

RUTH

As we have observed from our study of Ruth thus far, God works in ways that we do not always understand, and often through the daily things we do. It was certainly impossible for Naomi to believe that God's hand was in any of the hardships that she and her family had encountered, yet exactly as God had planned, we will see Boaz go on to marry Ruth, as together they become the great grandparents of King David.

I believe we can all sympathize with Naomi as she returns to her village, after leaving years earlier with a husband and sons; only to return now a widow with no possessions, and a daughter who is also without a husband. What will she and Ruth do? How will she care for the two of them? What will folks say?

Read Ruth Chapter 2, then answer the following:

1. Do you suppose that Boaz was a rich and influential man in the community? And since these events are occurring during the time of the Judges, what kind of character did Boaz display?
 - a. ANSWER: Boaz displayed a righteous and honorable character at a time in the land when this was very unusual, especially among the wealthy like Boaz. We know from the story of Ruth that Boaz was wealthy, honorable, and a highly respected man in the community.
2. Ruth went to glean in the fields, the practice of following after the harvesters and picking up what was left behind. Was she working for Boaz, or was this a charitable gesture on his part?
 - a. ANSWER: Gleaning was a charitable event; it was a way for the poor to get what food they could by coming along after the laborers and collecting what remained.
3. Read Leviticus 19:10. What lesson is God teaching here?
 - a. ANSWER: Through the practice of gleaning, God was teaching the people of Israel an important principle: do not be greedy. In fact, as we see in the story of Ruth, Boaz would go out of his way to make sure that his servants left plenty for Ruth to glean. It also helped them—as well as today—to realize that all they had come from God, and that He intends for us to share what He gives us with others who are not as fortunate.
4. List the reasons that Boaz is allowing Ruth to glean. (see Ruth 2:11-12)
 - a. ANSWER: Boaz tells Ruth that he wants her to glean in his field because he has been told about all the ways she supported Naomi, as well as because of Ruth's faith in coming to a land and people she did not know. He also asks that God bless her for her faith.
5. Who is Boaz giving credit to for Ruth being allowed to glean, and to prosper? Why not himself? After all, he owns the land, the crops, and the hired servants?
 - a. ANSWER: Boaz gives God all the credit, not his wealth, his fields and servants, only God because Boaz knows that everything belongs to God, and that it is only through God that Boaz has all that he has. He wants to play a part in God blessing Ruth.
6. Why do you suppose Boaz instructed his servants the way he did in Ruth 2:15-16? Why didn't Boaz just give her the grain?
 - a. ANSWER: Boaz allowed Ruth to glean, and made sure she was given plenty to glean. He did so to allow Ruth to work for what she gathered rather than treating her as a charity case and simply giving her grain. In this way she was not dependent on Boaz.
7. Do you suppose that after we have lost everything, we begin to see all that we took for granted and are grateful once again for God's provisions? Re-read Ruth 2:18-20.
 - a. ANSWER: Naomi's reaction to Ruth's gleaning and Boaz' kindness shows us that she sees God's hand in all of this and once again realizes that God has not forsaken her. Any of us who have suffered and then seen God's blessings following that suffering have experienced the joy that Naomi demonstrates in Ruth 2:18-20.
8. Can we see how thankful Naomi is that Ruth has found favor with their kinsman? Do we sometimes take the Lord for granted? Have you ever been thankful when God provided you an answered prayer following a period when there didn't seem to be any hope?
 - a. ANSWER: I don't know about you, but I certainly have dealt with long periods of suffering—periods that challenge my hope and my joy in Christ. What a joyful time it is following that long suffering when God's blessings appear, and we see God's hand in everything, just as Naomi did.

9. Can you extract from this lesson the precepts that God teaches us through the lives of Ruth and Boaz? Precepts about helping our brothers and sisters, about not being greedy, and about the duty of everyone prosperous to help provide for the not-so-fortunate? Boaz and Ruth both also give us excellent examples of living responsible, ethical, and upright lives, even when times are tough. Even though Ruth had no worldly possessions, she was willing to work, did not expect special favors, and respected the man who owned the land, the harvest and the servants. Boaz for his part did not take advantage of Ruth, or use his position and wealth in an untoward manner. He respected her dignity, and treated her with all fairness – something unheard of in those days when women were held in such low regard.
- a. ANSWER: As you see reflected in this question, there is much we can learn about living a righteous life. Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz all show us that in spite of our personal circumstances, and in spite of the ethics in the world around us, it is possible as followers of Christ to live honorably as Christ works through us. Love, charity, and our faith in God should never be compromised, or withheld from others.
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Do you suppose that the villagers were aware of all this? Can you envision that how Boaz conducted his business, treated his servants, and cared for his family were known to the villagers and were a testimony about his relationship to God? Can those around you see these same traits in you?

May God bless you this week as you faithfully study His word.

In Christ,

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