

Series: **Ruth**  
Today's Title: "**Threshing Floor Romance**"  
February 4, 2024 – *Ruth 3*

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**Objective:** To help people be confident in God and trust His providence and provision.

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*Opening prayer*

**Turn to Ruth 3, p. 223**

In our passage today, we're going to read about an engagement hint which will seem very weird to us – but we have to remember we're looking at a very different culture than ours – and we're also reading about events that happened about 3,500 years ago.

**Strategic planning.** *vs. 1-6*

As we move into **chapter 3**, we should take note that **chapter 3** takes place about 3 months after **chapter 2**.

We are now at the end of the barley and wheat harvest – and throughout the time of harvest, Ruth has been gleaning in Boaz's fields.

He has protected her and provided for her and Naomi.

So, the unstated question is, '*Now what?*'

Now that the harvest is over, what happens next?

**Read vs. 1-3**

Naomi begins by giving Ruth some very practical advice.

This is not a passage on modern dating – or ‘How to prepare for a proposal.’, but there is some wisdom here that is timeless.

### 1. Look and smell good.

In our modern-day culture, we bathe a lot – compared to cultures throughout the past.

Modern plumbing has made this possible.

But before modern plumbing, people didn’t bathe that much – because it was a lot of work to bathe!

Gathering that much clean water was not easy.

Ruth has been working – manual labor – gleaning in the fields.

But Naomi knew that tonight was prom night – a special night for Ruth – and she was going to help Ruth get ready.

Naomi knew the results were out of her control, but she also knew there were some things they could do to help matters.

“Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak...”

“anoint yourself” – this would have been a fragrant oil – perfume.

She tells her to “put on your cloak” – probably not her normal, everyday ‘go to work’ clothing.

This was good – very practical advice.

Advice that we follow all the time – or at least we should.

When you're planning a nice evening - take a shower. Do your hair. Shave. Perfume / cologne. Nice clothes.

2. A full stomach helps a man be happy.

"...but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking."

He'll be in a better mood if he has a full stomach!  
Don't ask him to make a big decision if he's hungry.  
Wait until the meal and drinks are finished – then approach him. Good advice.

### **Read vs. 4-6**

vs. 4 – this gets a little weird for us here.

We need to remember that this is part of ancient Middle East culture – about 3,500 years ago!!!

***This passage is not 'Prescriptive'*** – meaning this is not giving commands for all people in every era and culture to obey.

***This passage is 'Descriptive'*** – meaning it's describing what happened.

It's not endorsing what happened – not being critical of what happened.

The author is simply telling us what happened.

This is what is so great about the Bible.

It tells us what happened – simple – truthful – accurate.  
It reveals what people did – both good and bad.

I would suggest – if you have a daughter – that you  
don't follow the example here.

Don't tell your daughter that if she likes a young man, to  
quietly approach him when he's sleeping – take the  
covers off of his feet – lie down there – and wait for him  
to tell you what to do!!! Please don't!!

We need to remember – this is another culture – in  
another part of the world – and there are things  
happening here that we don't understand fully.

But this was what they did – and Ruth's actions are  
packed with meaning – and Boaz would understand  
what was being proposed.

God is sovereign.

We have seen His providence in action throughout  
**chapters 1 & 2.**

But God's sovereignty doesn't mean we just sit around  
and wait for Him to do all the work.

There are things He calls us to do.

Wisdom encourages us to points of action.

Responsibility and normal human interaction and  
relationship dynamics require us to act and interact in  
certain ways.

If you're praying for you husband / wife to be different, after you're done praying, make sure you're living up to the kind of spouse God calls you to do / be.

If you work with someone who is grumpy, mean, rude. Pray for them – and when you're done praying, treat them with dignity, kindness, and love.

Naomi has given Ruth a pep talk.

The strategic plan has been discussed.

Ruth has bathed, put on some perfume, done her hair, and put on her “cloak”.

Now it's time to break the huddle – and start the play!

**A threshing floor proposal.** vs. 7-15

Now the scene changes from Naomi and Ruth's conversation and ‘strategic planning’ to the activity at the threshing floor where the barley and wheat harvests were processed.

We join the scene toward the end of the evening's activities.

