

# A Covenant to Marry

Ruth 3:1-6, 8-12, 16-18  
SS Lesson for 08/18/2019

**Devotional Scripture:** Heb 13:1-8

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: Ruth 3:10*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### MARRIAGE PLAN (RUTH 3:1-6)

##### *Plan for protection (1)*

- Protection from physical danger, spoken impacts and famine (Job 5:20-22)
- Protection that only God can provide (Ps 18:2)
- Protection in the form of refuge in God (Ps 46:1-3)
- Protection from calamity (Prov 14:32)
- Protection in the form of deliverance (2 Cor 1:10)

##### *Plan for redemption (2-4)*

- A redemption that is part of Jesus' rescue (Rom 7:24-25)
- A redemption that has the Holy Spirit as a guarantee (2 Cor 5:2-5)
- A redemption that has a promise of a transformation into glory (Phil 3:20-21)
- A redemption that has as a reward a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)
- A redemption because we are God's possession (Eph 1:14)
- A redemption by a God that has unfailing love (Ps 130:7)

##### *Plan of obedience (5-6)*

- Obedience to show faith (Gen 22:9-12)
- Obedience to witness (Acts 8:26-31)
- Obedience regardless of prejudice (Acts 10:19-23)
- Obedience to follow Jesus (Matt 9:9)
- Obedience without knowing the results (Heb 11:8)

#### MARRIAGE SOUGHT (RUTH 3:8-12)

##### *Seeking to be known (8-9)*

- Known because of serving (Rom 14:16-18)
- Known because of loving (1 Cor 8:3)
- Known because of salvation (Gal 4:9)
- Known because of being chosen (John 15:19)
- Known because of good deeds (1 Tim 5:24-25)

##### *Seeking blessings (10)*

- Blessings for the faithful will abound (Prov 28:20)
- Blessings for doing the Will of God (Matt 12:50)
- Blessings for being obedient (John 8:51)
- Blessings because of decisions that please God (2 Chron 1:10-12)

##### *Seeking fulfillment (11-12)*

- Fulfillment because God's eyes are on the righteous (Ps 34:15)
- Fulfillment because God promises to answer even before speaking (Isa 65:24)
- Fulfillment because God promises to fulfill answers and seeking (Matt 7:7-8)
- Fulfillment because of obedience (1 John 3:21-22)

#### MARRIAGE PLAN REPORT (RUTH 3:16-18)

##### *Report what has been done (16-17)*

- Report of the help of God (1 Thess 2:2)
- Report that God will be with us (Dan 3:16-18)
- Report that there is hope (2 Cor 3:12)
- Report of God's grace (1 Cor 15:10)
- Report of being a servant (2 Cor 6:3-10)

##### *Report the need for waiting (18)*

- Waiting in anticipation (Ps 130:5-6)
- Waiting because it is good to do so (Lam 3:25-26)

Waiting because we are commanded to do so (Hos 12:6)

Waiting because hope demands it (Rom 8:24-25)

Waiting in hope and prayer (Rom 12:12)

## CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

*Conclusion*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Selfishness abounds in human affairs, and the pages of Scripture contain many examples. In the period of the judges, we find such examples as Abimelek, who sought the kingship for himself (Judges 9), and Samson, whose narcissistic encounters with the Philistines often served himself instead of Israel (Judges 14–16). Fortunately, though, people are not always selfish. The book of Ruth portrays several characters who demonstrate selflessness and integrity in their relationships. These characters draw their integrity from the character of the God who works through their actions to advance his benevolent purposes.

