

# LESSON 4

**TITLE** | Seeking Redeeming Love

**SCRIPTURE** | Ruth 3:1-18

## MEMORY VERSE

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe. (Psalm 107:1-2)

## MAIN IDEA OF TEXT

God's kindness and redeeming love is worth pursuing.

***BEGIN this time in prayer, confessing any Sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.***

# 1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

## TEACHER TIP

Start your lesson by telling a story that relates to the main idea of the lesson to grab the attention of your participants. In this section, we have provided you with two options, but feel free to develop your own.

## OPTION 1: “YOU’VE BEWITCHED ME BODY AND SOUL”

One of the most famous proposal scenes in cinema occurs in the 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice*. The meeting of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in the early morning fog seems almost surreal. Just as Elizabeth accepts, the sun rises, signaling the dawning of a new day for both. (play clip)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFsgLhx9dxg>

### POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why are proposals significant occasions?
2. What are some other famous proposal scenes in movies? What makes them noteworthy?
3. Does simply watching the clip of Mr. Darcy’s proposal diminish the meaning of this scene? How does knowing their previous story add meaning to the scene?

**Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:** Just as the engagement of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy symbolized the beginning of a new day for each of them, Ruth’s engagement to Boaz would be the beginning of a new day for her and Naomi. The difficult lot they had expected would be replaced by a future filled with hope and plenty. But unlike Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, Ruth and Boaz’s proposal scene hardly seems surreal. If anything, it seems bizarre. From this bizarre scene, however, God will work to provide the security Ruth and Naomi need. As we will discover in the weeks to come, this scene also plays a pivotal role in God’s provision for us.

## OPTION 2: TRADITIONAL PROPOSALS

In our culture, the traditional way for a man to ask a woman for marriage is for him to get down on one knee, reveal an engagement ring, and ask the question, “Will you marry me?” There is an attractiveness and nobility in this, but some have always had a desire to break the mold in unexpected ways. Some men have flashed the question up on the scoreboard during sporting events. Others will think of a sly way for their girlfriends to discover the ring. We recently heard of a young man donning armor and riding up on horseback while his bride-to-be’s friends were taking her on a walk through the park. Whether completely traditional or completely unexpected, proposals are memorable occasions for two people announcing their intentions to join one another in marriage.

### **POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. *How are customs created within a society?*
2. *Are customs a good thing within a society? Why or why not?*
3. *What marriage proposals have you heard of recently? Did the person proposing follow the traditional custom or did they do something else? What causes people to break with traditions or customs?*

**Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:** In our passage this week, we see Ruth declaring her interest in marrying Boaz. We cannot be sure whether Naomi's plan followed a known custom or whether it was something she thought of spontaneously. Whatever the case, Boaz was surprised and recognized Ruth's interest in marriage to him as an act of kindness to her family.

# 2

# SET THE STAGE

## TEACHER TIP

*In this section, you will find the historical, cultural, and literary context you need to properly interpret and apply the text.*

## OUTLINE

- I. Naomi's plan (1-5)
- II. Ruth's plea (6-9)
- III. Boaz's promise (10-18)

## CONTEXT

Naomi returned from her sojourn in Moab bitter towards life and towards God. How could she ever find joy in life after suffering through the loss of her family? Although Ruth was resolute about remaining with Naomi, she must have been anxious concerning her future. Would she ever marry again? Would she be able to provide for herself and Naomi as a foreigner in an unfamiliar land? Would Naomi even appreciate her once they returned to Bethlehem?

In chapter 2, these questions began to resolve. Ruth and Naomi receive unexpected kindness from an extended-family member, Boaz. Their needs are met, and hope returns. Perhaps Boaz would even take on the role of a redeemer by marrying Ruth and bring both her and Naomi into his household. But the harvest season is winding down, and although Boaz has continued to show kindness towards Ruth and Naomi, he has not progressed their relationship beyond where it stood after their first encounter. Maybe it was time for Ruth and Naomi to make their hopes more well-known to this potential redeemer.

## FALLEN CONDITION & GOSPEL RESPONSE

### FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

We sit still and do not pursue what God says is good to do. We think God will give us what he wants without any action on our part.

### GOSPEL RESPONSE

God is sovereign and he sovereignly uses our plans and actions to bring about his greater plan.

