

RUTH

OUT OF LOVE COMES REDEMPTION

“When we boldly declare our faith in God and demonstrate our love for Him, and for one another, we become living evidence for His existence. We become a living testimony to the fact that out of love comes redemption”

Notes and Outline

By

David E. Rembert

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO RUTH

OUT OF LOVE COMES REDEMPTION

Ruth 1:16

“But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.’”

INTRODUCTION

Dr. J. Vernon McGee had a significant affect on my walk with Jesus. I was a regular listener to his *Thru The Bible Radio* broadcast that went through the Bible in five years. I attended several of his Bible studies including his Bible study on the book of Ruth.

His Bible study on Ruth lasted twelve weeks. Those twelve weeks changed my life. I began to see how I could become living evidence for God’s existence as I walked by the Spirit in obedience to God’s Word, walking in the same manner as Jesus walked (**1 John 2:6**). Every time I left that Bible study I left with new insight into the practical applications contained in God’s Word. I left in amazement at the greatness of God. As McGee expounded upon the book of Ruth I gained a better appreciation for God’s incredible love and abundant grace. I better understood how God worked in the lives of ordinary people, to accomplish His plan and to bring glory to Himself. I saw how He accomplished His sovereign will. My love for Jesus grew as a result of McGee’s Bible study. Indeed, I was in awe of the only true and living God.

I hope you too will sense the greatness of God, His love, His grace and His devotion to those who love Him as we go through the book of Ruth. I pray that you too will see the importance of being living evidence for His existence and how to do it.

Ruth is one of the most important books in the Bible. It links the Old Testament and the New Testament together by giving the genealogy that leads to the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It explains how He came through the line of David. Ruth is the only book in the Bible that connects the house of David to the tribe of Judah, the Christ child who was born in Bethlehem. The book of Ruth gives the little town of Bethlehem its place in history. It links the Old Testament and the

New Testament together through a love story between Ruth and Boaz that ultimately leads to Jesus Christ.

BOAZ, THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER

The book of Ruth is one of the greatest love stories that you will ever read. A love story between a man named Boaz (who became a kinsman-redeemer) and a woman named Ruth (who became one of his kinsmen). It is a love story between a Jewish gentleman from Bethlehem and a gentile lady from Moab. A love story between a wealthy bachelor and a humbled widow. A love story between two people who founded their relationship in obedience to God's Biblical principles. As a result, they were abundantly blessed.

Ruth is a love story that so beautifully portrays the love and grace that one day would exist and now does between Christ and His Church – between Jesus the Kinsman-Redeemer and His kinsman, you and me.

Ruth is a love story that declares so clearly **1 Corinthians 13:13**, which says, ***“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”***

- In the book of Ruth we see Ruth's faith declared as an example for all of us to follow. As she said to Naomi in **Ruth 1:16**, ***“Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for were you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”*** Ruth boldly declared her faith.
- We also see Naomi's hope restored when Ruth gave her a grandson. As the women said to Naomi we in **Ruth 4:14-15**, ***“Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. May he be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”*** In the book of Ruth we see faith, hope and love but the greatest of these is love.
- Love in the book of Ruth is lifted to the highest plain. The love chapter of the Bible, **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**, is demonstrated repeatedly in the book of Ruth. It says, ***“Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*** The love that existed between Boaz and Ruth, and between Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, gives us a beautiful working illustration of what it means to love one another as God intended.

This would be a perfect time, as we go through the book of Ruth, to make a personal resolution. Now is a perfect time to purpose in our heart to put into practice the love illustrated in the book of Ruth. To purpose in our heart to honor and obey the Lord by loving our spouse, our children, our parents, our in-laws, our neighbors and one another just as Boaz loved Ruth, and just as Ruth loved Naomi, and just as Jesus loves us.

Now is a good time to renew our commitment to the Lord and to love as He loved so that all people will know that we are His disciples. When we boldly declare our faith in God and demonstrate our love for Him, and for one another, we become living evidence for His existence.

It is interesting to note, as we go through the book of Ruth, that even though it is a love story revolving around Ruth's love for the God of Israel, her mother-in-law and Boaz, the word "**love**" is only used once in the entire book. However, love is demonstrated in many ways showing us that true love is more than just words, it is also our actions. Notice what the apostle John stated in **1 John 3:18**. He said, "**Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and in truth.**" As often is the case, when it come to love, actions speak louder than words.

Love in the book of Ruth is lifted to the highest plain. It is not just a word that is used casually, as it is today, with little or no meaning. Today we tell people that:

- We love our car.
- We love a certain sports team – at least when they are winning.
- We love to read.
- We love to sing.
- We love chocolate.
- We love our cat or dog.
- We love Bar-B-Q wings.

In contrast, the book of Ruth demonstrates what true love is really all about. It is important to keep in mind that we cannot love inanimate objects. We can like them, but we cannot love them.

LOVE DEMONSTRATED BY GOD REAPING HIS HARVEST

The book of Ruth indirectly reveals God's love for people as He reaps a great harvest through His Son. This becomes evident because the book of Ruth was read on the Day of Pentecost, which we will see in a moment. As we do, keep in mind the theme of this book: *Out of Love Comes Redemption*. Also, keep **John 3:16** in mind, "**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**"

It is always fascinating to me to see how God uses the events of history to point us to Jesus. The book of Ruth is one of five Old Testament books that are read by Jewish Rabbis in the synagogue on five special occasions during the year:

- The book of Lamentations is read about mid-July to help the Jewish people reflect upon the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC by the Babylonians and again in 70 AD by the Romans. It contains five poems of mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
- The book of Ecclesiastes is read at the Feast of Tabernacles, which helps the Jewish people remember their escape from Egypt.
- The book of Esther is read at the Feast of Purim when the Jewish people remember their deliverance from Persia.
- The Song of Solomon is read at the Feast of Unleavened Bread or Passover when the Jewish people remember their deliverance from 400 years of captivity in Egypt.
- And the book of Ruth is read on Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks when the Jewish people celebrate the gathering of the new harvest of wheat and barley. This is very significant. The word "Pentecost" is the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks. The word means "fifty" because the Feast of Weeks took place fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits, which was when the Jewish people gathered their first bundle of wheat and barley. The

Feast of First Fruits fell three days after Passover, which was when Jesus was resurrected from the dead as the first of many fruits of God's new harvest (**1 Corinthians 15:20-23**).

In the book of Ruth we see Boaz reaping the harvest in Bethlehem and celebrating the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. However, in the New Testament, on the day of Pentecost we see God reaping His harvest, the souls of men and women, as He began His Church through the One who was born in Bethlehem. As we are told in **Acts 2:41**, "*...there were added that day about three thousand souls.*" God so loved the world that He sent His Son (**John 3:16**) so He could reap His harvest on Pentecost when the book of Ruth was read.

LOVE DEMONSTRATED BY CHRIST BECOMING THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER

Wouldn't you know, in God's infinite wisdom and sovereign planning, that contained within the book of Ruth is the strongest illustration in Scripture of what is called a kinsman-redeemer. Without a Kinsman-Redeemer God could not reap His harvest. This is one of the reasons the book of Ruth links the Old Testament with the New Testament.

Without the book of Ruth our Lord's credibility as a Redeemer, to both the Jews and Gentiles, would be in jeopardy. In order for God to reap His harvest and conform to the laws of redemption that He Himself established in the Old Testament, He had to send a Redeemer who was a blood relative to both the Jews and Gentiles. The Redeemer had to be a Kinsman-Redeemer. The only one in all of history to qualify as a true Kinsmen-Redeemer is Jesus Christ from the house of David, from the tribe of Judah, born in Bethlehem as a result of the marriage of Boaz the Jew with Ruth the Gentile.

There is an interesting side note to all of this. Every time a kinsman-redeemer fulfilled that role in the Old Testament a wedding took place. That is why our Kinsman-Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ, is a Bridegroom and the church that He has redeemed is His bride. In **Revelation 19:5-9** we see the wedding. In **Revelation 21:2-10** we see "*the wife of the Lamb*" who is the bride, the heavenly Jerusalem and home of the church (**Hebrews 12:22-23**).

There could be no redemption without the person and presence of a Kinsman-Redeemer. It is no wonder that God planned for the book of Ruth to be read on the very day that He started His Church.

If the work of a Kinsman-Redeemer is not properly understood, then redemption itself can be distorted and it has been by many so called religions.

Redemption, in its proper context is a love story, a love story between God and the men and women tHe created. Therefore, I have entitled this study in the book of Ruth "*Out of Love Comes Redemption*" because Boaz, a Jew, is a kinsman-redeemer of Ruth who is a gentile. The book of Ruth illustrates how Christ's work of redemption is a work of love and grace extended to both Jew and Gentile.

I hope, as you go through the book of Ruth, that you will be in absolute amazement of the greatness of God as well as in awe of His incredible love and His abundant grace that He has given through Jesus – our Kinsman-Redeemer.

CHAPTER TWO

RUTH 1:1

WHEN THE JUDGES GOVERNED

Ruth 1:1

“Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.”

Before we dig into verse one, let’s review why Ruth is one of the most important books in the Bible.

- First, it links the Old Testament with the New Testament by giving the genealogy that leads to our Lord Jesus Christ. It explains how Jesus came through the line of David.
- Second, it is the only book in the Bible that connects the house of David to the tribe of Judah. Jesus had to come out of the Tribe of Judah in order to be the King of Israel in fulfillment of prophecy.
- Third, it gives the little town of Bethlehem its place in history. The place where the Christ child would be born in fulfillment of Prophecy.
- Forth, it gives us the strongest illustration in Scripture of what is called the law of the kinsman-redeemer, which Jesus had to fulfill in order for Him to qualify as our Redeemer. Jesus had to be a Kinsman-Redeemer.
- Fifthly, the Jewish Rabbis read the book of Ruth in the synagogue on Pentecost as they celebrated their new harvest of wheat and barley. In God’s sovereign planning, the book of Ruth was read as God started the church on Pentecost as He celebrated His new harvest, the souls of men and women, that He would reap through His Son.
- Sixthly, God draws everyones attention to the qualifications of a kinsman-redeemer and what was required of a kinsman-redeemer. He was connecting the dots. He was making it clear that Jesus was the only fully qualified Kinsman-Redeemer reaping a great eternal harvest.
- Finally, the book of Ruth is a love story that puts into action the love chapter of the Bible, which is **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**.

The book of Ruth is a love story out of which came the redemption of Ruth and ultimately the redemption of every one who, by faith, trusts Jesus Christ as their Redeemer. Therefore, I have given this study in the book of Ruth the title: *“Out of Love Comes Redemption.”* The book of Ruth is a story that reveals the greatness of God, the sovereignty of God as well as the incredible love and abundant grace of God that He gives to those who love Him and are redeemed by Him.

In addition, the book of Ruth is full of practical applications that cover almost every area of life, which we will see.

As we open the book of Ruth we find that the writer, who is unknown (some suggest Samuel), packs a lot of information into **verse 1**. He gives us the time in history when the events in the book took place, the geographical locations where the events took place and the circumstances that prompted the actions of a certain family. Notice what we are told in **verse 1**, *“Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.”*

DURING THE JUDGES

The first thing we are told is that the events of Ruth took place *“in the days when the judges governed.”* After Moses died, at the end of Israel’s forty-year journey in the wilderness, his second in command, Joshua, led the people of Israel in conquering and possessing the Promised Land. After the death of Joshua and before the appointment of Saul as Israel’s first king, the Lord raised up judges to govern Israel. They governed for about 288 years. During that time the events of Ruth took place.

The days when the judges governed Israel were extremely difficult. Spiritually speaking, they were dark days in the history of Israel. It was a time when the majority of people did not know God. It was a time of Biblical compromise, moral corruption and confusion. Notice what we are told in **Judges 2:11-13**, *“Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served Baals, and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.”* Baal was the rain and fertility god of the Canaanites and Ashtaroth was the female companion of Baal. The worship of these false gods and goddesses included animal sacrifices, male and female prostitution and sometimes human sacrifices. The time when the judges governed were spiritually dark days.

The people of Israel forsook the LORD. Then, as we are told in **Judges 2:14**, *“The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.”* These were the social conditions in which the events of Ruth unfold.

The days when the judges governed Israel began with a generation of people who did not know God. As we are told in **Judges 2:8**, *“Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.”* Then in **verse 10** we read, *“All that genera-*

tion also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.” The days when the judges governed began with a people who had parents and grandparents that were delivered from Egypt by the power of God. They were led by God through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. They were a people who had parents and grandparents that witnessed God parting of the Red Sea, providing manna from heaven, giving the Ten Commandment and filling the tabernacle with His glory. They were a people who had parents and grandparents that witnessed the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day leading them through the wilderness. They were a people who one generation earlier witnessed the mighty hand of God part the Jordan River (**Joshua 3:13-17**) allowing them to cross on dry land to conquer Jericho. They watch God cause the walls of that great city to come tumbling down. They were a people who one generation earlier witnessed the mighty hand of God cause the sun and the moon to stand still in the sky for about an entire day (**Joshua 10:12-13**). They were a people who had parents and grandparents that saw God perform victory after victory in keeping His promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses by giving them their Promised Land. They were a people who one generation earlier witnessed the greatness, the power, the glory and the mercy of God. Yet within one generation after the death of Joshua most of the people turned their backs on God and worshipped idols, and the anger of the LORD burned against them. This is the environment in which the events of Ruth unfold. A sad testimony on an entire generation.

LIGHTS SHINNING IN DARKNESS

It is very important for us to understand why this happened, so we can avoid the same mistakes. The reason that the generation after Joshua forsook God is because there was no discipleship taking place.

The direction that God gave to the people through Moses in **Deuteronomy 4:9** was ignored. He said, *“Only give heed to yourself and keep your sole diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.”*

The direction that God gave parents through Moses in **Deuteronomy 6:5-9** was not implemented. It says, *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

The warning given by God through Moses in **Deuteronomy 6:10-15** was not taught. He said, *“Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you*

shall worship Him and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.”

Parents did not instruct their children in the way of the Lord. Grandparents did not instruct their grandchildren in the way of the Lord. Therefore, the next generation forsook the Lord and served false gods, and they reaped the anger of the only true and living God.

It is no wonder that when Jesus gave the great commission in **Matthew 28:19** He said, **“Go therefore and make disciples.”**

I would like to say something to those of us who are parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and church leaders. We need to share with the children and the youth that God has placed into our care the Word of God without compromise. We need to make it a daily routine. We need to instruct them in the ways of God and then let them see how the power, love, grace and mercy of God has worked and is working in our lives. We need to tell them and then let them see what Jesus is doing in our lives today as a living testimony of His existence. They need to see His Holy Spirit working in our lives. We need to be a disciple of Christ, then we need to disciple our children and hold them accountable. If we don't, I fear that we are going to lose the next generation, if we haven't already.

There are way too many influences in the world today that are trying to draw the hearts of our children away from Jesus. There are far too many influences in the world today that are attempting to cause our children to doubt the authority of God's Word and thereby compromise Biblical values. There are far too many influences today that are trying to convince our children and grandchildren that there is no God, there is no Creator of the universe, there is no Savior of the World.

I do not consider myself a perfect parent. In many respects it is only by the grace of God that all of my children love Jesus and are walking faithfully with Him according to His Word without compromise. With that in mind, I asked my children what we did as parents that influenced their walk with Jesus in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, a thoroughly corrupt world. Here are some of their answers. Perhaps they can be of some help to you:

- Prayer. We consistently prayed together as a family at dinner whether at home or in a restaurant. We consistently prayed for our children every day.
- We were open about our faith. They saw that our faith was real and important. God personally used me as an instrument in leading each of my children to Christ.
- We consistently shared God's Word with them and gave them exposure to sound Biblical teaching. We took them to adult seminars and events like Billy Graham. We never considered them to young to go.
- We took them to adult Bible studies, women's luncheons and men's morning breakfast meetings where they would hear testimonies of how God was working in people's lives.
- We spent our vacations at Christian Family Camps exposing them to Biblical teaching.
- We took them, sent them or went with them on short-term mission trips.
- I gave them a written copy of my personal testimony and my wives, so they would know what led us to put our faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. We taught them how to write their own testimonies.

- We tried to set an example of what it meant to walk with Jesus in good times and in difficult times. We refused to compromise God's Word. They told me that seeing me up early every day in God's Word had a huge affect upon their lives.
- We were totally committed to Jesus and His church.
- We tried our best to always demonstrate Christ like love.
- We did things as a family.

The book of Ruth unfolds in the midst of a very corrupt society when the judges governed, yet we find a godly man named Boaz and two godly women named Naomi and Ruth who became lights in the midst of that darkness. Eventually Ruth and Boaz would marry and raise a godly young man that would become the grandfather of king David and be listed in the genealogies of Christ.

We too are to be lights shinning in the midst of darkness today. We are to be that godly remnant that walks with Jesus without compromise according to His Word. We are to be discipled and we are to be disciples by discipling others, and our first disciples should be our children. Lets not loose the next generation. Let's be living evidence for the existence of God by walking in the same manner as Jesus walked (**1 John 2:6**).

CHAPTER THREE

RUTH 1:1-2

DECISIONS OUT OF DESPERATION

Ruth 1:1

“Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and two sons.”

By just reading a few verses in the book of Judges, which documents what took place when the judges governed, we discover that these were very difficult days in the history of Israel. It was a time when the majority of people did not know God or the work that God did for Israel, such as the miracles He did to bring them out of 400 years of Egyptian captivity (**Judges 2:10**). It was a time of Biblical compromise and Biblical ignorance that resulted in moral and spiritual corruption.

The people of Israel were not instructed in what God told them to do through Moses, as written in **Deuteronomy 6:5-15**. Most of the parents and grandparents did not instruct their children and grandchildren in the ways of the Lord. As a result, we are told in **Judges 2:13**, *“So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroath.”* They worshipped the idols of the Canaanites and according to **Judges 2:14**, *“The anger of the LORD burned against Israel.”* The days when the judges governed were days when, for the most part, there was no discipleship between one generation and the next. As a result, within just one generation the people turned their backs on God.

The events in the book of Ruth unfold at a time when there was a spiritual famine in Israel. To make it even more difficult there was a physical famine in the land as well. There was a famine that caused a certain family to make a decision out of desperation. As we are told in **Ruth 1:1-2**, *“Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.”*

FLEEING THE FAMINE

The famine mentioned at the beginning of the book of Ruth is one of thirteen famines mentioned in the Bible. Every time a famine is mentioned in the Word of God, it was a judgement from God as a result of people's sin. Here in Ruth God brought judgement upon a people that rejected Him. Instead of worshipping Him they worshiped and served idols. It was a time when they no longer gave thanks for or even acknowledged that the provision of their food came from the Lord, so He took it away.

The events that took place at the beginning of the book of Ruth not only unfold in the dark days of Israel's history, but also in the darkest of those days. God brought a famine, as a judgement for their sin, as a means to bring them to their knees in repentance for their sin and to bring them back into a proper relationship with Him.

The cause of the famine mentioned here in Ruth was a little different from most famines. Normally a famine resulted when God withheld the rain. The ground was not watered, the seeds did not germinate, the crops did not grow or they withered. Therefore, because of the famine there was no food. However, that was not the method God used to bring the famine mentioned in Ruth.

In reading through the book of Judges (one of the history books in the Bible) there is only one famine mentioned and it is important for us to understand its cause and severity. It is found in **Judges 6:1-6**. It says, *"Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years. The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them. So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both them and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it. So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD."* For seven years this famine occurred and it took seven years before the Israelites cried out to God, which gives us a glimpse at the hardness of their hearts and how far they really had drifted from God.

The book of Ruth most likely begins some time during the seven years of this famine and it is at this point, out of desperation, that Elimelech decides to take his family and flee the famine. Elimelech leaves Bethlehem. He leaves his friends and at least two other relatives, probably his brothers.

MOVING TO MOAB

Elimelech left Bethlehem and moved to Moab. In **verse 1** it says they *"...went to sojourn in the land of Moab."* Then, at the end of **verse 2** it says, *"Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there."* The fact of the matter is this, they would remain in Moab for about ten years.

Moab was not a very good place to go. There had always been enmity and strife between Israel and Moab because of what took place in **Genesis Chapter 19**. Just before God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, where Abraham's nephew Lot and his family lived, an angel of the Lord helped Lot escape with his two daughters but his wife perished. Then, the two daughters, thinking that there were no men for them to marry, decided to make their father drunk and to lie with him so they could have children and preserve the family (**Genesis 19:32**). Then, in **Genesis 19:36-38**, we read, *"Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. As for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day."* The Moabite people and the country of Moab began from an incestuous relationship between Lot and his oldest daughter. As a result of this sin God condemned Moab and there has always been enmity and strife between Moab and the Israelites. For example:

- In **Numbers 24:17** we are told, *"A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab."*
- In **Deuteronomy 23:3** God spoke through Moses saying, *"No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation shall enter the assembly of the LORD."*
- In **Judges 3:14** we are told that the Moabites captured and enslaved some of the Israelites for eighteen years.
- According to **Judges 11:17**, which is after the events of Ruth, the king of Moab would not even allow the Jews to pass through his country.
- In **Nehemiah 13:23-26**, Nehemiah considered it a sin to marry a Moabite woman.
- King David called Moab his *"washbowl,"* (**Psalms 108:9**). The only value that David saw in Moab was that it was a good place to wash his dirty feet.

Moab has always been at enmity with Israel, yet this is where Elimelech took his family to live for about ten years.

The fact that Elimelech took his family to Moab indicated either his ignorance of Scripture or his willful disobedience to Scripture. Either way he was out of the will of God. He chose to get up and flee the famine seeking man's help rather than getting down on his knees seeking God's help. He decided to seek the help of strangers rather than the help of family and friends. It was bad enough to leave Bethlehem for a short time and seek relief, but it was worse to go to Moab and seek relief, and it was a tragedy to take up residence there.

The famine, as does any testing of faith, sorts out the spiritually strong from the spiritually weak. It will either strike terror in our heart or put trust in our heart. It will either cause us to take things into our own hands, relying on our own strength and wisdom, or it will cause us to fall on our knees before the throne of God trusting Him, relying upon His wisdom, strength and provision.

In the book of Ruth we see one man who stayed and trusted God, and one man who fled with his family trusting his own judgement, and as a result he experienced the judgement of God. His decision was made out of desperation and it cost him his life and the life of his two sons, which we will see.

Making decisions out of desperation or decisions that are driven by extreme external pressures often fail. They are not well thought out. The consequences are not properly evaluated, or considered. If possible, we should avoid making decisions out of desperation.

I once was under pressure from a client to meet a contractual schedule. I needed, so it seemed, to make a certain decision to meet their schedule and I needed to make it fast. So, I quickly committed our company to a \$100,000.00 subcontract without following company protocol. It was definitely a decision made out of desperation, which as it turned out did not solve the original schedule problem. Instead, I compounded the situation by not only being under pressure to meet an unrealistic client schedule, but also under additional pressure to make up the \$100,000.00 of company money that I threw down the drain. With a little more thought, counsel and help from the right people I could have renegotiated the client's schedule. I put my job and my family's livelihood on the line by making a decision out of desperation that was driven by extreme external pressures. Fortunately for me the company came along side me to resolve the crisis.

We need to keep in mind that there are consequences to every decision we make. Therefore, every decision must be prayerfully considered and brought into alignment with the Word of God. Here are some questions to ask before making decisions (note: they may not apply to every situation):

- Does it bring God the most glory?
- Does it hinder my testimony for Christ in any way?
- Does it jeopardize my integrity or damage my reputation?
- Does it hinder the use of my spiritual gift(s) in any way?
- Does it affect the cause of Christ?
- Is it consistent with the Word of God?
- What is the Biblical basis for my decision?
- Have I sought out counsel – godly counsel if possible?
- Does it demonstrate my love for God and others?
- Does it show that I am walking by faith or by sight?
- Have I spent enough time in prayer seeking God's wisdom and direction?
- What are my options?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- What are the risks involved and how can they be mitigated?
- Does it put anyone in harms way?

