

Well, good morning; how are we? Good, good! I want to give a quick shout-out to my people joining us in our online community! I'm so glad you're joining us in worship and studying God's Word from wherever and whenever you're at. I'm appreciative of your heart's posture to join us in our online community though you can't be here physically. So, praise God we have this ability. Well, if I haven't been able to meet you yet, my name is Doug; I'm one of the Pastors here, and I would love to connect with you on the patio after we worship together. So, be sure to come and say hi.

We're continuing in our current series in the book of Ruth called, "Profound Provisions," where we are unpacking the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. Today, we're going to be diving into chapter 3, which is an interesting and intriguing story that tends to leave people with more questions than answers.

Just a little recap about what has been happening in the last couple of chapters, we have watched as Naomi, a widow herself, has lost her two sons, leaving her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, as widows as well. As would be customary in the culture, Naomi encourages both Orpah and Naomi to return to their parents, where they will be cared for. Both women plead with Naomi to stay with her, but Naomi convinces Orpah to return to her family. Ruth, on the other hand, reveals a bit of her personality in that she continues to push back against Naomi, urging her to allow her to return to Bethlehem with her. Going so far as to say, "For where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."¹

Man, that escalated quickly! Ruth goes from being like, "I really want to go with you," to "Where you die, I will die! If anything but death parts me from you, God forbid!"

This shows the drivenness and the loyalty that Ruth deeply feels toward Naomi. And it's risky. She's a Moabite woman going to live among the Hebrews.

Naomi risked everything to care for another.

She could have gone home to be with her family, to be cared for, and be secure, among her own people. But she was willing to risk her comfort, her security, and everything to care for Naomi.

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), v. Ruth 1:16-17.

And so with that they make their way to Bethlehem. Both women have goals in mind as they reach the city. Naomi's maternal love for Ruth, aware that one day Ruth will be left alone after Naomi dies moves her to want to find someone to marry Ruth. On the other hand, Ruth is fiercely loyal and has a deep love for her mother-in-law and is wholly focused on providing food. With that, Ruth heads to the fields to glean the left overs of the harvesters.

While working tirelessly to collect food she encounters a relative of Naomi's late husband, Boaz. He happened to own some of the field that Ruth had been picking up the left overs in and after meeting her realized that he had heard of her and all that she had done for Naomi since her husband died. Because of this, Boaz speaks highly of Ruth and allows her not only to glean the left overs, but gives her access to food and water and protection as well as having his harvesters leave behind not just left overs but even to have access to some of the bundles of sheaves. So much so that she ends up taking home 5 gallons of food that would provide for her and Naomi for about 2 weeks. But before Ruth leaves Boaz prays over Ruth saying, ¹² The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" ¹³ Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants."²

As God used Ruth to care for Naomi, God used Boaz to care for Ruth.

Ruth took a risk going with Naomi to a foreign land. And now Boaz is taking a risk providing for and offering so much to a foreigner.

What we have seen of Boaz and Ruth is that they are people of impeccable character. The author depicts them of being selfless, good, kind-hearted and thoughtful people. And then, we enter into chapter 3 and things get seemingly weird and a bit uncomfortable.

If you have your Bibles look with me at Ruth 3:1.

"Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? ² Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." ⁵ And she replied, "All that you say I will do."³

Okay, if you were Ruth, or a Hebrew living during this time and you heard this, you would be super uncomfortable, you'd be looking around, making sure your kids weren't listening. You'd be like, is Naomi really saying this?!

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, v. Ruth 2:12-13.

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, v. Ruth 3:1-5.

What Naomi is saying is pretty inappropriate. But, I want to do a little interpretation here and make sure we really understand what Naomi is saying.

Let's look at verse 1, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?" Ruth comes home, she's got all this food and a story about this man, who's actually a relative of Naomi's, he was super sweet and provided for her and protected her, and was impressed with her character, even though she is a Moabite and not an Israelite.

Well, those mama ears perked right up! Naomi hears about how well Boaz is treating Ruth and her mind runs straight to the long-term care and provision of Ruth. That's the motherly instinct of wanting to care for Ruth long after Naomi gone. And so Naomi starts with, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?"

