



Silverdale Baptist

RUTH: BEAUTY FROM ASHES ~ WAITING ON OUR KINSMAN REDEEMER
RUTH 3~ 06/24-25/2023

Big Idea

The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

Getting Started

Share a time you made a plan to deal with a situation in your life and saw the Lord order your steps, or even change your plans in the process.

Learn

***Leader:** This week, the campus pastors shared a message from Ruth 3. Each pastor's message was different based on their own personality, studies, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. This guide will focus on the text of Ruth 3 and include in the application section the main points from Bonny Oaks Campus pastor Matty Finlay's message.*

Ruth 3 contains one of the more challenging passages in the story. When interpreted in our cultural context, Ruth's actions on the threshing floor strike us as suggestive, inappropriate, and even dangerous. But remember, the events in the book of Ruth occurred more than 3,000 years ago in a culture totally unlike ours. Also, the text has already established that Ruth and Boaz are people of integrity. So, what sounds to some of us as suggestive was interpreted by the people in the story as a marriage proposal.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 3:1-5

What are Naomi's instructions to Ruth?

Why? What does Naomi hope to accomplish for Ruth?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 3:6-13

What happens when Ruth gets to the threshing floor?

What is the balance between boldness and humility in Ruth's actions?

How did Boaz respond to Ruth's proposal?

Now, for the first time, we learn that there is another kinsman redeemer who has the right of refusal. Boaz can only say yes to the proposal if the other kinsman says no.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 3:14-18

How does Naomi respond to Ruth's news?

From what we have read in Ruth 2-3, what kind of man is Boaz?

Describe Ruth's character.

Apply

1. In humility, create a plan.

*"The heart of man plans his way,
but the LORD establishes his steps."
Prov 16:9*

Do you have a situation in your life where you are in pain and desperation, waiting on the Lord? How can you, in humility, create a plan to see God bring a resolution? What can you do in your situation?

2. In humility, take action.

Naomi created a plan. Ruth followed through. Both ladies trusted God to bring a resolution.

What actions will you take this week to begin to find a resolution to your situation?

Will you trust God to change your plans?

3. In humility, keep waiting.

Where is the balance in your situation between making a plan and trusting God?

Will you wait on the Lord to bring resolution?

Life is a balancing act. We plan our ways, but the Lord orders our steps. Sometimes we find the extremes and not the balance. We are busy making our own plans, and we leave God out. Or, at the other extreme, we make no plans and expect God to do what He has called and equipped us to do. The balance can be hard to find. But we see a beautiful picture of the balance in the book of Ruth. Naomi and Ruth plan, but God orders their steps.

In your life, reach for the balance.

Pray

Father, thank You for ordering our steps. Lord, You alone are God, and You alone know the end from the beginning. We trust You to lead us and redeem us. In our lives, help us to reflect to the world our trust in and dependence on You. Amen.

Dig Deeper

1. Ruth prepared to meet Boaz (Ruth 3:1–5)

There were other men who would gladly have married Ruth (v. 10), but they could not have redeemed her. Only a kinsman could do that, and Boaz was that kinsman. Since Naomi knew that Boaz would be using the threshing floor that night and staying there to guard his grain, she instructed Ruth to prepare herself to meet him. Ruth made a fivefold preparation before she presented herself to Boaz.

First, *she washed herself* (v. 3a). Every day in the United States, 450 billion gallons of water are used for homes, factories, and farms, enough water to cover Manhattan to a depth of ninety-six feet. In the East, the heat and the dust made frequent washing a necessity; but water was not always plentiful. With regard to the Jews, the Law of Moses required ceremonial washings, and taking a bath and changing clothes usually preceded a special event (Gen. 35:1–3). Actually, Naomi was telling Ruth to act like a bride preparing for her wedding (Ezek. 16:9–12).

If we want to enter into a deeper relationship with our Lord, we must “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1, NKJV). Whenever we sin, we must pray, “Wash me” (Ps. 51:2, 7); but sometimes God says to us, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean” (Isa. 1:16, NKJV). When we seek forgiveness, God washes the record clean (1 John 1:9); but God will not do for us what we must do for ourselves. Only we can put out of our lives those things that defile us, *and we know what they are*. It might mean cleaning out our library (Acts 19:18–20), our cassette and CD collection, the magazine rack, or perhaps the TV viewing schedule. We must separate ourselves from whatever defiles us and grieves the Father (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; James 4:7–8).

If the Old Testament priests came into God’s presence defiled, they were in danger of death (Ex. 30:17–21). The Jewish people were conscious of the need for holiness as they came to worship God (Pss. 15; 24:1–6); yet Christians today rush into God’s presence without cleansing themselves of the sins that rob them of God’s blessing. Is it any wonder that our worship is often an empty routine and that the power of God doesn’t come to our meetings?