No matter how difficult the situation may be, if we surrender to the Lord and obey Him, He will see us through.

In the case of Elimelech, he had at least two other brothers that stayed in Bethlehem throughout the famine. They could have been a help and support to him and his family. There was another solution, which would have brought God the glory. He could have avoided making a decision out of desperation. By asking some simple questions before making decisions can take us out of the desperate mode and puts us into a proper mind set to make wise decisions and/or seek the wisdom of God regarding the matter (**James 1:5-6**).

 CHAPTER FOUR

RUTH 1:2

WHAT NAMES REVEAL

Ruth 1:2

“The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah.”

The first sentence in the book of Ruth tells us that there was a famine in the land of Judah during the time when the Judges governed. By studying the book of Judges we discover that the famine was most likely a famine caused by the Israelites rejecting God and worshipping idols. In other words, God allowed the famine to bring them to their knees in repentance for their sin and to bring them back into a proper relationship with Him. A famine that was most likely caused by the invading armies of the Midianites, Amalekites and the sons of the East as recorded in **Judges 6:1-6**. These invading armies came in like locust. They and their camels were innumerable, destroying all the produce of the earth. As we were told in Judges Chapter 6, they left no sustenance in Israel.

The events recorded in the book of Ruth probably took place during this seven-year famine. A famine that caused Elimelech to take his family and leave Bethlehem, and go to Moab. He went into a country that was at enmity with Israel. I personally believe Elimelech was out of the will of God. He chose to seek the help of strangers rather than the help of family and friends. He chose to flee the famine seeking refuge and help in a strange land rather than getting on his knees and seeking God’s help. The results of his decision were devastating.

However, before we look at the plight of Elimelech and his family, it is important to first look at the meaning of the names given in **Ruth 1:2** and what they reveal. We are told, *“The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.”*

OBSERVING BIBLICAL NAMES

Most parents spend a great deal of time searching for that perfect name to give their new born child. We read books on the subject of boy's names and girl's names trying to find the right name. Then as parents we try to come to some kind of agreement as to which name to select. I am convinced that this is why it takes nine months for the child to be born. God knew it would take most parents at least that long to agree on the right name.

When it came to my third son, my wife and I needed more than nine months. It really got frustrating. She and the baby were ready to be released from the hospital, but they wouldn't let them go home until we gave the hospital a name to put on the birth certificate. We were still at an impasse.

I remember it was about three o'clock in the afternoon. I needed to pick my two older boys up at school. When I arrived at their school, one of the teachers came out to greet me and said, *"We are so excited that you finally chose a name for your son."* I said, *"I don't understand, I just left my wife at the hospital and we were still undecided."* She replied, *"Well, your son Steve told the entire class today that his new baby brother's name was Timothy."*

Our primary criteria was to choose a name from the Bible. So, we went with our son's selection and named him Timothy John, which means, *"Worshiping God/God has been gracious."* Tim's life has been true to his name. The Lord was very gracious in giving Tim to us and his birth caused us to worship the Lord with praise.

When studying the Bible it is important to look up the meaning of the names given to people and places in a good Bible dictionary. Quite often the names of people reveal their character and physical appearance. Sometime the names reflect the personality or attitude of the parents. The meaning of names found in the Bible also reveal God's sovereign plan for people's lives. For example:

- God changed the name of Abram to Abraham in **Genesis 17:5**. The name Abraham literally means, *"Father of many,"* which has certainly unfolded in history.
- Joseph was told in **Matthew 1:21** to call the Christ child *"Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."* The name Jesus in the Hebrew language is *"Jeshua"* or *"Joshua,"* which literally means, *"the Lord (Yahweh) is salvation."* His name revealed God's sovereign plan. God the Father sent God the Son to offer forgiveness of sin.

In a similar way, the meaning of the names given in **Ruth 1:2** provides additional insight into some of the main characters of the book as well as God's ultimate plan for the town of Bethlehem.

ELIMELECH

The first name mentioned in **Ruth 1:2** is *"Elimelech,"* which means, *"My God is King."* This is a very wonderful name. Every time someone said Elimelech they were not just calling him by his name, they were also saying, *"My God is King."*

It is interesting, in God's sovereign plan, that Elimelech lived in Bethlehem where the King of kings would eventually be born.

In addition, Elimelech became the father-in-law of Ruth who would eventually be included in the lineage of Christ, who is the King of kings. As we are told in **Revelation 19:16**, *"And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.'"*

NAOMI

Elimelech's wife also had a very wonderful name. Her name was "*Naomi*," which means "*pleasant*." When her mom held her for the first time she probably could tell she had a pleasant personality, so she gave her the name Naomi. I think, for the most part, the book of Ruth is a testimony to Naomi's pleasant personality.

When my daughter was born I sensed that she was not going to be any trouble. She grabbed my heart the first time I looked at the warmth and sparkle in her blue eyes. However, just to make sure there was no misunderstanding, as I held her in my arms for the first time, just moments after her birth, I told her, "*No dating until your eighteen*." You see, one needs to set down the rules early when raising kids. It worked. She did not date until she was eighteen.

Here in the book of Ruth I think Naomi was a wonderful lady who had a gentle spirit and a genuine love for her family.

MAHLON AND CHILION

Next, in **verse 2**, we are given the names of Elimelech's two sons, "*Mahlon*" and "*Chilion*." Virtually nothing is given in Scripture concerning these two boys except their names. However, their names reveal a great deal.

The name "*Mahlon*" means "*sick*" or "*unhealthy*" and the name "*Chilion*" means "*puny*." These two boys were not very robust. This may have been the driving force behind Elimelech's decision to take his family and flee the famine. I think Elimelech was worried about their well being, so he made what he thought was a wise decision. However his decision was made out of desperation.

Unfortunately, he put his trust in man rather than in God. His own name should have reminded him that God is King and therefore ruler of all and worthy of his trust. His own name should have reminded him that God is King and therefore the One who was in control of everything. The One who could supply his needs for his family if he would just put his trust in Him.

I think it is important to understand that worrying and fretting over things does not make things better, neither does it add to your life span. In fact, it could do just the opposite. Stress and anxiety that comes from worrying can cut a life short. Notice what Jesus said in **Matthew 6:25-27**. He said, "*For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?*" We are to put our trust in the One who supplies our daily bread, and that is what Elimelech should have done.

BETHLEHEM IN JUDAH

This leads us to another name in the book of Ruth that is very significant and that is the name of the city, Bethlehem. Quite often the names of places reveal and reinforce God's sovereign plan as He works in the events of History. That is certainly the case with the city of Bethlehem.

The meaning of the name "**Bethlehem**" is "**house of bread.**" Wouldn't you know that in God's sovereign plan He chose Bethlehem to be the birth place of Jesus, who is identified in the New Testament as the "**bread of life**" (**John 6:48**). Notice what Jesus said in **John 6:47-51**, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.**" Jesus Christ, the bread of life, came down out of heaven to be born in the house of bread – Bethlehem. Jesus set aside the glory which He had with the Father, before the world was made, and entered the human race. Then, He went to the cross so He might take upon Himself our judgement for our sins. He did that so He could offer us forgiveness and eternal life. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord we receive the bread of life. As a result, we are given forgiveness of sin, a spiritual rebirth and eternal life in glory with Jesus.

Notice what Jesus said in **John 6:35-41**. He said, "**I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day...I am the bread that came down out of heaven.**"

Knowing this wonderful promise and knowing that I have personally received His gift of eternal life through putting my faith in Jesus, causes me to stop and give Him all my praise. This brings us to one other name that is given in **Ruth 1:2**. Bethlehem is located within the tribe of Judah and the name "**Judah**" means "**praise.**" Wouldn't you know that according to God's sovereign plan, the One who would come out of the tribe of Judah, born in Bethlehem, is the One who will receive all the praise forever and ever. His name is Jesus! **Revelation 5:13-14** says, "**And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb (Jesus), be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'**" The names in the book of Ruth reveal God's sovereign plan, which brings Him and His Son (Jesus, the Lamb of God) praise, honor and glory forever and ever.

 CHAPTER FIVE

RUTH 1:3-5

PLIGHT OF THE PRODIGAL FAMILY

Ruth 1:3-5

“...and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.”

There are two other names given in **Ruth 1:2** that we need to look at. The first is the territory called “*Moab*” which is about 75 miles from Bethlehem. The name “*Moab*” means “*from the father*.” The name refers to the incest that occurred between Lot and his oldest daughter resulting in a child being born that was named Moab (**Genesis 19:36-38**). The second name is “*Ephrathites*,” which is a title used to refer to the people who lived in the area known as “*Ephrath*” and later known as Bethlehem (**Genesis 35:19**). There are several other names that we will look at as we go through the book of Ruth, each one gives us wonderful insight into people’s lives and God’s dealing with their lives. All of which brings glory to God.

In **Ruth 1:3-5**, we see the plight of this prodigal family. We see the result of the decisions they made, decisions made out of desperation and unfortunately, decisions that were also out of the will of God.

In **Romans 15:4** we are told, “*For whatever was written in earlier times* (referring to the Old Testament) *was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*” As we observe this family, I am going to share some ways we can make decisions in the midst of difficult circumstances that are in the will of God. I want to make sure we learn from the experiences of this family.

Ruth 1:3-5 says, “*Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband died; and she was left with her two sons. They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.*”

A WRONG DECISION

Because of the famine that was in the land and because Elimelech and Naomi had two unhealthy boys, they decided to leave Bethlehem. They decided to get up and flee rather than get down on their knees and ask God for help and wisdom in making the right decision. They decided to seek help from strangers in a foreign land rather than seek help from family, friends and their heavenly Father. They took matters into their own hands, rather than relying on the sovereign hand of God to provide and protect them, and to guide them in and through their difficulties.

Whenever we have decisions to make we should always couch those decisions in prayer. The bigger the decision the more time we should spend in prayer before making that decision. In **Philippians 4:6** we are told, ***“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God.”*** Underline the words ***“in everything by prayer.”*** That is the key to making wise decisions that are in the will of God. We must go to Him in much prayer desiring His will to be done and not ours.

Sometimes we lack wisdom in knowing what the will of God is and how to do the will of God. Therefore, in **James 1:5** we are told, ***“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”*** Underlines the words ***“let him ask of God.”*** That is the key to making wise decisions that are in the will of God. We are to humble ourselves and get on our knees, and seek His guidance and His wisdom.

The apostle Peter said in **1 Peter 5:7**, cast ***“all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”*** God cares for each of us, more than we will ever know in this lifetime. That is why He wants us to take our burdens, our anxiety, and the things in our lives that have an uncertain outcome, and cast them on Him. It is like taking the baited end of a fishing line and casting it into the waters, with one exception, we are not to reel it back in. We are to cast our anxiety upon our ever caring heavenly Father and leave them their with Him, trusting Him to take care of them and us.

Whenever we have decisions to make we should seek wise and godly counsel from many people. In **Proverbs 11:14** (NKJV) we are told ***“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”*** A good decision is made with multiple, wise and godly counsel. The more crucial the decision, the more important the counsel. That is the key to making wise decisions that are in the will of God.

Whenever we have decisions to make we must make sure those decisions are aligned with the Word of God. Jesus said in **Matthew 4:4**, as He quoted **Deuteronomy 8:3**, ***“Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”*** Good decisions do not violate the Word of God.

Apparently, Elimelech and Naomi did not pray, did not seek godly counsel and did not search the Scriptures before they made their decision to go to Moab. As a result their decision ended up being out of the will of God. Their decision making process was flawed and as a result they made a wrong decision. Elimelech and Naomi were out of the will of God with no visible inclination to repent or the desire to even be in the will of God. So, God dealt with them in Moab. God was dealing with their hearts through the famine in Bethlehem, but they left Bethlehem. So God had to deal with them more severely in Moab. Elimelech walked away from God and took his family with Him and He died in Moab.

In the New Testament there is a story about a prodigal son who left his home and entered a foreign country. He too made a wrong decision that ended up being out of the will of God. So,

God dealt with him in that foreign country. He lost everything he had and ended up eating in the pigpen before he finally humbled himself, repented and returned home.

In a similar way, this prodigal family left their home and entered a foreign country. They too lost everything they had. They ended up eating out of the “*washbowl*” (which is the term David used in describing Moab in **Psalm 108:9**) before the sole survivor of that family humbled herself, repented and returned home.

A WORSE DECISION

You would think that after Naomi lost her husband she would have taken her boys and returned to Bethlehem, but she didn't. To complicate matters, Naomi took a wrong decision and made it worse. She allowed her sons to take “*for themselves Moabite women as wives*” and she took up residence in Moab. We are told in **verse 4**, “*And they lived there about ten years.*” When Naomi allowed her sons to marry Moabite women, she broke the Mosaic Law.

In **Deuteronomy 23:3** we read, “*No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD.*” Also, in **Nehemiah 13:1**, it says, “*On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God.*” Marrying Moabite women meant they were either bringing them into the assembly of God or they were leaving the assembly of God to worship false gods. In either case they were out of the will of God.

In **Deuteronomy 7:3-4** we are told, “*Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.*” Some Bible scholars think this passage only applies to the Canaanites and not to the Moabites. However, that is not the way Nehemiah interpreted that passage. Notice Nehemiah's reaction in **Nehemiah 13:23-27**. “*In those days I also saw that the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. As for their children, half spoke the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah, but the language of his own people. So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, ‘You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused him to sin. Do we then hear about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?’*” Naomi and her two sons were out of the will of God. Naomi was walking away from her God and taking her sons with her and her sons died in Moab.

There is something that is very important that we need to understand. Whenever we get out of fellowship with God and God's people we end up on a slippery slope. We begin a down hill slide. We begin to lose our footing. We begin making wrong decisions and then worse decisions. Unless we repent of our pride and arrogance, and our disobedience to God and His Word,

God may let us reach the bottom of that slide. Why does God allow such things to happen? So there is no place else to look but up. I believe that is what happened to Naomi.

We should not take lightly the importance of our fellowship with God and with His people. We should not take lightly our relationship with God that was made possible through the shed blood of Jesus Christ upon the cross. We should understand that God loves us. Therefore, He wants us to walk faithfully with Him and in fellowship with Him. He wants us to make wise decisions with Him. God wants us to walk with Him according to His Word, so He is glorified. Let's make sure we avoid the slippery slope. Let's purpose in our hearts to live according to every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (**Matthew 4:4**). Let's make sure we continue in genuine fellowship with God (**Revelation 3:20**) and His people (**Hebrews 10:23-25**).

There is a passage in the Old Testament that I have memorized. It is a passage that God has used in my life to keep me focused on Him and not on myself or on my circumstances. It is **Proverbs 3:5-8**, ***“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.”*** When in difficult times and in the midst of difficult circumstances we are not to lean on our own understanding or our own wisdom. We are to trust in the Lord with all of our heart. We are to acknowledge Him in all of our ways. We are to trust Him and rely upon Him. We are to seek his wisdom and guidance in every decision we make desiring His will be done. No matter what we are going through our wonderful, all-knowing and all-powerful Lord already knows every detail. He is already working on our behalf. Whatever it is, we have His assurance that it will be for our ultimate good and His ultimate glory. ***“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”*** (**Romans 8:28**).

Let's learn from Elimelech and Naomi. Let's not make the same mistakes that they made. Let's not make decisions that are contrary to the Word of God. Rather, let's make decisions based on the Word of God. Let's not rely on our wisdom, but His.

CHAPTER SIX

RUTH 1:6-14

NAOMI IS ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Ruth 1:6

“Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab...”

We saw the results of wrong decisions made by Elimelech, Naomi and their two sons. They were decisions that took them to Moab, a country at enmity with Israel. They were decisions that allowed their two sons to marry Moabite women in disobedience to the Law given by God through Moses. They were decisions that were contrary to the Word of God. Therefore, they were out of the will of God. They were decisions that ultimately resulted in the death of Elimelech and his sons Mahlon and Chilion. We also observed, from Scripture, guidelines for making right decisions. Decisions that are couched in prayer, seeking the wisdom of God, searching the Word of God and getting godly counsel from several different people.

In **Ruth 1:6-14**, as Naomi began her journey back to Bethlehem, we see her starting to make wise decisions based on the Word of God. As we look at this passage, we see two requirements needed to make right decisions. One is a personal relationship with God Almighty. The other is counting the cost before making decisions. In other words, consider the consequence of the decision. What it will take to accomplish? What is the impact on peoples lives? Naomi considered both as she began making decisions that were in the will of God. In **Ruth 1:6-14** we are told, *“Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food. So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. And Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, ‘Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.’ Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, ‘No, but we will surely return with you to your people.’ But Naomi said, ‘Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, would you therefore*

wait until they are grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone against me.’ And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.”

NAOMI’S BACK

After Naomi’s two sons died she started to leave Moab with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. “**Orpah**,” whose name means “*stubborn*” was married to Chilion and “**Ruth**,” whose name means “*friendship*” was married to Mahlon, according to **Ruth 4:10**. As we will see, Ruth lived up to her name. Ruth became more than a daughter-in-law to Naomi, she became Naomi’s best friend.

In **verses 6-7** we see these three widows walking down the road towards Judah. Naomi had decided to go back home to Bethlehem and at this point her two daughters-in-law were following along.

There is something else we should observe regarding Naomi. She not only decided to go back home, she also decided to go back to the only true and living God – the God of Israel. Four times, in **verses 6, 8, 9** and **13**, Naomi refers to God as the “**LORD**.” In doing so she uses God’s primary name, “*Yahweh*.” Please note that in those four verses the word “**LORD**” is in all capital letters in your Bible. Every time you see the word “**LORD**” or “**GOD**” in all capital letters in the Old Testament it is the Hebrew word “*Yahweh*” referring to God’s primary name, which means “*the holy, eternal, salvation providing, self-existent One.*” (See my book titled *What’s His Name?*).

Naomi recognized that it was “*Yahweh*” who provided His people with all their sustenance in **verse 6**. She said, “*the LORD (Yahweh) had visited His people in giving them food.*” As the psalmist wrote in **Psalms 104:14** and **27**, “*He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the labor of man, so that he may bring forth food from the earth... They all wait (referring to all of creation) for You to give them their food in due time.*” Naomi recognized, as we should, that all of our sustenance comes from Yahweh.

Naomi also recognized, in **verse 8**, that it was “*Yahweh*” who could extend kindness. She said, “*May the LORD (Yahweh) deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.*” As we are told in **Deuteronomy 7:9**, “*Know therefore that the LORD (Yahweh) your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments.*” Naomi recognized that kindness came from the hand of God, to those who love Him.

Naomi also recognized that it was “*Yahweh*” who could give rest to the weary in **verse 9**. She said, “*May the LORD (Yahweh) grant that you find rest, each in the house of her husband.*” Naomi was encouraging her daughters-in-law to remarry amongst their own people.

Naomi knew that it was going to be difficult for them. She was speaking from experience. Losing a loved one is spiritually, physically and emotionally very hard. There would be the ongoing memories, some good and some not. There would be the lonely nights, the eating alone and making decisions alone. Celebrating holidays and special events would be different.

However, Naomi knew that her rest would come from the LORD and she wanted her daughters-in-law to look to Him as the One who would supply their rest as well. For those who have lost loved ones, you know exactly what these three widows were going through. I trust you have experienced what Naomi experienced and that is this: Yahweh is the *“Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3)*.

God got Naomi’s attention. Her focus was once again upon Him. Naomi recognized that it was *“Yahweh”* who was working in her own life to bring her into submission to His Word and His sovereign will in verse 13. She said, *“...for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me.”* God will allow hardship, adversities and difficulties in life to bring us back into submission to His will and to His sovereign Lordship. One of the reasons He does that is so He can accomplish His plans upon this earth and in our lives for His glory.

Sometimes we get the misconception that living our lives and making decisions in life is all about pleasing us, but it is not. Living our lives and making decisions in life is all about pleasing Him. We need to get our eyes off of ourselves and on the essence of life – upon God Himself.

Naomi was coming back to Bethlehem, but she was also coming back to Yahweh. May I say to you: Right decisions are usually made when we are walking with God Almighty desiring to honor Him and to please Him in every area of our lives.

NAOMI’S BURDEN

As these three widows walked down the road to Judah they came to a fork in that road. So Naomi told them in verse 8 to return home to their mother’s house. Naomi was counting the cost of returning to Bethlehem with two Moabite widows. She was considering the burden not only upon herself, but also upon the two girls. She was returning to Bethlehem in poverty with no way to support and provide for herself much less these two girls.

I think it is important to understand something. Every decision we make has a cost associated with it. Every decision we make has consequences that not only effect us, but others also. Our decisions can bring blessings to others or great harm. They can bring encouragement or discouragement. They can bring praise or they can bring ridicule. Therefore, a wise decision-maker will count the cost of his or her decisions before they are made. As Jesus said in Luke 14:28, *“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”* A wise decision-maker will count the cost of his or her decisions before they are made. That is what Naomi was doing here.

Naomi considered the cost and then told her daughters-in-law the hard truth. She told them what the situation was going to be like in Bethlehem. She was helping them to count the costs as well. Naomi essentially told them that if they returned to Bethlehem they would never get married again. She understood Deuteronomy 25:5 that said her daughters-in-law would need to marry within the family and Naomi had no other sons for them to marry and was too old to have more. She understood that her people would have nothing to do with Moabites. They would be outcasts. They would be mistreated. They would live in poverty. It would be too costly.

Naomi was giving these two women the hard truth. I am sure it was very difficult for her to say what she said and even more difficult for the two girls to hear the truth.

NAOMI'S BOND

There was a special bond of love and friendship that existed between these three women. The kind of bond that is built when you go through similar life experiences together. Each of these women buried a husband. There was a shoulder to cry on, and an embrace to comfort. There was a unique bond that existed between these women.

Orpah and Ruth were very moved by Naomi's decision to send them back home to their mothers. They did not expect to hear this from Naomi and when they did they lifted up their voices and wept. The Hebrew word used for "*wept*" in verses 9 and 14 ("*bakah*") indicates that Orpah and Ruth were sobbing, or crying uncontrollably. This was a very emotional scene.

Orpah and Ruth's initial reaction was: "*No, but we will surely return with you to your people,*" in verse 10. They wanted to return to Bethlehem and be with Naomi. However, four times Naomi told them to go and return home, each time she became more emphatic.

Orpah considered the cost and Ruth considered the cost, and each made their decision accordingly. One kissed Naomi good-bye and the other clung to her. We will see their decisions in verses 15-18. We will see the difference between two types of people, one who professes faith and one who possess faith. One who has religion and one who has a relationship with the only true and living God. We are going to see the results that take place in the lives of ordinary people who walk down the road of life with God making decisions according to the Word of God.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RUTH 1:15-18

A SEVENFOLD COMMITMENT

Ruth 1:16-17

“But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me.’ ”

As Naomi and Ruth began their trip to Bethlehem, Ruth declared a sevenfold commitment. It is the same sevenfold commitment that God expects from you and me as we put our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Notice Ruth’s commitment in verses 15-18, *“Then she said, ‘Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her god’s; return after your sister-in-law.’ But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me.’ When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.”*

In verse 15 we see that Orpah decided to go home *“to her people and her gods.”* That meant she went back to worshipping the pagan god of the Moabites called Chemosh, which required making child sacrifices as burnt offerings (2 Kings 3:26-27). Orpah had a rather sallow commitment to Naomi and no commitment to Naomi’s God. She had no commitment to Naomi’s people. She had no commitment to her pending lifestyle if she returned to Bethlehem with Naomi. So, as Orpah stood at that fork in the road she decided to take the road that led back to her people and her gods. Unfortunately the road she took led to eternal separation from the only true and living God – Yahweh.

