

I. Chapter 1: Tragedy and Loyalty

- Naomi and her husband, Elimelech leave Bethlehem in Judah because of a famine. They travel to the foreign land of Moab. They have two sons, Mahlon and Chilion.
- Elimelech dies and his two sons marry Moabite women, Ruth (Mahlon) and Orpah (Chilion).
- They reside in Moab for ten years before Naomi tragically loses both sons.
- Upon learning the famine in Judah was over, Naomi prepares to return. Naomi encourages her daughters-in-law to remain in their home land as she has nothing to offer them. Naomi pleads with them 3 times to stay.
- With great sadness and weeping, Orpah decides to stay, but Ruth pledges to remain with Naomi and accept her people and God as Ruth's own (1:16, 17). Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. Naomi asks to be called "Marah" meaning "bitter" in Hebrew (cf. Exodus 15:23).

II. Chapter 2: Generosity of the Redeeming Kinsman

- We learn that Naomi has a kinsman named Boaz (related to Elimelech).
- Ruth goes to glean the fields after the reapers as was the practice of the poor (and God's commandment to field-owners) to sustain themselves (Leviticus 19:9, 10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19). She chooses the field of Boaz, seemingly by "chance".
- Boaz, upon learning who she is, instructs her to only come and glean from his field. Ruth is told that she can drink water from his servant's jars and eat with Boaz's reapers.
- Ruth's reputation has preceded her (2:6, 11, 12). Boaz instructs his people to allow her great leniency in where she gathers and to leave excess behind for her.
- When she returns and informs Naomi of whose field she had gleaned in, Naomi is pleased and calls for the Lord to bless Boaz. Ruth abides by the requests of Naomi and Boaz, gleaning only in the field of their kinsman during the barley and wheat harvests.

III. Chapter 3: Love is in the air:

- Naomi decides that she needs to find Ruth a new man and a new home. She knows that Boaz and his men will be threshing wheat that night. Naomi instructs Ruth to make herself look beautiful and go to where Boaz will be.
- Following Naomi's direction, Ruth lies down at Boaz's feet while he is asleep. Boaz is startled to discover her lying there and asks who she is. In her answer, Ruth offers herself to Boaz as his wife (cf. Ezekiel 16:8) indicating he is a close relative (Heb. "redeeming kinsman").
- It is thought that Naomi and Ruth may be stretching the levirate marriage obligation (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) to Boaz since Naomi had no other sons.
- Boaz accepts the proposal, but indicates that there is a closer kinsman. He must clear the deal with this man before things can move forward.
- Boaz gives Ruth a gift of six measures (Hebrew is unclear, may be *ephah*, eq. to 20 dry quarts) of barley so she will not return to Naomi with nothing. Much debate exists on the symbolism here.
- Naomi ensures Ruth that Boaz will settle the matter that same day.

IV. Chapter 4: Redemption:

- Boaz goes to the town gate and summons the elders of the town and the nearer-kinsman of Elimelech. The situation he describes to the man is somewhat more detailed than we have been told so far. Naomi has a piece of land that needs to be sold.
- Boaz offers the opportunity for the man to purchase the land, but reveals another yet-to-be-known condition. The widow of Elimelech's son must accompany the deal. The other kinsman is unable to redeem the inheritance due to other conflicting business. He defers to Boaz & they seal the deal by exchanging footwear.
- Boaz informs the elder witnesses of the transaction that he does intend to redeem the land and take Ruth to be his wife. The elders bless the transaction and union.
- Boaz and Ruth are married and Ruth bears him a son, Obed (Heb. "worshipper").
- Ruth and Naomi rejoice that the Lord has brought a redeemer to their family who will continue the line of Elimelech. Naomi becomes the child's "nurse" (Heb. "support, carrier, foster mother").