Because Ruth had left her home country out of loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi viewed Ruth's future security as her own responsibility. Ordinarily, a woman's father or other male relatives would arrange her marriage and protect her. This unusual state of affairs left the two women to provide for themselves. Naomi gave her daughter-in-law her blessing to go into the neighbors' fields and seek permission to glean there to provide for them both (Ruth 2; compare Leviticus 19:9, 10). Ruth ended up in the field of Boaz, a close relative of Naomi's deceased husband, whom the text introduces as a man of standing in his town (Ruth 2:1). Spiritually sensitive readers recognize the providential hand of God in the events (2:3). In due course, Boaz met Ruth and praised her acts of kindness to Naomi. He invoked God's blessing on her and made sure she was safe and provided for during the harvest. Because this lesson focuses on Ruth's proposal to Boaz, we must address the questionable legality of marriage between an Israelite and a Moabite. The law included certain restrictions about a Moabite not being part of "the assembly of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 23:3; compare Nehemiah 13:1). Such exclusion suggests a prohibition against intermarriage because the offspring of this union would never be included in the spiritual life of Israel. Centuries later during the time of Ezra, intermarriages with non-Israelites were considered a threat to the purity of the covenant people. Following the Babylonian captivity, the returned exiles were especially aware of the importance of remaining separate from idolatrous influences. The leadership of the community took action to dissolve such marriages (Ezra 9:1, 2; 10:1–5; compare Nehemiah 13:23–27). This separation would help ensure that the Israelites would not become guilty (again) of the sins that had led to the captivity (see Deuteronomy 6:13–15; compare Jeremiah 19:4, 5). Ruth had affirmed without reservation her allegiance to the God of Israel and severed ties with Moab (Ruth 1:16, 17). One might say she had been adopted into the covenant people. Thus, despite her Moabite nationality, there was no danger of her turning the family line of Elimelek (Naomi's husband) to foreign and false gods. Because she had embraced God alone, Ruth needed to follow his laws for his people. The need for Ruth to remarry stems from the directive to bear a child for her deceased husband (see Deuteronomy 25:5–10). This practice ensured that the dead man's legacy did not die with him. The practice also provided for the widow. She gained both a husband and a child through the practice of levirate marriage (see Ruth 1:11). Though the concept of kinship is important throughout the Bible, the book of Ruth explores extensively themes of covenantal loyalty within the family. Duties within the family include buying back land sold in times of emergency (Leviticus 25:25–27; Ruth 4:2–6), redeeming family members sold into debt slavery (Leviticus 25:47–49), and avenging murder (Numbers 35:19). For Ruth, the most important kinship obligation was that of levirate marriage.

### Key Verse: Ruth 3:10

*Then he said, "Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich"*

## Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Naomi was no longer depressed. She became a matchmaker and prepared Ruth to seek the love of her willing kinsman-redeemer, Boaz. The turning point in the narrative is at hand. During the weeks of the barley and wheat harvests (cf. 2:23), Naomi had time to put her plan together. When the time was right she acted.

**3:1.** Naomi was a persistent person (cf. 1:8-15). She was now resolved to seek rest and security for her daughter-in-law through marriage. Ruth had given up the possibility of remarriage in order to care for the aging Naomi, but now marriage suddenly again became a possibility. It was customary for Hebrew parents to arrange marriages for their children (Judges 14:1-10). **To find a home** is literally to “find rest” (cf. Ruth 1:9), to be settled and secure in a home with a husband.

**3:2.** Naomi pointed out that since **Boaz** was a relative of theirs, he could be a **kinsman-redeemer** for Ruth. He had an open and willing heart. So Naomi suggested Ruth go to **the threshing floor** that evening. The people of Bethlehem took turns using the threshing floor. The floor was a flat hard area on a slightly raised platform or hill. In threshing, the grain was beaten out from the stalks with flails (cf. 2:17) or was trodden over by oxen. Then in **winnowing** the grain was thrown in the air and the wind carried the chaff away. The grain was then removed from the threshing floor and placed in heaps to be sold or stored in granaries. Threshing and winnowing were a time of great festivity and rejoicing. Naomi knew that Boaz was threshing his grain on the day that she had chosen for her plan. She also knew that Boaz would be sleeping near his grain that night, to protect it.