I am reminded of another fork in the road that Jesus referred to in Matthew 7:13-14. He said, *“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”* Every person stands at this fork in the road and

must choose. Orpah chose the wide road that led to eternal condemnation. Ruth chose the narrow road that led to eternal life. We see Ruth's faith as she declared her sevenfold commitment.

First, Ruth said in **verse 16**, "*...where you go, I will go.*" Ruth decided to follow Naomi no matter what the cost. This is equivalent to the same kind of commitment we make when we, by faith, trust Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. We must be committed to following Jesus no matter what the cost. Jesus said in **Matthew 10:37-38**, "*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.*" In other words, there should not be anyone in our lives or any purpose in our lives that is more important than Jesus. Ruth gave up her biological father and mother, her country, her former lifestyle, and her pagan gods to follow Naomi and the only true and living God. There was nothing that was more important to her.

Is Jesus the most important person in your Life? Who or what are you following today? Are you following a certain career path or are you following Jesus while in your career path? In other words, do you see your vocation as a ministry opportunity? Are you willing to give up your career if Jesus asked you to do something else? Are you following some ideological philosophy of life or are you following the One who is your life? Are you following your own will, your self made ambitions and priorities, or are you following Jesus and His example of doing the will of His Father? Jesus told His disciples, "*Follow Me*" and that includes you and me. We are to pick up our cross daily and surrender all to Jesus. Ruth surrendered all to Naomi. She put her faith in the only true and living God. We should do nothing less. We should follow Jesus, no matter what the cost.

COMMITMENT TO ABIDE

The second thing that Ruth said in **verse 16** was, "*...where you lodge, I will lodge.*" Ruth was committed to live with Naomi even if it meant living in poverty. She would identify herself with Naomi even if it meant persecution.

This is the same kind of commitment we should have with Jesus. Ruth was going to live with Naomi and share every aspect of her life. We too, when we abide in Christ, share every aspect of His life. He becomes our life. "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*" (**Galatians 2:20**). Ruth shared Naomi's sufferings and hardships, she shared her sorrows and joys. She experienced, with Naomi, God's abundant grace and mercy, God's faithful provisions and protection, and an incredible inheritance. We too share the same things with Jesus when we decide to abide in Him.

COMMITMENT TO FELLOWSHIP

The third thing Ruth said in **verse 16** was, "*...your people shall be my people.*" Ruth was going to identify herself with God's people. She was going to be their friend and they were going to be her friends. She was going to eat with them, fellowship with them, pray with them, worship with them and share their burdens.

May I say: We cannot make a decision for Jesus Christ, say that you are going to follow Him and abide with Him, and then forsake the body of Christ – His church. Being in fellowship with God’s people in the church is absolutely critical:

- That is where we care for and encourage one another as we go through the trials of life.
- That is where we are discipled and equipped for ministry through the teaching and preaching of God’s Word.
- That is where the world sees the fullness of Christ in action as we love one another and minister to one another using the spiritual gifts He has given to each of us.
- That is where we come together to support and send people back into the harvest field.

As we are told in **Hebrews 10:24-25**, “*...let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*” When we become followers of Christ, then God’s people become our people.

COMMITMENT TO GOD

The fourth thing Ruth said in **verse 16** was, “*...and your God, my God.*” In **verse 16** Ruth used the Hebrew word “*Elohim*” in referring to God. The name “*Elohim*” speaks of God as the all-powerful One, the creator of all things. Then, in **verse 17**, Ruth used God’s primary name, “*Yahweh.*” In essence, Ruth was saying, “*...the all-powerful, holy, salvation providing, self-existent God of the universe, the only true and living God, the Creator of heaven and earth will be my God.*” It is to that end that every person is called by God. We are to know Him and then confess to others that they know Him.

Unfortunately, very few people today arrive at the conclusion that Jesus Christ is God. Therefore, few confess that they know Him in a personal way. Jesus said in **John 17:3**, “*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*”

Jesus said in **Matthew 10:32-33**, “*Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*” How about you, are willing to stand up for Jesus in your work place, on your school campus, in your neighborhood and in your family, and confess that you know Him? Or is Jesus your best kept secret? Ruth’s declaration separated her from those who professed to be religious and those who possessed a personal relationship with the only true and living God. Ruth said, “*...your God, my God.*” Are you willing to make that stand and make that declaration before your friends and family today, and yes, even to strangers?

COMMITMENT FOR LIFE

The fifth thing Ruth said in **verse 17** was, “*Where you die, I will die.*” Ruth’s decision to follow and abide with Naomi, to fellowship with her people, and to believe in her God was a lifetime commitment. So it should be understood by everyone who, by faith, trusts Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. We are to be committed to a different lifestyle as long as we walk on this earth. Notice what the apostle Paul stated in **Galatians 2:20**. He said, “*I have been crucified with*

Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Who are you living for today? Are you living for your self, or are you living for Jesus? Christians and Christianity have a bad reputation today. People call us hypocrites because we go to church on Sunday and put on a good front on Sunday, but live like the devil the rest of the week.

I often told my congregation: *"I am not your normal pastor."* That is because for thirty-one years, before I became a pastor, I saw first hand how Christians acted. I heard how they talked in the work place, in the home, on campuses and in the locker rooms. I can tell you that for the most part it is a disgrace to God.

- Their language was filthy.
- Their honesty, ethics and integrity were lacking.
- They sat around telling and laughing at the same off-color jokes, like everyone else.
- They sat around with their peers tearing down their spouse and gossiping just like those who were outside of Christ.
- They enjoyed listening to the same disgusting music and watched the same disgusting television shows and movies that the rest of the pagan world enjoyed. There was a time when Christians wouldn't go to an "R" rated movie, but that is not the case today.

Our commitment to Jesus is to be one that does not disgrace His holy name, but one that brings glory to Him, even when no one is watching. As long as we walk this earth and everywhere that we walk upon this earth our goal is to glorify Him by what we say and do. Ruth's commitment to Naomi honored her just as our commitment to Jesus should honor Him. That is to be our lifetime commitment.

COMMITMENT FOREVER

However, Ruth's commitment, as should ours, went beyond this life. The sixth commitment that Ruth made in **verse 17** was, ***"Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried."*** Ruth did not even want her physical death to separate her from Naomi. That is to be the heartbeat of every born again Christian. Our innermost desire is to always be in the presence of Jesus even after death. That was Paul's commitment in **Philippians 1:21**. He said, ***"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."*** Paul, as should we, was looking forward to and was committed to an eternal union with Christ, without the limitations of this life. Ruth's commitment was forever. Just as our commitment is eternal.

COMMITMENT TO JUDGEMENT

Ruth's final commitment in **verse 17** was, ***"Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."*** Ruth was saying that if she changed her mind, then may the Lord's judgement on her be worse than death itself. Ruth did not make a quick emotional decision, but rather a carefully thought out commitment.

It is my prayer that every person who, by faith, trusts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord would have the same kind of commitment to Christ and His church as Ruth had for Naomi and her God. Let's make sure we do not waver in that commitment.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RUTH 1:19-22a

NAOMI ARRIVES HOME WITH RUTH

Ruth 1:19

“So they went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came about when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’”

When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her she said no more to her. They both walked about seventy-five miles for about seven days until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem they arrived humiliated, hurting, and humbled. As we are told in **Ruth 1:19-22a**, *“So they went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came about when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’ She said to them, ‘Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?’”* So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab.”

HUMILIATED

I am sure it was not easy for Ruth to go to Bethlehem. And it was not easy for someone like Naomi, who had walked away from God and His people, to return home. To do so meant she had to give up her pride and humble herself under the mighty hand of God. She had to say, *“God, You were right and I was wrong.”* She had to repent by doing a 180-degree turn. She had to stop walking away from God and purposely walk towards God, as difficult as it may have been. She had to place herself, once again, under the authority of God by submitting to His Word, His purposes, His direction and His will for His glory.

Quite often when someone returns home after walking away from God and His people, they return home as a spectacle in complete humiliation. That was the case with Naomi. In **verse 19** we see *“...that all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’”* I

think they were shocked to see Naomi return home in rags. According to **Ruth 2:1**, her husband's side of the family was very wealthy. So, I think the other women in the city were shocked knowing that she left wealthy but returned in poverty. I think they were shocked to see her return without her husband and without her two sons. I think they were shocked to see her returning with a Moabite daughter-in-law. All eyes were on Naomi. She was the talk of the town.

We are told in **verse 19**, “*...all the city was stirred because of them.*” That included the women, the men and the children. They were stirred not only because of Naomi, but also because of Ruth. I am sure many in the city had mixed emotions as they walked down the street. Some would welcome Naomi and Ruth while some would avoid them. Some would welcome them with open arms and some would gossip behind their backs. Some would show compassion while others would think they got what they deserved. No matter what the people were thinking, Naomi was back where she belonged, with Ruth, to stay. No matter how people reacted, God welcomed her back with open arms just like He does with every one of His children who repent and return to Him. He is “*the God of all grace*” (**1 Peter 5:10**).

HURTING

Unfortunately, Naomi came back hurting. Notice **Ruth 1:20-21**. “*She said to them, ‘Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?’*” The name “*Mara*” means “*bitter*.” You may recall that the name Naomi means “*pleasant*.” In other words, Naomi told the women to call her bitter not pleasant. Naomi was coming back to God, but she was hurting.

There is an important observation that I would like to make. Notice that Naomi, while recognizing God's discipline in her life, seems to be bitter towards God for what happened. In **verses 20-21** she said, “*...the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me,*” “*...the LORD has brought me back empty,*” “*...the LORD has witnessed against me,*” “*...the Almighty has afflicted me.*” Therefore, “*...call me Mara.*” I think we need to understand that bitterness can easily creep into our lives when we go through extreme grief and hardship. We can experience intense antagonism or hostility from another person, we can experience unwarranted cruelty from another person, we can experience relentless sarcasm from another person and become bitter towards that person. The seed of bitterness is planted when things happen to us that we think should not have happened. The seed of bitterness is planted when people maliciously try to hurt us and succeed by spreading lies, etc. As a result relationships are damaged and sometimes severed. We need to be very careful. Bitterness eats away from the inside out. It can certainly rob us of our joy and it can rob others of their joy as well.

Bitterness is usually miss directed. When we are bitter we tend to blame God and others for what happened and not ourselves. I get the feeling that Naomi's bitterness was directed towards God for the consequences she and her family experienced. In reality, what she and her family experienced was a result of their disobedience to God.

In my lifetime I have had many opportunities to be bitter. Therefore, I want to share with you what I have learned to do in order to keep from becoming bitter when things in my life start coming apart at the seams. First, I purposely tell God in prayer that I will not allow anything or any-

one to rob me of my joy in Christ. Then, I do a self-evaluation to see if there is any sinful behavior that may have caused or contributed to the situation. If there is, then I immediately confess that to God and ask His forgiveness. If not, then I look for God's greater purpose in the matter. I ask for His strength by His indwelling Spirit. I look for ways that I can honor and glorify God through the situation. That keeps my focus on Jesus as the Lord of my life and keeps me from becoming bitter.

The Holy Spirit lets us know in **Ruth 1:22** that it was Naomi who returned to Bethlehem not Mara. I believe Naomi had already repented before she arrived in Bethlehem. She just needed time to heal and God was going to give her that time. God was going to do the healing. She is not going to remain bitter for very long. Because God is *"the God of all grace."*

HUMBLING

Naomi said in **verse 21**, *"I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty."* She is in the process of humbling herself under the mighty hand of God and as a result, she will experience the God of all grace. The apostle Peter spoke to this in **1 Peter 5:5-10** when he said, *"You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour* (sometimes through bitterness). *But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."* Do you know someone who is going through a humbling experience? You may want to share those verses with them. You see, we tend to cast all of our anxiety on one another and that is all right since we are to bear one another's burdens, but don't stop there. Cast all of your anxiety upon Him – He cares for you.

When we humble ourselves and cast all of our anxiety upon Him (**1 Peter 5:6-7**), and resist the devil and stay firm in our faith (**1 Peter 5:8-9**), then we receive the promise in **1 Peter 5:10**. It says, *"After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."* That is what Naomi experienced. She experienced *"the God of all grace."*

Ruth was also coming to Bethlehem as a humble widow and she too experienced *"the God of all grace."* She too experienced the results of humbling oneself before Almighty God.

There is a wonderful verse that applies to Ruth. It is found in **Proverbs 22:4**. It says, *"The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honor and life."* Ruth is a beautiful illustration of how *"the God of all grace"* works in a person's life that is humble. God blesses the humble, but resists the proud. As we will see later, Ruth will be blessed with riches when she marries the wealthiest bachelor in Bethlehem. She will receive honor when she is named in the lineage of Jesus Christ. She will receive life for all eternity as she puts her faith in the only true and living God – *"the God of all grace."*

For all of us who have humbled ourselves under the mighty hand of God by receiving Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, we too receive the same blessings as Ruth, the same blessings that are promised in **Proverbs 22:4**. You see, we have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing (**Ephesians 1:3**). We have already been blessed with riches since we are heirs and joint heirs with Christ (**Romans 8:16-17**). In other words, we own all that He owns and since He is the Creator of all things and the owner of all things we are blessed with riches beyond measure. In addition, we have been given a place of honor in glory with Jesus as His bride (**Revelation 19:7**) and as a kingdom of priests (**1 Peter 2:9**). We have been given life, the gift of eternal life. In Christ we have riches, honor and life to the glory of God – because He is ***“the God of all grace.”***

We come to Him in our poverty and He gives us His riches. We come to Him in our humbled state and He lifts us up to a place of honor with Him. We come to Him with a life condemned and He gives us a life blessed for eternity. May I say again, He is ***“the God of all grace.”***

CHAPTER NINE

RUTH 1:22b**GOD’S TIMING – IMPECCABLE****Ruth 1:22b**

“And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.”

Chapter One of Ruth concludes with Naomi and Ruth entering Bethlehem. One might think that this would be a joyous occasion for Naomi, but it wasn’t, just the opposite was true. She entered the city hurting, bitter and humiliated in front of her friends after loosing everything. She left the city full and returned empty. Both Naomi and Ruth entered the city as humble widows living in poverty.

They both entered the city humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God by placing themselves under His authority and His protection. They both submitted themselves to God’s Word, His purposes, His direction and His will for His glory. As a result, they both experienced the God of all grace. We get a hint of God’s grace in their lives by looking at the timing of their arrival in Bethlehem. The last verse in Chapter One, **Ruth 1:22b**, concludes by saying, *“And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.”*

The timing of Naomi and Ruth’s entrance into Bethlehem was very significant. It was not just by chance that they entered Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. I believe God’s sovereign timing was involved. We will see throughout the book of Ruth, as we do throughout all of Scripture, that God’s timing is always impeccable. I firmly believe that when we are walking by the Spirit and not by the flesh, we too find that God’s timing in our own lives is impeccable.

The harvest season in Bethlehem started with the barley crop and ended with the wheat crop. The beginning of barley harvest, as mentioned in **verse 22**, puts their entrance into Bethlehem at the Feast of First Fruits, which was on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened bread and on the third day after Passover.

Of course in the New Testament we find that Jesus was crucified on Passover and resurrected on the Feast of First Fruits. Naomi and Ruth’s entrance into the city at the beginning of barley harvest was not by accident. In God’s perfect timing they became an illustration of the church and God’s plan to ultimately reap a new harvest that would include both the prodigal Jew and the

pagan gentile by offering them the Bread of Life – Jesus Himself, the Kinsman-Redeemer – born in Bethlehem through the lineage of Ruth.

By looking at the significance of the events taking place as Naomi and Ruth entered the city and I think you will see why I say that God’s timing was impeccable.

PASSOVER

The Passover, which was the first of the Jewish feasts, was celebrated in remembrance of their deliverance from Egyptian captivity.

While in Egypt they were directed by God to sacrifice an unblemished lamb and place some of the blood of that lamb on the door posts and lintel of their homes (**Exodus 12:5-23**). The Lord then promised, when He brought judgement upon Egypt, He would pass over the homes that were covered by the blood of the lamb. In other words, everyone in that home was spared the judgement that was pronounced upon Egypt by God.

Jesus, who is called the Lamb of God in **John 1:29**, was crucified on Passover according to **John 19:14**. Jesus was crucified as our Passover Lamb according to **1 Corinthians 5:7**, *“For Christ our Passover also has been crucified.”* When we, by faith, trust Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, and accept His work of redemption upon the cross we are in essence covered by the blood of the Lamb of God. We are spared God’s judgement. As we are told in **1 Peter 1:18-19**, *“...you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”* **John 3:16-18**, tells us, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* When God’s judgement is pronounced He will pass over everyone who is covered by the blood of the Lamb. However, judgement will fall upon everyone not covered by the blood of Jesus, everyone who has rejected Christ – our Passover.

As a side note, it is interesting to compare the similarities between the sacrifice of the first Passover lamb in Egypt with Jesus, our Passover Lamb, upon the cross. The first Passover lamb had to be unblemished. Jesus, our Passover Lamb, had to be sinless – unblemished and spotless (compare **Exodus 12:5** with **1 Peter 1:18-19**). The blood of the first Passover lamb had to be shed as was the blood of Jesus, our Passover Lamb (compare **Exodus 12:7** with **Hebrews 9:22-26**). None of the bones of the first Passover lamb were broken and none of the bones of Jesus, our Passover Lamb, were broken (compare **Exodus 12:46** with **John 19:32-36**). The first Passover lamb was slain at twilight (around 3:00 p.m.) as was Jesus, our Passover Lamb (compare **Exodus 12:6** with **Matthew 27:45-46**). God’s timing is impeccable.

As Ruth entered the city of Bethlehem little did she know that she would remarry and give birth to a son who would lead to the birth of Jesus, God’s Passover Lamb. However, God knew. God knew that when He established the Passover in Egypt it would find its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus upon the cross some 1446 years later. God knew that Ruth would be a key figure in the process. There was not a better time for Ruth to come to Bethlehem than at the beginning of bar-

ley harvest, the third day after Passover on the Feast of First Fruits. God's timing was impeccable.

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The slaying of the Passover Lamb and the eating of the Passover meal initiated the Feast of Unleavened Bread that went on for seven days.

Leaven was a substance added to the bread dough to make it rise. It was the yeast. After the bread dough was kneaded it was set aside until it fermented. This took time. God instructed the Jewish people to bake unleavened bread at Passover. This commemorated Israel's hurried departure from Egypt. In addition, leaven became a symbol for sin. So the bread baked at Passover was pure with no additives.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread would ultimately illustrate that the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ, was sinless. All who partook of the Bread of Life were made pure and should walk in purity. We see this in **1 Corinthians 5:6-8**. It says, *"Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."* In other words, our sins have been forgiven and washed clean by the blood of God's Passover Lamb. Therefore, let's walk in purity.

Naomi and Ruth's entrance into Bethlehem at the Feast of Unleavened bread served as a reminder for them to walk in purity. Naomi's recommitment and Ruth's new commitment to the Lord was to be marked by their personal purity, just as our lives are to be today. There was no better time for Naomi and Ruth to come to Bethlehem than at the beginning of barley harvest. God's timing was impeccable.

FEAST OF FIRST FRUITS

Three days after Passover was the Feast of First Fruits. The Feast of First Fruits marked the beginning of the barley harvest. This was when the Jewish people took the first sheaf of barley, their first fruits of their new harvest, and presented it to the Lord praising Him for the entire harvest (**Leviticus 23:9-11**).

It was during the Feast of First Fruits, the third day after the crucifixion of Christ, that Jesus was resurrected. Jesus was the first fruit of God's new harvest (the Church), which included the prodigal Jews who would come home to their heavenly Father through Christ, their Messiah, and the pagan Gentiles who would believe (**1 Corinthians 15:20** and **James 1:18**).

Naomi and Ruth entered Bethlehem at the Feast of First Fruits as an illustration of God's grace and God's plan to ultimately reap a new harvest that would include both the prodigal Jew and pagan Gentile (**Galatians 3:26-29**). Therefore, Ruth would remarry and give birth to a son who would lead to the birth of Jesus, the first fruit of God's new harvest. Everyone who reads the book of Ruth are able to look back upon Ruth's entrance into Bethlehem and see that God's timing was impeccable.

The more I study Scripture and the longer I walk with the Lord the greater my appreciation is for His timing in my life. I can look back and see God's perfect timing in so many areas. For example:

- Sensing God's leading, I decided to leave my secular vocation and enter vocational ministry. It was perfectly timed by the Lord. There were several things, which were out of my control that had to fall into place. Such as my financial debt needed erased, my commitment to existing clients needed to be resolved, my profit obligations to the corporation had to be met, my replacement had to be trained, and a position in ministry had to be offered. All of those things came to a conclusion at the same time, which allowed me to make that step of faith into vocational ministry. On the day that I decided to resign my position from my secular job I received a call from a local church offering me a position. They did not know that I was planning to resign. I did not share that with anyone. They did not know that my heart's desire was to enter vocational ministry. However, God did, and His timing was impeccable.
- I remember trying to get a ticket to the last performance of my son's play at a community theater. I was unable to buy the ticket when they were offered, so all the tickets were sold out. However, God worked it out so I was able to sit in the sound both to watch the last performance. I had perfect seats and it did not cost me anything. It was free! If I bought the ticket when they were offered I would not have had the best seat in the theater. God's timing was impeccable.

God's timing is always impeccable in the lives of His people who walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh. God's timing is always impeccable in the lives of those who submit themselves to His Word, His purposes, His direction and His will for His glory. Ruth and Naomi experienced God's impeccable timing in their lives.

CHAPTER TEN

RUTH 2:1-3

WE PLAN – GOD DIRECTS

Ruth 2:3

“So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.”

In the book of Ruth we see God directing the steps of His people in a way that allows Him to accomplish His plans. For example:

- God directed Ruth to Boaz.
- He kindled a spark of romance that enabled them to get married because of the Jewish Law concerning the kinsman-redeemer.
- God enabled Boaz and Ruth to have a son who was in the lineage that led to the birth of Jesus.
- As part of God’s ultimate plan, Jesus became our Kinsman-Redeemer, which is illustrated in the book of Ruth through Boaz.

In the book of Ruth God directed the steps of His people to show us the requirements associated with the Law of the kinsmen-redeemer. This is significant. According to the Law of the kinsman-redeemer, Jesus could not be our Redeemer unless He was our Kinsman, our blood relative. He had to be a blood relative to both Jew and Gentile. In addition, in order for Jesus to be our Redeemer He had to be born in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2**).

God worked in the life of Ruth as He guided and directed her steps to the field of Boaz. As a result, we see a working illustration of a Biblical principal. The Biblical principal is this: *“The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps”* (**Proverbs 16:9**). Notice what we are told in **Ruth 2:1-3**, *“Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.’ And she said to her, ‘Go my daughter.’ So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.”* It was not by chance that Ruth gleaned in the por-

tion of the field belonging to Boaz. God guided and directed her steps to that field. We will see some of the ways that God may have used to direct her steps in a moment.

BOAZ INTRODUCED

In **Ruth 2:1**, Boaz is introduced for the first time. As he is introduced we learn several things about this man's background, character, stature and unique position.

First, we need to understand that the Messiah would come through the lineage of Boaz. A lineage that God continued from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah and eventually to Boaz. In the Gospel according to Matthew we find that Matthew carefully linked the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to Boaz, (**Matthew 1:1-6**).

The skeptics of Jesus' day challenged everything about Jesus except His genealogy. His genealogy was impeccable fulfilling all the requirements of the Messiah as the Savior of the world born in Bethlehem and the King of kings from the tribe of Judah.