It's important for us to understand what Naomi is saying here. When she says "should I not seek rest for you" She's saying, should I not find a long-term plan for your life that benefits you? A home, a husband to protect you and to provide for you. This word rest describes a rest that is found in the security and comfort that you would find in a loving husband.

This is Naomi's opening argument to her plan for Ruth. "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?" And she goes on, "Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were?" In other words, Boaz is a kinsman, which means he's an eligible bachelor for Ruth and potentially has the responsibility to protect Ruth if she's in any trouble, danger or has any needs. And then she says, "hasn't he been very kind in that he's been letting you gather grain with his young women."

She's painting a picture here for Ruth to see that there's a potential here for a relationship. And so Naomi says, "here's what you need to do" in the second half of verse 2 we pick up, "See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Now, winnowing barley is where, typically at night the harvester would go to his threshing floor, usually on the side of a hill or an area that has an open breeze where they would have cut out a floor, typically down to the bedrock which would be come polished over many years of this process, and they would take a pitch fork toss the barley up in the air and the wind would come and blow away the chaff and the heavier grain would fall to the threshing floor for them to collect.

So, being that it's the end of the harvest, Naomi knows that this is what Boaz will be doing tonight and says, ³ Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. I mean, everybody knows that a man is much more willing to talk and be in a good mood after dinner time. So Naomi continues, ⁴ But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do."

Man, this got crazy quick! There are some Hebrew euphemisms here, some Hebrew imagery, that is bit scandalous! Now, Hebrew is a bit different than the Greek that we see in the New

Testament in that it contains far more idioms and imagery that is used which makes translating a bit more challenging. So we're going to need to unpack some of this to get a more clear picture. So I want to hit on a few things here.

Naomi has developed a plan to get Ruth in front of Boaz and hopes that she earns favor with him and that he will choose to redeem her by marrying her. So she starts in verse 3,

"³ Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor." There is clearly a strategy to what Naomi is telling Ruth to do. There's no question of that. Naomi is being strategic. What the text is implying when Naomi says, "wash and anoint yourself and put on a cloak" is not that she wants Ruth to get cleaned up and look all provocative, no, instead, Ruth most likely had been wearing mourning or widow garments. This would communicate to those around her that she is not available for courtship. In fact, this same imagery is seen with King David in 2 Samuel chapter 12. He does the same thing where he washes himself, puts oil on, and puts on his best clothes on signifying that he is done mourning over the loss of his son.

So, Naomi is having that motherly conversation with Ruth, I know that you have been mourning for years and grieving the loss of my son, but it's time to move on. It's time to look forward to what God is providing for you. So Naomi is telling her to take those clothes off and make it known that you are available. At the same time she had been working in the fields and was most likely quite dirty and smelly. And that's not the best way to get a guys attention. Hence the "anoint yourself," which merely suggests that Naomi was saying to put on perfume. Boaz isn't interested in you smelling like the guys. So she goes on,

"go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do."⁴

It's important to keep the context of who we're talking about here, so I want to be clear that there is nothing in the text saying that Boaz is getting drunk and staggering off. Instead, Boaz is fat and happy! He's had his dinner, a glass of wine and now is heading out to watch over his product until it can be packaged up and sold the next day.

What better time is there to approach a man with a proposition!?

Again, Naomi is merely being strategic. She's being wise. That's why she tells him to go and watch for him to separate himself from his friends and family so that she can approach him when he has her full attention, and there aren't curious ears around if things go sideways. If Boaz decided that he did not want to be her kinsmen redeemer, then it would be good that this was in private as neither one of them would lose face publicly. It's incredibly thoughtful on Naomi's part to decrease any pressure on Boaz.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, v. Ruth 3:3-4.

Okay, but now, things get a bit weird. Naomi says, Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.” First of all, it’s important to note that when the author uses the Hebrew word in, “then” in this context, he’s saying, “don’t miss this part, this is important. Naomi is saying, stay with me here, this is important.

“go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.” What is she saying!? Uncover!? Feet!? Lie down!?

The reality is in the Hebrew this has sexual connotations all over it. In fact, else where this similar language is used to describe a more intimate scenario. But! That does not line up with the context of this passage. In fact, if we were to unpack the righteousness of each of these characters it would be clear that this is not what Naomi is telling Ruth to do.