The next thing Ruth did to prepare was to *anoint herself* (*Ruth 3:3b*). Eastern peoples used fragrant oils to protect and heal their bodies and to make themselves pleasant to others. A bride would especially take care to wear fragrant perfume that would make her “nice to be near” (see Song 1:3, 12–14; 4:11–16).

Anointing oil speaks of the presence and the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. All believers have received the anointing of the Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27), and therefore we ought to be “a fragrance of Christ” to the Heavenly Father (2 Cor. 2:15). The more we are like Jesus Christ in character and conduct, the more we please our Father; and the more we please Him, the more He can bless and use us for His glory.

I once heard Dr. A.W. Tozer say, “If God were to take the Holy Spirit out of this world, much of what the church is doing would go right on; and nobody would know the difference.” We have so much in human resources available to the church today that we manage to “serve the Lord” without the unction of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. But is that what God wants?

While here on earth, Jesus lived His life and did His work through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:16–19). If the spotless Son of God needed the Spirit’s power, how much more do we! Do we dare pray in the energy of the flesh when the Spirit is present to assist us? (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 2:18) Do we try to witness for Christ without asking the Spirit to help us? (Acts 1:8) Can we fellowship with our Lord in His Word apart from the ministry of the Spirit of God? (Eph. 1:15–23 and 3:14–21)

Ruth’s third act of preparation was to *change clothes* (*Ruth 3:3c*). She was to put off the garments of a sorrowing widow and dress for a wedding (see Isa. 61:1–3). Ruth probably didn’t have a large wardrobe, but she would have one special garment for festive occasions. Naomi had the faith to believe that Ruth would soon be going to a wedding!

In Scripture, clothing carries a spiritual meaning. After they had sinned against God, our first parents tried to cover themselves; but only the Lord could forgive them and clothe them acceptably, and He had to shed blood to do it (Gen. 3:1–8, 21). The Jewish priests wore special garments that nobody else was permitted to wear (Ex. 28). Salvation is pictured as a change of clothes (Luke 15:22; Isa. 61:10), and Christian living means taking off the “graveclothes” of the old life and putting on the “grace clothes” of the new life (Col. 3:1–17; see John 11:44).

We can’t come into God’s presence in our own righteousness, for “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6, KJV). We can only come in the righteousness of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21), for we are “accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6, KJV). If we are obedient to His will and seek to please Him, then our garments will be white (Rev. 19:8); but if we’ve sinned, we must confess our sins and seek His cleansing (Zech. 3). If you want to enter into a deeper fellowship with your Lord, then “let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil” (Ecc. 9:8, KJV).

Ruth prepared herself to meet Boaz *by learning how to present herself to him* (*Ruth 3:3–4*). There was nothing improper about this procedure, for it was the only way Ruth could offer herself to her kinsman redeemer. She had to put herself at the feet of the lord of the harvest, and he would do the rest.

Suppose that on her way to the threshing floor, Ruth decided to take a different approach. Why lie at the feet of the man you want to marry? Why uncover his feet and then ask him to put a corner of his mantle over you? Certainly there ought to be a better way! Had she used another approach, Boaz would have been confused; and the entire enterprise would have failed.

The Old Testament priests knew how to approach God because He gave them their instructions in the law. New Testament Christians know how to approach God because in the Word He has told us what is required. Whether in our private communion with the Lord or in public worship, we have no right to alter the principles of approach that God has laid down.

While ministering one week near Springfield, Illinois, my wife and I decided to visit the Abraham Lincoln house. In order to get in, we each had to have a ticket that could be procured at only one place. We had to follow the guide and not deviate from the route of the tour. Last but not least, we had to deposit our chewing gum in a container outside the house! If we wanted to see Mr. Lincoln's house, we had to conform to the rules.

Like the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–24), lost sinners can come to the Lord just as they are; and He will receive them and change them. But God's own children must "conform to the rules" if they want to fellowship with their Father (Heb. 10:19–25). When the people of God assemble for worship, we must be careful to worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), following the principles given in the Scriptures. When it comes to worshiping God, too often people do that which is right in their own eyes and substitute human inventions for divine instructions.

Finally, *Ruth promised to obey* (Ruth 3:5). "All that you say to me I will do" (NKJV). She was not only a hearer of the Word, but she was a doer. A willingness to obey the Lord is the secret of knowing what He wants us to do and being blessed when we do it. "If anyone is willing to do God's will, he shall know concerning the teaching" (John 7:17, literal translation). The will of God is not a cafeteria where we can pick and choose what we want. God expects us to accept *all* that He plans for us and to obey Him completely. Coming to God with a hidden agenda and with reservations in our hearts will only lead to grieving the Spirit and missing God's best.