For Jesus to be the Messiah, He had to come through the lineage of Judah according to the prophecy given by Jacob in **Genesis 49:10**. For that to happen, Boaz, Bethlehem's most eligible bachelor, needed to get married and have a son. Apparently he was not interested in any of the women in Bethlehem, or they were not interested in him. Whichever was the case, time was running out for Boaz. So God intervened to bring him Ruth.

The name "**Boaz**" means, "*in him is strength*" and apparently he lived up to his name. We are told in **Ruth 2:1** that he was "*a man of great wealth.*" In the King James it is translated "*a mighty man of wealth.*" That phrase can also be translated "*a mighty man of war*" as well as "*a mighty man of law.*" I think Boaz was all three. He possessed the ability to acquire and protect his property, both physically and legally, and then turn it into a prosperous business. He was a man in good standing. He was respected by his peers.

We are also told that he was "*of the family of Elimelech.*" This puts him in a very important and unique position. Boaz had the legal right to marry Ruth. He also had the financial resources to buy the property of Elimelech, and pay off any debt or lean against that property. Boaz could become what is known as a kinsmen-redeemer if he chose to do so.

RUTH'S PLAN

In **verse 2**, Ruth asked Naomi's permission to glean in the fields. Apparently they were out of food and had no way to feed themselves, unless they gleaned in the barley fields. As I mentioned before, they returned to Bethlehem in poverty. Apparently Naomi was not in any condition to glean since it was Ruth who offered and received Naomi's permission to do so. We are not told why Naomi did not glean. She may have been physically unable to glean, which was back breaking work. So, some where along the way, she instructed Ruth in the Jewish Law concerning the method by which God took care of the poor and the widows. That method was called gleaning.

In **Leviticus 23:22**, God gave instructions to the owners of the fields and to the reapers. He said through Moses, "*When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the LORD your God.*" In **Deuteronomy 24:19** God repeated

His direction to the people with additional information. He said, ***“When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand.”*** Ruth was an alien or foreigner, a widow and certainly one of the needy. She had every right to ask Naomi’s permission to go into the harvest fields and glean for food.

Ruth was learning about the true and living God. She was learning about His provision, protection and His loving concern for the poor. God is still concerned about the poor today. Helping the poor is to be a concern and a characteristic that marks every true believer. When you get a moment read **Matthew 25:31-46** and ask: Which side of the King of kings are you standing on?

Ruth had a plan. She would glean, but where? How would she find the right field in which to glean?

GOD’S DIRECTION

Ruth was learning something every one of us needs to learn and that is this: God directs and leads His people. As we read earlier, in **Proverbs 16:9**, ***“The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”***

There was no one standing next to the field of Boaz waving a sign that read *“Glean here.”* We have all seen people standing at the intersection waving and twirling big signs that say, *“Car Wash”* or *“Garage Sale”* or *“Open House”* or something more elaborate. You may need to drive around the block a couple of times to figure out what the sign says, but at least there is someone giving directions. God did not do that with Ruth.

God did not speak to Ruth like He did with Jonah and say, ***“...arise and go to Nineveh.”*** From a human perspective it was by chance that Ruth entered the field of Boaz. However, from God’s viewpoint, He led her into the field of Boaz. So, how did God lead her to the right field?

I believe God prepares the way for His people who commit their way to Him. As we are told in **Proverbs 16:3**, ***“Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established.”*** Sometimes He prepares the place where He wants us to go, so it becomes more obvious to us. Always keep **Proverbs 3:5-6** in mind, ***“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”*** When we are walking with the Lord desiring to be at the center of His will, then I believe God will direct our steps as we make plans and commit those plans to Him.

I think Ruth probably stood at the edge of the city surveying the fields asking the Lord to help her choose the right one. I think the Lord helped her choose the right one by preparing her way in advance and by making it more obvious which field to choose. If I were in Ruth’s position I think I would look at the fields and do a quick prayer and a quick analysis.

- Perhaps the field of Boaz was closer to her home than the other fields. After all, she would need to carry whatever she gleaned back to her house by herself.
- Perhaps the field of Boaz had shade and a place to rest. We see that in **verse 7**.
- Perhaps the other fields were not as inviting as the field of Boaz.
- Perhaps the reapers in the field of Boaz left more barley behind than the reapers in the other fields showing that Boaz was a generous man, which he was.

- Perhaps the reapers in the field of Boaz was happier and more content than those in the other fields showing that Boaz was a good man to work for, which he was.
- Perhaps the reapers in the field of Boaz were more respectful than those in the other fields.
- Perhaps the field of Boaz was a safer place to glean.
- Perhaps the field of Boaz was more ready to be harvested than the other fields.

I believe God works this way in order for Him to guide us to the place where He wants us to be. He prepares our way in advance.

When I changed employers in my secular career I did a similar analysis of the company that I wanted to work for. I decided to write down the things that I wanted to see in a new employer and I committed them to the Lord. For example:

- I wanted to make sure there was Christian fellowship, perhaps a Bible study that I could attend. In my interview with that company I discovered there was a Bible club with about 100 members that had a lunch time Bible study.
- I wanted to work closer to home. I was tired of driving 80 miles every day to and from work. In my interview I discovered the office that I would be assigned to was only 4 miles from my home.
- I wanted to make sure the company was solid and a secure place in which to work, so I checked them out and discovered that they were.
- I wanted to make sure the company had clear goals, good management, happy employees, etc., and they did.

I checked them out as much as they were checking me out. I committed my way to the Lord and asked Him to make it clear which way I should go. I made plans, but He directed my steps. I put my trust in Him. Now I must admit that I was not totally sure that was where God wanted me to be until after I started working there for a while.

Dr. Harry Ironside once said that eighty percent of the decisions he made were made without knowing that they were in God's will until sometime later. You know there is a wonderful thing about making wrong decisions. After you make a wrong decision, then you are pretty certain what the right decision is, and you can usually back up and make the right one.

When I was in vocational ministry as an associate pastor, the leadership of the denomination called me one day to see if I was interested in being a Senior Pastor of a church. They had seven openings. I was contacted by four of the churches. However, before I talked to any of them I wrote down the things I wanted to see in a new church. When the interview process started I soon discovered, to my amazement, that the purpose statement and core values of one particular church matched my own purpose statement and core values perfectly. For example:

- They had a strong emphasis on the Word of God.
- They wanted a strong emphasis on discipleship.
- They had a desire to reach the unchurched.
- They had a desire to grow spiritually.
- They were a praying church.
- They had solid strategic initiatives and a strong Biblical focus.
- They had an incredible reputation for raising up leaders and putting them into ministry.
- They had a worship service that was not a performance.

- To top it all off, they were the friendliest people I had every met in my life, which gave me a sense of security.

I knew in my heart of hearts that this was the church God was leading me to as a Senior Pastor

God prepares our way in advance if we are diligent in seeking His direction. **Proverbs 16:9** says, *“The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”* In **Psalm 37:23** we are told, *“The steps of a man are established by the LORD, and He delights in his way.”* When we are walking with the Lord desiring to be at the center of His will, then I believe God will direct our steps as we make plans and commit them to Him. He delights in that.

I am sure Ruth would not know until sometime later that she had entered the right field. Nevertheless, God was directing her steps because she trusted in Him. Our wonderful Lord still works the same way today guiding and directing His people.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RUTH 2:4

AN EXCELLENT WORK PLACE

Ruth 2:4

“Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, ‘May the LORD be with you.’ And they said to him, ‘May the LORD bless you.’”

As Ruth made plans to glean and then implemented those plans by walking towards the harvest fields, God directed her steps to the field of Boaz. As a result, the Biblical principle recorded in **Proverbs 16:9** was put into action. It says, *“The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”* God somehow prepared in advance the place where Ruth was to glean, which led her to Boaz. I believe God made the field of Boaz an obvious choice.

God works in a similar way in our lives today. When we are walking with the Lord desiring to be at the center of His will, then God will direct our steps as we make plans and commit those plans to Him.

As we make plans and commit them to God, God directs our steps to the place where He wants us to go. However, we can still have doubts whether we are in God’s will. So, God confirms His leading in our lives. That is what God did in the life of Ruth. We see that in the remainder of Chapter Two.

However, before we see God confirming His leading in Ruth’s life I want us to see the relationship that Boaz had with his employees in **Ruth 2:4**. We are told, *“Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, ‘May the LORD be with you.’ And they said to him, ‘May the LORD bless you.’”* We see, in this verse, an example of an excellent work place. We see practical applications regarding proper employer and employee relationships as well as the qualities of a good leader.

Most of us are either in authority or under authority in the work place. Either we are the boss or we have a boss. In some cases both apply when we have people working for us yet we still report to someone in authority over us. **Verse 4** gives us insight into how the boss should relate to his or her employees and how the employees should relate to their boss. **Verse 4** gives us in-

sight into the qualities and the results of good leadership. **Verse 4** gives us insight into the qualities of an excellent work place.

EMPLOYEE FOCUSED

First, please notice that Boaz, the boss, was late to work. His reapers were already there. His servants were already there. The gleaners were already there hard at work before he arrived at his work place.

Have you ever worked for a boss who was constantly late to work or late coming back from lunch? I had a boss like that once. He was either late to work in the morning or late coming back to work after lunch. He seemed to have a work ethic that said, *“You come in late and go home early to make up for it.”*

His employees were frustrated because they were expected to be on time. One day, actually several days in a row, his employees took small pieces of double-backed tape and taped down everything on his desk. They taped down his pencils, his papers, his note pad, his coffee cup, his cup of sunflower seeds, his telephone, his day planner, the paper clips, the stapler, even the pictures of his family – they taped down everything. Then they set a timer to see how long it would take, once he sat down at his desk, to pick something up off of his desk and start working.

They had one person who was assigned as their bookie. He was in charge of taking bets to see who would be the closest in guessing how late he would be and how long it would take for him to start working once he arrived. This boss lost the respect of his employees, which is quite often what happens when the boss is consistently late. That was not the case with Boaz.

Boaz had the respect of his employees. As he arrived to work they said, ***“May the LORD bless you.”*** I like that. We are not told why Boaz was in Bethlehem and arrived late to work. However, I think I have a good understanding regarding the character of Boaz. Therefore, I think Boaz was in Bethlehem, early in the morning, doing business. Perhaps he was making arrangements to market his harvest. Perhaps he was getting money to pay his employees. Whatever it was, Boaz did nothing to lose the respect of his employees. In fact, just the opposite was true. He did everything to earn the respect of his employees.

Boaz was well organized and on top of every situation, as we will see. That is a sign of a good leader. A good leader stays in front of those who are following his or her leadership. He or she is always planning ahead to make sure his or her employees, those placed under his or her authority, are properly cared for. Sometimes that means getting up earlier to make plans and take care of business. That kind of leader has the respect of his or her employees, or followers. That was certainly the case with Boaz.

Boaz was employee focused. The first thing he did when he arrived to work was greet his workers, his reapers. The first thing he said was ***“May the LORD be with you.”*** The employer and the employees were on speaking terms. There was a mutual respect between the employer and the employees. By enlarge this is lacking in the work place today. That is because neither the employer nor the employee has earned the respect of the other. Businesses and people in general are to self-centered today. Employers get so bottom-lined focus they forget or neglect the people who will accomplish their bottom-line goals.

The first thing Boaz did when he arrived at the work place was greet his employees. He showed interest in them as people and interest in their work, and as a result the field of Boaz was an excellent work place.

I learned the value of this from a boss I had once. Twice a day he would show up at my desk. Once at 8:30 a.m. and once at 4:00 p.m. Every time he stopped by he showed interest in me as a person before he showed interest in the work that I was doing for him. He earned my respect. He would always ask how my family was doing. He knew their names, their birthdays, their interests and how well they were doing. He would then ask how I was doing and if there was anything that he could do to help. There wasn't anything that I wouldn't do for that man because I knew he had my best interest in mind. He earned my respect as he did with all of his employees.

Sometimes we give a person a job to do and the only interest we show is whether that job is done on time, in budget and according to our expectations. Whether it is in the work place, in our families or in the church we need to show constant, consistent, genuine interest not only in a person's work or ministry, but also in the person.

Far too often we complain when something does not go according to our expectations without any consideration at all for the person we are complaining to or complaining about. If you want happy workers, happy ministers and a quality end product, then you need to show respect for the person or person's who are responsible for getting the job done. That is what Boaz did.

Boaz was a good leader and a good boss. He was an excellent illustration of what we are told in **Colossians 4:1**, "*Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.*" The field of Boaz was an excellent work place.

EMPLOYER FOCUSED

There was something else that made the field of Boaz an excellent place to work, and that was because his employees were employer focused. The employees of Boaz said to him, "***May the LORD bless you.***" They understood that if the Lord blessed Boaz they too would be blessed.

When I was in a management position in my secular career I had several Christian men in my department that started a lunch time prayer meeting. They invited me to join them. They would pray every week for my success in finding new work. They prayed that I would continue to walk in a manner that honored the Lord. They prayed that the Lord would give me wisdom in the tough decisions that needed made. They prayed for my family. They prayed for those who were in authority over me that they too would be successful. I credit the success I had to the Lord and to the people who prayed for me on a consistent basis. God graciously answered the prayers of those men. I just got to be the vessel that God used to answer their prayers for His glory.

When was the last time you prayed for your boss or bosses? When was the last time you prayed for the worship team in your church, the sound technicians, the morning greeters, the visitation team, those volunteers ministering to your youth and children, your committee members, etc.? When was the last time you prayed for your Pastors? We need to pray for those who, by God's grace, are in a position of leadership.

My late wife and a few of her girl friends were complaining one day about the decisions that the President of the United States was making. During one of their gripe sessions it occurred to them that they complained a lot, but were not praying for those in leadership as the Bible taught

(1 Timothy 2:1-2). That group of women started meeting in my home every week for two years with one goal in mind, stop complaining and start praying. I like that.

I have found that as Christians we tend to do a lot of complaining, but very little praying. I can always tell when people stop praying because they start complaining. There were no complaints in the field of Boaz because these people were asking the Lord to bless him. That is what we should be doing.

GOD FOCUSED

The reason that the field of Boaz was an excellent place to work was because both the employer and the employees were God focused. That being the case, then I know the Lord was their motivation to work hard and the cause of their blessings. They knew that it was the Lord who would bless their effort – the work of their hands. They knew it was the Lord who would give them the strength to do the work, which was hard back breaking work. They knew it was the Lord who would bless their employer and through him supply their needs. Sometimes we lose sight of this today. We forget whom we are working for or whom we are serving. In **Colossians 3:23** we are told, *“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”*

I know, in many cases, our place of employment is not totally God focused. However, we can be. Don't tell me you can't. I've been there working in the midst of some of the most ungodly people you can imagine. Jesus can be and should be our motivation to do an excellent job with the right attitude no matter where we are in the work place, so we bring honor and glory to His name.

That is why the field of Boaz was an excellent work place. Boaz was employer focused. The employees were employer focused. And they were both God focused.

I would encourage you, if you are in a place of leadership, to pray for your employees. Pray that they are guided and strengthened by the Lord to do the work they have been asked to do. Pray for your employer. Pray that he or she would be blessed by the Lord. Be specific. Perhaps that blessing is the need for more work. Whatever you do, do your work as though you work for Jesus. I think you will find that God will honor those prayers. Perhaps He will even provide for you an excellent work place. You can pray for that as well.

CHAPTER TWELVE

RUTH 2:5-10**WHEN PROTECTION IS OFFERED****Ruth 2:8-9**

“Then Boaz said to Ruth, ‘Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.’”

As Boaz began his daily routine in his barley field, a young woman caught his eye. As we are told in **Ruth 2:5-10**, *“Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, ‘Whose young women is this?’ The servant in charge of the reapers replied, ‘She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the Land of Moab. And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ Thus she came and has remained from morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while.’ Then Boaz said to Ruth, ‘Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.’ Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, ‘Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?’”*

RUTH NOTICED

It did not take Boaz very long to notice Ruth and to inquire about Ruth. He immediately asked his servants, in **verse 5**, *“Whose young women is this?”* Boaz not only wanted to know her name; he also wanted to know if she was married – *“Whose young women is this?”* There was something about Ruth that immediately attracted Boaz to her. We are not told what it was, but we get some hints as we see the story unfold. I think there were several things that attracted Boaz to Ruth.

- Perhaps it was her sweet and gentle spirit. In **verse 7**, *“she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers.’”* She did not need to ask. She had the legal right to glean in any field of her choice. However, she did not insist upon that right, but rather asked permission. I am reminded of what Peter said in **1 Peter 3:3-4** speaking to wives in particular, and applied to women in general. He said, *“Your adornment must not be merely external – braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.”* May I say: a sweet and gentle spirit is not only precious in the sight of God, it is also precious in the sight of men as well. I think Boaz was attracted to Ruth because she had this imperishable quality.
- Perhaps it was her countenance, the color of her eyes, her warm smile or more likely the confidence and determination he saw when he looked into her eyes. We have already seen this in **Ruth 1:16-17** when she committed her life to God and His people.
- Perhaps it was her diligence. According to **verse 7** she had been working all morning and had rested just for a little while.
- Perhaps it was her willingness to make personal sacrifices for the well being of another. In **Ruth 2:11** Boaz told her, *“All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me.”* Ruth demonstrated true love for Naomi – a sacrificial love. The kind of love Christ had for the church and the kind of love a husband is to have for his wife (**Ephesians 5:23**).
- Perhaps it was her reputation. In **Ruth 3:11**, Boaz told Ruth that *“all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.”* She impressed the people of Bethlehem including Boaz. Godly men are attracted to godly women who have good reputations.
- Perhaps it was the way she humbled herself in showing respect for Boaz, others and the only true and living God.

Ruth was a beautiful woman, both in her personality and in the way she conducted herself. Ruth possessed the qualities that would attract any man. She certainly got the attention of Boaz. Do you believe in love at first sight? I do. Boaz was falling in love with Ruth.

I know this is true because of the way Boaz treated this gleaner, this foreigner from the land of Moab. The first thing Boaz did was to offer Ruth his protection.

RUTH PROTECTED

In **verses 8-9** Boaz told Ruth not to go anywhere else. He told her to stay in his field, to follow his reapers, and to drink his water. In addition, Boaz told his servants not to touch her. Men do these kinds of things when they are in love. When a man loves a woman he will offer his protection. Just like when a man and a woman walk down the sidewalk and the man puts himself between the woman and the traffic on the street. He is offering her his protection.

Boaz understood that it was very dangerous for a woman in Ruth’s position to be gleaning – a young woman, a widow from Moab. She was likely to receive insults. She could be physically abused. She would not be safe. So, before Boaz even approached Ruth he had already arranged to put his protection around her. As Boaz said in **verse 9**, *“I have commanded the servants not*

to touch you.” Protection is always offered as an extension of one’s grace, which is motivated by love.

Boaz went out of his way to urge Ruth not to go into any other field to glean. He went out of his way to protect her from harm. Boaz is interested in Ruth. She caught his attention and she captured his heart.

Before we go any further there is something you need to know about Boaz. In the book of Ruth Boaz is a type of Christ in that he was an illustration of what Christ would ultimately accomplish. For example:

- Boaz was a kinsman-redeemer to Ruth. As we will see, Jesus is a Kinsman-redeemer to the world (**Philippians 2:6-8**).
- Boaz was the lord of his harvest. God the Father is the Lord of a great harvest (**Matthew 9:38**), that is to say, the souls of men, women and children reaped through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.
- Boaz gave rest to Ruth. Jesus gives rest to all who put their faith in Him as their personal Savior and Lord (**Matthew 11:28**).
- Boaz supplied the needs of Ruth. Jesus is the supplier of all of our needs (**Philippians 4:19**).
- Boaz became the bridegroom of Ruth. Jesus is the Bridegroom of the church, which is His bride (**Revelation 19:6-7**, **Revelation 21:2** and **Revelation 21:9-10**).
- Boaz offered Ruth protection. Jesus becomes our eternal Protector as we put our trust in Him as our personal Savior and Lord (**John 10:27-29**).

What Boaz was to Ruth, Christ is to all who draw near to God through the blood that He shed upon the cross. Boaz took the initiative to extend grace to Ruth by offering her his protection. God in a similar way has taken the initiative to extend grace to the world by offering His eternal protection through Jesus Christ (**John 3:16**).

Notice what we are told in **1 Peter 1:3-5**, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* Our eternal salvation, destination, and inheritance are protected by the supreme power of God through our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why? Because God loves us. Protection is always offered as an extension of one’s grace, which is motivated by love.

David clearly understood and recognized the protection of God in his life. He said in **Psalms 18:1-2**, *“I love You, O LORD my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”* When we love the Lord and take refuge in the power of God, then He becomes our rock, our fortress, our shield, our salvation, our stronghold and no one is able to penetrate that protection. Why? Because He loves us. Protection is always offered as an extension of God’s grace, which is motivated by His love for you and me.

Even Satan cannot penetrate the hedge of protection that God has placed around those who love Him, unless He gives Satan permission. That was certainly the case with Peter. In **Luke 22:31-32** Jesus said, *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like*

wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” God allowed Satan to test Peter, but Jesus prayed for Peter’s faith and that after he was tested he would strengthen his brothers in Christ. Within fifty-three days, Peter preached the first sermon on the first day that the church was started and it brought glory to God. God’s protection was upon Peter because love was present. Peter loved Jesus and Jesus loved Peter.

Since *“the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”* (**1 Peter 5:8**) Jesus considered it very important to personally pray for our protection. In **John 17:15**, Jesus prayed, *“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.”* In **2 Thessalonians 3:3** the apostle Paul showed his confidence in the protection of God when he said, *“But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”*

Now, I want you to understand something that is very important. God offered Ruth protection through Boaz, but it was her decision whether to accept it or not. She could decide to put herself in harms way by rejecting the offer from Boaz.

As it was with Ruth, so it is with us today. God has offered us His eternal protection through Jesus Christ. When we, by faith, trust Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, when we accept His redemptive work upon the cross and His resurrection from the dead, we have God’s eternal protection. However, we must choose whether to accept God’s protection or reject it. We can choose to put ourselves in harms way by rejecting Jesus Christ. Protection is always offered as an extension of God’s grace, which is motivated by His love (**John 3:16**). However, we must accept it.

RUTH’S RESPONSE

Ruth asked a very practical and a very important question in **Ruth 2:10**. She asked Boaz, *“Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?”* The word *“favor”* in the Hebrew can also be translated *“grace”* as it is the King James Translation. Grace of course is unmerited favor. It is getting something that we do not deserve.

I think Ruth was absolutely startled. She was ever mindful that she was a Moabite in a foreign country and did not deserve to receive such grace. She certainly did not expect this kind of attention. So, Ruth was wondering why she had been offered this unmerited protection from Boaz. Now, Boaz was not going to just come out and say it, but he was falling in love with Ruth.

The question that Ruth asked Boaz we can also ask of God. Why has God offered us His grace? We too are undeserving of such attention. The answer is in **John 3:16**, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”* Protection is always offered as an extension of grace because it is motivated by love. It is a gift. Yet we must choose to accept it or reject it.

Because of love – God’s love – He has offered us His grace, which includes forgiveness of sin, eternal life and His eternal protection when we put our faith in the redemptive work of Christ. Protection is offered, motivated by God’s love. Have you accepted His gift? Ruth did!

 CHAPTER THIRTEEN

RUTH 2:11-13

A GOOD REPUTATION REWARDED

Ruth 2:12

“May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.”

Boaz did something that was very unusual. He offered Ruth, a gleaner and a foreigner, his protection. He extended to her his grace, his unmerited favor, because he was falling in love with Ruth. This young woman caught his attention and captured his heart.