# 3 LOOK AT THE BOOK

## TEACHER TIP

*In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your class through the process of Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the teacher, work through all the exercises below to ensure you gain a good understanding of the text.*

Ruth and Naomi found momentary respite from the challenges they faced, but the hope built as chapter two progressed has stalled. Ruth has continued gleaning at Boaz's fields, but he has made no further moves to establish a relationship with her. In this week's lesson, Ruth and Naomi create a plan to make their intentions fully known to Boaz. Their plan may fail, but it is time for them to act in faith. How will Boaz respond?

1 One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. 2 Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. 3 Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

5 "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

7 When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!

9 "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family."

10 "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. 11 And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. 12 Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. 13 Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning."

14 So she lay at his feet until morning but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, "No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor."

15 He also said, "Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town.

16 When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "How did it go, my daughter?"

Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her 17 and added, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.' "

18 Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what

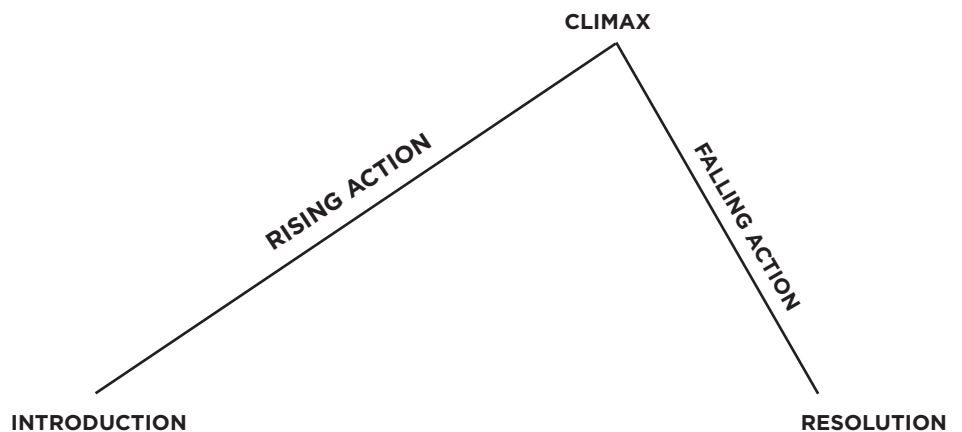
happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

## OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: CHART THE PLOT

On the chart given below, diagram the story. Include the verses and action along the chart. You will need to include the setting, the rising action (and conflict or issue that causes the rise), the climax of the story, the falling action, and finally the conclusion or new normal. (Hint: use the outline given in the *Set the Stage* section.)

### CHART PLOT



### OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: DIALOGUE

In a narrative, different rhetorical devices move the story along. In this passage, the dialogue is the primary catalyst to the story. Read through the passage again and underline the dialogue, when a person or people are speaking.

### OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: LOOK UP BACKGROUND INFORMATION

One cannot read Ruth 3 and escape the feeling there are many customs particular to their context that we are unfamiliar with today. As you read through the text, create a list of the unusual practices you see.

## INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

### INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: FROM PLOT TO THE AUTHOR'S MAIN POINT

Using a chart to form the plot of the story helps us to understand what is most important to the author. Double check your plot chart with the

completed chart at the end of the lesson and write down the main point of the story.

### **INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: FROM CLIMAX TO EMPHASIS**

Using the chart from the observation section, determine the climax of the story. Answer the following questions:

1. *How does the author use repetition to build anticipation?*
2. *How does the author use questions to build anticipation?*
3. *How does the author extend the climax into chapter 4?*

### **INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: USE YOUR RESOURCES**

Use *The Bible Speaks Today Commentary*, the resources provided at the end of this lesson, and other resources you have to discover the significance of the practices you noted in Observation Exercise 3. Look for answers to the following questions:

1. *Was Naomi telling Ruth to appear as a bride when meeting Boaz?*
2. *Were Naomi's instructions related to any Israelite custom or was this a spur-of-the-moment plan?*
3. *What is the implied meaning of stretching a garment/wing over someone?*

### **APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?**

#### **TEACHER TIP**

*In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God is calling them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.*

**QUESTION 1:** Is there any opportunity waiting for you to take a step of faith to pursue it? Why is it often difficult to pursue things we yearn for? Could your refusal to take the first step be linked to a lack of faith in God?

