

## Ruth 2

### *The provisions of our Kinsman-Redeemer*

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Chapter 1 ends with Naomi and Ruth arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning. This chapter depicts God's provision for the poor, widows, orphans and the less fortunate. The bottom line of His "welfare program" was: Food's available; but if you want to eat, you have to go out and work for it.

**Harvesting Rules:** When harvesting in your field, you could only go through the field once. You weren't to go back through the field to clean up or pick up anything that you dropped. And the field's corners weren't to be harvested. Then those in need could go in to glean what was left and it would be enough to supply their needs.

**Ruth took the initiative to provide for Naomi and herself. Where did Ruth end up gleaning (v. 3)?** In a field owned by a man named Boaz. Can you see the sovereign hand of God at work here? The sovereign hand of God works the same way in our lives. Our Christian life is a walk of faith, not a walk of sight.

**What can you tell about Boaz and his relationship with the workers/harvesters (v. 4)?** It was a relationship of fondness and respect which speaks volumes about his leadership ability. He warmly greeted the harvesters/the little guys/the relatively unimportant. He didn't just check in with the foreman and supervisors. You can often tell the real character of a man in authority by seeing how he relates to his staff and by how they react to him.

**Why do you think Boaz noticed Ruth (v. 5)?** As a leader, he knew his people. She was new and probably stood out. As a Moabitess she may have looked different. Plus Bethlehem was a small town (300-1000) at that time. He had most likely heard about the new girl in town.

It's easy to want to romanticize this encounter. We like to think she was a beauty, while he was a handsome dude—love at first sight. But Scripture doesn't paint that picture for us. We have no idea how Ruth looked. And even if she was pretty, after working several hours of hard labor in the sun, she was probably dirty and unkempt.

**How did Boaz treat Ruth?** With great respect and favor. Like a father. Like a protector. He provided for her because he knew she needed to provide for Naomi as well.

*Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her (v. 15).* This was even more generous than the command in Leviticus 19:9-10. Boaz would allow Ruth to take some barley from among the already gathered sheaves of grain.

*And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her. So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley (vv. 16-17).* An ephah of barley was about 5½ gallons (22 liters) of barley. To people who had nothing, it was a very profitable day's work. Boaz wanted to bless Ruth, but he didn't want to dishonor her dignity by making her a charity case. So he allowed some grain to fall, so that she could pick it up.

**Why did Boaz treat Ruth like that?** He was impressed with her character, work ethic, unselfish attitude and reputation. He admired what she had done. And she was a blood relative by marriage.

**How long did Ruth glean in the fields?** For four months: the 2 months of the barley harvest and the 2 months of the wheat harvest.

**How did Naomi react to the news that Ruth had been led to glean in Boaz's field (v. 20)?** She called on God to bless him and highlighted his kindness to both them and their family including the deceased Elimelech. She also pointed out to Ruth the family link between them and Boaz. You can see Naomi's countenance starting to change.

Is this the same woman in chapter 1? The very same woman who came into town saying, *Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me... the Almighty has brought calamity upon me (vv. 20-21).*

**What changes do you see in Naomi's attitude?** Now that she sees more of God's plan unfolding—of how all

things are working together for good. No longer viewing herself as a victim, she's displaying gratitude and a glimmer of hope and joy. This moment of awakened hope in Naomi is a crucial turning point of the story.

**What leadership qualities do you see in Boaz?** He treated his subordinates with respect, was sensitive to the needs of his people, an encourager. He didn't stay in the office—he mixed with the workers appropriately, he effectively integrated his faith and profession.

**A kinsman-redeemer:** This introduces an important word in the Book of Ruth—the ancient Hebrew word *goel*. To say that Boaz was a *goel* (a kinsman-redeemer) was more than saying he was a relative. It was saying that he was a special family representative. He was responsible for the welfare of the extended family.

**What did it mean to be a kinsman-redeemer in those days?** Someone who was responsible for:

- Protecting the interests of needy members of the extended family
- Providing an heir for a widow with no sons
- Redeeming the land that a poor relative had sold to an outsider
- Redeeming a relative sold into slavery
- Avenging the killing of a relative

**Who is our equivalent of a kinsman–redeemer and why?** Jesus Christ. As our *Kinsman*, He became flesh and became one of us. The primary reason Jesus came to Earth was to identify with sinful mankind. He ate the same things, was baptized, went to our places, wept with us, was hungry, walked with us, and was tempted in all ways just like us (Hebrews 4:15). But unlike us, He never sinned. As our *Redeemer*, He was the pure and perfect sacrifice who satisfied the wrath of God against our sin. And by paying the price for our sin, He redeemed us from enslavement to sin and eternal death.

#### **Application:**

As a leader, it is critically important to know the people who work for you. Treat your subordinates with great respect. You should know their names and some of the circumstances of their lives. It sends the right message when you address them by name. You can't be a great leader unless you care about your people.

Ruth may not have known it, but she was under inspection. The supervisor was looking at how she worked, and he was impressed that she did an excellent job. We are under inspection also. We are being watched by others to see how we will walk with God. And to see if we are real. And what they see will make a difference.

**How do I treat the gleaners in my life?** The waiters—do I thank them when they fill up my water glass? The person behind the counter at MacDonal'd's, the cashier at Target (if wearing a name tag)—do I address them by name?

The kindness of Boaz was noteworthy. It's much easier to be kind to others when we can see a potential pay-off from the investment of our kindness. Yet true kindness is shown when we, like Boaz, extend ourselves to others who, as far as we can see, have nothing to give back to us.

The sovereignty of God appears where we least expect it—like in the field where Ruth chose to glean. Life changing events occur in what we consider as the least important circumstances of life, the mundane. We need to be God's people all the time, even in life's seemingly insignificant areas.

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