**3:3.** Ruth was to prepare herself by washing and perfuming herself. The words **best clothes** may be rendered “a large outer garment.” This was to keep her identity from being detected. She was to observe Boaz **eating and drinking** but was not to **let him know** of her presence.

**3:4.** After Boaz finished eating and drinking, Ruth was to observe **the place where** he retired for the night. Under cover of darkness Ruth was to **go to Boaz, uncover his feet, and lie down** there. (On the meaning of the uncovering of the feet, see v. 7.) Boaz, Naomi said, would then **tell** Ruth what she was **to do**. The implication was clear that Ruth should do whatever he requested.

**3:5.** **Ruth** stated that she would act in full and unquestioned obedience to the directions of her mother-in-law (cf. 2:22-23). The preparation for the redemption experience had been carefully made. Now the plan had to be carried out.

**3:6.** Ruth **went to the threshing floor** and carried out the plan in exact detail as matchmaker Naomi had laid it out.

**3:7.** Some commentators suggest that what **Ruth** did presented an opportunity for immorality. But nothing in the passage supports this. Her mother-in-law had complete confidence in the integrity of the kinsman-redeemer. **Boaz** could be trusted to act responsibly. And Ruth was recognized by everyone as “a woman of noble character” (v. 11). The uncovering of the **feet** was a ceremonial act that was completely proper. Probably the scene took place in the dark so that Boaz had the opportunity to reject the proposal without the whole town knowing about it.

**3:8-9.** **Something startled Boaz in the middle of the night. He turned** to discover that **a woman was lying at his feet**. Boaz asked for the identity of his unusual guest (cf. 2:5). Ruth responded in humility (cf. 2:10): **I am your servant Ruth**. She had put herself under the wings of Yahweh (2:12), and now she asked to be put under the wings of Boaz. In the phrase **the corner of your garment** the word “corner” is *kānāp*, which is translated “wing” in 2:12. She used a poetic image that had its source in the blessing that Boaz had given her. A Moabitess widow was calling the attention of a noted Hebrew to his responsibility. He could now follow through on his benediction (2:12) by becoming Ruth’s **kinsman-redeemer** and providing her with the security of marriage. Boaz joyfully received Ruth’s proposal. The tension of the plot continued, however, because another kinsman had a prior claim on her.

**3:10.** Boaz gave no hint that Ruth had embarrassed him by her actions or that she had done something that was not within her rights or against the customs of the day. Rather than thinking suggestive thoughts as some might have done in such a setting, he immediately blessed Ruth: **The LORD bless you**. He again used the phrase **my daughter**, a reminder of their age difference (cf. 2:8; 3:11). He commended Ruth for her act of **kindness** (“loyalty,” *hesed*; cf. 1:8) that was **greater than** her decision to serve her mother-in-law. Boaz also commended her for not going **after a younger** man. He seemed to believe Ruth could have readily

found such a match. He praised her for being willing to marry an older man in order to fulfill her commitment to her first husband, Mahlon (cf. 4:10), and the family name of Elimelech.

**3:11.** Boaz then relieved any immediate fears Ruth might have had by saying that he would **do** as she requested. He might have sensed that she was apprehensive over how he might interpret her bold proposal. Boaz told her that **all his fellow townsmen** (lit., the “people of the gate,” probably referring to the elders of Bethlehem) considered her a person of the highest reputation. **Noble character** translates *hayil* (“valor, worth, ability”), the same word used of the worthiness of Boaz (2:1; cf. Prov. 12:4; 31:10, 29 [“noble”]). They were truly a good match!

**3:12.** The narrative, however, was not nearing the end. Still another complication had to be unraveled. Boaz had already looked into the legal aspects of the proposed marriage; perhaps he had anticipated her request. He knew that Ruth by her marriage into Elimelech’s family had a relative who was more closely related to her than he was. But Boaz would do all he could to see that the outcome would be one that satisfied Ruth’s request.

