

A Mighty Man of Valor

Message 02 of 04 in the series: "Ruth: A Story of Valor, True Love, and Redemption"

A. Some helpful background information:

Ruth was a godly woman of "**heséd**" (loyalty, faithfulness, and true love) living in a time of moral/spiritual darkness. "In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes." Judges 21:25 (NLT) Instead of taking care of herself, Ruth chose to move to Israel with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and do her best to provide. Naomi had chosen to become bitter over the deaths of her husband and sons which had left both her and Ruth impoverished and facing starvation.

Centuries earlier, God had instructed His people on how to assist foreigners and widows at harvest time. "When you are harvesting your crops and forget to bring in a bundle of grain from your field, don't go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Then the Lord your God will bless you in all you do. When you beat the olives from your olive trees, don't go over the boughs twice. Leave the remaining olives for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. When you gather the grapes in your vineyard, don't glean the vines after they are picked. Leave the remaining grapes for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. **Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt. That is why I am giving you this command.**"

Deuteronomy 24:19-22 (NLT) (see also *Leviticus 19:9-10 & 23:22*)

Life Application: God cares for widows, orphans, and people in need, and He wants His people to care for them, too. "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you." James 1:27 (NLT)

B. Ruth did what she could to provide for herself and her mother-in-law, Naomi.

"Now there was a **wealthy and influential** man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech. One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go out into the harvest fields to pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it.' Naomi replied, 'All right, my daughter, go ahead.' So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And **as it happened**, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech."

Ruth 2:1-3 (NLT)

Note: Boaz was a man of "chayil" (a mighty man of valor, sterling character, and integrity).

Note: Ruth didn't wind up in a field belonging to Boaz by chance. "We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps... We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall."

Proverbs 16:9 & 33 (NLT)

Life Application: We can trust God to guide us in every detail of our lives. "The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives." Psalm 37:23 (NLT)

C. Boaz was glad to help Ruth out because she was a woman of heséd.

"While she was there, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. 'The Lord be with you!' he said. 'The Lord bless you!' the harvesters replied. Then Boaz asked his foreman, 'Who is that young woman over there? Who does she belong to?' And the foreman replied, 'She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes' rest in the shelter.' Boaz went over and said to Ruth, 'Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well.' Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. 'What have I done to deserve such kindness?' she asked. 'I am only a foreigner.' 'Yes, I know,' Boaz replied. 'But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers. May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done.' 'I hope I continue to please you, sir,' she replied. 'You have comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, even though I am not one of your workers.' At mealtime Boaz called to her, 'Come over here, and help yourself to some food. You can dip your bread in the sour wine.' So she sat with his harvesters, and Boaz gave her some roasted grain to eat. She ate all she wanted and still had some left over. When Ruth went back to work again, Boaz ordered his young men, 'Let her gather grain right among the sheaves without stopping

her. And pull out some heads of barley from the bundles and drop them on purpose for her. Let her pick them up, and don't give her a hard time!" Ruth 2:4-16 (NLT)

Note: People notice godly character. "Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world." 1 Peter 2:12 (NLT)

Life Application: God wants us to stand out for our good deeds and kindness. "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

D. Naomi was encouraged when she heard how God had led Ruth to the field of a relative who was willing to be kind to them.

"So Ruth gathered barley there all day, and when she beat out the grain that evening, it filled an entire basket. She carried it back into town and showed it to her mother-in-law. Ruth also gave her the roasted grain that was left over from her meal. 'Where did you gather all this grain today?' Naomi asked. 'Where did you work? May the Lord bless the one who helped you!' So Ruth told her mother-in-law about the man in whose field she had worked. She said, 'The man I worked with today is named Boaz.' 'May the Lord bless him!' Naomi told her daughter-in-law. 'He is showing his kindness to us as well as to your dead husband. That man is one of our closest relatives, one of our family redeemers.' Then Ruth said, 'What's more, Boaz even told me to come back and stay with his harvesters until the entire harvest is completed.' 'Good!' Naomi exclaimed. 'Do as he said, my daughter. Stay with his young women right through the whole harvest. You might be harassed in other fields, but you'll be safe with him.' So Ruth worked alongside the women in Boaz's fields and gathered grain with them until the end of the barley harvest. Then she continued working with them through the wheat harvest in early summer. And all the while she lived with her mother-in-law."

Ruth 2:17-23 (NLT)

Note: If he would be willing, Boaz might become a "family redeemer" who could rescue Ruth and Naomi permanently from their desperate situation. "They may be bought back by a brother, an uncle, or a cousin. In fact, anyone from the extended family may buy them back." Leviticus 25:48b-49a (NLT)

Life Application: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time." Psalm 34:18-19 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

Read Ruth 2 and then discuss the following questions:

1. What are your impressions of Ruth? ...of Boaz? Do they remind you of anyone you know? Why?
2. Why was Boaz so kind to Ruth? Why was Ruth so kind to Naomi?
3. What do the following passages say about helping people in need?
 - Leviticus 19:9-10, Deuteronomy 24:19-22
 - James 1:27 & 2:15-17
 - 1 Timothy 6:17-19
4. What do the following passages teach us about God's providential care and guidance?
 - Psalm 1:6, 32:8-9, & 37:23
 - Proverbs 16:9 & 33
 - Romans 8:28

Describe a time in your life when you realized that God had providentially guided you into a certain situation or circumstance.

5. Why do you think God wants His people to stand out? (1 Peter 2:12, Matthew 5:14-16)

6. Discuss the following quotations from legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden:

“Be more concerned with your character than your reputation because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.”

“The true test of a man’s character is what he does when no one is watching.”

“Players with fight never lose a game; they just run out of time.”