

**“The Book of Ruth”**  
**A Virtual Bible Study Series on Facebook Live**  
**Thursday Nights @ 7:00 PM**

**Session 4: “What a Difference a Day Can Make!”**  
**(Ruth 2:1-23)**

**Session 3 Recap**

Last week in Session 3, we continued our look at Ruth Chapter 2, specifically focusing on Ruth’s conversion experience. Similar to our conversion experiences with God, Ruth’s words and actions were decisive and poignant. Her life would never be the same, because her conversion (and really all conversion) involved separation, new identification, and single-minded determination.

Starting with separation, Ruth’s conversion experience involved three key areas of separation in her life. First, the conversion involved separation from her previous kingdom, Moab, to the new kingdom of Israel – God’s kingdom. Second, her conversion meant separation from the practice of worshipping many gods to the belief and following of the One True God. Finally, Ruth’s conversion meant separating from those who decided to stay behind in the past life, like Orpah and her other family members.

Ruth’s conversion also meant she chose a new total identity wrapped up in Naomi’s identity, but more importantly in God’s relationship with her. First, Ruth chose to identify with God and His people. This new identification would cover Ruth wherever she went and whatever she experienced. She might face real danger returning with Naomi to Judah as a foreigner, yet she still placed her trust in Him. This new identification was not just for the present time, but would last forever. Ruth promised Naomi that even after she died, she would remain faithful to her and their God.

Ruth’s conversion was characterized by strong will and determination. Naomi’s words would not waver her from her decision to follow her and follow her God. As a clear sign of this conversion and her faith, Ruth invoked the sacred name of God, “Yahweh”, the covenantal name of God, holding herself accountable before Naomi, and most importantly, before Him.

## **Session 4: “What a Difference a Day Can Make!” (Ruth 2:1-23)**

One day can make a big difference in a person’s life. Life-saving surgery. Homeless to having safe shelter. Jobless to being gainfully employed. Single to being married. One day can make a big difference in a person’s life. The same is true for the story of Naomi and Ruth as they enter the land of Judah. At the end of Chapter 1, we saw that Naomi arrives with the whispers of the crowd questioning if this was the same woman that left ten years before with all that one could ask for. Now, widowed, sonless, destitute, only accompanied by her Moabite daughter-in-law, Naomi has arrived to her homeland with little but anything to call her own. Yet, one day changes her bitterness into a smile.

Naomi and Ruth were poor and vulnerable as they arrived back in the land of Israel. However, the laws of Israel allowed for the poor and the destitute – specifically the widow and the alien – still to find means to survive. Knowing this law, at the beginning of Ruth chapter two, Ruth is prepared to go glean behind the harvesters, picking up the leftovers after they had reaped the crops. Naomi knew this was one of the only healthy hopes for their survival.

Fast-forwarding to the end of Chapter 2, their situation has been completely transformed. Chapter 2 covers one single day and by the end of this unexpected day, we can imagine that smiles can be found on the faces of Naomi and Ruth as they lay their heads down at night. Having left that morning with nothing, hoping someone would show favor on them that day, Ruth returned from the fields with an overflowing blessing! An abundance of barley – one ephah (3/5 of a bushel, 22 liters, or 5 gallons) full was weighing Ruth down as she returned to her mother-in-law. This was the value of about half a month’s of wages – an entire person could stand in the amount of barley she was able to glean that day. Imagine Naomi’s face as Ruth entered her presence with this blessing. That is what it was – a blessing.

But who? Who would look with such favor on this Moabite foreigner from a distant land? Which field or fields did you work in? When Ruth reveals the name of the man that showed the great favor on her and Naomi, Naomi knew God was still showing his kindness. His favor – which can be defined as “kindness beyond what is due or usual” – was given by a human man but motivated by our Heavenly Father. God’s protective favor was shining bright on Ruth and Naomi that day. Ten years earlier, she had left the Promised Land and essentially

removing themselves from His needed protection. Now, she returned and He was there to take her back in. And Ruth too. And their response was...a smile.

God's smile-producing kindness can be broken down into three specific categories...

### **1. The Lord's favor is meticulously planned. (Ruth 2:1-4)**

The author of Ruth gives us an important narrator note in the opening of chapter 2. "Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz." This seemingly random piece of information will play an important role in God's immediate plans for Naomi and Ruth's survival and long-term plans for the nation of Israel. Ruth decides to go glean in the fields to find some grain to help bring food to their table. Naomi agrees, but did not give any direction about which fields to go to, who to avoid, or any advice of how to approach this process in her homeland. This is interesting, and we must assume that Naomi was putting her trust in God to guide this process.

God's planning lead Ruth to the field of Boaz, a relative of Elimelech. One translation has it described as, "as luck would have it." The Lord does not do luck! He plans and pre-arranges. The field she ended up in was the field that the Lord planned for her to go to. Yes, this was Ruth's choice. Free will. Yet, God was working in the midst to bring about his ultimate purpose. Then in verse four we are told, "Now behold," or "Just then", Boaz happens to show up. The narrator has already made us aware of who this man was, and now we get to see his character. We can be sure that Boaz did not travel to his fields every day. However, today – the day that Ruth was in his fields – he happened to arrive when she is there. Not a coincidence. God's planning to show His lavish favor down to every detail – the field, the timing, the individuals, the blessing.