**QUESTION 2:** What relationships should take priority in life? Are these the relationships you spend the most time cultivating? What keeps you from devoting the time needed to build these strong relationships?

**QUESTION 3:** Why is integrity so central to a life of godliness? In what ways will a stance for integrity make your life more difficult or make you less popular within your social and professional networks?

**QUESTION 4:** Naomi recognizes that Boaz is a man of his word. Do other people recognize you as someone who is faithful to the commitments you make? If so, how can you encourage others to be faithful to their word without becoming self-congratulatory? If not, what steps do you need to take to amend your failures with others and keep your commitments in the future?

**QUESTION 5:** What are you waiting for God to accomplish for you? Has the waiting been difficult? In what ways are you tempted to push ahead without God? How can you encourage yourself to wait on God's timing?

# 4

# CHALLENGE

## **TEACHER TIP**

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*End your time of study with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.*

Ruth and Naomi saw a resolution to their troubles when Boaz showed kindness to Ruth at the fields, but now they are wondering whether Boaz will take the next step to become their redeemer or whether their hopes will be dashed. As the harvest season was drawing to a close, they devised and carried out a plan to make their hopes known to Boaz. Now Boaz has assured Ruth he will resolve the matter of her redemption quickly, and Naomi encourages her to wait patiently on Boaz.

In many ways, Ruth and Naomi's hopes for the future parallel our hopes for the future. We believe God will provide, and we are anxious to see how God will provide for us. Some of our hopes are more immediate in nature such as a new job or home situation. Ultimately, our hopes rest in Christ's return and the completion of our redemption.

As we think about hope, we must answer two questions. First, is our hope based on the promises of God and his will or are we seeking hope in our own schemes and expectations? We always have to be willing to investigate whether our hopes are from God or not. Second, if our hopes are from God, we need to question whether it is a time to wait on God to act or whether it is time for us to take a step of faith to set things in motion. We see Naomi and Ruth exhibiting both elements of this question in this passage.

## **LET'S PRAY**



# COMMENTARY

## RUTH 3:1-5

This passage begins with Naomi outlining a plan for Ruth to suggest marriage to Boaz. The course of action she describes seems bizarre to us. Morris, writing in the *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary*, suggests it may have been bizarre to the people of that time too. We just do not have enough information regarding the marriage/courtship customs of this time:

We have very little knowledge of the customs prevalent in Israel in antiquity and the arrangements for marriage here outlined are not elsewhere attested. But then we have no other example of a situation quite like this. What was to be done where two widows were left to their own devices? This story gives us an answer as to what might happen, though we have no means of knowing just how common the practice described was. Apparently it was an Israelite but not a Moabite procedure, for Naomi had to explain to Ruth what she must do to show Boaz that she was interested in marriage with him. Though Ruth carried out the plan readily enough there is no indication that she knew anything about the custom until Naomi outlined it.

Later, Morris emphasizes the same point:

That represented the completion of Ruth's task (except for her invitation to Boaz to throw his skirt over her, 3:9). The rest was up to Boaz. The context makes it clear that this describes a way whereby Ruth signified to Boaz her desire to marry him. Ordinary methods of approach were no doubt difficult and this provided a suitable medium. But why it should be done in this way we do not know. Nor do we know whether this was a widely practised custom or not. It is not attested other than here. Lattey thinks that 'the action in itself is symbolic, suggesting that the mantle should cover Ruth as well, and thus preparing the way for her words in 3:9. To throw the mantle over a woman would be to claim her for wife.' In view of the widespread use of garments in a symbolic fashion now known to have been common at the time, this may well be the explanation. The narrator uses the utmost delicacy, but it is clear that Naomi's plan was not without its dangers. The fact that she was prepared to urge this course on Ruth is the measure of her trust in both the participants. All the more is this the case since in the Ancient Near East immoral practices at harvest-times were by no means uncommon, and, indeed, appear to have been encouraged by the fertility rites practised in some religions.