**3:13.** Boaz acted responsibly in two ways: (1) He did not send her home in the middle of **the night**. He would protect her and he would touch her only if she could be rightfully his. (2) Also he protected the rights of her nearer kinsman. If the other relative wanted **to redeem**, that was his right. But if the nearer kinsman was **not willing**, Boaz would **surely** do so. He covered his pledge with a **vow**. There was no doubt about how Boaz wanted the matter to eventuate.

**3:14.** Ruth **lay at his feet until early morning**. She arose before daylight. Boaz did not want her life complicated by village gossips, so he urged her not to **let it be known** she had been at **the threshing floor**. Nothing had happened that was improper but gossips are not careful about facts.

**3:15.** Into Ruth’s **shawl** Boaz put **six measures of barley** for her and Naomi. Naomi was entering more and more into the fullness of her wise decision to return to Bethlehem. The “measure” was probably the seah (one-third of an ephah or about 10 pounds). Thus six seahs would equal about 60 pounds. Ruth was a strong woman to be able to carry such a heavy load. Probably Boaz placed the burden **on her** head. Some Hebrew manuscripts read, **Then he went back to town**, but others have “she” in place of “he.” Since Ruth returned to Bethlehem at that time and Boaz a bit later that morning (4:1), both renderings (“she” and “he”) fit the facts. Naomi eagerly sought to know the outcome of Ruth’s adventure and predicted that Boaz would quickly resolve the issues that day. Whatever the outcome as to who the redeemer would be, it would be Ruth’s day of redemption.

**3:16-17.** Naomi sought to know how it had gone with **Ruth**. As before, she called Ruth **my daughter** (v. 1; 2:2; cf. 1:11-13; 3:18). Ruth gave her a full report and added that **Boaz had** given her the **barley** so that Naomi could share in Ruth’s future fulfillment. Naomi had done her matchmaking well and had earned a reward. The aged widow could then rest assured that she would not be forgotten in the future.

**3:18.** Naomi and Ruth had done all they could. The initiative now rested with Boaz. Boaz would **not rest** till he had **settled the matter** that day.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Marriage Plan (Ruth 3:1-6)**

1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"

2 Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.

3 Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

4 Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do."

5 And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do."

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her.

## **Plan for protection (1)**

*Protection from physical danger, spoken impacts and famine (Job 5:20-22)*

20 In famine he will ransom you from death, and in battle from the stroke of the sword. 21 You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes. 22 You will laugh at destruction and famine, and need not fear the beasts of the earth.

*Protection that only God can provide (Ps 18:2)*

2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

*Protection in the form of refuge in God (Ps 46:1-3)*

1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

*Protection from calamity (Prov 14:32)*

32 When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge.

*Protection in the form of deliverance (2 Cor 1:10)*

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

## **Plan for redemption (2-4)**

*A redemption that is part of Jesus' rescue (Rom 7:24-25)*

24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

*A redemption that has the Holy Spirit as a guarantee (2 Cor 5:2-5)*

2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

*A redemption that has a promise of a transformation into glory (Phil 3:20-21)*

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

*A redemption that has as a reward a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)*

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

*A redemption because we are God's possession (Eph 1:14)*

14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

*A redemption by a God that has unfailing love (Ps 130:7)*

7 O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

## **Plan of obedience (5-6)**

### *Obedience to show faith (Gen 22:9-12)*

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

### *Obedience to witness (Acts 8:26-31)*

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road — the desert road — that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." 30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

### *Obedience regardless of prejudice (Acts 10:19-23)*

19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." 21 Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" 22 The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." 23 Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.

### *Obedience to follow Jesus (Matt 9:9)*

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

### *Obedience without knowing the results (Heb 11:8)*

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

## **Marriage Sought (Ruth 3:8-12)**

8 Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet.