2. Ruth submitted to Boaz (Ruth 3:6–9)

The harvest season was an especially joyful time for the Jews (Isa. 9:3; 16:10), which is the way God wanted it. "The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice" (Deut. 16:15, KJV). Most people today live separated from the sources of their daily bread and don't realize all that's involved in producing food. Perhaps our table prayers would be more joyful and more grateful if we realized all that a farmer goes through to help keep us alive.

Harvesting and threshing were cooperative enterprises. The men of a village would take turns using the threshing floor, which was usually a raised platform outside the village and often on a hill where it could catch the evening breeze. The men would deposit the sheaves on the floor and then separate the grain from the stalks by having oxen walk on it (Deut. 25:4) or by beating the stalks (see Ruth 2:17). Once the grain was separated, the workers would throw the grain into the air; and the breeze would carry the chaff away while the grain fell to the floor. The grain would then be heaped up to be carried away for marketing or storage. The men often worked in the evening when the breeze was up, and they slept at the threshing floor to protect the harvest.

Four times in this chapter there is mention of feet (3:4, 7–8, 14). Ruth had fallen at the feet of Boaz in response to his gracious words (2:10), but now she was coming to his feet to propose marriage. She was asking him to obey the law of the kinsman redeemer and take her as his wife.

We may ask, "Why didn't Ruth wait for Boaz to propose to her?" His statement in 3:10 suggests the first reason: He fully expected that she would marry one of the younger bachelors in Bethlehem. Boaz was an older man, and Ruth was a young woman (4:12). Evidently he concluded that he was out of the running. But the most important reason is given in verse 12: There was a nearer kinsman in town who had first option on Ruth and the property, and Boaz was waiting for him to act. Ruth had forced the issue, and now Boaz could approach this kinsman and get him to decide.

"Life is full of rude awakenings!" a famous cartoon canine likes to say, and more than one biblical character would agree. Adam went to sleep and woke up to discover he'd been through surgery and was

now a married man. Jacob woke up to discover he was married to the wrong woman! Boaz woke up at midnight to find a woman lying at his feet.

When he asked who she was, Ruth replied that she was Ruth; but she did not call herself “the Moabitess.” Now she was the “handmaid” of Boaz. She was making a new beginning. You find Ruth named twelve times in this little book, and in five of these references she is identified with Moab (1:22; 2:2, 21; 4:5, 10).

To spread one’s mantle over a person meant to claim that person for yourself (Ezek. 16:8; 1 Kings 19:19), particularly in marriage. The word translated “skirt” also means “wing.” Ruth had come under the wings of Jehovah God (Ruth 2:12); and now she would be under the wings of Boaz, her beloved husband. What a beautiful picture of marriage!

3. Ruth listened to Boaz (Ruth 3:10–14)

In the responses of Boaz to Ruth, we see how the Lord responds to us when we seek to have a deeper fellowship with Him. Just as Boaz spoke to Ruth, so God speaks to us from His Word.

He accepts us (Ruth 3:8–10). Boaz might have refused to have anything to do with Ruth; but in his love for her, he accepted her. He even called her “my daughter” (see 2:8) and pronounced a blessing on her (see Eph. 1:3). Our Heavenly Father and our Redeemer are seeking for a closer relationship with us, and we should not be afraid to draw near and share Their love (John 14:21–24; James 4:7–8). If we could only realize in even a small way the great love our Kinsman Redeemer has for us, we would forsake everything else and enjoy His fellowship.

He assures us (Ruth 3:11–13). In the midnight darkness, Ruth couldn’t see the face of Boaz, but she could hear his voice; and that voice spoke loving assurance to her: “Fear not!” *Our assurance is not in our feelings or our circumstances but in His Word.*

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.

During the Boxer Rebellion, when the workers with the China Inland Mission were experiencing great suffering, the founder James Hudson Taylor, then in his late seventies, said to some colleagues, “I cannot read; I cannot think; I cannot even pray; but I can trust.” “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17, NKJV).

“Fear not” is the word of assurance that the Lord gave to many of His servants: to Abraham (Gen. 15:1), Isaac (26:24), Jacob (46:3), Moses and the nation of Israel (Ex. 14:13), Joshua (Josh. 8:1; 10:8), King Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:17), the Jewish remnant returning to their land (Isa. 41:10, 13–14; 43:1, 5; 44:2), the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:9), the Prophet Daniel (Dan. 10:12, 19), Joseph (Matt. 1:20), Zacharias (Luke 1:13), Mary (1:30), the shepherds (2:10), Paul (Acts 27:24), and the Apostle John (Rev. 1:17). You and I can say with these spiritual giants, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear” (Heb. 13:6, NKJV).

Not only did Boaz calm Ruth’s fears, but he also made a promise to her concerning the future: “I will do for you all that you request” (Ruth 3:11, NKJV). Whatever God starts, He finishes; and what He does, He does well (Phil. 1:6; Mark 7:37). It was not Ruth’s obligation to do for herself what only Boaz could do.