Commentators are divided concerning the nature of Ruth's dress. Previous generations believed Ruth was dressing herself up as a bride. If so, Boaz could hardly miss the point. But this view is falling out of favor of many recent commentators. Younger, for instance, writes in the in NIV Application Commentary:

A number of commentators understand Naomi's instructions to be a bride's preparations for marriage, so that Ruth comes to Boaz as a bride. But this is not borne out by comparison with other bridal contexts in the Old Testament. This is not to say that Ruth is not "making herself more presentable," but she is not "decking herself out" either (e.g., note that no jewelry or dress of fine linen is mentioned). The most likely explanation of Naomi's instructions is that they mean that Ruth should end her period of mourning and so signal her return to the normal activities and desires of life, which, of course, would include marriage. This change in her appearance, with its symbolic meaning, will indicate to Boaz both her availability and the seriousness of her intentions.

Warren Wiersbe, writing in *Be Committed*, argues that Ruth was taking on the appearance of a bride: Actually, Naomi was telling Ruth to act like a bride preparing for her wedding (Ezek. 16:9-12)... The next thing Ruth did to prepare was to anoint herself (Ruth 3:3b). Eastern peoples used fragrant oils to protect and heal their bodies and to make themselves pleasant to others. A bride would especially take care to wear fragrant perfume that would make her “nice to be near” (see Song 1:3, 12-14; 4:11-16)... Ruth’s third act of preparation was to change clothes (Ruth 3:3c). She was to put off the garments of a sorrowing widow and dress for a wedding (see Isa. 61:1-3). Ruth probably didn’t have a large wardrobe, but she would have one special garment for festive occasions. Naomi had the faith to believe that Ruth would soon be going to a wedding!

Naomi has the best and most noble intentions at heart for Ruth, but anyone could see her plan had plenty of opportunity for failure. Younger imagines a number of ways the plan could collapse:

Ruth’s response demonstrates her willingness to engage in this risky endeavor: “I will do whatever you say” (3:5). It should be remembered that things could go wrong in the plan. For example, Boaz could mock her request for marriage to him—a wealthy and powerful Israelite landowner—as a vain attempt at social climbing for a poor widowed “Moabitess.” Or, since Ruth has not secured a new marriage contract and is technically still the wife of Mahlon (cf. 4:5, 10), Boaz could charge her with failing in her family responsibilities, branding her an adulteress. Or even worse, Boaz could use the night’s opportunity for his sexual pleasure, bringing on her great humiliation, and then malign her (charging her with entrapment) or even charge her with prostitution. Yet Ruth responds, “I will do whatever you say,” which demonstrates her radical commitment to and trust in Naomi. Fortunately, there is the possibility that Boaz will wake up and recognize immediately the true meaning of Ruth’s actions and respond favorably to her..

### **RUTH 3:6-9**

This scene can be somewhat difficult for modern readers to imagine. Leon Morris, writing in the *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary*, helps fill in some of the missing information:

It was harvest-time and therefore a time of feasting and enjoyment (cf. Isa. 9:3). Boaz ate and drank well and his heart was merry (the verb translated was merry is that rendered ‘that it may be well with thee’ in 3:1, AV, RV). In due course he went to bed at the end of the heap of corn (AV, RV). At harvest-time people would camp out, and in those days (as is the case still with country folk in that region) they did not mind hard beds! Probably his servants were in other places near the threshing-floor and Boaz would have had a place to himself.

Ruth’s choice of words for identifying herself suggest a change in her relationship with Boaz. Younger, writing in the *NIV Application Commentary*, explains it this way:

Ruth’s words are carefully chosen. She begins by identifying herself: “I am your servant [amâ] Ruth.” Earlier in 2:13, Ruth referred to herself as Boaz’s šiphâ, although she does not really have even this status (she is officially a nokrîyâ, “foreign woman”; see comments on 2:13). Now she uses amâ; the choice of the socially higher term is doubtless Ruth’s attempt to suggest that she is within the class of women who might be married. This word seems to emphasize a slave’s feminine qualities (need for protection, weakness, sexual attractiveness, etc.), while šiphâ seems to be used when the female is viewed as a possession and a laborer.

Both terms can be used as self-designations. When used this way, amâ suggests a female petitioner’s weakness and need for help or protection when presenting a request before a more powerful male, never before another female. When šiphâ is used as a self-designation, it signifies the

woman's subservience and readiness to serve or obey instructions. The word *amâ* does show respect to a superior to be sure, but even a woman of high rank, married to a man of wealth, might use this word to put herself in a subordinate position (cf. Abigail in 1 Sam. 25:41). Thus, in her nocturnal visit Ruth's reference to herself as an *amâ* is appropriate in the context of a request of marriage to a *gibbôr hayil* [mighty man]like Boaz.