One of the things that drew Boaz to Ruth was her reputation. I want us to see something in the book of Ruth that is very important. It is something that applies to every age group (children, teenagers and adults). I want us to see that the Lord always rewards a good reputation that honors and glorifies His name.

Notice what happened in **Ruth 2:11-13**. *“Boaz replied to her, ‘All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.’ Then she said, ‘I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.’”*

RUTH’S REPUTATION

Ruth had quite a reputation and apparently Naomi told Boaz the whole story. Perhaps one of the reasons that Boaz was late to work (**Ruth 2:4**) was because he stopped by Naomi’s home to see how she was doing. Boaz told Ruth, in **verse 11**, *“All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me.”*

- Boaz knew about Ruth’s love and respect for Naomi as well as her kindness and life long commitment to Naomi.

- Boaz knew that she left her parents and her country to be with Naomi and God's people.
- Boaz knew about her commitment to God and how she turned away from worshipping idols.
- Boaz knew that she was true to her word. She followed through on the commitments she made.
- Boaz knew about her humble spirit and now saw it first hand.
- Boaz knew that she was a woman of excellence. In other words, she didn't party and carouse around at night, she didn't dress inappropriately and she didn't chase after men. Her behavior honored the God she loved.

Ruth's reputation was attractive to Boaz and it was attractive to God as well. As a result, God rewarded her good reputation.

I think all of us are aware that people talk about people. Quite often the discussion revolve around the reputation that a person has developed. Everyone one of us develops a reputation and we reap the results of that reputation.

Some people develop a reputation for being prideful, conceited, and egotistical, while others develop a reputation for being humble, modest and courteous. God said in **1 Peter 5:5** and **James 4:6** that He *"is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* God rewards those who have a genuine reputation for being humble in the presence of those who know them best. The people who are our closest friends, our spouse and those we work with on a daily basis can usually testify whether we are humble or not. I say that because I have found that some people put on an act and act as though they are humble in front of a larger audience to gain public support. I have seen that happen with pastors, politicians and professional athletes. That was not the case with Ruth. Ruth received God's grace because she was genuinely humble in the presence of Naomi who knew her best. Ruth had a reputation for being humble and God rewarded it. He extended to Ruth His grace and His protection through Boaz.

Some people develop a reputation for being obedient to the Word of God while others develop a reputation for being indifferent to the Word of God. Some Christians treat the Word of God like junk mail. They don't open it, they just toss it aside and go about their business. I want you to see what David said about the Word of God in **Psalm 19:7-11**. David used several words like *"law," "testimony," "precepts," "commandment"* and *"judgements"* to describe God's Word. Notice what David said: *"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgements of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward."* God will greatly reward those who have a reputation for walking obediently to His Word. Ruth was gleaning in the harvest field in obedience to the Word of God. She was developing a reputation for walking in obedience to God's Word and as a result God rewarded Ruth's work, her wages were full. In one day Ruth gleaned an ephah of barley according to **Ruth 2:17**, which was enough to feed her and Naomi for ten days. God rewarded her good reputation by supplying her needs in abundance.

Some people develop a reputation as people who purposely seek after God, desiring to walk with Him by faith, while others develop a reputation for seeking their own self interests, for do-

ing their own thing, for doing what is right in their own eyes. In **Hebrews 11:6** we are told, *“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”* Ruth had already developed a reputation as a woman who by faith was seeking refuge from God by placing her faith in God. Boaz recognized that. In **Ruth 2:12** he said, *“...under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.”* May I say: God recognized that as well. As a result, God rewarded Ruth’s good reputation by giving her His protection.

Just as a side note, I mentioned that once we, by faith, place our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord we come under God’s eternal protection. Nothing can break through that protection unless God permits it for our good and His glory. However, I must add to that statement. Sin in our lives will take us out from under the umbrella of God’s protection and His discipline in our lives is sure to follow until we come to a place of repentance.

Some people develop a reputation for being considerate and others-centered, while others develop a reputation for being inconsiderate and self-centered. Ruth could have sat in Naomi’s home and said, *“What’s for dinner?”* Instead she, in essence, said, *“Can I do the grocery shopping for you?”* Ruth asked if she could glean for food rather than saying to Naomi, *“That’s your job.”*

In **Ruth 2:14**, Ruth had lunch and we are told that *“she ate and was satisfied and had some left.”* Most of us would have tossed what was not eaten or would have asked for a container and then put it in the refrigerator until it started growing green fuzz. In **Ruth 2:18**, after Ruth gave Naomi what she had gleaned, we are told that she *“gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.”* Ruth shared her lunch with Naomi. In **Philippians 2:4** we are told, *“...do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”* Ruth had a reputation that said she had the best interests of others in mind and as a result God rewarded her good reputation.

God will not bless reputations of unrighteousness that do not honor or glorify Him. However, reputations of righteousness that honor and glorify God will be rewarded by Him just as He did with Ruth.

RUTH’S REWARD

Ruth’s reward for having a good reputation that honored and glorified God was abundant. She was brand new to her faith. She had only been walking with God for a few days. Yet, her good reputation was evident and blessed by God:

- She received God’s protection.
- The Lord blessed the work of her hands.
- Her wages for a day’s work was full.
- She found favor in the sight of God and man.
- She was kindly spoken to and spoken of.
- And, she was comforted.

I want you to understand that Ruth did not seek a reward for having a good reputation, but rather God gave it to her as a part of His grace.

I think all us would like to be recipients of God's blessings for having a good reputation. Unfortunately, because of pride, disobedience to God's Word, self-centeredness and being inconsiderate of others many Christians develop an ungodly reputation. Then they wonder why they are not blessed by God. A good reputation that honors and glorifies God is developed by displaying godly attitudes and actions consistent with God's Word over time. A good reputation is the work of the Holy Spirit as we walk by the Spirit.

Every one of us should be in pursuit of a good reputation. However, we are not to be in pursuit of a good reputation for what we can get out of it. We are not to seek the blessings, but rather seek to glorify God and bring honor to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. A good reputation has a great reward, but it is only by and because of the grace of God, so He might receive all the more glory through our lives. Therefore, we ought to be in pursuit of a good reputation before men and before God. A good reputation that glorifies the Father and honors the Son – Jesus Christ. We ought to walk as Jesus Himself walked, as living evidence for His existence. Ruth was certainly living evidence for God's existence.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

RUTH 2:14-17

GOOD LEADERS ARE SERVANTS

Ruth 2:14

“At mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.’ So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left.

Boaz was a godly man and a good leader. He put Biblical principles into practice as a leader. They are the same Biblical principles that we can put into practice as leaders in our homes, churches and workplace. In **Ruth 2:14-17**, we see that good leaders, like Boaz, are servants who are motivated by love, extending kindness, and generously giving of their time and resources. Notice what took place in the harvest field belonging to Boaz and what he did as a godly leader and as a man who is falling in love with Ruth. **Ruth 2:14-17** says, *“At mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.’ So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, ‘Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may 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.”*

MOTIVATED BY LOVE

This Boaz was a fast worker. He met Ruth at midmorning (**verses 4-13**) and by noon he had already invited her to lunch (**verse 14**). Not only did he invite her for lunch, he also prepared the hors d'oeuvres (the bread dipped in vinegar) and cooked the lunch (a lunch of roasted grain) and then served her the lunch.

In our culture today it would be like a man inviting a women that he loves and wants to impress over for a Bar-B-Q with some of his friends. He does the cooking and makes sure the meal

is cooked just the way she likes it. He sets the table. He pulls the chair out as she gets ready to sit down and then helps her scoot it up to the table. He serves the meal making sure she is the first one served. He treats her as though she is very special, which she is. He doesn't think about anyone else but her. She has his full-undivided attention. He doesn't take his eyes off of her. He waits on her hand and foot because he loves her.

You know, it is unfortunate, in many cases after couples get married that all changes. The man comes home and says high honey what's for dinner? He flops down on the couch, kicks off his shoes, puts his feet on top of the coffee table and turns on the television. He expects the dog to bring him his slippers and his wife to wait on him hand and foot. Then he wonders why there are so many problems in his marriages.

There is the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping that can affect relationships. We are told in **Galatians 6:7**, ***“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”*** Sow unkindness and disrespect and you will usually reap unkindness and disrespect. Sow a selfish unloving attitude and you will usually reap a selfish unloving attitude.

You see, Ruth showed kindness to Naomi and she reaped kindness in return from Boaz. Ruth showed respect for Boaz and she reaped respect from Boaz. Boaz showed love and kindness to Ruth and he will reap love and kindness from Ruth. They both reaped what they sowed.

Boaz was a servant leader. He served those who were under his leadership and those under his leadership served him in return. The Biblical principle of sowing and reaping affects relationships. Boaz illustrated what Jesus taught his disciples in **Matthew 20:25-28**. Jesus said, ***“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*** Jesus did not come to be served, but rather to serve. In response, those whom He served willingly became His servants. It is the principle of sowing and reaping. If you want to become leaders in your home, in your workplace or in the church, then you must first become a servant to those whom you want to lead. Boaz was a good leader because he was a good servant. He had a servant's heart. Now, you may say, *“Wait just a minute, wasn't Boaz's servant leadership and behavior motivated out of his love for Ruth?”* I would have to say, yes, just as our servant leadership and behavior towards one another should be motivated out of our love for one another and out of our love for Jesus.

Jesus came to serve you and me by giving His life as a ransom because He loved us even when we did not deserve to be loved (**Romans 5:8**). Love should always be the motivation behind being a servant leader. Those outside of Christ will exercise leadership by lording it over people out of duty. Christians are to exercise leadership by becoming servant leaders motivated by their love for one another and their love for Jesus. Good leaders are servants motivated by love.

EXTENDING KINDNESS

When a leader exercises his or her leadership with a servant's heart motivated by love, we usually find that kindness is extended to those under his or her leadership. That is the next progres-

sion in the process of being a good leader. That is what we see Boaz doing. In **verses 15**, Boaz told his servants to *“Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her.”* Boaz went beyond Ruth’s legal right as a gleaner by letting her glean among the sheaves. Boaz was extending his kindness to Ruth. Good leaders are servants motivated by love who extend kindness.

David did the same thing after he became king of Israel. Because of his love for his friend Jonathan, who died, David extended his kindness to Jonathan’s son. In **2 Samuel 9:1** we are told, *“Then David said, ‘Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?’* Well, there was, and his name is Mephibosheth. In **verses 6-7** we are told, *“Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself. And David said, ‘Mephibosheth.’ And he said, ‘Here is your servant!’ David said to him, ‘Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly.’”* David became a servant leader motivated by love extending kindness to those under his leadership.

Kindness is an act of love. In **1 Corinthians 13:4** we are told, *“...love is kind.”* Love is a ministry of the Holy Spirit as is kindness. They are both fruits of the Spirit listed in **Galatians 5:22** that are evidenced in our lives as we walk by the Spirit. Therefore, good leaders who are motivated by love will extend kindness to those under their leadership.

Good leaders will extend kindness in the way they communicate (by the tone of their voice and by the words they chose). Good leaders will also extend kindness by their actions. Extending kindness out of love as servant leaders is giving someone something they don’t expect and may not deserve. It is a result of having the other person’s best interests in mind (**Philippians 2:3-4**). Good leaders are servants motivated by love extending kindness to those under their leadership.

GENEROUSLY GIVING

When leadership is exercised with a servant’s heart, motivated by love and extending kindness we usually find leaders who are very generous with their time and resources. That is the next progression in the process of being a good leader and that is what Boaz did with Ruth.

In **verse 16** Boaz said to his servants, *“Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”* Boaz was very generous to Ruth. As a result of Boaz’s generosity, Ruth was able to glean an ephah of barely which was enough food to feed her and Naomi for ten days. By the time the harvest season was over she would have gleaned more than enough to feed Naomi and herself for an entire year. Boaz not only spent time with Ruth to comfort and encourage her, he also gave generously from his resources to help her in a way that did not cause her to lose her dignity. Good leaders are generous givers of time and resources.

Paul told Timothy to instruct those in the church *“...to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share”* (**1 Timothy 6:18**). Paul told the church at Corinth, in **2 Corinthians 9:6**, *“...he who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”* It is the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping that God uses to make a leader a good leader, even a great leader. Good leaders are servants motivated by love, extending kindness and generously giving of their time and resources.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

RUTH 2:18-20**THINGS THAT LIFT OUR SPIRIT****Ruth 2:20**

“Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.’ Again Naomi said to her, ‘The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.’”

Boaz was a servant leader who was motivated by love extending kindness and generosity to those under his leadership. He demonstrated that by the way he treated Ruth when he gave her his protection, prepared and served her lunch, and made it very easy for her to glean an abundance of food. Ruth gleaned an ephah of barley, which weighed about 30-40 pounds. It was enough food to feed her and Naomi for about ten days.

I think Ruth was quite surprised by the events of the day, and with the love, kindness and generosity of Boaz. However, Ruth was not the only one surprised by the events of the day. Notice Naomi’s reaction in **Ruth 2:18-20**, *“She took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. Her mother-in-law then said to her, ‘Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed.’ So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, ‘The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.’ Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.’ Again Naomi said to her, ‘The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.’”*

When Naomi first entered the City of Bethlehem she told the women in the city to call her Mara not Naomi, in **Ruth 1:20**. In other words, she said call me bitter not pleasant. Naomi was hurting and discouraged. However, all of that was going to change. Her spirit was being lifted. She too was going to be comforted, encouraged and blessed by the lovingkindness of Boaz.

I think all of us, on occasion, get discouraged. We go through times when we are hurting emotionally. There are events in our lives that cause us to be disheartened.

I am going to be very open. I was discouraged on a particular Sunday morning because of the poor attendance in the worship service due to Daylight Savings Time. However, during the week, I was greatly encouraged when the Lord brought three different pastors outside of the church along my path. All of them said to me, independently, *“I am hearing great things about your church”* And certainly they should. The Lord was doing great things in and through our church.

We all go through periods of time when we are discouraged. Then, the Lord brings someone into our lives or causes something to happen in our lives that brings us encouragement. He knows exactly what we need and when we need it. It is good to understand what some of those things are. The things that the Lord uses to lift our spirits when we are discouraged and feeling low. Naomi is a good person to observe as the Lord lifted her spirit.

UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS

One of the things that causes our spirit to be lifted is an unexpected blessing. That was certainly the case with Naomi. You can almost hear it in her voice as you read **Ruth 2:19**. She said, *“Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed.”* Naomi knew that Ruth could not glean an ephah of barley without someone coming along side to help. She did not expect Ruth to come home with enough food for ten days after working only one day. That was an unexpected blessing. It was as though the Lord was saying to Naomi, *“It is going to be all right. I am going to take care of you. Keep trusting in Me”*

We all can experience unexpected blessings when we put our trust in the Lord. I remember when my daughter was a temporary employee for a company that she liked very much. She wanted to become a permanent employee. Shortly after she starting working for this company she had a very difficult day. At the end of the day her boss called my daughter and one other person into her office and chewed them out for missing a deadline. My daughter left the office on that Wednesday totally disheartened and in tears, yet fully trusting the Lord for her future employment. The next day she went to work knowing that it was going to be just as difficult. In the afternoon her boss called her into her office again. You can imagine the thoughts running through my daughters brain. She was a temporary employee, so they could let her go at any time. However, this time my daughter’s boss told her that she was getting a substantial pay increase and that the paper work was submitted to make her a permanent employee. My daughter went from total discouragement to a feeling of exhilaration. Unexpected blessings lift our spirit when we put our trust in the Lord.

It is important to understand that the Lord usually uses another faithful believer to bring blessings in to our lives, just as He did through Boaz to Ruth and through Ruth to Naomi. Therefore, we should be ready and looking for opportunities to be used of the Lord as a blessing in someone’s life, rather than a thorn in their side. Being an unexpected blessing in someone’s life will lift their spirit, not crush their spirit.

LOVINGKINDNESS

Another thing that lifts our spirit, which can be overlooked in this passage in Ruth, is *“lovingkindness.”* In **Ruth 2:20** Naomi said, *“May he (referring to Boaz) be blessed of the LORD*

who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and the dead.” The Hebrew word used here for “*kindness*” is translated as such 32 times in the Old Testament and 176 times as “*lovingkindness*.” The term is one of the most important terms used in the Old Testament. Lovingkindness in its full definition is a strong steadfast love that is filled with grace, mercy, forgiveness, faithfulness, goodness and devotion. If lovingkindness does not lift your spirit I do not know what will. Naomi understood the intentions of Boaz. She knew Boaz gave Ruth his lovingkindness and Naomi’s spirit was lifted.

A KINSMAN-REDEEMER

Boaz sent a very strong message to Naomi. He was saying through his acts of lovingkindness that he was in love with Ruth, and was willing and able to fulfill his roll as a kinsman-redeemer. I know this by the way Naomi told Ruth who Boaz was. She said in **Ruth 2:20**, “*The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.*” There are five Hebrew words translated as “*relative*” into the English language. Here in **Ruth 2:20** the Hebrew word translated as “*relatives*” literally means “*kinsman-redeemer.*”

In **Leviticus 25:23-25** and **47-49** as well as in **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**, God established the law of the kinsman-redeemer. In the book of Ruth God illustrated the law of the kinsman-redeemer and in the New Testament God completely fulfilled the law of the kinsman-redeemer through Jesus Christ.

In **Ruth 4:5**, Boaz stated the requirements of the law. He said, “*On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.*” In other words, the kinsman-redeemer would need to buy back the property that Naomi probably sold in order to travel to Moab. In addition, the kinsman-redeemer would need to marry Ruth to raise up a child that would one day inherit the property thereby keeping it within the family.

The law concerning the kinsman-redeemer required several things. First, the person doing the redeeming had to be a blood relative. He literally had to be a kinsman-redeemer. Boaz met that qualification. This is very important to understand when it comes to the redemption offered by God through His Son. In order for Jesus to be our Redeemer He also had to be our Kinsman. Therefore, for Jesus to be a Kinsman-redeemer He had to enter the human race and be a blood relative to both the Jew and the Gentile. This requirement was certainly fulfilled as Boaz the Jew and Ruth the Gentile were married and gave birth to Obed through whom came Christ the Savior – our Kinsman-redeemer. Jesus had both Jewish blood and Gentile blood running through His veins.

Second, the kinsman-redeemer had to be willing and able to become the husband of the redeemed. Boaz was willing and able to become Ruth’s Bridegroom just as Jesus, our Kinsman-redeemer, was willing and able to become our Bridegroom.

The kinsman-redeemer also had to be able to pay the price for redemption, so that the one who was being redeemed had no debt credited to their name. With Boaz he had to pay the going price in the market place for the field belonging to Naomi. In doing so there would be no debt credited to Ruth or Naomi. In a similar way, Our Kinsman-redeemer, Jesus, had to pay the going price for our redemption as well, which was His shed blood and death upon the cross. As we are

told in **Romans 6:23**, *“For the wages of sin is death...”* and in **Hebrews 9:22**, *“...without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”* As a result of Christ paying the price for our redemption, then there is no debt credited to our name. We are told in **Colossians 2:13-14**, *“...He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”*

Boaz was in a position to be a kinsman-redeemer, but he did not need to act in that capacity. He could have said no, but he didn't. He did not say no because he loved Ruth. Out of love comes redemption. And out of God's love for you and me (**John 3:16**) comes His Redemption in the person of a Kinsman-redeemer and His name is Jesus our Savior.

It is also important to understand that the one being redeemed had to be willing to be redeemed. Ruth had to be willing to allow Boaz to be her kinsman-redeemer. She had to go to Boaz and tell him that she wanted to be redeemed. Boaz could not redeem her until she did. So it is with you and me. We need to be willing to allow Jesus Christ to be our Kinsman-redeemer. We need to go to Him in prayer and let Him know that we want to be redeemed. There is no redemption until we do.

Just as Boaz was the only qualified kinsman-redeemer for Ruth, so is Jesus the only qualified Kinsman-redeemer for you and me. He is the only Savior who is a blood relative to both Jew and Gentile, who is from the lineage of David, the rightful King of kings, Lord of lords and High Priest from the tribe of Judah born in Bethlehem. He is the only one who was willing and able to pay the price for our redemption. He is the only one who could ever do so out of love. Out of love comes redemption.

Knowing all of that ought to lift your spirit. Our spirits ought to be lifted because our Kinsman-redeemer has come. Almost two thousand years ago Jesus entered Jerusalem headed for the cross as our Kinsman-redeemer. A great crowd of people met Him at the entrance to the City with branches from palm trees shouting *“Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD; Hosanna in the highest!”* See **Matthew 21:9**. Their spirits were lifted because their Redeemer had come. How about you, is your spirit lifted?

You can have your spirit lifted by receiving God's lovingkindness, which includes His grace, forgiveness of sin, mercy, faithfulness, goodness, devotion and eternal life. All you need to do is tell your Kinsman-redeemer, Jesus Christ, that you want to be redeemed. You will be comforted, encouraged, loved and your sins forgiven through the lovingkindness offered by God through His Son. All you need to do is say in prayer with all sincerity of heart: *“Dear Heavenly Father, I want to be redeemed. I believe Jesus died for my sins, was buried and rose again. Please forgive me for my sins. I accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. Amen.”*

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

RUTH 2:21-23

WHEN OBEDIENCE IS EASIER

Ruth 2:23a

“So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest.”

Ruth’s first day of gleaning in the field of Boaz was a remarkable day. Boaz treated Ruth in a very special way. He offered her his protection, prepared and served her lunch, and instructed his workers to let her glean among the bundles of barley that they had already harvested. The lovingkindness and generosity of Boaz was very evident, not only to Ruth, but also to Naomi.

As a result, Naomi’s spirit was lifted. She could now see the light at the end of the tunnel. She understood that Boaz was a kinsman-redeemer who was able to redeem her property that she lost when she left Bethlehem to go to Moab. She also understood that Boaz was willing to redeem Ruth, which meant marrying Ruth to raise up a child who would carry on the family name and eventually inherit Naomi’s property. This was an unexpected blessing for Naomi that brought her great encouragement.

In Ruth 2:21-23 we pick up the discussion between Ruth and Naomi as Ruth told Naomi what Boaz offered. Notice what we are told, *“Then Ruth the Moabitess said, ‘Furthermore, he said to me, You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.’ Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, ‘It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field.’ So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.”*

The offer by Boaz and the direction given to Ruth by Naomi was very clear. Ruth was to glean in the field of Boaz until the harvest season was over. Ruth was to stay in the field of Boaz for her own safety. It would also give Ruth the opportunity to get better acquainted with Boaz. Naomi understood that Boaz was in love with Ruth. His love for Ruth was demonstrated by his actions. I am sure Naomi was hoping that Ruth would feel the same way and fall in love with Boaz. As we will see in Chapter Three that was indeed the case.

However, there is something else that I want us to observe in these verses. When I study the Bible I purposely look for godly character traits that are evident in the lives of godly people. I look for practical applications. I look for ways that I can improve with the Lord's help. I look for the lessons learned and the methods practiced. Here in **Ruth 2:21-23**, I see the unwavering obedience of Ruth to Naomi.

I am sure you are aware that obedience to those in authority over us is a godly character trait that brings glory to God. Our obedience to God and to His word is usually reflected in the way we react to human authority. Those who rebel against God's authority in their lives will usually rebel against human authority in their lives.

In **Ruth 2:21-23**, we see the unwavering obedience of Ruth to Naomi and we see what made her obedience to Naomi easier. There are three things that facilitate obedience – that makes obedience easier.

RESPECT IS EARNED

The first thing that makes obedience easier is when we have respect for those in authority over us. By the way, that respect is earned. Boaz was in the process of earning Ruth's respect. It was not something he would accomplish in one day.

