

Ruth and Boaz

Ruth gleans in the fields of Boaz, a relative of Naomi's husband. Boaz shows her kindness, and eventually redeems and marries her.

Ruth 2:1-23 • Ruth 3:1-18 • Ruth 4:1-22

CHARACTERS: Ruth, Boaz, Naomi

THEMES: Provision, Kindness, Redemption, God's plan

RUTH AND NAOMI had arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest, but they had nothing. Ruth said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.'

As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, a relative from Elimelech's clan. Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and noticed Ruth. 'Who does that young woman belong to?' he asked his foreman.

'She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi,' the foreman replied. 'She asked to glean behind the harvesters, and she has worked steadily from morning till now.'

Boaz said to Ruth, 'Stay here with my women workers. Watch the field where the men are harvesting and follow along. I have told the men not to touch you. When you are thirsty, drink from the water jars.'

Ruth bowed down and asked, 'Why have I found such favor in your eyes? I am only a foreigner.'

Boaz replied, 'I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.'

Boaz told his men to let her gather even among the standing sheaves and to deliberately leave stalks for her. That evening, Ruth went home with an ephah of barley—about thirty pounds!

Naomi was amazed. 'Where did you glean today? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!'

'The man's name is Boaz,' Ruth said.

Naomi's face lit up. 'The Lord bless him! That man is our close relative—one of our kinsman-redeemers!'

In Israel, a kinsman-redeemer was a relative who could buy back family land and marry a widow to continue the family line. Naomi saw God's hand at work.

The harvest season passed. Naomi instructed Ruth to go to Boaz on the threshing floor and present herself to him as one seeking redemption. Ruth obeyed. Boaz was deeply moved. 'This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier,' he said. 'You have not run after the younger men. I will do everything you ask.'

There was one problem—a closer relative existed. But when that man declined to redeem Ruth, Boaz stepped forward. In front of the town elders, he declared, 'I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite as my wife.'

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. The Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi, 'Praise be to the Lord, who has not left you without a redeemer! Your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.'

They named the baby Obed. He became the father of Jesse, who became the father of David—the future king. Ruth, the Moabite outsider, was now part of the lineage of the Messiah.

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