### **2. The Lord's favor is channeled through "Mr. Right". (Ruth 2:4-16)**

Chapter 2 serves as an official introduction to Boaz. We have already been introduced to Naomi and Ruth in Chapter 1. Now, we are introduced to "Mr. Right". God could have chosen many different avenues to bless Naomi and Ruth. Yet, he chose Boaz as the channel for these blessings. Why?

- *First, Boaz was an immediate relative of Naomi's family.* This will play out further in chapter 3, but he would have the responsibility as a relative to take care of the needy within his family. This would include Naomi and Ruth.
- *Second, Boaz was a man of standing in society.* He owned multiple fields and he had the means necessary to take care of the two women.
- *Third, Boaz was a godly man.* Boaz refers to the Lord and His goodness multiple times in this passage. Even in his opening words to the workers in his fields, he says, "May the Lord be with you." In Boaz's eyes, there was no gap between the spiritual and the material world. His men knew that God was at the center of his thinking and all that he did. They should carry that out as they worked his fields. Boaz had stayed in Bethlehem during the famine, while others (like Elimelech) left.
- *Fourth, Boaz was obedient.* He obeyed the law of the Lord. Following the harvesting law found in Deuteronomy 24:19, he told his workers not to go back and cut a sheaf if they missed it. Instead, leave it for those in need. This is one of the reasons Ruth was in his field. Boaz's men also knew he would be open to a foreign woman gleaning in his field and had not run Ruth off when she arrived.
- *Fifth, Boaz was welcoming.* Not treating Ruth as a foreigner, he refers to her as "his daughter". Then at mealtime, he invites her to eat with him.
- *Sixth, Boaz was sensitive.* Boaz recognized that Ruth was alone and was in need. He told her to stay with her servant girls for protection.
- *Seventh, Boaz provided for Ruth.* Boaz first provided protection for Ruth by telling his men not to touch or harm her, which might have been common for a foreign woman in a foreign land. Next, he provided refreshment, telling her she could drink from the water jars that his men had filled.
- *Finally, Boaz was generous.* Over and beyond. When he provided lunch for her, he shared bread and wine. She ate all she wanted and had more leftover. Boaz also gave instructions to his men to pull out stalks from his harvest and drop them on the ground for her to pick up. This went above and beyond what was required by the law of Israel. No wonder she went home with so much!

Boaz was the perfect man – the perfect channel – for God’s lavish kindness on Ruth and Naomi. If we look at the qualifications for Boaz above, many are echoed in perfection in the life of Jesus Christ.

### **3. The Lord’s favor is hope-giving for the future. (Ruth 2:17-23)**

The closing verses of Chapter 2 shows Naomi’s recognition of God’s kindness as she heard Ruth’s accounts of the day. As she heard the story and thought about how God had blessed them that day, one could imagine that Naomi’s mind started turning towards the future. Maybe she began to wonder where all this might lead. She encouraged Ruth to stay with Boaz’s maidservants for both protection and for the familial connection.

One day. One day changed the possible hopes of Naomi and Ruth from despair and bleakness to hope for the future. This day of change all occurred because of God’s favor being bestowed upon and through God’s people. While the circumstances were still the same – Naomi and Ruth were still widows, still no sons, still poor, still experiencing the hardness of life – the hope-giving experience of God’s kindness gave both Naomi and Ruth a reason to believe. Maybe, just maybe, they went to sleep that night with a smile.

Ruth Chapter 2 challenges Christians to look at our stories as well. Take some time to trace God’s meticulous plan through your life to show where His favor has been showered upon you and your family. The rest of the story shows how God was not just showing his favor on Naomi and Ruth, but the entire nation of Israel, and later all humanity through Jesus Christ our Lord. God’s meticulous plan has a micro-level (our story) and a macro-level (all humanity). The Lord delights in lavishing his favor on his people, often in ways that are far beyond our imagination.

Ruth Chapter 2 also challenges Christians to hear the call to follow Boaz’s favor showing pattern upon the world. The law of Israel provided the direction for its follower to help the poor, the widow, the alien, and the disadvantaged. Christians today are called to do the same, as followers of the One who gave His all. God will often use these opportunities to draw people closer to Him, under His protective wings.

Ruth Chapter 2 finally challenges Christians to look at the future with hope as we consider the favor God has shown in the past. Scripture is full of examples

of the way God has bestowed his favor on His followers. We can testify to examples of ways God has shown favor in our lives. The Lord's favor does not mean a trouble-free life. Yet as we take refuge under his wings, we may know that the same God who saw Naomi and Ruth through a dark time is the same God providing hope for us when we are in a similar darkness. If God is for us, who can be against us?

### **Follow Up Questions...**

- 1. As you think about your spiritual journey, who has served as spiritual "Boaz's" in your life – individuals who have shown you God's lavish favor? How did these individuals encourage you?**
- 2. In what practical ways can you be a channel of God's favor – a Boaz – to a specific individual this week? A family member? A friend? A work colleague? A neighbor?**
- 3. What past evidences of God's favor serve as "touchstones" or reminders as you seek to continue to follow him in trust, even when times seem dark?**

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**Session 5: "Active Faith" (Ruth 3:1-18)**

**Thursday, October 14 7:00 PM**

**Facebook Live**