Instead, most scholars believe that Naomi is literally saying to uncover his feet so that he will be stirred by the breeze, he’ll wake up, and you can listen to what he says to do.

And that’s exactly what happens.

Boaz gets a little chill, probably has that feeling, you know that feeling when you’re being watched, parents you know what I’m saying? It’s two o’clock in the morning and you slowly wake up and have this feeling you’re being watched and you roll over and bam! There’s a kid standing next to the bed staring at you.

I think that’s what happens to Boaz here. He moves around trying to cover his feet, feels something and looks and goes, “woah! Who are you?!”⁵ And listen to Ruth’s response, “I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.”⁶ A couple things here, first of all, this was not part of the plan. Naomi said, “he’ll wake up and tell you what to do.” But, Ruth doesn’t wait for him to talk. Again, that go-getter personality here is seen and Ruth tells him what she wants. To be his servant, to be redeemed by her.

Now, she calls herself a servant like she did back in chapter 2. But, this is not the same word for “servant” that Ruth uses back in chapter 2 verse 13, that word meant servant, as is in maid-servant belonging to a mistress, like Naomi. This word here, that she uses to describe herself in chapter 3, is actually more of an intimate word, she’s saying, I’m *your* servant. It has a tone of humility and a willingness to be placed under him. It’s more of a mistress servant.

But, it’s not just that, did you see what else she said? Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.” Do you remember the prayer that Boaz prayed over her back in chapter 2 verse 12? Boaz prayed, The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!” Ruth is

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, v. Ruth 3:9.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, v. Ruth 3:9.

using the same language from Boaz's prayer to say, Boaz! You are the answer to your prayer that I would find refuge under the wings of God. He has provided you to be my redeemer!

Boaz responds to her in verse 10, "And he said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman."⁷

I love this. Boaz responds to her request to marriage by saying, you are a good woman. But, it's really more than that.

I could go off on a tangent here, but I'm really trying not to! Let me just say, the book order of our Old Testament, is not the same book order of the original Hebrew bible that the Jews use. Yes, they have the same books, but they're arranged a little differently.

For example, the book of Ruth in our Bibles comes right after Judges. And it gives a cool contrast from what was such a mess in the times of the Judges to what righteousness looks like from Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz.

But, in the Hebrew Bible, the book of Ruth comes after Proverbs. Proverbs is wisdom literature. Want to learn about wisdom read Proverbs. Want to see wisdom lived out, read Ruth! It depicts three lives of righteous wisdom. In fact, if you remember how the book of Proverbs ends, chapter 31 starting in verse 10 the question is asked, "An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels."⁸

My literary tangent is over. What I think is so incredible about the how the Hebrew Bible is ordered, is that when you finish reading Proverbs and you hear about this incredible woman, you then start reading Ruth and you see her!

Friends, when Boaz says, "I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman." That word for worthy is the same word used in Proverbs 31 to describe the most excellent wife. He's saying, everyone in town knows your character. Knows the amazing woman that you are, and I would be beyond blessed to be your husband.

There's something else that I love about what Boaz said. He said, "I will do for you..." Boaz was a doer. Ruth was a Doer. Naomi was a Doer. These people didn't sit back and say, I'm just waiting in God, I'm just gonna let Him do His thing. Friends! We are His thing! We are what He is doing! Ruth and Boaz understood that.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, v. Ruth 3:10.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, v. Proverbs 31:10.

Ruth took a risk going with Naomi. She took a risk going to Boaz. She took a risk not following Naomi's instruction, but instead, asked Boaz to marry her. They all took risk, they were all active not passive.

This reminds me of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. Two of the men took risks. One did not. Who did God bless?

Are you actively living out your trust in Jesus? We need to ask ourselves this.

Am I actively living in trust of Jesus?

God's people are never called to the lazy boy life. Regardless of what stage of life you are in, whether young or old, whether a new Christian or have been tracking with Jesus for years. We are called to live our lives actively pursuing Christ and actively making Him known everywhere we go. And as we do, we trust. We trust that God will provide when we take risks. Whether that risk be living a godly lifestyle or risk of speaking when the world tells us to be quiet.

Chapter 3 is saying, get out of your lazy boy, be strategic, don't play the victim, take risks, be doers!