On the other hand, Naomi had already earned Ruth's respect. Ruth had already, on her own initiative, placed herself under Naomi's authority. Ruth respected Naomi. So, when Boaz suggested that Ruth stay in his field to glean, Ruth looked to Naomi for her direction. She willingly became obedient to whatever Naomi said. Obedience is easier when we respect those in authority over us.

Notice what Paul said in **Philippians 2:12**. He said, ***"So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence."*** Because of the respect that the Philippians had for Paul, they willingly became obedient to his direction even when he was not around to watch. We see their respect referenced in **Philippians 1:25-26**. Paul said, ***"Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again."*** They had confidence in Paul's leadership. They respected him as an apostle and as a fellow bondservant of Jesus Christ. That made their obedience to Paul much easier. They knew Paul had their best interest in mind. He practiced what he preached by putting into shoe leather **Philippian 2:3-4**, ***"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for the interests of others."*** Boaz did the same thing, and so should we. Putting others first builds respect. It makes obedience easier.

During my freshmen year in High School the football coach saw me playing flag football during my gym class. He came up to me and said he wanted me to try out for the football team. Now, I had a great deal of respect for this coach. He only had one hand. Yet he could catch and throw a football better than anyone on the team. He could do more push-ups and chin-ups with one hand than the rest of us could do with two hands. He had earned my respect. So I said, ***"Sure I'll give it a shot."*** He told me that he was going to open up the weight room and wanted me to work out after practice and on weekends, which I did. As a result of my obedience to his coach-

ing I made the varsity football team, first string right end, during my freshmen year in High School. You see obedience is made easier, even if it means hard work, when we respect those in authority over us.

REASONS ARE GIVEN

There is something else that makes obedience easier and that is when we are given the reasons why we should obey. Naomi gave Ruth the reason she should obey. The reason was, she would be safe. In **Ruth 2:22**, *“Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, ‘It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field.’”* Naomi’s reason made good sense. It made Ruth’s obedience easier.

Have you ever noticed that when God asks for our obedience in the Bible He always gives us the reason why we should obey? For example, in **Ephesians 6:1-3** it says, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.”* It is OK to let children know that if they disobey their parents things are not going to go well for them. They need to know that their disobedience could cause them harm or even shorten their life span. For example:

- You may tell them not to climb in a certain tree because you know the branches are weak, they could fall and hurt themselves.
- You may tell them not to put that marble in their mouth because they could choke to death.
- You may tell them not to play in the street because they could be hit by a car that may not see them.
- You may tell them to make sure they eat their fruits and vegetables because you want them grow up with a strong and healthy body.

It is not because we are mean that we tell them these things and desire their obedience, but rather it is because we have their best interest in mind. Disobedience to any of those items, and many others that we could list, could cause them harm or even shorten their life span. It is important to tell our children and those under our authority why we want them to do certain things in obedience to what we say. When the reason is given for obedience, then obedience is made easier.

Now I must say, having been a child and a teenager once, that some times my parents told me what they wanted me to do and even gave me the reasons why they wanted me to do them, and I thought their reasons are dumb and stupid. I thought my parents were being mean or unreasonable.

After making the varsity football team I could not wait to go home and tell my dad the good news. When I told him, his reply was, *“You’re not playing football.”* You’ll get hurt was his reason. I thought my dad’s reason was dumb and stupid. I thought he was being mean and unreasonable. Nevertheless, I did not play football. That leads me to the third thing that makes our obedience easier.

RESULTS ARE SEEN

The third thing that makes our obedience easier is when we see the results of our obedience. For Ruth, she saw the results immediately. She worked in the field of Boaz in complete safety.

To remain obedient over the long run we need to see the results of our obedience in the short run. Ruth saw she was safe every day that she gleaned in the field of Boaz. She experienced it, so she continued working in the field of Boaz for about six weeks until the end of the harvest season. In **Ruth 2:23** we are told, *“So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barely harvest and the wheat harvest.”* Obedience is made easier when we see the results of that obedience.

I went to my first High School football game as a spectator sitting in the bleachers. It was our season opener. Everyone thought we had a good chance to win the championship that year. We had an all-American running back and a great quarterback. The coach worked hard balancing the running game with the passing game. On the first play of the game our all-American running back picked up 30 yards on the play. The stadium went crazy. On the second play of the game the right end that took my place went out for a pass. He caught the pass for another impressive gain, but was hit hard. He was hit from the front and hit from the back. One hit him high and the other hit him low. He went down and never got up. They took him off the field in an ambulance with a broken neck.

I went home that night and told my dad how much I respected his decision. I told him that I would never again question the reasons for the decisions he made. My obedience to my father became easier because I saw the results of that decision. Unfortunately, it was in a negative way, but nevertheless, I learned that the decisions my parent’s made and the reasons they made them were not dumb or stupid. I learned that they were not being mean and unreasonable. In fact, it was just the opposite. They had my best interest in mind. They made wise decisions and gave me wise direction out of their love and concern for me. I gained a deep respect for my parents.

Our obedience is made easier when we respect those in authority over us, when we are given good reasons to obey and when we see the results of our obedience.

In **Deuteronomy 10:12-13** it says, *“...what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God (in other words, respect Him), to walk in all His ways (be obedient) and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and keep the LORD’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today (and here is the reason why) for your good?”* Then, in **Deuteronomy 11:26-28** we see the results. We are told, *“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God...”* God has made our obedience to Him easier. That is because we can respect Him. He has our best interest in Mind. He gives us good reasons why we should obey and we when do we see the results of our obedience through the blessings He gives. We can take the same approach in our homes, workplace and within our church. Earn respect, give good reasons for decisions that require obedience and look for positive results. I think you will find that obedience will become easier, just as it was in the life of Ruth.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

RUTH 3:1-5

THE MATCHMAKER'S MISSION

Ruth 3:1

“Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well for you?’”

In Ruth Chapter Three the harvest season is over. Ruth completed about six weeks of gleaning in the field of Boaz. We are not told what went on during those six weeks. However, as far as Boaz and Ruth are concerned, it must have gone very well. I know this, because Naomi asked Ruth if she would like to marry Boaz.

Naomi became a matchmaker who was on a mission. She felt free to follow her inclination based on Ruth's unique position. She had a plan that she wanted to present to Ruth. Notice what we are told in Ruth 3:1-5, *“Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well for you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barely at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do.’ She said to her, ‘All that you say I will do.’”*

THE PROPOSAL EXTENDED

Naomi presented her plan to Ruth. She said in Ruth 3:1, *“...shall I not seek security for you...?”* In other words, *“Do you want to get married?”* I believe at this point, Boaz was in love with Ruth and Ruth was now in love with Boaz. However, Ruth did not make any move towards Boaz. She didn't let her feelings be known. The reason she didn't respond to Boaz was because of her commitment to Naomi in Ruth 1:16-17. She said to Naomi, *“...where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.*

Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me.” Ruth was a woman of integrity. She was true to her word. I believe she would have remained a widow in order to honor her commitment to Naomi. So, Naomi stepped in as a matchmaker.

THE POSITION EXPLAINED

Ruth was in a very unique position. She was a childless widow. According to Jewish Law she had certain rights. In **Deuteronomy 25:5-10** we are told, *“When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out from Israel. But if the man does not desire to take his brother’s wife, then his brother’s wife shall go up to the gate of the elders and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband’s brother to me.’ Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And if he persists and says, ‘I do not desire to take her,’ then his brother’s wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, ‘Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother’s house.’ In Israel his name shall be called, ‘The house of him whose sandal is removed.’”* This is why Naomi asked Ruth, *“...shall I not seek security for you...? Is not Boaz our kinsman...?”* Ruth was in a very interesting position. She could claim one of her husband’s brothers (a kinsman-redeemer) as her own husband. She had the legal right to do that to preserve the family’s name and the family’s property.

When God gave the nation of Israel the Promised Land, He gave each tribe a particular section of that land. Then, He gave each family within each tribe a particular parcel of land. That parcel of land was to be handed down as an inheritance from one generation to another. God also provided the means by which they could protect their property. The nearest kinsman would marry the childless widow. Together they would have a child in order to pass on the title of the property and keep it within the nation, within the tribe, and within the family.

According to the law, if the nearest kinsman refused to marry Ruth, the childless widow, she could disgrace him in front of the entire city. She would do that by spitting in his face and removing his sandal. That was the ultimate disgrace.

Naomi’s plan as the matchmaker was presented to Ruth. Ruth was now free to respond to Boaz. In **verse 5** she said to Naomi, *“All that you say I will do.”*

THE PLAN ESTABLISHED

Naomi told Ruth to wash herself and to anoint herself. In other words, she was to put on some of that Majestic Moab #5, the perfume with the irresistible fragrance. Then she was to put on her best clothes and go to Boaz at the threshing floor.

When she got to the threshing floor she was to watch and wait until he was asleep. Then she was to quietly go up to Boaz and uncover his feet and lie down at his feet. In the middle of the

night when his feet were cold he would lean forward to cover his feet, smell that Majestic Moab #5, look around and find Ruth lying at his feet. Wow! What a way to wake up! Naomi had it all figured out.

It is interesting to note that the plan Naomi had for Ruth parallels the plan God has for us. Just as Naomi sought security for Ruth through Boaz her kinsman-redeemer, so it is with God who seeks security for us through Jesus our Kinsman-redeemer. Boaz illustrates the role of a kinsman-redeemer, which was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Ruth, illustrates what happens to those who are redeemed, which was ultimately fulfilled in Christ.

The first thing that Naomi told Ruth to do was wash herself. When we trust Jesus Christ as our personal Redeemer the first thing that takes place is, we are washed. In **Titus 3:4-7** we are told, ***“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*** The washing of regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God cleanses us from sin and washes us with the Word of God (**Ephesians 5:26-27**). We are given a new Spirit-empowered and Spirit-protected life as God’s own children and heirs of His kingdom. We go through the washing of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit. In other words, we are born again – born of the Spirit (**John 3:5-8**).

The second thing Naomi told Ruth to do was to anoint herself. When we trust Jesus Christ as our personal Redeemer, we too are anointed. We are anointed with His Holy Spirit. In **1 John 2:20** we are told, ***“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.”*** In **1 John 2:27**, we are told, ***“...the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.”*** There is only one thing that God has given to us that abides in us and teaches us, and that is His Holy Spirit. The washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit cleanse us, then we are anointed by the in-dwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who teaches us how to abide in Christ.

The third thing that Naomi told Ruth to do was to put on her best clothes. When we trust Jesus Christ as our personal Redeemer we too put on the best clothes. We put on His righteousness. We are clothed with His character qualities. Some of those qualities are described in **Colossians 3:12-14**. We are told to ***“...put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another and forgiving each other...put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”*** We not only have our sins washed away and are in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit, but we are also given a new wardrobe that reflects His righteousness (**Revelation 3:5** and **19:7-8**). When we come to Christ we are clothed in His righteousness, ***“...we become the righteousness of God in Him”*** (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).

The fourth thing that Naomi told Ruth to do was to go to Boaz and claim him as her redeemer. Boaz did all that he could do. He let it be known through his actions that he was willing to pay the price for Ruth’s redemption. He made his intentions known. He wanted to redeem Ruth. However, he must wait until Ruth came to him and let him know she wanted to be redeemed. The same is true for us. God has done all that He can do. He sent the Redeemer and paid the price for our redemption. He has made His intentions known. He wants to redeem us. How-

ever, He must wait until we come to Him and let Him know that we want to be redeemed. Just as Ruth had to personally claim Boaz as her redeemer, so it is with us, we must personally claim Jesus as our Redeemer. Just as Ruth went to the foot of Boaz, so we must go to the foot of the cross. Just as Ruth took action, so we must take action.

Ruth knew that Boaz was her redeemer, but it did not do her any good until she personally asked him to redeem her. Many people today know the facts about Jesus, but they have never personally asked Him to redeem them. The apostle Peter in Acts Chapter Two gave the very first sermon ever preached in the church. In that sermon Peter said in **Acts 2:21**, ***“And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*** The message has not changed in two thousand years. The method for being redeemed has not changed in two thousand years. Call on the name of the Lord. Let your intentions be known. Let the Father know that you want to be redeemed into His family. Let Him know you want your sins forgiven. Let Him know you want Him to come into your life and you shall be saved.

Many people are faithful church attenders, but have never gone down to the threshing floor and personally asked Christ to be their Redeemer. We all need to kneel at the foot of the cross. Have you asked Jesus to be your Savior, to save you from sin and to forgive you of your sin? Have you asked Him to redeem you and reconcile you in your relationship with the Father? Just as Naomi offered security for Ruth through the kinsman-redeemer (Boaz), so the Father offers eternal security through the Kinsman-redeemer (Jesus Christ), ***“...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved” (Romans 10:9).***

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

RUTH 3:6-9

RUTH PROPOSES TO BOAZ

Ruth 3:9

“He said, ‘Who are you?’ And she answered, ‘I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.’”

Naomi told Ruth what she must do. She was to wash herself and anoint herself. She was to put on some of that Majestic Moab #5 with that irresistible fragrance. She was to put on her best clothes. Then, in the middle of the night she was to go down to the threshing floor where Boaz was sleeping and ask him to be her redeemer and marry her.

Ruth did everything that her mother-in-law said. In Ruth 3:6-9 we are told, *“So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold a woman was lying at his feet. He said, ‘Who are you?’ And she answered, ‘I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.’”*

THE THRESHING FLOOR

In Ruth 3:6 we are told, *“So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.”* It is important for us to understand what was taking place at the threshing floor.

The threshing floor was located either on top of a hill, or in some location that had full exposure to the winds that blew in the late afternoon. It was located in a place that had a hard clay soil, which was leveled and compacted to make a smooth hard surface about twenty-five to forty feet in diameter. Then a border of stones were placed around the perimeter to keep the grain from blowing away.

When the breeze began to blow they would take their sheaves of grain and spread them out on the threshing floor. Then they would take oxen or donkeys and walk then around the floor to trample down the grain and break the chaff or husks away from the grain. The people would then take the crushed grain and throw it into the air to allow the wind to blow the chaff away while the grain fell back to the threshing floor. That process continued as long as the wind blew starting around sundown and sometimes continuing until midnight.

Whenever the wind died down they quit threshing and held a religious feast. The entire family participated in the feast including, the reapers and servants. It was a time of singing psalms and thanking the Lord for an abundant harvest. It was a time for celebrating the fruit of their labor.

After the feast was over the men would sleep around the grain, which was stacked in the middle of the threshing floor, to protect it from thieves. Since the threshing floor was circular they would sleep with their heads towards the grain and their feet would stick out like spokes on a wheel around the stack of grain. This is the picture we have as Ruth approached Boaz in the middle of the night.

However, there is something else taking place that I want you to see as Ruth went to Boaz, which reflects true redemption. To explain I need to start with Jesus in the New Testament and then come back to Ruth.

When Jesus left His glory with the Father to enter the human race and go to the cross for you and me, He humbled Himself. As we are told in **Philippians 2:5-8**, *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking on the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* For redemption to take place, Jesus our Kinsman-redeemer, had to humble Himself by going to the cross. Then, in **Philippians 2:5**, we are told to *“Have this same attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”* In order for you and me to experience redemption, we too must humble ourselves by looking to the cross and telling our Redeemer that we want to be redeemed. Pride has kept many people out of the kingdom of God:

- Some have this prideful notion that they can do it their way and on their terms. Yet in **Isaiah 53:6** we are told, *“All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”*
- Some have this prideful notion that if they are good enough and do enough good things they will get into heaven. Yet we are told in **Isaiah 64:6**, *“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”*
- Some have this prideful notion that any religion can get them there. Yet Jesus said in **John 14:6**, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”*
- Some have this prideful notion that says, I don’t care what the Bible says, God does not want a personal relationship with people. They set their own words as more authoritative than God’s Word. They reject what Jesus said in **John 14:23**, *“If anyone loves Me, he*

will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”

In order to be redeemed we must give up our methods, our prideful notions and our efforts. We must fall on our knees before God Almighty. We must unconditionally accept His method and His effort as given in His Word. We must give up our pride and humble ourselves by going to Jesus and Jesus alone telling Him that we want to be redeemed.

In order for Ruth to be redeemed she had to go to Boaz and tell Him she wanted him to be her personal redeemer. She had to humble herself by kneeling at the feet of Boaz just as we must humble ourselves by kneeling at the foot of the cross, by kneeling before Jesus. As we are told in **Philippians 2:10**, “...so at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” Humility precedes redemption. God “...is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble” (**1 Peter 5:5**). That is the picture we have as Ruth approached Boaz.

THE UNCOVERING

Ruth humbled herself that night by going to the threshing floor and waiting until Boaz fell asleep. According to **Ruth 3:7-8**, she came secretly. Ruth did not want to wake anyone up. Once she found Boaz she took his blanket and carefully pulled it back to uncover his feet. Then she lay down at his feet. In the middle of the night Boaz’ feet got cold. Then, when he bent forward to cover his feet he got a sniff of that Majestic Moab #5, looked around and saw a woman lying at his feet.

When we began our study in the book of Ruth, I mentioned that the word “love” was only used once in the entire book. I mentioned that love was demonstrated in many different ways throughout the book of Ruth giving us insight in how we should love one another as well as how we should love Jesus. For example, Ruth had certain rights as a childless widow and Boaz had certain obligations as a kinsman-redeemer. However, neither one rushed into the relationship. They waited until the time was right. You see, according to **1 Corinthians 13:4**, “*love is patient.*”

Far too often I hear young people say, “*I can’t wait to get married.*” May I say to you: love can wait, lust cannot. I hear young people say, “*I can’t wait to move out of the house.*” Far too often I hear older people say, “*I can’t put up with that person any more.*” Or, “*What’s taking them so long.*” I want you to know something. When we lack patience, what we are really saying is, “*It is all about me.*” Yet the fruit of God’s Spirit working in us is “*patient*” (**Galatians 5:22**). Therefore, patience is all about Him, His leading and His timing in our lives. Being patient is an act of love. Being patient is humbling ourselves under the authority of God.

Sometimes, before God allows us to move forward as individuals, we must wait for Him to work in another person’s life, or to change our circumstances in life. That is called patience. Patience says I love Jesus more than myself and that brings glory to God.

God will do one of two things in our lives. He will either bless our patience, or He will help us develop patience through the trials of life (**Romans 5:3-5** and **James 1:2-3**). It is up to us to decide how difficult we want our lives to be. Boaz was patient and his patience paid off. Ruth was patient and her patience paid off.

THE COVERING

There is no question that Boaz was startled to find a woman lying at his feet. It must have been pretty dark that night or Ruth had her face covered, so Boaz said, in **verse 9**, ***“Who are you?”*** I think when Boaz discovered it was Ruth lying at his feet, his heart skipped a beat. I think he was pleasantly surprised.

I also think when Ruth saw Boaz looking at her she got about as nervous as you can get. So she got right to the point. She probably rehearsed in her mind what she was going to say, over and over again. She said, ***“I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.”*** She got right to the point, ***“You are my kinsman-redeemer, so marry me.”*** Ruth proposed to Boaz.

Now the question was: Will Boaz marry Ruth? Boaz had a major problem that could keep them from getting married. It was nervous time. What will Boaz do? Aren't you glad the story doesn't end here?

CHAPTER NINETEEN

RUTH 3:10-13

WHAT MUTUAL LOVE PROMOTES

Ruth 3:10

“Then he said, ‘May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.’”

One approach to reading and studying the Bible that I find very helpful is to look for the human factor. To look at how people live and how God responds to their lives. By taking that approach we can learn from their godly behavior or from their mistakes. The idea is to let the Spirit of God take the Word of God and transform us into the people of God. By taking that approach we cannot rush through Scripture. We must take our time by going through the Bible verse by verse, so the Spirit of God can open our eyes to see the things that will change our lives. We have already seen some of those things in the book of Ruth.

So far, we have seen Ruth’s obedience to Naomi. We saw Ruth humbling herself by going to the threshing floor in the middle of the night to find Boaz. It was there that Ruth popped the big question. She asked Boaz to be her redeemer and marry her.

We saw that we too must humble ourselves and go to our Redeemer and ask to be redeemed. We do that by trusting Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord – our Kinsman-redeemer.

We also saw that both Ruth and Boaz demonstrated patience by not rushing into the relationship. They became well acquainted with each other first. They developed a mutual respect for one another. They waited until they both were released from other commitments and obligations. They waited for the right time. One of the ways they demonstrated their love for one another was through their patience. You see, according to **1 Corinthians 13:4**, *“Love is patient.”*

There are several other ways Ruth and Boaz demonstrated their love for one another. We see some of them in **Ruth 3:10-13** as Boaz responded to Ruth’s proposal. We see what mutual love promotes in a relationship. Notice what we are told in **Ruth 3:10-13**, *“Then he said, ‘May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excel-*

lence. Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning.”

COMPLIMENTARY COMMENTS

The first thing that Boaz did, after Ruth’s proposal, was give her a compliment. In **verse 10** he said, *“May you be blessed of the LORD. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.”* Obviously there was a big age difference between Boaz and Ruth. Perhaps that was another reason Boaz did not approach Ruth first. A young godly woman can be attractive to an older man. However, because he does not want to act foolish or be embarrassed, he remains silent. By Ruth going to Boaz and letting him know her desire to be redeemed by him was an act of kindness on her part. It was an act of love on her part because according to **1 Corinthians 13:4**, *“...love is kind.”*

Boaz recognized her lovingkindness; he was excited about it and complimented her for it. You see love *“rejoices with the truth”* according to **1 Corinthians 13:6**. Mutual love promotes kind actions and it promotes kind responses in the form of genuine compliments.

Boaz also complimented Ruth for her reputation. In **verse 11** he said, *“I will do whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.”* Love *“does not rejoice in unrighteousness”* (**1 Corinthians 13:6**). Apparently, if Ruth was not a woman of excellence Boaz would not have been very eager to except her proposal. Her reputation was to be admired and it deserved to be complimented. Mutual love looks for opportunities to give genuine complements.

I have been taught to give ten genuine compliments before offering one constructive criticism. That is a good rule of thumb to follow because constant criticism builds barriers between people. It destroys effective communication. It destroys relationships. Constant criticism, void of genuine compliments, is like a wedge that can divide friendships and relationships, marriages, families and churches.

I must admit, there is a down side to giving ten compliments, especially if they are given in a short time frame. On occasion my wife would say, *“Honey, thanks for taking out the trash. I really appreciate you putting your dirty clothes in the hamper. That was very helpful. By the way, dinner out last night was wonderful.”* By the third compliment I new I was in deep trouble. However, I must say, a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down. Mutual love looks for opportunities to give genuine compliments.

COMMON CONSENT

Mutual love for one another also seeks common consent or to put it another way, a joint agreement. By Ruth going to Boaz in the middle of the night it gave Boaz an opportunity to say no without any public embarrassment.

I rather suspect that Naomi new that Boaz was not first in line to be Ruth’s redeemer. As we will see in a moment, there was a closer relative that had to be given the first opportunity to re-

deem Ruth. Yet it was obvious to all that the Lord had led Ruth to the field of Boaz and that there was a mutual love that had developed between them.

Naomi could have told Ruth that she must go to this other relative first, but she did not. Because of Naomi's love for Ruth she sent her to Boaz. You see, love *"does not seek its own"* according to **I Corinthians 13:5**. Love does not insist on having its own way. Love always has the best interest of another in mind. Naomi gave Ruth the opportunity to say no regarding Boaz and Ruth gave Boaz the opportunity to say no as well. Mutual love promotes common consent or mutual agreement. It always has the best interest of another in mind.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

There is something else that takes place when mutual love exists between two people. There is clear communication. Mutual love promotes clear communication so there is no misunderstandings.