What seemed to Naomi to be a simple procedure has now turned out to be a bit more complicated, because there was a man in Bethlehem who was a nearer kinsman. Boaz didn’t withhold this problem from Ruth, for he didn’t want her to return home with false hopes in her heart. Joy and peace that are based on ignorance of the true facts are but delusions that lead to disappointments. The great concern of Boaz was the redemption of Ruth, even if another kinsman redeemer had to do it.

When you see this as a picture of our redemption in Jesus Christ, it impresses you strongly that *God obeyed His own law when He accomplished our salvation in Christ*. His law said, “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:4, NKJV), and God didn’t seek for some way to evade this. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32). Of course, there was no other “kinsman” who could redeem a lost world. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, KJV).

4. Ruth received gifts from Boaz (Ruth 3:15–17)

During her days as a gleaner, Ruth had received generous treatment from Boaz. His workers had allowed her to follow the harvesters; they protected her from harm; they deliberately dropped sheaves for her to pick up. Boaz had shared the noon meal with Ruth, even handing her the parched grain with his own hands (2:14). On that first day of gleaning, Ruth had gone home with a little more than half a bushel of grain; but now Boaz filled her cloak with two bushels of grain, which would be more than two weeks’ supply.

Boaz not only calmed Ruth’s fears and gave her assurance for the future, but he also met her present needs in a gracious and generous way. She had not asked him for anything, but he gave the grain to her because he loved her. He was about to marry her, and he didn’t want his prospective bride gleaning in the fields like a poor laborer.

Naomi’s question in 3:16 has puzzled translators and interpreters. Why would her own mother-in-law ask her who she was? *The Living Bible* paraphrases the question, “Well, what happened, dear?” and both the NIV and the NASB read, “How did it go, my daughter?” But the *Authorized Version* translates the Hebrew text as it stands: “Who are you, my daughter?” In other words, “Are you still Ruth the Moabitess, or are you the prospective Mrs. Boaz?”

Ruth remembered Boaz’s words, as she had done before (2:19–21); and she shared with Naomi all that Boaz had promised. Then Ruth showed Naomi the generous gift Boaz had given them. A man who sends a generous gift to his prospective mother-in-law is certainly a good choice for a husband.

Naomi could no longer say that her hands were empty (1:21). Now they were full because of the grace of the kinsman redeemer. Ruth’s faith and obedience had brought about a complete transformation in their lives, and now they were living by grace.

5. Ruth waited for Boaz to work (Ruth 3:18)

It is “through faith and patience” that we inherit the promises (Heb. 6:12; 10:36). Since Naomi and Ruth believed that Boaz would accomplish what he said he would do, they waited patiently until they received the good news that Ruth would be a bride. “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it” (Ps. 37:5).

I confess that *waiting* is one of the most difficult things for me to do, whether it’s waiting for a table at a restaurant or waiting for a delayed flight to take off. I’m an activist by nature, and I like to see things happen on time. Perhaps that’s why the Lord has often arranged for me to wait. During those times, three phrases from Scripture have encouraged me: “Sit still” (Ruth 3:18, KJV), “Stand still” (Ex. 14:13, KJV), and “Be still” (Ps. 46:10, KJV).

“*Sit still*” was Naomi’s counsel to Ruth, and wise counsel it was. Ruth would have accomplished nothing by following Boaz around Bethlehem, trying to help him keep his promises. “Their strength is to sit still” (Isa. 30:7). Our human nature gets nervous and wants to help God out; and when we try, we only make matters worse.

“Stand still” was the command of Moses to the people of Israel when the Egyptian army was pursuing them. There was no need to panic, for God had the situation well in hand. Then the Lord commanded the people to “go forward” (Ex. 14:15), and He led them safely through the sea. There is a time to stand and a time to march, and we must be alert to know which one God wants us to do.

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10, KJV) is a wonderful antidote for a restless spirit. The Hebrew word translated “be still” means “take your hands off, relax.” It’s so easy for us to get impatient with the Lord and start meddling in matters that we ought to leave alone. He is God, and His hands can accomplish the impossible. Our hands may get in the way and make matters worse.

Boaz was busy working for Ruth, and Naomi was confident that he wouldn’t rest until he had settled the matter. “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform [complete] it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6, KJV). It encourages my heart to know that Jesus Christ is working unceasingly *for* His people as He intercedes in heaven (Heb. 8:3–4), and that He is working *in* us, seeking to conform us to His perfect will (13:20–21; Phil. 2:12–13).

Have you put yourself at the feet of the Lord of the Harvest, and are you trusting Him to work? One evidence of your trust will be your willingness to sit still and let Him have His way.¹

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*Be Committed*](#), “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 40–50.