



Time to Reflect

- What impacts you the most about Boaz and his generosity and compassion? How could we follow his example and model servanthood more effectively?
- How can we be more like Ruth and strive to be positive examples to our friends and family?

Last week we reflected on the themes of providence, grace, humility and compassion. We were reminded that when we step out in faith, trusting God entirely, then He goes before us. This week our attention is drawn to the developing relationship between Ruth and Boaz, and our passage reveals much about their character. We see rays of positivity and hope begin to shine in the lives of Naomi and Ruth.

“Boaz’s favour extends to the dinner table (v14). In modern times, we may want to think of this as Boaz and Ruth’s first date! But this is not a nice romantic meal over some roasted grain – it is more like a lunch break at work. Even so, Boaz’s hospitality is gracious and exemplary.”

(Tony Merida, *Ruth For You*, p77)

Specifics

- (v14) sets the scene for what follows in the passage. It was mealtime and Boaz invited Ruth to share some food with him. We see a warm welcome being extended and hospitality being enacted.
- There were a number of people at this meal (v14b) and what actually took place reveals even more to us about Boaz’s character.
- Firstly, it is worth noting that Boaz ate alongside those who worked for him. He may have been wealthy and influential but he wasn’t disconnected or aloof. He associated with his workers and he was interested in them and appreciative of them.
- Secondly, it is clear from (v14-16) that Boaz was the host of the meal. He urged Ruth to eat some of the food that was provided (v14) and note how he served her some food (v14b).
- Boaz was a man who modelled servant leadership and he led with grace, humility and warmth.
- Thirdly, Boaz was generous. He provided more than enough food, hence the references to abundance and leftovers in (v14b) and (v18).
- Fourthly, when Boaz granted Ruth the freedom to glean, he also welcomed her into his group of workers. Remember that she was a foreigner and our passage reminds us of this (v21). But this didn’t matter to Boaz. He sought to be gracious to Ruth and afforded her a sense of honour and dignity.
- Daniel Block brilliantly reflects, **“Boaz took an ordinary event and transformed it into a magnanimous occasion for compassion, generosity and acceptance.”¹**
- After the meal, Ruth returned to work (v15) and she was shown further kindness by Boaz. Usually gleaning meant picking up the grain that had been discarded or left behind. However, Ruth was given permission to gather directly from the crops (v16).

¹ Daniel Block, *Ruth: The King Is Coming* (Zondervan, 2015), p137.

- Boaz wanted to make Ruth's job easier and of greater benefit to her. As a result, Ruth gathered an abundance. The passage makes reference to an ephah (v17) and this was about 30lbs or 13.6kg. This would have been several weeks worth of food!
- (v18) directs our attention to Ruth's character. She brought this bounty of grain back to her mother-in-law, as well as the leftover food that she had from the meal.
- We see a great thoughtfulness in Ruth, a deep-rooted care that she had for Naomi. We could say that Ruth had a good and generous heart. This is all the more impressive when we remember that Naomi had been struggling with her life journey – she had referred to herself as Mara, or bitter (1:20).
- Tony Merida narrows in on this part of our passage and he draws out an excellent practical point. He writes, *"I find Ruth's example challenging. Do you find it hard to love bitter people? Is it challenging to serve difficult people? If so, then allow Ruth to instruct and inspire you! Love the Naomi's in your life in the way that Christ has shown love to you, realizing that the proper response to his grace and patience toward you is to show grace and patience to others."*²
- Ruth's interaction with Naomi had a profound impact. Naomi responded to Ruth with two questions and a blessing (v19). Note the change of tone - away from lament and towards hopefulness.
- As Ruth and Naomi reflected more fully on this hope-filled meal (v19b), Naomi spoke further words of blessing (v20). The actual translation of Naomi's words as recorded in (v20) is of profound interest.
- In the original Hebrew the phrase *"He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead"* could apply to either God or Boaz. The balance of evidence would actually suggest that Naomi was thinking about God when she spoke these words.
- This marks a significant transformation in Naomi's life, away from the lament we observed in Ruth 1.
- Merida suggests, *"We are seeing here what we may call Naomi's personal revival. Her view of the Almighty is being restored. Her bitterness is being replaced by thankfulness."*³
- Light was starting to shine in Naomi's life and we can take great comfort from her example. We can be encouraged that, even in the most desperate of situations, God can move in powerful and life-changing ways.
- Again, Merida helps us as he observes, *"If you are in a season of grief, allow Naomi's turnaround to encourage you. Weeping may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning, as the psalmist says (Psalm 30:5)...By God's grace, it is possible to go from 'mourning' to 'dancing' (Psalm 30:11)."*⁴
- Our passage concludes by introducing Boaz as a guardian-redeemer (v20b). This was a close relative who was able to come to the assistance of a family member. Specific details can be found in Leviticus 25:25-55 and Deuteronomy 25:5-10.
- We will look more fully at this in later passages in our study series. For now, it is important for us to realise that life had started to change, quite dramatically, for Naomi and Ruth. The skies were turning bluer.
- Boaz modelled great grace, compassion and generosity to Ruth. She in turn lavished love on Naomi. All of this combined to bring hope and positivity into the lives of these two women who had experienced such heartbreak and challenge.

² Tony Merida, *Ruth For You* (The Good Book Company, 2020), p80.

³ Ibid, p81.

⁴ Ibid, p81.