9 And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative."

10 Then he said, "Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.

12 Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

## **Seeking to be known (8-9)**

### *Known because of serving (Rom 14:16-18)*

16 Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

*Known because of loving (1 Cor 8:3)*

3 But the man who loves God is known by God.

*Known because of salvation (Gal 4:9)*

9 But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

*Known because of being chosen (John 15:19)*

19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

*Known because of good deeds (1 Tim 5:24-25)*

24 The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. 25 In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden.

### **Seeking blessings (10)**

*Blessings for the faithful will abound (Prov 28:20)*

20 A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

*Blessings for doing the Will of God (Matt 12:50)*

50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

*Blessings for being obedient (John 8:51)*

51 I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

*Blessings because of decisions that please God (2 Chron 1:10-12)*

10 Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?" 11 God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king,

### **Seeking fulfillment (11-12)**

*Fulfillment because God's eyes are on the righteous (Ps 34:15)*

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;

*Fulfillment because God promises to answer even before speaking (Isa 65:24)*

24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

*Fulfillment because God promises to fulfill answers and seeking (Matt 7:7-8)*

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

*Fulfillment because of obedience (1 John 3:21-22)*

21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

## **Marriage Plan Report (Ruth 3:16-18)**

16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "Is that you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her.

17 And she said, "These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'"

18 Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."

### **Report what has been done (16-17)**

*Report of the help of God (1 Thess 2:2)*

2 We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.

*Report that God will be with us (Dan 3:16-18)*

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

*Report that there is hope (2 Cor 3:12)*

12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

*Report of God's grace (1 Cor 15:10)*

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

*Report of being a servant (2 Cor 6:3-10)*

3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! 5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother goes to law against another — and this in front of unbelievers! 7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers. 9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

### **Report the need for waiting (18)**

*Waiting in anticipation (Ps 130:5-6)*

5 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. 6 My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.

*Waiting because it is good to do so (Lam 3:25-26)*

25 The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

*Waiting because we are commanded to do so (Hos 12:6)*

6 But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.

*Waiting because hope demands it (Rom 8:24-25)*

24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

*Waiting in hope and prayer (Rom 12:12)*

12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### **Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

#### **Conclusion**

We come to the end of chapter 3 with a sigh of relief. Things might have ended differently, and that would not have been good. Both Ruth and Boaz were placed in compromising situations, but both responded in a godly way so that their character was evident, and the goal which Naomi sought to reach could be gained by a much higher road. There are many lessons to learn from our text, and I will conclude this message by pointing out a few of them.

(1) *Godly character is evident in ungodly settings.* The godly character of both Ruth and Boaz is dramatically displayed against the backdrop of chapter 3. Circumstances were far from ideal here, but that did not prevent these two people from living in a way that should command our respect. I think of the Corinthian church and the ungodliness of the culture in which those saints were called to live. Paul set a high standard for these early believers because he was confident that God is able to make His people stand. We often bemoan the fact that we live in dark days, but it is during such times that the light of the gospel should shine ever more brightly.

(2) *Men are called to be moral leaders in their relationship with the opposite sex.* In our culture, it is sometimes assumed that men will be the aggressors and that it is the woman's role to "put on the brakes." This is often the case in dating. Many young men seem all too willing to go as far as the young woman will permit. This is not the way it happened in our story. In effect, Naomi instructed Ruth that she was to do whatever Boaz said (3:4). Had Boaz not been a man of character, things might have gone in a very different direction at this midnight meeting under the covers and in the cover of darkness. But it was Boaz who took the moral leadership so as to protect the purity and reputation of Ruth.

Young men, this is the standard for you. You (and I, and every man) should be the kind of moral leader who takes the moral high ground, protecting the purity and reputation of those women with whom we associate. This is what real manhood is about. Remember, Boaz was a "**mighty man of valor.**" He showed that not only on the battlefield, and in the barley field, but at the threshing floor as well.

