

Time to Reflect

- How can we grow to trust God more fully and become more effective in partnering with Him to see His Kingdom grow in our local community?
- In what ways can we be sure of God's will for our lives?

Last week our attention was drawn to the developing relationship between Ruth and Boaz, and our passage revealed much about their character. We saw how rays of positivity and hope began to shine in the lives of Naomi and Ruth. This week we will reflect on the development of the relationship between Boaz and Ruth as a plan was devised (v1-5) and a proposal was given (v6-9).

"...chapter 2 finishes with a downer. There is no date between Ruth and Boaz. We want to see Boaz ask Ruth out, but chapter 2 just leaves us hanging! We are left to wonder: will anything happen between these two?"

(Tony Merida, *Ruth For You*, p93)

Specifics

- Last week we saw how Naomi had started to change – away from grief and despair, towards hope and optimism. This week, at the very beginning of our passage (v1), we encounter a rejuvenated Naomi.
- Instead of focusing on herself and lamenting her own situation and circumstances, Naomi was now looking out for Ruth's welfare. She felt that it was her responsibility to find a home for Ruth, a place where she would be well looked after and provided for.
- This led to Naomi devising a plan which she wanted Ruth to follow. It is easy to classify this as scheming or plotting. We might say that Naomi was hatching a romantic plot. However, we must see this passage within the wider context of the book of Ruth, particularly what we have studied so far.
- God was clearly moving in the lives of Ruth and Naomi. In previous studies we have highlighted the providence of God and we have been reminded that God is sovereign.
- The passage before us doesn't indicate that Naomi had forgotten about God. Nor was she trying to move ahead of God.
- Tony Merida narrows in on this and he writes, *"Naomi does not say, God is sovereign, so let's just wait until a husband knocks on the door! God's sovereignty is not a license for human inactivity. That would be not trusting Lord but testing the Lord. No, we should work and act, in view of and because of God's work and God's activity."*¹
- As we read the specifics of Naomi's plan, it is interesting to realise that Naomi knew where Boaz was and what he was doing (v2). It leads us to ask how did she acquire this information?
- It is clear that Naomi had done some research. Perhaps she watched Boaz or she got information from some of the people who knew her and greeted her when she arrived back in Bethlehem (1:19-21).

¹ Tony Merida, *Ruth For You* (The Good Book Company, 2020), p95.

- The threshing floor, mentioned as the place where Boaz could be found (v2b), is a very interesting location. These tended to be communal places and they were busy places, particularly at night.
- The winnowing, or threshing, usually occurred at night because there were breezes that helped with the process of separating the grain from the chaff. The workers would usually sleep at these places so as to protect their grain.
- However, these locations were also places of immorality. For example, in Hosea 9:1 we read about threshing floors being a site for prostitution.
- Nonetheless, Naomi saw an opportunity for Ruth and she provided very specific instructions (v3-4).
- Note how Ruth was to take a bath and put on perfume and fresh clothes. She was not to look like a widow in a time of mourning.
- Naomi encouraged Ruth to visit Boaz at the threshing floor when he was in a good mood, to observe where he would sleep and then draw close to him.
- Once again, our attention is drawn to Ruth's remarkable loyalty to Naomi and we are also reminded about her courage. This was a risky plan. Boaz could, perhaps, respond harshly. He could also charge Ruth with acting like a prostitute.
- There was danger for Ruth in entering this place at night. Remember how Boaz was concerned about her welfare during the hours of daylight (2:9). Surely the night hours would have been even more dangerous for Ruth.
- Merida offers a helpful and practical point of analysis. "If Naomi has overestimated his (Boaz) kindness, integrity, and status as a close family member, the plan will go seriously wrong. The plan all depends on Boaz and him alone...As we make plans – as we try to figure out strategies for ministry and make good decisions in our lives – we know that there is one person on whom everything depends: the Lord Jesus.²"
- The remaining verses of our passage (v6-9) reveal how Ruth went to the threshing floor "...and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do." We can feel the tension build in these verses as Ruth followed Naomi's instructions (v7).
- It's little wonder that Boaz was startled when we woke in the middle of the night (v8). Understandably he asked what appears to be an obvious question: "Who are you?" (v9).
- Ruth's answer (v9b) is really revealing and Merida picks this up as he observes, "Her response is different from 2:13, where she was amazed at Boaz's favour, given that she was not one of his servants. Now she is identifying herself as having an improved status; she is the kind of woman that Boaz might marry.³"
- Ruth's request "Spread the corner of your garment over me..." is the moment where she moved beyond Naomi's plan and took the initiative. This was, essentially, a proposal. In Ezekiel 16:8 the phrase 'spread your wings' (or garment) is a reference to marriage.
- Ruth was essentially "...asking Boaz to become part of God's protection and provision for her life.⁴"
- This was a bold move but one that demonstrated faith and trust in God as well as deep levels of personal resilience and courage.
- Ruth had certainly come a long way from the young widow that we first met back in chapter one.

² Merida, *Ruth For You*, p67.

³ Ibid, p100.

⁴ Ibid, p100.