Ruth could not have expressed her desire more clearly or succinctly to Boaz. Boaz could not have expressed his desire more clearly to Ruth. Boaz could not have expressed the problem that he was facing more clearly to Ruth. There was another relative in the picture that had to be given the first opportunity to redeem the family's property and marry Ruth.

We will see in Chapter Four how Boaz takes care of the problem. For now, the point I want us to understand is this: There were no misunderstandings between Boaz and Ruth. Mutual love for one another promotes clear, open, honest and loving communication.

Unfortunately, even when we have the best intentions in mind, what we say or try to communicate and what people hear are sometimes two different things. It's kind of like the man who frantically called the doctor on the phone saying, *"My wife is pregnant and her contractions are only two minutes apart!"* The doctor then asked, *"Is this her first child?"* To which the man being a little irritated responded, *"No! This is her husband!"* Even when we think our communication is clear its not.

Nevertheless, mutual love for one another makes every attempt to promote clear, open, honest and I want to underscore, loving communications. We are to speak *"truth in love"* (**Ephesians 4:15**). That is what Boaz did.

CARING CONCERN

There is one other item that mutual love promotes and that is a caring concern for one another. Love is demonstrated by our genuine concern for the physical, financial, emotional and spiritual well being of another person. When we are genuinely concerned for another person we put our "self" aside and seek the best for that person.

Boaz would do that for Ruth. He understood the position that Ruth was in, the position that he was in, and the position that this other relative was in. So Boaz said in **verse 13**, *"...if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives."* Boaz wanted to redeem Ruth because he loved Ruth. Yet he would put himself aside so that harmony would remain in the family and the best would be accomplished for Ruth.

You see, according to **1 Corinthians 13:4**, *“love...is not jealous.”* Boaz may have his heart broken if the other relative redeems Ruth, but for Ruth’s sake he would not be envious – he would not become jealous. He had every one’s best interest in mind. Mutual love promotes a caring concern for others. Therefore, because of this caring concern for Ruth, Boaz personally went to this other relative to resolve the issue. We will see that in Chapter Four.

There is another way in which Boaz demonstrated his caring concern for Ruth. He told her in **verse 13** to stay the night, to *“Lie down until morning.”* It would not be safe for a young woman of excellence to be walking the streets at night. So Boaz had her lie down and stay night. I want you to notice in **verse 14** that it says, *“So she lay at his feet until morning.”* There was no hanky-panky on the threshing floor with Boaz. His concern was simply for the safety of Ruth.

God has a caring concern for people as well. In **John 3:16** we are told, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”* God’s loving caring concern for the eternal destiny of people caused Him to send Jesus, so they could be redeemed.

The apostle Paul also had a caring concern for people. In **2 Corinthians 5:20** he said, *“...we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*

I too have a loving caring concern for people. I too want people to know the good news that they can have their sins forgiven and receive eternal life. Have you responded to God’s loving caring concern for you? You can do that by telling Him in prayer that you believe Jesus Christ died for your sins on the cross and was raised again on the third day. Go to your Redeemer and ask Him to forgive your sins and come into your life as Savior and Lord. Keep in mind, out of love, out of God’s love for you and me, comes redemption.

CHAPTER TWENTY

RUTH 3:14-18**WHEN A MAN LOVES A WOMAN****Ruth 3:14-15**

“So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before anyone could recognize another; and he said, ‘Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.’ Again he said, ‘Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it.’ So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.”

We have seen Boaz’s reaction to Ruth’s proposal as she asked him to be her redeemer and marry her. In essence Boaz said, “Yes! Well, maybe.” There was another relative that had to be given the first opportunity to redeem the family’s property and marry Ruth. Boaz could not give Ruth a definite yes even though he wanted to. Therefore, Boaz indicated he would personally resolve this issue, which we will see in Chapter Four.

We also saw how Boaz put his love for Ruth into action. He demonstrated that love in the way he complemented her, communicated with her and cared for her safety. For example, it was not safe for a woman of excellence to walk the streets at night, so Boaz told Ruth to stay the night with him.

Then, in **Ruth 3:14-18** we are told, *“So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before anyone could recognize another; and he said, ‘Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.’ Again he said, ‘Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it.’ So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city. When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, ‘How did it go, my daughter?’ And she told her all that the man had done for her. She said, ‘These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’ Then she said, ‘Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.’”*

I want to mention again, there was no hanky-panky going on at the threshing floor between Boaz and Ruth. I want us to clearly understand that Boaz and Ruth didn’t mess around. There was no immoral conduct between Boaz and Ruth. There was no inappropriate behavior between

Boaz and Ruth. Ruth was a woman of excellence, as we saw in **Ruth 3:11**. Therefore, we are told in **verse 14**, “...*she lay at his feet until morning.*”

HE PROTECTS HER REPUTATION

Ruth was concerned about her reputation, so we are told that she “*rose before one could recognize another.*” Ruth wanted to leave the threshing floor before anyone recognized who she was. A godly woman with a godly reputation will do whatever is necessary to protect that reputation, for her sake and for her Lord’s sake. A woman of excellence brings glory to God. A woman of excellence does not put herself into compromising positions.

We also see that out of Boaz’s love for Ruth he too protected her reputation. In **verse 14**, “*He said, ‘Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.’*” I am sure that in the night air the others around the threshing floor could hear their voices. I am sure they were wondering who this woman was that spent the night with Boaz. Boaz did not want any rumors to start that may in some way harm Ruth’s godly reputation, or his for that matter. Since Ruth rose before one could recognize another Boaz did not even mention her name. He simply referred to her as “*the woman,*” not out of disrespect, but rather out of love. When a man loves a woman he will protect her reputation. By the way, the same is true when a woman loves a man.

Many Christians today allow themselves to get into compromising positions that either cause people to question their godliness or causes them to violate their godliness. In **1 Thessalonians 5:22** we are told to “*abstain from every form of evil.*” In other words, we are not to say something or do something that would give someone an opportunity to point the finger at us and say, “*Uh Huh! Look at him or her and they call themselves Christians.*” We are to develop godly reputations and do everything we can do to protect that reputation for our sake and for our Lord’s sake, so it brings glory to Him.

As men, young or old, we should never put ourselves, or put a woman into a compromising position where our godly reputation could be questioned. When a man loves a woman he will protect her reputation as well as his own.

My late wife and I had an agreement. Neither one of us would ever say anything that was unkind about the other in the presence of our friends, neighbors or acquaintances. If there was an issue between us we worked it out in the privacy of our home and in the presence of our Lord. We did that so we would not dishonor His name, or each other’s. My wife could walk into any setting with my business associates or friends and know she was looked upon with the highest respect. That was easy for me to do because she was a woman of excellence. I knew that I could walk into any setting with her girl friends and know that I was looked upon with the highest respect. I trust I made that easy for her as well.

My point is this: When a man loves a woman he will protect her reputation just as Boaz protected the reputation of Ruth. The same can be said for a woman. She will protect the reputation of the man she loves, just as Ruth protected the reputation of Boaz.

HE GIVES HER GIFTS

There is something else that a man does when he loves a woman and that is: He gives her gifts. We are told in **verse 15** that Boaz did not let Ruth leave the threshing floor before he gave her **“six measures of barley.”** He gave her one of the most valuable gift that he could give. He gave her enough food for six weeks.

Men, you know that women love to receive gifts. Particularly when they are unsolicited or unexpected. They love to receive gifts that are from the heart and have some meaningful value to them. Therefore, there are some gifts you should avoid.

It’s kind of like the frugal young man who was showing his buddy the beautiful diamond ring he bought his wife for her birthday. His buddy responded and said, *“I thought you said she wanted a red corvette for her birthday.”* *“She did,”* said the young man. *“But where am I going to find a fake corvette?”* Just a word of advise men, stay away from the fake diamonds.

Coming back to Ruth, there is something else Boaz was doing. He was also giving his future mother-in-law a gift. In **verse 17** Ruth said, **“These six measures of barely he gave to me, for he said, ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty handed.’”** When a man loves a woman he will give her gifts, but how often does he give his mother-in-law or future mother-in-law gifts. I wish I had been more thoughtful in that area.

Boaz made a very beautiful gesture by letting Naomi know without any words spoken that he loved Ruth and intended to be her redeemer. Boaz was saying without any words spoken that he was going to care for Ruth and he had the resources to do it. Boaz was removing the burden that Naomi and Ruth were carrying. As a kinsman-redeemer he was going to take their burden upon himself. That leads us to the third thing that a man does when he loves a woman.

HE BEARS HER BURDEN

When a man loves a woman he bears her burden. He carries her books. He carries her concerns. He carries those things that are too heavy for her to carry by herself. He steps in to be her strength.

Boaz could have very easily told Ruth to go and talk with that other redeemer first. He could have said, *“Let me know how it turns out,”* but he didn’t. Instead he took that burden off Ruth’s shoulders and went to the other redeemer for her, in her place. Boaz took upon himself her load, which allowed her to rest in him. When a man loves a woman he will bear her burdens.

In **Galatians 6:2** we are told, **“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”** The word **“burdens”** in the Greek language refers to that which is too much and too heavy for one person to carry by themselves. The **“law of Christ”** refers to His command in **John 13:34**, which says, **“A new commandment I give you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”** According to **Galatians 5:14**, love fulfills the entire Law. When a man loves a woman he will bear her burdens, because he loves her.

Of course, this applies to the entire church. Because of our love for Jesus and because of our love for one another we have an obligation as a church to bear one another’s burdens.

Are you trying to carry a heavy burden today? One that:

- Is too much or too heavy for one person to carry.
- Weighs you down.
- Wears you out.
- Causes you to lose sleep.

- Causes you to cry out for help.

May we as a church, as husbands and wives, as brothers and sisters, as friends and neighbors fulfill the law of Christ by bearing one another's burdens.

Men, fulfill the law of Christ by fulfilling the commandment that Jesus gave you to love your wife as Christ loves the church (**Ephesians 5:25**). Protect her reputation, give her gifts with special meaning and help her bear her burdens. Be her strength, so she can rest. Communicate your love by your actions. As the apostle John stated *"...let us not love with word or tongue, but in deed and truth"* (**1 John 3:18**).

Husbands, wives, fulfill the law of Christ in your marriage. Lay aside your pride, your selfishness and your arrogance. Bear one another's burdens. As Jesus said, *"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if we have love for one another"* (**John 13:35**). Become living evidence for God's existence, for His glory. The people around you are watching and listening. Let them see Jesus in you, in your marriage and in your church. *"Walk in the same manner as He (Jesus) walked"* (**1 John 2:6**). Be men and women of excellence. Be like Boaz and Ruth.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

RUTH 4:1-5

INTERCESSION -- A LABOR OF LOVE

Ruth 4:1-2 (NKJV)

“Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, ‘Come aside, friend, sit down here.’ So he came aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, ‘Sit down here.’ So they sat down.”

Boaz demonstrated his love for Ruth by protecting her reputation, giving her gifts and by his willingness to bear her burden. He was willing to intercede for her by going to the **“closest relative”** that had to be given the first opportunity to redeem Naomi’s property and marry Ruth. Boaz took the pressure off of Ruth’s shoulders and put it upon himself. He interceded as Ruth’s representative.

When someone willingly and voluntarily intercedes on the behalf of another it is a labor of love. Boaz could have just as easily told Ruth, *“Go talk to this other relative yourself and let me know how it turns out.”* Ruth had the responsibility, according to **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**, to confront this other relative herself. Boaz could have insisted upon that approach and he would have been in complete compliance with Jewish Law. However, Boaz did not take that approach. Why? Because he loved Ruth. Voluntary intercession for another is a labor of love.

Ruth 4:1-4 (NKJV) says, *“Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, ‘Come aside, friend, sit down here.’ So he came aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, ‘Sit down here.’ So they sat down. Then he said to the close relative, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. And I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.’ And he said, ‘I will redeem it.’”* In **Ruth 4:5** (NASB) Boaz presented the complete responsibility of the kinsman-redeemer. *Then Boaz said, ‘On the day you buy the field from the hand of*

Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.”

The intercessory work of Boaz required him to get a court room resolution. He needed to make sure the redemption process was complete and in compliance with Jewish Law. That process included buying back Naomi's property, marrying Ruth and raising a child that would eventually inherit the property.

There is something else that is very important for us to see and understand in **Ruth 4:1-5**. That is this: There is the act of redemption and then there is a continuing responsibility attached to that redemption. It affected the decision made by the closest relative, it affected Boaz and it affects every one of us, even today. We will see that in a moment.

A COURT RESOLUTION

The first thing Boaz did, in **Ruth 4:1**, was go to the gate of the city and sit down. In the days of Boaz the cities were built with a security wall around their perimeter for protection. The cities were very compact, the streets were narrow and the houses were crowded close together. There was usually only one way in and out of the city and that was through the city gate. That is where Boaz went knowing that eventually this other relative would pass through the gate as he went to or returned from the threshing floor, or from his barley field.

The gate of the city also served as an outdoor courtroom. It was where legal matters were resolved for the public to witness as a public record. This is what Boaz was in the process of doing. When Boaz saw the other relative he said, in **verse 1**, ***“Turn aside, friend, sit down here.”*** Then, in **verse 2**, ***“He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, ‘Sit down here.’”*** The ten elders would act as judges. All decision would be final and legally binding according to Jewish Law. Court was in session and a resolution was unavoidable.

A COMPLETE REDEMPTION

The issue to be decided was who would buy back the property of Naomi, marry the childless widow, give her a child and help her raise that child. The kinsman-redeemer had to provide for a complete redemption that included all the above. So Boaz presented the facts to this other relative.

The first thing he brought up was the property issue. Naomi's husband, Elimelech, sold his property to finance the families move to Moab, which lasted ten years. However, the money ran out. When Naomi returned to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law she did so in complete poverty. That is why Ruth had to glean for food. Naomi did not have the resources to buy food much less to buy back her property. So a close relative was required to step in and buy it back for her.

As we are told in **Leviticus 25:25**, ***“If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold.”*** There were three ways in which the original property owner could get their property back:

- They could work until they earned enough to buy it back.

- They could wait until the year of jubilee. The year of jubilee occurred every fifty years. This was when the sold property was returned to the original owner without cost (**Leviticus 25:28**).
- Or, a kinsman-redeemer who had the financial resources could buy it back for them.

Apparently Naomi was not able to work. Therefore, she could not earn the money to buy back her property. The year of jubilee was too distant in the future. So, Boaz told this other relative to redeem it himself, if not, then Boaz would redeem it (**verse 4**).

This other relative responded to Boaz, in **verse 4**, saying, ***“I will redeem it.”*** Now, having already seen that Boaz was a successful businessman he probably knew that this other relative was fully capable of buying back the property. Successful businessmen make it their business to know the competition.

The approach that Boaz took gave this other relative the opportunity to save face in front of the public. It was a very kind and loving approach. Boaz did not want to embarrass this other relative.

Once this other relative indicated that he was willing to buy back the property Boaz then brought up the second issue. In **verse 5** he said, ***“...you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.”*** In other words, you must marry Ruth and together have a child, and then raise that child until he is old enough to inherit the property.

There was a double burden involved. The kinsman-redeemer not only had to buy the property, but also provide for and care for Ruth and her family. There was a continuing responsibility attached to the redemption.

A CONTINUING RESPONSIBILITY

In a similar way there is a continuing responsibility attached to our redemption today that must be fulfilled by our Kinsman-redeemer through His intercessory work, which too is a labor of love.

First, because He so loved the world (**John 3:16**), He interceded for us by paying the price for our redemption upon the cross. In **Isaiah chapter 53**, that great prophetic passage reveals the intercessory work of our Redeemer. It says:

- In **verse 5-6**, ***“But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”***
- In **verse 12**, ***“...He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.”***

That intercessory work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was a labor of love. As we are told in **Romans 5:8**, ***“But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*** As suggested by the title of my notes on the book of Ruth, *Out of Love Comes Redemption*.

There is also a continuing responsibility that is attached to our Lord’s intercessory work. One aspect of that continuing responsibility is found in **Romans 8:34**. It says, ***“...Christ Jesus is He***

*who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also **intercedes for us.***” Jesus is interceding in heaven today for those who have been redeemed by His blood.

I don't think we will ever have a full appreciation of His ongoing intercessory work until we are with Him in heaven. However, this much I do know, just as Ruth had a kinsman-redeemer to represent her in the courtroom of the city, we too have a Kinsman-redeemer who represents us in the courtroom of God. Jesus is the One who has presented our case before the eternal Judge. He has pronounced us forgiven of our sin and freed from any punishment for that sin. Why? Because we have personally trusted Jesus as our Savior and Lord. No matter what the accuser may say about me, Jesus intercedes on my behalf. He says to the Father, *“Dave Rembert is not guilty. He has been washed by My blood; he has been redeemed. He has put his faith in Me, trusting Me as his Savior and Lord. He has accepted Your grace.”*

There is another ongoing responsibility that is attached of our Lord's intercessory work, which is accomplished by God's Holy Spirit working in us and through us today. In **Romans 8:26-27** we are told, *“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself **intercedes** for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He **intercedes** for the saints according to the will of God.”* Even when we do not know the right words to say in our prayers, the Holy Spirit takes those prayers and presents them to the Father according to His perfect will.

I am reminded about the young pastor who was talking to one of his seminary professor about prayer. He said, *“I know that the intercessory work of God's Spirit is mightily present in my congregation.”* *“How can you tell”* the professor asked? The young pastor said, *“When I am preaching I can look out across the congregation and see many people with their eyes closed making groanings too deep for words.”* I trust you are involved in a labor of love praying for the saints – even if it is during the sermon. In **Ephesians 6:18** we are told, *“With all prayer and petition pray **at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.**”* Be on the alert. I take that to mean if you are going to pray during the sermon, then you should do it with your eyes open.

Intercessory prayer is a labor of love that is led by the Spirit as part of the ongoing intercessory work of Jesus.

Keep this in mind, when someone willingly and voluntarily intercedes on the behalf of another, it is a labor of love. That is what Jesus did and is doing for you and me. And, that is what Boaz was doing for Ruth.

This other kinsman-redeemer agreed to buy Naomi's property. But would he redeem Ruth? The plot thickens as we look at the next few verses in Ruth.

 CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

RUTH 4:6-8

WHEN A MAN LOVES HIS FAMILY

Ruth 4:6

“The closest relative said, ‘I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.’”

Boaz intercede for Ruth. He represented Ruth by confronting another relative on her behalf, the relative that had to be given the first opportunity to act as her kinsman-redeemer. The intercessory work of Boaz was motivated by his love for Ruth.

Boaz understood that he needed to take this other relative to court. He understood that he needed to make sure the redemption process was complete, which included buying Naomi’s property, marrying Ruth and raising a child that would eventually inherit the property. Boaz also understood that there was a continuing responsibility attached to Ruth’s redemption. He was willing to accept that responsibility, which included caring for Ruth and her family.

So, Boaz presented the facts to this other relative in a courtroom setting before the elders of the city and the general public as witnesses. As Boaz presented the facts he broke them down into two separate issues. The first was buying Naomi’s property. The second was marrying Ruth, giving her a child and raising that child who would eventually inherit the property.

This other relative was willing to buy Naomi’s property. We saw that in **Ruth 4:4**. But, was he willing to marry Ruth? We see the answer to that question in **Ruth 4:6-8**. We are told, *“The closest relative said, ‘I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.’ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel. So the closest relative said to Boaz, ‘Buy it for yourself.’ And he removed his sandal.”*

I have a great deal of respect for Boaz and how he handled the situation. He was very kind to this other relative. He gave him the opportunity to save face in front of the elders and the general public.

The first thing Boaz did was to give this other relative the opportunity to say, *“Yes, I’ll buy the property.”* Boaz gave him the opportunity to show that he was willing to fulfill his responsibility as a kinsman-redeemer according to Jewish Levitical Law. Boaz also gave him an opportunity to graciously decline his responsibility as a kinsman-redeemer. Boaz was up front with this other relative by letting him know that if he declined, then he (Boaz) was ready, willing, able and eager to step in as the next in line to be Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer.

When men respect one another they will be very gracious and kind to one another in the way they handle their business. They will try to protect each other’s reputation. They will try to give each other a graceful way out of a difficult situation rather than try to embarrass and humiliate one another in front of the public or their peers. That is what Boaz did with this other relative. Boaz respected this man.

I had a client that I did business with for nearly eight years. The projects that we worked together on were highly visible to the general public and public officials. One mistake could jeopardize either one of our careers. We developed a mutual respect for one another’s professionalism, technical expertise and integrity. As a result we had an agreement. Whenever things on our project would start to get out of control either one of us could call the other and say, *“Let’s get some pie and coffee.”* That was our way of saying, *“We have a crisis that we need to resolve before one of us gets hurt.”* We had a prearranged place where we met. We dropped whatever we were doing and within twenty minutes we were sitting down resolving the issue. We did that out of respect for one another, to protect each other’s reputation and careers. We also did that to avoid any situations that might become embarrassing to either one of us if there was a public or peer review of our project. We gave each other a graceful way out of a difficult situation and that is what Boaz did for this other relative.

Now, there is not much said about this other relative. We are not even given his name. We are only told that he was the brother of Elimelech and Boaz (**Ruth 4:3**), and older than Boaz since he had the first right to being a kinsman-redeemer. I must say, I have a great deal of respect for this other relative as well. His response to Boaz was proper. He revealed what a godly man does when he loves his family. That is:

- He protects his family and he provides for his family with the big picture in mind.
- He protects his family and he provides for his family during his life span and beyond.

He makes sure that whatever he does or whatever decisions he makes, even under pressure, does not jeopardize his family, but rather benefits his family over the long run.

HE PROTECTS

Therefore, this other relative told Boaz that he could not redeem Ruth for himself because it would jeopardize his own inheritance. In other words, he was already married and had a groan child or children, and he would jeopardize their future inheritance if he redeemed Ruth.

He was willing to buy Naomi’s property because it would add to the inheritance that he already had, which would eventually be passed on to his own child or children. However, when

Ruth became part of the redemption that was another matter. He would need to take money away from his own estate to buy the property, hire the servants to cultivate the land and market the harvest that would eventually be given to Ruth's child. In addition, he would need to spend whatever money and time it took to raise Ruth's child. He would need to take the time to nurture the child and to instruct the child in the Hebrew Scriptures. This was a double and triple financial burden. His existing family's inheritance would be reduced and even jeopardized. This would most likely cause disunity in his own family.

In making his decision, this other relative looked to the future – even beyond his own life.

- He made his decision based on what was best for the entire family by keeping his families best interest in mind.
- He was financially responsible.
- He did not acquire as much as he was able to acquire based on the big picture over the long run.
- He was an example of what Paul talked about in **Philippians 2:4**, when he said, “...*do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*”

When a man loves his family he keeps their best interest in mind. His decisions are based on the big picture.

A few years ago my oldest son had been out of work for two months. He and his wife had three children. One of their goals was for mom not to work, so she could stay home with the kids, at least for a while, until they were older. They were attempting to make decisions based on what was best for their family over the long run. My son interviewed for several jobs in Arizona even though he lived in California. At least one company indicated they would hire him if he lived in Arizona. My son seriously considered that option because it would allow his wife to stay home with the kids. When a man loves his family he keeps their best interest in mind and his decisions are based on the big picture over the long run. My son took the job and moved his family to Arizona.

In the case with this other relative that Boaz confronted, I think there was something else influencing his decision. Now, this is not recorded in Scripture. This is just me putting myself in this other relative's sandals. I don't think this other relative's wife was going to be very understanding when he brought home a young and beautiful Moabite woman.

No matter what may have been all the reasons behind his decisions this much we do know, if he said yes, regarding Ruth, he was going to jeopardize his own inheritance and quite possibly bring discord into his existing family. The stakes were too high. So he said to Boaz, “*I cannot redeem it – redeem it for yourself.*” When a man loves his family he protects and provides for that family by keeping their best interest in mind.