(3) *Beware of ungodly counsel that comes from people who appear to be pious and to have our best interest at heart.* Naomi appears to be intent on seeking what is best for Ruth. Her counsel sets forth a plan which would seemingly provide Ruth with the security and blessings of a husband, a home, and an heir. In spite of how this counsel was presented, the reader should see through this and realize how wrong it was.

We should readily see that it is important for every Christian to discern the difference between sound counsel and ungodly counsel. But just how is one to discern the difference? I can think of several important clues from our text. First, one should evaluate the counsel given by another by considering their personal relationship with God. The indications we are given regarding Naomi's spiritual condition in chapter 1 are far from encouraging. Naomi is not a woman who is walking close to God. By her own confession, she is bitter, accusing God of being unduly harsh with her. That should cause us to see all kinds of red flags (warnings).

We would do well in evaluating the counsel of others if we asked this question: Is the counsel I am being given coming directly from the Words of Scripture, or is it the opinion of the counselor? Is the counsel we are given a "Thus saith the Lord" that is found in the Bible, or is it a personal opinion? Finally, we can learn a great deal from the answer to this question: "Is the counsel being given challenging me to do the difficult (even humanly impossible) thing that is right, or is it justifying me doing the easy thing that I (in my sinful flesh) really want to do?" God's will is almost never the "path of least resistance." God's will was expressed in the law, but we know from Romans 7 that we cannot do it by mere will power or fleshly effort. God's will can only be accomplished when His Spirit gives life to our flesh which is dead with respect to righteousness.

False teachers appeal to our fleshly desires to prompt us to act. Teachers of the truth hold forth God's Word which commands us to mortify the flesh, not indulge it. When we are counseled to do that which appeals to our flesh, we can be reasonably sure that it is bad counsel. Our task as believers who are part of the body of Christ is to challenge our fellow believers to take the high ground and to do the hard (even impossible) things which God requires of us, through the power of His Spirit.

We are no friend when we encourage others to do "what feels right;" we are only a friend when we encourage them to trust and obey God. We live in a time like that of the judges, when everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes. Let us encourage others to do what is right in God's eyes by obeying His Word and encouraging others to do likewise.

(4) *Be alert to the reality of the providence of God in the lives of His people.* This text, though well known and often cited, is surely true:

The providence of God is often unseen until God chooses to lift the veil, so to speak, and reveal what He has been about. God was providentially preparing Naomi for the blessings He was about to bestow on her, and this at a time when she wrongly concluded that He was dealing harshly with her. In chapter 3, I believe that God providentially protected both Boaz and Ruth from rumors and accusations by preventing anyone from seeing the two of them together that night. More evidences of providential care are yet to come in the Book of Ruth.

(5) *Our text should teach us to beware of taking shortcuts.* It is my contention that Naomi is attempting to take a shortcut in her efforts to get Ruth married to Boaz. I believe that shortcuts are both unbiblical and unwise. But first let me define what I mean by a shortcut. A shortcut is an ungodly, faithless action that we take to avoid pain and suffering, hard work, trusting God, or waiting. In other words, we take shortcuts in order to solve a problem the easy way, as opposed to God's way.

Let me give some examples of shortcuts that were taken by people in the Bible. Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a shortcut to that knowledge that would make them "like God." Abram and Sarai grew weary of waiting for God to give them a son as He had promised, and so, at the prompting of Sarai, Abram slept with Hagar, resulting in the birth of Ishmael – a shortcut for which we are still paying the price. Judah was afraid to give his third son to Tamar, and so Tamar took the shortcut of dressing like a harlot and having sex with Judah. Fearing that they would not be able to marry and produce offspring, Lot's two daughters got him drunk and had sexual relations with him, resulting in the births of Moab and Ammon. Seeing his fighting men scatter, Saul went ahead and offered the sacrifices himself, rather than to wait for Samuel as he had been instructed. Fearing that they would suffer persecution from the Jews, some who claimed to trust in Christ began to insist that Gentile converts must be circumcised. Wishing to appear more generous than they were, Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and gave some of the proceeds to the church, secretly keeping some for themselves, but declaring that they had given the entire purchase price.