**Read vs. 7-9**

Some commentators view this passage in a negative light, believing that Ruth was seducing Boaz with sex, and therefore entrapping him into marriage.

*But this is not the case at all.*

Boaz was older than Ruth – probably a generation older, so it’s unlikely that he would have initiated a proposal. After all, as we’ll see – there was another relative who had the legal right to Ruth.

Legally, Boaz was not the first in line.

Ruth waits until the night winds down and Boaz goes to sleep.

Then, she lays down at his feet, which in that culture, was where a woman would lay down (I don’t know why!).

As Ruth does this, she uncovers his feet – and this eventually wakes Boaz up – and he is startled by a woman laying at his feet.

*This is clear evidence there was no sexual contact between the two of them.*

**vs. 9** - After Ruth identifies herself, she asks him to, “Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.” She is asking him to propose to her – to accept his role as “redeemer”.

There are many engagement and wedding traditions in the various nations of the world.

Examples... <https://brightbrides.org/blog/engagement-traditions-around-the-world>

### **Japan...**

Japan is the part of the Asia region where culture is based on the indirect expression of emotions and minds. In the past centuries, a man could ask a girl whether she

was ready to make miso soup for him every day. One more way to state his wish to be with her was asking whether she wants to lie in the same grave with that man, which is how a husband and wife would be buried.

### **India...**

In the past the engagement ceremony had several steps. In the first step, a groom's father asked a bride's father for her hand. They both should have also stated that their children had no skeletons in closets. In case of an agreement, a bride's father suggested a date for the wedding.

### **Fiji...**

For the potential groom, they would prepare gifts for the woman's father but make them unusual and extraordinary. So, creativity was very much part of the process. Moreover, to prove his serious intentions, a man should bring nothing less but a sperm whale tooth. In the previous centuries, a man should have killed a whale to prove his masculinity and strength.

### **The Republic of the Congo (Africa)...**

A man warns a woman's family he's going to come and ask for her hand. He arrives with his family. However, a future groom isn't allowed to speak. His father or uncle represent his opinion at that meeting. A man's family brings drinks and presents to discuss engagement

issues. After having conditions settled, a bride is free to start living into a groom's house.

Every culture has different customs and practices. It is interesting... and I think a wise thing... to note in those engagement customs how often the families are involved.

Our American independent streak is not always helpful or healthy.

There is great wisdom in the counsel of your larger family – especially if they are Christians.

Now, what is this “redeemer” role?

This was part of the O.T. Law, and it is called the *‘Kinsman Redeemer’* – or in the case of marriage, the *‘Levirate Marriage’* (Deuteronomy 25:5-6).

### **Kinsman Redeemer Laws**

These laws seem strange to us, but they made sense in ancient times, and they were given by God to protect families from disaster and to prevent a family name and property from being lost forever.

### **When Israel first occupied the Promised Land...**

- There were 12 tribes – land was allotted to each tribe.
- In each tribe, land was allotted to each family.
- Land could be sold to pay debts / cases of poverty.



- In the Year of Jubilee (every 50 years) the purchased land was given back to the family – so the family name and land could be passed down to the next generations.
- The Kinsman Redeemer laws – and specifically the Levirate Marriage – protected families from losing their land, and from losing future generations.

In some ways, we can see these laws as an insurance policy – to make sure the family didn't become extinct.

### **Kinsman Redeemer Obligations**

1. Buy (redeem) a relative out of slavery (Lev. 25:48).
2. Responsible to be the “avenger of blood” to make sure the murderer of a family member answered for their crime (Numbers 35:19).
3. Responsible to buy back (redeem) family land that was sold off due to poverty, etc. (Lev. 25:25).
4. Responsible to carry on the family name by marrying a childless (sonless) widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10 – Levirate marriage).

These laws helped to safeguard the persons, property, and posterity of the family.

### **Levirate Marriage**

A levirate marriage is literally a *“marriage with a brother-in-law.”*

The word *levirate*, which has nothing to do with the tribe of Levi, comes from the Latin word *levir*, “a husband’s brother.”

In ancient times, if a man died without a child, it was common for the man’s unmarried brother to marry the widow in order to provide an heir for the deceased.