Warren Wiersbe, writing in *Be Committed*, notes the absence of the word "Moabitess" as evidence Ruth is carefully choosing her words. Thus far in the book, she has been Ruth the Moabitess, but if Boaz follows her suggestion, this distinction will further fade into the background:

When he asked who she was, Ruth replied that she was Ruth; but she did not call herself "the Moabitess." Now she was the "handmaid" of Boaz. She was making a new beginning. You find Ruth named twelve times in this little book, and in five of these references she is identified with Moab (1:22; 2:2, 21; 4:5, 10).

Earlier, Boaz recognized that Ruth had found refuge under the wings of the Lord. Now, Ruth suggests Boaz become the embodiment of God's refuge. The word translated "corner" by the NIV in verse 9 is the same word translated as "wings" in Ruth 2:12. Morris discusses the connection in his commentary:

She proceeds to her plea. It seems that therefore of KJV correctly interprets the Hebrew (HS, 56, 57R1). She looks for Boaz to take action simply because she is who she is. She employs an expressive metaphor and asks him to spread his skirt over her. It is used similarly for taking in marriage in Ezekiel 16:8. The spreading of the skirt over a widow as a way of claiming her as a wife is attested among Arabs of early days, and Joüon says it still exists among some modern Arabs. Cf. also Deuteronomy 27:20, etc. Wright points out that the word is singular in passages like Deuteronomy 22:30 (Hebrew 23:1); 27:20; 1 Samuel 24:4, 5; Ezekiel 16:8 and, indeed, wherever the skirt of a garment is meant. He accordingly takes it to refer here to wings: "spread thy wings over thine handmaid", a much more delicate way for Ruth to intimate her wish.' ... Ruth had put herself under Yahweh's 'wing' when she came to Judah. Now she seeks also to put herself under that of Boaz. Keil & Delitzsch understands the word to refer to 'the corner of the counterpane, referring to the fact that a man spreads this over his wife as well as himself'. But 'wings' seems more probable.

Wiersbe's explanation is brief and clear:

To spread one's mantle over a person meant to claim that person for yourself (Ezek. 16:8; 1 Kings 19:19), particularly in marriage. The word translated "skirt" also means "wing." Ruth had come under the wings of Jehovah God (Ruth 2:12); and now she would be under the wings of Boaz, her beloved husband. What a beautiful picture of marriage!

### **RUTH 3:10-18**

Boaz is amazed by Ruth's kindness, but in what way could this kindness be greater than her decision to leave family and country to remain faithful to Naomi? Morris explains that Ruth's proposal to Boaz reveals her to be one who prioritizes family over personal interest:

Ruth is not left long in doubt. Boaz' response is to call down a blessing upon her (cf. 2:4, 12). He thinks that Ruth has shown more kindness (AV, RV) now than when she first came. The kindness at the beginning (AV, RV) will be that which Ruth showed to Naomi in not forsaking her and in gleaning to provide for her needs. Now to this she has added a further evidence of her regard for family relationships. She has not followed natural inclinations (in seeking a young man in marriage) but has shown a responsible attitude to the family in looking to her *go'el* as her marriage partner. The word

kindness is that used in 1:8 (see note on this). It includes the thought of faithfulness as well as that of benevolence. Ruth is steadfast as well as kindly in this action. Lattey renders 'piety' but this is hardly it, though Ruth has certainly shown dutifulness (with which in a note Lattey equates piety). Boaz sees her faithfulness in the fact that when she thought of marriage Ruth did not go after young men (the word means 'choice' men) whether poor or rich. She preferred to keep to family connections and thus showed her respect for the right. She did not simply let her own personal inclinations rule her. Knox translates, now, more than ever, thou hast shewn the goodness of thy heart; Berkeley, This your later kindness is lovelier than any previous one. There is an article with young men. It is not 'young men' in general that is meant but 'the young men', the definite group of young men in the village. We should not overlook the implied compliment to Ruth. Boaz clearly was certain that had she wished Ruth might have married a rich young man. There would be no point in praising her faithfulness to family obligations otherwise.