V. Character of Ruth

- Loyal:
 - ✓ Ruth is committed to Naomi until death (1:16, 17). Her mother-in-law is returning home after more than 10 years of absence. One can surmise that their relationship is incredibly close (1:14) and that these women have endured great sadness and loss together.
 - ✓ Their example is comparable to that of David and Jonathan in I Samuel 20. Jonathan realizes that the Lord intends for David, not him, to rule Israel. His commitment to David vacates any desire for power. Jonathan does not take the easy way out and side with Saul, but commits to David.
 - ✓ Ruth, it should be noted is also committed to Naomi's family in that she follows through with Naomi's direction to pursue Boaz for a husband, rather than chase younger men (3:10). For this, Boaz describes her as a woman of virtue (3:11), a trait of a good wife (Proverbs 12:4; 31:10)
- Merciful"
- Naomi will have no husband or sons to support and protect her. The thought of this woman returning home completely alone is unacceptable to Ruth (1:16). Certainly she knows that she will have to work hard to support them both as she makes the agreement. Our Lord speaks to the merciful in Matthew 5:7. He himself felt pity for those in need (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34). Jesus taught that the Lord desires compassion above sacrifices (Matt. 9:13; 12:7). Christians are to have a compassionate heart (Colossians 3:12).
- Industrious:
 - ✓ We see in chapter 2 that Ruth is not a lazy and slothful hindrance to Naomi. She volunteers (2:2) to go and glean in the fields, hoping to not only bring home food, but find favor in the sight of a man to improve their situation. She works from morning until evening (2:7, 17). She eats and supplies Naomi with food (2:18). Ruth spends the entire harvest seasons for wheat and barley gleaning, staying at home with Naomi (2:23) not out behaving foolishly chasing after men. Paul warns Timothy about how younger widows are prone to behave (I Timothy 5:11-14) and encourages them to get re-married rather than become idle busybodies and gossips. Ruth is the pure antithesis of this concern.

VI. Character of Boaz

- Respectable:
 - ✓ When Boaz greets his workers (2:4) by wishing the Lord's blessing on them, they return his greeting in kind. Boaz ate and worked among his servants (2:14; 3:2). He seems to be the type of master that God's word desires in Leviticus 25:43 & Colossians 4:1.
 - ✓ He treats Ruth, knowing about her loyalty to Naomi, with dignity, respect and kindness. Boaz is known as a man of great wealth (2:1), but there is no indication that money has corrupted him. He is welcome to sit among the elders of the city for business and earns their blessing.
 - ✓ Boaz calls his fellow kinsman "friend" (4:1) and shows respect to him as the closer kinsman.
 - ✓ We are to be people of respect, noticed by others. Ananias is described as such a man (Acts 22:12). The leadership of the church is to exhibit this quality (I Tim. 3:1, 7).
- Generous:
 - ✓ Boaz offers Ruth much more than Biblical law commands him to do for the poor. She is offered water to drink whenever she is thirsty. He offers her a meal during her first day working there. He directs his servants to allow her to glean not just the outer corners of his fields, but among the sheaves as they cut and bind the grain. They are instructed to purposely pull out and leave cut grain for her to pick up, easing her work. Upon their betrothal to each other, he gives a huge amount of barley to bring back to Naomi.
 - ✓ One is reminded of Cornelius, a man of authority and power who is described as devout, fearing God and generous in giving to the Jews, even though they are not his people (Acts 10:1,2).
- Honorable:
 - ✓ Boaz treats Ruth with dignity and respect when she comes and lays at his feet. He even asks her to depart early in the morning so that no one will know a woman was in with the men (3:14) lest Ruth's reputation be spoiled. Boaz will not step in front of the fellow kinsman to redeem the land and marry Ruth.
 - ✓ Although the story he tells is more elaborate than the rest of the narrative indicates, it appears honest. Boaz marries Ruth and when Obed is born (4:13 says the Lord enabled her conception), he ensures that Naomi is a close supporter and caregiver to the child (4:16). This brings honor and respect to Naomi from women in the community (4:14, 17).
 - ✓ Doing the things that are honorable should be what we dwell on (Philippians 4:8). Giving preference to others honors them (Romans 12:10) and brings honor to ourselves.