HE PROVIDES

This other relative illustrated another principle in Scripture. It is found in **1 Timothy 5:8**, which says, “*But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*” This is a harsh statement and is often miss understood, so it requires some explanation.

First, it does not single out just the men. The word “*anyone*” in the Greek language applies to both men and women, and to both married and single. There is a responsibility placed upon all of us to care for our family members, especially those in our own household and particularly those that cannot work, or are out of a job.

Second, **1 Timothy 5:8** is in the context of family members providing for the widow that is in their family who is too old or physically unable to work and support herself.

In the case of Boaz and this other relative, the widows were going to be provided for. Ruth would remarry and then Ruth together with Boaz would care for Naomi. When a man loves his family he will protect and provide for that family, even when they go through hardship. By the way, the same can be said for a godly woman. She too will care for those in her family.

Third, the word “*provide*” in **1 Timothy 5:8** refers to basic needs not greeds. It literally means, “*To foresee.*” In other words, we are to look to the future, anticipate our family’s needs and plan for their well being over the long run with the big picture in mind. That is what this other relative did in the book of Ruth. He provided for his own. He did not do anything that jeopardized their well being or future inheritance. That is what a man does when he loves his family. He protects them and provides for them.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

RUTH 4:9-12

BLESSINGS IN BETHLEHEM

Ruth 4:11-12

“All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, ‘We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD shall give you by this young woman.’”

Boaz got a court room resolution. A resolution that determined who would fulfill the role of a kinsman-redeemer to Ruth. The closest relative who had the first opportunity to become the kinsman-redeemer to Ruth was unwilling to jeopardize his own family’s inheritance. So, he gave Boaz his right of redemption. To confirm his decision he took off his sandal and gave it to Boaz. Boaz was now free to respond to Ruth’s proposal.

We see Boaz’s response and the people’s response to his decision in **Ruth 4:9-12**. We are told, *“Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, ‘You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased may not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today.’ All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, ‘We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD shall give you by this young woman.’”*

Boaz declared, for public record, that he would completely fulfill the role of a kinsman-redeemer. He declared his decision in the presence of the elders that he summoned. He also declared his decision in the presence of all the people who gathered around to watch.

That was an important day for the city of Bethlehem and for the world. The decision made that day affected the history of mankind. It revealed the sovereign intervention of God in the affairs of men to accomplish His will. The continuation of the messianic line hung in the balance. The prophetic promises given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah hung in the balance, and God was victorious. His will was done. The lineage of the Messiah was going to continue as we will see

There were four blessings given to Boaz by the people that day in Bethlehem. The blessings dealt with his family through Ruth, his fortune, his fame and his future descendants. All four blessings were in the hands of God. God would determine whether they would be given or not. So the people prefaced their blessings by saying in **verse 11**, ***“May the LORD.”***

There is something very important that every one of us must understand. It does not matter what our position or call in life might be. Every blessing that we receive is from the Sovereign hand of God. That is what we are told in **James 1:17**. It says, ***“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”*** Boaz and Ruth were going to receive their blessings from God Himself and so do we.

Quite often we find ourselves saying to one another, *“Good luck.”* Or, *“I wish you well.”* Or, *“I hope you succeed.”* May I suggest that you preface your well wishes to one another by saying: *“May the Lord.”* *“May the Lord bring you success.”* *“May the Lord keep you well.”* That approach acknowledges:

- That God is the One who gives every good thing.
- That He is the Sovereign Lord in our lives.
- That our desire is for His will be done.

That approach honors Him. That is what the people of Bethlehem were doing, while giving their blessings to Boaz and Ruth.

FAMILY

The first blessing that the people gave to Boaz was in **verse 11** when they said, ***“May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel.”*** Rachel and Leah were married to Jacob and through Jacob twelve sons were born. Those twelve sons established the twelve tribes that made up the nation of Israel. What the people of the city desired for Ruth and Boaz was a large prominent family. The people hoped their family would continue to build the house of Israel.

They understood that their desire was in the hands of God. They understood every child was a gift from God. As we are told in **Psalm 127:3a**, ***“Behold, children are a gift of the LORD.”*** So, the people said to Boaz, ***“May the LORD.”***

The mention of Rachel and Leah was very significant for a couple of other reasons. Rachel was buried about a mile and a half north of Bethlehem (**Genesis 35:19**). And Leah was the one who gave birth to Judah (**Genesis 29:35**). Judah was the great-great-great-great grandfather of Boaz. Judah was given the promise that the Messiah would come through his lineage in **Genesis 49:10**. Boaz was in the messianic line. Therefore, he must continue that lineage through Ruth just as Leah did for Jacob. God would give that blessing, as we will see.

FORTUNE

The second thing the people desired for Boaz was that he *“achieve wealth in Ephrathah”* or Bethlehem. Certainly Boaz was financially successful even before he met Ruth. However, through the offspring of Boaz would come the richest man in the world. His name was Solomon.

In **2 Chronicles 1:11-12** we are told, *“God said to Solomon, ‘Because you have this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you.’”* Please notice that riches, wealth and honor came from the hand of God. It was part of God’s blessing upon Solomon and it was part of God’s blessing upon Boaz.

It is not wrong to have money. Money is neutral, not evil. What is wrong is the love of money. As we are told in **1 Timothy 6:10**, *“For the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

There was a book published a few years ago titled *The Silent Partner* written by Sheldon Jackson, Ph.D. and Published by Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, California © 2001. The book documented the legacy of the Marshburn brothers and their Christian walk. The Marshburn brothers owned and operated the Marshburn Farms in California for many years. Over thirty percent of all the money they made from the farms went into the Lord’s work. They were responsible for starting several new churches. They bought a printing press for Wycliff Bible Translators. They were key supporters of several missionaries. They were large donors to at least two different theology centers. All of which they did over and above their normal tithes and offerings to their home churches.

I did not know all the brothers, but I knew Frank Marshburn very well. I taught a Bible study in the home of Frank and Louise Marshburn for six years. Frank gave me some advise concerning my finances once. He said, *“Dave, be an open conduit through which God can pour His resources so you can have an affect on building the kingdom of God. Hold on to just enough to care for your family.”* What Frank was saying was, *“Don’t love money, but rather love Jesus.”* *“Be a vessel for God’s use.”*

I don’t believe Boaz had a love for money based upon his generosity to Naomi and Ruth. Boaz received God’s blessing of wealth because he was an open conduit that God used, pouring His resources through Boaz to bless others, to care for others and to build His kingdom.

FAME

The third blessing the people desired for Boaz was that he *“become famous in Bethlehem.”* God provided that blessing. He placed the story of Boaz in the Bible for all to read.

In addition, through the offspring of Boaz would come the Christ child born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of prophecy. As God said in **Micah 5:2**, *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too*

little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” Jesus Christ, the eternal One, the Creator, our Kinsman-redeemer, our Savior and Lord, the King of kings, God manifested in human form, was born in Bethlehem. Jesus was born through the lineage of Boaz. Boaz became famous in Bethlehem.

FUTURE

The people desired a forth blessing for Boaz. As they said in **Ruth 4:12**, “*...may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD shall give you by this young woman.*” Perez was the great-great-great-great grandfather of Boaz. The messianic line was almost cut off until Perez was born to Judah, and the messianic line was almost cut off until Boaz married Ruth and had a son.

I believe the people of Bethlehem knew how important it was for Boaz to marry and have a son. What they were saying was, “*May you have a son that will continue the messianic line like Perez.*” God moved history and intervened as a Sovereign God to assure that the lineage of Christ would continue. We see that lineage documented in the book of Matthew in the New Testament. We will look at that passage as we close the book of Ruth. For now, may I say, the house of Boaz was like the house of Perez.

There were blessings in Bethlehem that continue even today because of Boaz and Ruth. Keep in mind that in order for Jesus to be the Savior of the world, He had to be born in Bethlehem from the lineage of Judah in fulfillment of prophecy. And just as important, Jesus also had to be a Kinsman-redeemer like Boaz. Boaz is the only illustration in the Bible that shows us what the kinsman-redeemer does. Therefore, just as Boaz acted as Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer, so does Christ act as our Kinsman-redeemer today. What Boaz did for Ruth, so Christ does for us:

- Boaz interceded on Ruth’s behalf, just as Jesus interceded on our behalf (**Isaiah 53:12**).
- Boaz paid the going price for Ruth’s redemption, and Jesus paid the going price for our redemption upon the cross (**Romans 6:23**).
- Ruth who was poor became rich through Boaz, and we become rich in Christ. We become heirs and joint heirs with Him in His kingdom (**Romans 8:17**).
- Ruth humbled herself by going to Boaz and as a result she was given an honored position in the messianic line. We humble ourselves by going to Christ and as a result we too receive an honored position in Christ. We become “*...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession*” (**1 Peter 2:9**).
- Just as Boaz became the bridegroom for Ruth, so does Christ become the Bridegroom for the church.
- Just as Ruth became the recipient of love, grace, mercy and abundant blessings through Boaz her kinsman-redeemer. So do we receive love, grace, mercy and abundant blessings through Christ our Kinsman-redeemer.
- Just as Ruth told Boaz her kinsman-redeemer that she wanted to be redeemed, so we must tell Jesus our Kinsman-redeemer that we want to be redeemed (**Romans 10:13**).

There were blessings in Bethlehem and as a result we are blessed today through the One born in Bethlehem – Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

RUTH 4:13-17

OBED & US, GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

Ruth 4:17b

“So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

Boaz would completely fulfill the role of a kinsman-redeemer. He would buy Naomi's property, marry Ruth and raise up a child who would inherit that property. The people of the City were very excited and supportive of Boaz and Ruth. They pronounced their blessing upon them recognizing that those blessing would come from the hand of God and they certainly did.

Now, as we look at **Ruth 4:13-17**, the opening statement in **verse 13** simply says, *“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife...and she gave birth to a son.”* We all know that it was not that simple. There were many things that needed to be done in preparation for that wedding. There was going to be a Jewish wedding and I suspect a great celebration. Ruth needed to get herself ready in the midst of her excitement. The opening sentence in **verse 13** covered about nine months. It started with a wedding and ended with the birth of Ruth's son.

One of the members of my congregation told me, after I preached on **verse 13**: *“Pastor, that is just like you, but just the opposite. That verse covered nine months and you take nine months to cover one verse.”* Well, I don't think I spent nine months preaching on one verse, but it probably seemed like it to my congregation. I spent six months preaching through the book of Ruth and I feel as though I rushed through it. There is just too much in The Word of God to only summarize a few of the main points. I think God wants us slow down and let His Spirit take His Word and grab our hearts and minds. That may not happen if people are just given “sound bites” and a steady diet of humorous stories, rather than the meat of the Word.

In **Ruth 4:13-17**, we see God's plan. His purpose beautifully unfolds through the birth of Obed, who was God's workmanship. Let's look at these verse and let God's Spirit grab our hearts and minds. These verse give us a pivotal point in human history. They reveal the greatness of God and His sovereign plan for all of humanity. We are told in **Ruth 4:13-17**, *“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. Then the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed is the LORD who has*

not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name be famous in Israel. May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.’ Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. The neighbor women gave him a name saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi!’ So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

Every one of us has a God given purpose in life. Each of us has a God given talent and ability that we are to develop and use. God has given us those talents and abilities for our benefit and for His glory. For example, some people have a musically talent. They can use that talent to earn a living and to worship the Lord. Some people are very creative. They can use that creativity to earn a living and honor God. Some people are very organized. They can use their organizational skills to earn a living and to serve God. The list goes on. We all have a God given purpose as well as God given talents and gifts that are unique and special to each of us.

As parents we are to help our children identify their purpose and help them develop their individual talents and abilities. We are to observe their uniqueness and then help them use that uniqueness to earn a living and to serve God.

In my case, I should have known that my first born son would become an electrician. All the signs were there. When he was a young boy he had a fascination with electricity. He tried to stick his fingers into the electrical outlets in our home. Later he moved up in his technical skills and tried to stick screwdrivers into the electrical outlets. He discovered that the end of a screwdriver had the same shape as the electrical outlet. It fit very nicely and made a bigger spark. The clincher was when he took my pruning shears and cut the cord on my electric lawn mower. He created an electrical arc that burnt a hole about a half-inch in diameter in the blade of my pruning shears. Fortunately the were grounded and he was not hurt. Today he is a very good electrician who, I might add, has a deep appreciation for safety.

We all have God given talents and abilities to develop for our benefit and His glory. We are God’s workmanship. We are the clay in the Potter’s hand. He has determined the color of the clay. He has determined the shape of the clay. He has given it a certain consistency. He has given it a unique character. He has determined how the clay will be made into a vessel for His purposes and for His glory. We are God’s workmanship.

CREATED AS NAOMI’S PROVIDER

Obed was God’s workmanship created in a very special way as a provider for Naomi. In **verse 14**, the women of the city referred to him as Naomi’s “*redeemer*.” In other words, Obed was Naomi’s legal heir of her estate. He would eventually redeem her property. Obed was a very special grandchild created especially for Naomi, his grandmother.

The women also saw Obed as the “*restorer*” of Naomi’s life in **verse 15**. As you may recall, Naomi returned to Bethlehem bitter. In **Ruth 1:20**, she said don’t call me Naomi, which means pleasant, but rather Mara, which means bitter. Almost a year later Naomi had her life restored. She went from being bitter to being pleasant again. She went from being hurt to being healed. She went from being in poverty to being provided for. All of this because Obed was God’s workmanship created in a very special way as a “*restorer*” of Naomi’s life.

The women of the city also saw Obed as Naomi's "*sustainer*" in her old age. That is what we are told in **verse 15**. Baby Obed would grow up and take care of his grandmother in her old age. He would become her provider and her caregiver. He would provide her with food, shelter, and loving care. Obed was God's workmanship created in a very special way as a "*sustainer*" of Naomi's life.

The women in the city saw Obed as a servant to Naomi. So they named him Obed in **verse 17**, which means "*servant*." That was one of his God given purposes in life. Just as you and I are created in Christ to serve Christ, Obed was created in a special way to serve Naomi.

CREATED FOR GOD'S PURPOSE

Obed was certainly Naomi's provider, but God had another purpose in mind for Obed. God's purpose for Obed would affect future generations. God's purpose for Obed had an eternal benefit. Obed would be the one to carry on the family line that would eventually lead to the birth of Jesus Christ.

In **verse 17** we are told, "*He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.*" What a wonderful purpose to have, to be the grandfather of king David. The grandfather of the one that would establish the throne for the King of kings, Jesus Christ.

Every one of us not only has God given talents and abilities, but also a God given purpose in life. That purpose will quite often have an impact on future generations.

I think of the young boy who, at the age of four, lost his father. He grew up in a poverty stricken family. At seventeen with very little education he started working in his uncles shoe shop. While there his Sunday school teacher, Edward Kimble, led him to Christ. That young teenager's name was Dwight L. Moody, one of the greatest preachers and evangelist of his time, and founder of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. God had a purpose in mind for a young mother who would raise her son without a father. God had a purpose in mind for the Sunday school teacher Edward Kimble. God had a purpose in mind for a young shoemaker that would affect future generations for Christ. Dwight L. Moody was God's workmanship.

I think of the young man who received Christ as his personal Savior and Lord at the age of sixteen. He was totally dedicated to following and serving Jesus. At the age of twenty-one he had a church congregation of over 6,000 people. His name was Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers of the twentieth century who affected future generations for Christ. He was God's workmanship.

I think of the boy who was born in 1953 with cerebral palsy. He would be a cripple for life. Kids made fun of him because he walked funny and talked funny. He had trouble controlling his feet and arms. His speech was slurred. At the age of eleven his dad died of cancer and at the age of fourteen his mother died of cancer. For years he wanted to die, until he met Jesus at the age of seventeen. Today David Ring is one of the most powerful preachers and evangelists that I know. Every time that I have listened to him preach I have laughed, I have wept and I have had my life incredibly changed. David Ring, palsy and all, is God's workmanship.

I think of the young man who received Christ as his personal Savior and Lord at the age of twenty-seven. Who at the age of fifty-five gave up a highly successful secular career to become a relatively unknown preacher of God's Word. The story is on going. The impact is unknown.

However, this I do know, I am God's workmanship created for His purpose and for His glory to affect future generations.

We are all created for God's purpose. We are all God's workmanship.

CREATED FOR GOD'S PLAN

In **Ephesians 2:10** we are told, *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."* In the Greek language the word "workmanship" is the word "poiēma" from which we get our English word "poem." We are God's poem. We are His artwork, His masterpiece in Christ, created with His special plan in mind for each of us to do good works. We were created to be in sync with God's plan for our lives.

Of course, sin can cause us to get out of sync with God. That is why we need to apply **1 John 1:9** when that happens. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* God's forgiveness, His work of reconciliation brings us back to being in sync with Him and His plan for us. I am reminded of a story about two men that were walking across the street. One man stopped in the middle of the street and began to pray while the other continued to cross the street. When he finished praying he joined his friend who said, *"What were you thinking of, stopping in the middle of the street to pray?"* *"You could have been run over."* To which the man replied, *"Something came between me and God and I wanted to clear it up before I got to the other side."* It may not be wise to stop and pray in the middle of the street, but it is wise to clear up anything that gets between us and God as quickly as possible. May we all be sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit's and keep our relationship with God uninterrupted by sin.

Of course, by not putting our faith in Jesus Christ trusting Him as our Savior and Lord also causes us to be out of sync with God. Without Christ we are like a poem that does not rhyme. We are out of sync with God's purpose. We are out of step with God's plan for our lives. God has gone to great lengths to make us His workmanship in Christ (**Ephesians 2:1-10**).

Once we are God's workmanship created in Christ for good works, then God equips us for that good work. In **2 Timothy 3:16-17** we are told, *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* As God's workmanship, He not only gives us talents and abilities, but also special spiritual gifts to be used in serving one another for His glory (**1 Peter 4:10-11**). Those spiritual gifts include serving, teaching, giving, helps, hospitality, faith, knowledge, wisdom, pastoring, administration, evangelism, and leadership to mention a few. God has created you and me as His workmanship. He wants to accomplish His purpose for our lives and His plan that will affect future generations.

Just as Obed was God's workmanship, so are we God's workmanship. Just as Obed was part of God's plan, so are we part of God's plan. Purpose in your heart to learn, develop and use your talents, abilities and spiritual gifts for His glory. Learn what your God given purpose in life is, so you can influence this generation as well as future generations for Jesus.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

RUTH 4:18-22**GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS WORD****Ruth 4:18a**

“Now these are the generations of Perez...”

As we conclude the book of Ruth we do so by looking at the generations of Perez. In **Ruth 4:18-22** we are told, *“Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, and to Salmon was Born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.”*

When we come to genealogies in the Bible the temptation is to skip over them. However, the genealogies listed in the Bible are very important. In fact, these five verses in **Ruth 4:18-22** are some of the most important verses in the entire Old Testament. They are listed in the genealogies of Christ in **Matthew 1:3-6** as well as in **Luke 3:31-33**. They are the only verses in the Old Testament that connects David to the tribe of Judah. They are the only verses connecting Jesus to the tribe of Judah in fulfillment of prophecy. Without the book of Ruth the genealogies of Christ would be incomplete.

In addition, the genealogies listed in **Ruth 4:18-22** reveals one of the most important characteristics of God. They show us that God always keeps His word. As we are told in **Numbers 23:19**, *“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”* God will always keep His Word.

The Bible is God’s word written down. As we are told in **2 Timothy 3:16**, *“All Scripture is inspired by God”* or literally *“God Breathed.”* Everything written in the Bible is written for a purpose. As God said in **Isaiah 55:11**, *“So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”* The Bible is God’s Word and God always keeps His Word.

TO JUDAH

In **Ruth 4:18** we are told, *“Now these are the generations of Perez.”* The father of Perez was Judah. Judah was the founder of the tribe of Judah, which was one of the twelve tribes of Israel. God made a promise to Judah through his father Jacob just hours before he died. That promise is found in **Genesis 49:10**. It says, *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”* The scepter and/or the ruler’s staff have always been symbols of a king’s authority. God promised Judah that the God given right to reign as a king in Israel would always come through Judah. This God given right to reign as a king in Israel would remain in Judah until Shiloh comes referring to the Messiah as the King of kings.

That promise was given about 640 years before God selected David to be His king in Israel. David was from the tribe of Judah. Every God ordained king that followed David (twenty-two in all) came from the tribe of Judah. For Jesus to be the King of kings and sit upon the throne of David during His millennial reign, He must be from the tribe of Judah. He is, born in Bethlehem in Judah. God kept His word.

God’s promise to Judah was a continuation of a long line of messianic promises that were given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God always keeps His word.

TO DAVID

There are ten generations mentioned in the book of Ruth starting with Perez and ending with David. God made a promise to David as well. The promise is found in **2 Samuel 7:16**. It says, *“Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”* As the Lord tells us in **Psalms 89:34-37**, *“My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants shall endure forever and his throne as the sun before Me. It is established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful.”* God said He would keep His word. David’s throne would be established forever. From the lineage of David would come the King of kings who would reign forever. His name is Jesus.

In **Revelation 5:5** we find a statement referring to Jesus Christ. It says He is *“...the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.”* Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, the Messiah, the King of kings and the Lord of lords came from the tribe of Judah through the lineage of David. God kept His word and He will keep His word.

Jesus came the first time in fulfillment of God’s Word as a Kinsman-redeemer, as the Lamb of God born in Bethlehem from the tribe of Judah. Jesus is coming again and when He does He will come as a Lion from tribe of Judah. He will come as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and as a righteous judge waging war against all who oppose Him (**Revelation 19:11-21**). God kept His word and He will keep His word.

God kept His word with Judah and He kept His word with David. God moved in the affairs of Ruth and Boaz so He could keep His word by offering redemption to both Jew and Gentile through a Kinsman-redeemer. There is only One who fulfills all the requirements of a Kinsman-redeemer according to God’s Word – Jesus, born in Bethlehem from the tribe of Judah.

TO US

There are a multitude of promises that God has made in the New Testament, which affects you and me. I want to look at just a few from the gospel of John.

- In **John 3:16** Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”*
- In **John 5:24** Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgement, but has passed out of judgement into life.”*
- In **John 6:47** Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.”*
- In **John 10:27-30** Jesus said, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”*
- In **John 11:25-26** Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

God will keep His word. He will always keep His word. Those who receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord will be given eternal life.

However, with that being said and with the evidence presented over thousands of years, it comes down to one question. *“Do you believe this?”* I am not talking about an intellectual belief. Rather, I am talking about a belief that comes from the core of your being. A belief that translates into a faith that trusts Jesus Christ and Him alone for your Salvation and forgiveness of your sins.

Paul said in **Romans 10:9-10**, *“...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”* In **Romans 10:13** we are told, *“Whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved.”* May I say to you, if you take that step of faith as God instructs, He will keep His word. He will forgive the sins that you have committed against Him – past, present and future. He will reconcile you in your relationship with Him and give you eternal life. You will not perish, you will not come into judgement, and you will never be snatched from the Father’s hand. Rather, you will live with Him forever. God always keeps His Word.

The book of Ruth illustrates how God works in the lives of ordinary people who put their trust in Him. It shows how He directs our paths and provides for our needs. It shows Him to be full of mercy and abundant in grace. It shows Him honoring godly people who honor Him. It shows Him keeping His Word from one generation to another. As we are told in **Isaiah 40:8**, *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God stands forever.”* God’s Word will always be. Jesus said in **John 10:35**, *“...the Scripture cannot be broken.”* Praise God that we can hold His eternal Word in our hands. Praise God that He has given us His Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us. Praise God that we can know and serve the only true and living God. Praise God for His love, for *Out of Love Comes Redemption*.

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