Thankfully, we also have examples of those in the Bible who refused to take a shortcut. When David sinned by numbering the Israelites, God brought a plague of pestilence on the people. In His mercy, God stopped short of destroying all. The prophet Gad instructed David to erect an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah. When David sought to purchase the property on which the threshing floor was located, Araunah offered to give it to David. David refused this shortcut, insisting that he could not offer a sacrifice that cost him nothing.

The greatest example of refusing to take a shortcut is found in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the outset of his public ministry, the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to fast and to be tested by the devil. On three occasions, the devil presented our Lord with three shortcuts, all of which our Lord refused, basing His decision on the Word of God. The essence of these shortcuts was for Jesus to satisfy, or please Himself, by acting independently of the Father (much as Adam and Eve had done in the Garden of Eden).

All of this was leading up to Satan's effort to turn the Lord Jesus from the cross (whether or not Satan grasped it at the time). If Jesus would simply bow down and worship him, the devil offered to give Him authority over all the kingdoms of the world. Here was the biggest shortcut of all time, a shortcut around the cross. But our Lord refused the easy path and chose the path of shedding His blood as the payment for our sins. Every Christian can rejoice over the choice He made, and the price He paid.

My friend, because our Lord refused to take a shortcut around the cross of Calvary, there is no way that God will accept any shortcut to salvation that you may choose to avoid the cross. Jesus Christ is the only way to God, and the cross is the only basis for our salvation. Do not think that your sincere efforts at pleasing Him will suffice as the payment for your sins. Only Christ's death in your behalf can pay the price for your sins, and only His righteousness bestowed upon you as a gift will meet God's standards. Please, no shortcuts when it comes to your eternal destiny.

For the Christian, shortcuts deprive us of the opportunity of seeing the hand of God at work in our lives. There was no shortcut around the Red Sea. While the Israelites were terrified because the sea was before them and the Egyptian army was behind, they were blessed to see God's hand at work in a powerful way, bringing about their salvation and the destruction of the entire Egyptian army. Had Naomi's scheme produced the physical union of Ruth and Boaz, neither they nor we would be able to rejoice over the hand of God at work in Ruth 4. We seek to find shortcuts because of the level of difficulty we perceive, but it is God who raises the level of difficulty in order to demonstrate His power and His grace. Shortcuts are a way to bypass the blessing of seeing God powerfully at work in our lives.

Just what kind of shortcuts might I be talking about that you and I might face today? Let me suggest a few. *Pragmatism* is a lifestyle of taking shortcuts. Doing things in a way that seems to get the job done, but which falls short of the means God requires. *Suicide* is a shortcut, especially for the Christian. I have participated in the funeral service of at least one Christian who committed suicide as a shortcut. In this particular funeral, the fellow was reading the last chapters of the Book of Revelation as he killed himself. I know what he was thinking. He was thinking how wonderful heaven is, and how terrible his life on earth had become. Why not hasten the process and gain heaven now? As a believer in Jesus, I am convinced that he went to heaven, but he had a whole lot of explaining to do when he got there. And he lost the opportunity to see God work in his life to lead him through the dark valley in which he found himself. Suicide is a shortcut, my friend, and shortcuts are wrong.

Medication (both illegal drugs and prescription drugs) *can be* a shortcut. Listen very carefully to what I am saying. I am not saying that all prescription drugs are wrong. I said that drugs can be misused as a shortcut. We know that some people who need pain medication can become addicted to it. It can become a shortcut to avoid the emotional pains of life. We know that some people suffer from depression and need psychiatric drugs, at least for a time. But there are also those who would rather dull emotional pain than deal with it. Such people need to carefully consider whether their medication is truly a solution to their problems or a shortcut around them.