Boaz would not send Ruth away empty handed. He gave her a large quantity of grain to show his interest in her. Morris explains how much. It might seem to us to be a funny way to show marriage interest—"Here, carry this huge load of grain home!"—but it would have been a significant gesture for Ruth:

Boaz had a sense of the fitness of things and apparently he did not regard it as proper that his prospective bride should return from her night's adventures empty-handed. So he told Ruth to fetch her cloak and hold it out. When she did so he measured out six measures of barley. Unfortunately, the text does not say what measure is meant, the Hebrew reading simply 'six of barley'.<sup>5</sup> In 2:17 the ephah is used, but six ephahs would amount to about 132 litres or 24 gallons. This seems an impossibly large amount so it is probable that we should take the measure here to be the seah, which amounted to a third of the ephah. Hertzberg points out that this would make a load of about 40 kilogrammes (i.e. about 88 pounds), not impossible for a strong young woman. Gerleman suggests the omer, but this was a tenth of the ephah and it would make Boaz' gift less than the amount Ruth acquired in a day of gleaning. The impression we get is that he was being bountiful, which seems to rule this out. Gerleman does not notice this point. There is also a point of syntax, namely that the gender of the adjective 'six' leads us to expect a measure grammatically feminine, whereas 'omer' is masculine. On the whole, it seems then that six seahs is what is meant. Since Boaz had to put it on Ruth it is obvious that it was a large load. The munificence of this gift we may estimate from the fact that on a full day of gleaning Ruth managed but one ephah (2:17), and that was considered quite an achievement. Such a large amount would not be easy to manage so Boaz put it on Ruth, i.e. he assisted her get the load properly balanced as she carried it on her head.

Morris notes an important connection to Ruth 1:21:

It may be no coincidence that the same word empty is used here as in 1:21 when Naomi spoke of being brought home 'empty'. Her 'empty' days are over.

Waiting is difficult for everyone, but imagine Ruth waiting to see how the situation with the other kinsmen redeemer would turn out! Wiersbe uses this text to flesh out the importance of waiting on God:

It is "through faith and patience" that we inherit the promises (Heb. 6:12; 10:36). Since Naomi and Ruth believed that Boaz would accomplish what he said he would do, they waited patiently until they received the good news that Ruth would be a bride. "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it" (Ps. 37:5).

I confess that waiting is one of the most difficult things for me to do, whether it's waiting for a table at a restaurant or waiting for a delayed flight to take off. I'm an activist by nature, and I like to see

things happen on time. Perhaps that's why the Lord has often arranged for me to wait. During those times, three phrases from Scripture have encouraged me: "Sit still" (Ruth 3:18, KJV), "Stand still" (Ex. 14:13, KJV), and "Be still" (Ps. 46:10, KJV).

"Sit still" was Naomi's counsel to Ruth, and wise counsel it was. Ruth would have accomplished nothing by following Boaz around Bethlehem, trying to help him keep his promises. "Their strength is to sit still" (Isa. 30:7, dW, ). Our human nature gets nervous and wants to help God out; and when we try, we only make matters worse.

"Stand still" was the command of Moses to the people of Israel when the Egyptian army was pursuing them. There was no need to panic, for God had the situation well in hand. Then the Lord commanded the people to "go forward" (Ex. 14:15), and He led them safely through the sea. There is a time to stand and a time to march, and we must be alert to know which one God wants us to do.

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10, KJV) is a wonderful antidote for a restless spirit. The Hebrew word translated "be still" means "take your hands off, relax." It's so easy for us to get impatient with the Lord and start meddling in matters that we ought to leave alone. He is God, and His hands can accomplish the impossible. Our hands may get in the way and make matters worse. Boaz was busy working for Ruth, and Naomi was confident that he wouldn't rest until he had settled the matter. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform [complete] it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6, KJV). It encourages my heart to know that Jesus Christ is working unceasingly for His people as He intercedes in heaven (Heb. 8:3-4), and that He is working in us, seeking to conform us to His perfect will (13:20-21; Phil. 2:12-13).

Have you put yourself at the feet of the Lord of the Harvest, and are you trusting Him to work?

One evidence of your trust will be your willingness to sit still and let Him have His way.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

Daniel Block, *Judges, Ruth*, The New American Commentary.

Trent Butler, Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.

Leon Morris, *Ruth*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary.

George Schwab, "Ruth," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

Warren Wiersbe, *Be Committed*.

K. Lawson Younger, *Judges and Ruth*. The NIV Application Commentary.

# PLOT CHART