A widow would marry a brother-in-law, and the first son produced in that union was considered the legal descendant of her dead husband.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/levirate-marriage.html>)

### **Kinsman Redeemer – order**

If a woman’s husband died before having a son, the right to marry the widow – in order to continue the name and property of the widow’s husband:

1. Dead man’s brother
2. Dead man’s uncle
3. Dead man’s uncle’s son (cousin of dead man)
4. The next closest blood relative – and down the line

We don’t know where Boaz was in this list, but we know he wasn’t the closest relative.

We know that Ruth was married to Mahlon (4:10), and we know that Boaz was not his brother. Chilion was Mahlon’s brother – and Chilion has died.

The next closest would be Mahlon's uncle – and we know Boaz was not the closest relative, so, we know he wasn't the uncle.

*We don't know where he was on the list.*

*We only know there was a relative closer than he was.*

In fact, one could argue, the reason we even know the names Elimelech and Mahlon – is because Boaz was willing to be the Kinsman Redeemer to Ruth, perpetuating the family line of Elimelech and Mahlon.

### **Read vs. 10-15**

There are a number of things to notice here...

**1. Ruth's obedience** (vs. 10) – “you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.”

By this statement we know that Boaz was older.

Ruth's husband died. She may have wanted a younger man to increase her odds of more years together.

But she chose to obey the process set forth in the Law.

**2. Ruth's Godly morality** (vs. 11) – “for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman.”

She is upright – a moral person – and this is her reputation with everyone in Bethlehem who knows her.

**3. Boaz's integrity** (vs. 12b) – “Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.”

He doesn't try and pull a fast one. He has already thought this through – he knows there's another relative who is closer in relation to Mahlon.

**4. Boaz protects Ruth** (vs. 13-14) – We see this in 2 ways.

Physical protection (vs. 13) – “Remain tonight...Lie down until the morning.” It wouldn't be safe for Ruth to walk back to town in the middle of the night.

Reputation protection (vs. 14) – “So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”

He protects her reputation by sending her home before sunrise.

**5. Boaz provides for Ruth and Naomi** (vs. 15) – “...he measured out six measures of barley...”

He sends her home with food – demonstrating his commitment to Ruth and her mother-in-law.

**Trusting in God's provision and providence.** vs. 16-18

Ruth returns home...

**Read vs. 16-18**

Boaz is a smart guy – he knows you need to make the mother-in-law happy.

*Let's summarize the chapter...*

Naomi made a strategic plan for Ruth to initiate a proposal for Boaz to marry Ruth and fulfill the obligation in the O.T. Law for the Kinsman Redeemer.

Ruth put the strategic plan in to motion – and Boaz was receptive to it.

However, there is another relative, closer in relation than Boaz, and Boaz will see if this other relative is interested in fulfilling his role as redeemer.

Now, Ruth and Naomi must wait – it's out of their hands.

They've done what they can do.

Now they must trust in God's provision and providence.

Will God do all they hope – and have Boaz be the Kinsman Redeemer?

They don't know.

In life, there are things we are responsible to do.

Things in the human realm that we can do, and, in many cases, God expects us to do.

But after we do those things, we often find ourselves waiting on God.

Waiting for Him to move... to act... to change someone else's mind, etc.

### ***Apply it...***

Let's think about this from the micro / macro view.

Micro view – Boaz is willing to take the responsibility – to be the Kinsman Redeemer to Ruth.

His willingness means Mahlon’s family line would go on.

Macro view – Boaz’s willingness not only perpetuates Mahlon’s family line, but his willingness leads to King David – and ultimately to Jesus Christ – who took on the responsibility to be the redeemer for humanity – for all who believe in Him as their Savior.

And we’re redeemed by Jesus – not only for our own redemption from sin and the benefit of our family in this generation and all generations to follow until His return, but so we can perpetuate the name of Jesus to all people – letting them know the redemption Jesus offers to them when they believe!!

**Malachi 1:11**

“But My name is honored by people of other nations from morning till night. All around the world they offer sweet incense and pure offerings in honor of My name. For My name is great among the nations,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

1. Put your faith in Jesus – your Redeemer!
2. Let others know of the redemption available for them – in Jesus Christ.

*Close in prayer*