All right, I'm already in trouble with some people, so let me go a bit further. There are some children who suffer from conditions that may require medication to help them control their behavior. But there are also some children who just need parents who will insist that they sit down and behave. Some children need discipline more than they need a prescription. Others may need both. Medication should not be a substitute for discipline.

Illegal drugs are just a step removed. These are drugs that cannot be obtained legally, but may produce the same end result – taking away the pain in one's life so that there is a momentary relief from it. While the cross of Christ may not be the solution to a broken arm, and it may not dull the pain of a dentist's drill, no drug will solve the problem of man's sin and guilt, for only the blood of Jesus can remedy sin.

Let me mention one final shortcut. It is not a shortcut for all, but it can be for some – the spiritual study of others. No generation has had as many opportunities to read good books and commentaries, or to listen to sermons on the radio, television, or your MP3 player. These are good things, but they should never be a shortcut for your own serious study of God's Word.

We must study the Word of God for ourselves and not rely merely on the work of others. As these words from Proverbs tell us, we must seek for God's wisdom as for hidden treasure. That means that *we* must do some mining on our own. No wonder we "do what is right in our own eyes." I would suggest that you begin to do that by turning in your Bible to the Book of Ruth and seeking God's wisdom for you there.

*(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/3-cutting-corners-naomi-s-under-cover-operation-ruth-3>)*

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

Marriage is one of the most sacred covenants that human beings can enter into. Sadly, integrity in this hallowed relationship is all too rare. Some cite “irreconcilable differences” after growing apart for years. Others find, too late, that they were not well-suited to each other from the very beginning of their relationship. Infidelity abounds in all segments of society. Spouses cheat through social media, visiting illicit websites, concealing text messages, hiding money, etc. Abuses of many kinds contribute to broken marriages. Scripture does not downplay the lack of good role models, whether in the arena of marriage or elsewhere. The actions of biblical characters are not always noble or exemplary. Even the one described as “a man after [God’s] own heart”—David son of Jesse (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22)—failed miserably (2 Samuel 11). The account in today’s lesson, however, presents a shining example of integrity and determination to follow God’s principles. There was no manipulation to obtain selfish goals. Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz acted as people of God in the best sense. What models they continue to be.

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary***

Ruth's Commitment to Help Her Mother-in-Law - When Ruth gleaned in a Bethlehem field in order to provide food, God directed her steps—she gleaned in a field belonging to Boaz, a close relative.

Ruth Asked for a Commitment from Boaz - At the end of the harvest season, Naomi suggested Ruth appeal to Boaz for marriage. She reminded Ruth of his family ties and obligations as a "near kinsman" (Ruth 3:9, KJV, also called the "kinsman-redeemer") to a relative whose husband had died. In that role, he took on the responsibility to carry on the family name by marrying a childless widow. Boaz was related to Naomi's deceased husband, so Ruth had the right to confront him about safeguarding Elimelech's property and family. Naomi instructed Ruth to bathe, put on fragrant oil, dress up, and lay down at the feet of Boaz once he settled to sleep. Naomi believed the Lord had led Ruth to Boaz's field to glean. That night, Boaz realized someone was at his feet and discovered it was Ruth. He was impressed with what she had done, and he decided to fulfill his responsibility to her as a kinsman-redeemer.

Boaz Made a Commitment to Ruth - Boaz acknowledged Ruth's strength, moral character, and integrity. Although he was ready to marry her, Boaz knew of a closer relative who bore the responsibility of a kinsman-redeemer to Naomi's family. He promised to deal with the situation. Ruth ran to Naomi and told her all about the night's events. In his generosity, Boaz also sent a gift to Naomi. The wise woman encouraged Ruth to be patient. Boaz would take care of everything that very day.

Loyal Commitments Are Hard to Find - Ruth's unselfish loyalty resulted in an unshakable bond with her mother-in-law and a marriage to Boaz. Loyalty is a virtue, a rare find. A relative or friend who sticks with a person through good times and bad is more valuable than gold.