

Ruth 3

Pursuit Of A Guardian Redeemer

Section One: Naomi's plan for Ruth

Read Out Loud: Ruth 3:1-7

One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. ²Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

⁵"I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. ⁶So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. ⁷When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down.

? What does Naomi ask Ruth to do in this passage?

Ruth's New Clothes

Ruth would have likely been in a season of mourning for the loss of her husband (either Mahlon or Kilion – the book never clearly states which of Naomi's sons was married to Ruth). In ancient Israelite culture, it was normal for people to wear clothing that symbolize their emotional state. As such, Ruth would have likely been wearing torn up or ratty clothes. So, Naomi's request for Ruth to put on nice clothing and perfume is more significant than asking her to change her wardrobe. Naomi is asking Ruth to move from a season of grief to a new season where she makes herself "available" for a new relationship.

The concept of a guardian-redeemer (some translations say family-redeemer or kinsman-redeemer) is very important in the book of Ruth. A guardian-redeemer was a close, influential relative who could be turned to for help, usually when the family line or possessions were in danger. This redeemer was responsible for buying back family land, buying back enslaved relatives, and otherwise caring for relatives in difficult circumstances.

With that in mind, let's take a look at a couple passages of scripture that give further insight into the role of a guardian-redeemer:

Leviticus 25:25 – "If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold."

Leviticus 25:35-38 – "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among

you. You must not lend them money at interest or sell them food at a profit. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.”

Leviticus 25:47-49 – “If a foreigner residing among you becomes rich and any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to the foreigner or to a member of the foreigner’s clan, they retain the right of redemption after they have sold themselves. One of their relatives may redeem them: An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in their clan may redeem them. Or if they prosper, they may redeem themselves.”

? In each of the passages above, how do you see guardian-redeemers called to offer hope?

? What do you think it meant to Naomi and Ruth that Boaz was their guardian-redeemer?

? How do you see Naomi act in faith in verses 1-4?

? How do you see Ruth act in faith in verses 5-7?

Moabites in literary context

In Genesis 19, we have the literary framework for understanding how the Bible portrays the Moabite people: children making sexually immoral advances on their parents because of a lustful distrust in God. In Genesis 19, Lot’s daughters take advantage of him in an episode involving alcoholic drink. The sexual misconduct of Lot’s daughters leads to the birth of Moab who is “the father of the Moabites.” From that point on, the Moabites are a hostile nation to the Israelites. Even though the story of Ruth plays off the stereotypes of promiscuous Moabites (“uncover” / “lay down”), since Ruth is portrayed as obedient, gentle, and quiet – rather than aggressive (or drunk) – the reader is challenged to reconsider this Moabite woman as faithful, trusting, and patient.

Section Two: Night at the threshing floor

Ruth 3:8-13 (NIV)

⁸ In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet! ⁹ “Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.”

¹⁰ “The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, don’t be

afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹²Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. ¹³Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.”

? What Christ-like character traits do Ruth and Boaz display here?

? Just as Boaz is a guardian-redeemer for Ruth, Jesus is a guardian-redeemer for us. He redeemed us from our sin and brokenness through his life, death, and resurrection. How have you experienced Jesus as a guardian-redeemer in your personal life?

In verse 11, Ruth is referred to as a woman of noble character. Proverbs 31 is well-known for its depiction of a “wife (or woman) of noble character.” Read verses 15-20 together.

Proverbs 31:15-20

- ¹⁵ She gets up while it is still night;
she provides food for her family
and portions for her female servants.
- ¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
- ¹⁷ She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.
- ¹⁸ She sees that her trading is profitable,
and her lamp does not go out at night.
- ¹⁹ In her hand she holds the distaff
and grasps the spindle with her fingers.
- ²⁰ She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.

? What verses or phrases in this text describe Ruth’s character and/or actions in Ruth 1-3?

Section Three: Return with a report of blessing

Ruth 3:14-18 (NIV)

‘So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor.” ¹⁵He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town.

¹⁶When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?” Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her ¹⁷and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t

go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.”¹⁸ Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

? What is Boaz set on doing as the morning begins? Why are his actions important?

? Boaz' care for Ruth & Naomi is a shadow of the care and redemption Christ has given us. How specifically has Christ acted/provided for you as your perfect guardian-redeemer?

? Ruth trusted in Naomi's plan and God's blessings. How can we model that faith and better place our trust for redemption in Jesus? What should be our response to Jesus?

For Discussion And Accountability

? This week, how can you step out in vulnerability towards God and more fully trust in his redemption?