

Ruth 2

Showing Favor

Learning Objectives

- To gain an understanding of the characters and narrative in Ruth 2
- To understand how the Law plays a role in the story of Ruth and Boaz
- To better apply the principles of this passage to our context

Pray for your time as a group!

Introduction

We're going to begin the study by reading the passage and answering a few key questions from the narrative. Then, we will be looking at one of the laws that God had given to the people of Israel and see its importance in the story. Finally, we will try to apply what we've learned in the Ruth passage to our context.

Part I: Ruth Meets Boaz

Ruth 2:1-23 (NIV)

¹ Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz. ² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." ³ So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek. ⁴ Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!" "The Lord bless you!" they answered. ⁵ Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?" ⁶ The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi." ⁷ She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

⁸ So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. ⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." ¹⁰ At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" ¹¹ Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. ¹² May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." ¹³

“May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord,” she said. “You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.”

¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.” When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. ¹⁵ As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her. ¹⁶ Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.”

¹⁷ So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. ¹⁸ She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough. ¹⁹ Her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!” Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. “The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,” she said. ²⁰ “The Lord bless him!” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers.” ²¹ Then Ruth the Moabite said, “He even said to me, ‘Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.’” ²² Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.” ²³ So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Leader’s Note: Guardian-redeemer is another term for family-redeemer or kinsman-redeemer. This concept will be further explored in Ruth 3.

? What is Ruth’s reputation among the people at this time? How has that become her reputation?

Possible answers: Ruth is known as the Moabite. The overseer in particular knows the details of Ruth’s story, mentioning how she came back with Naomi. Her story has spread, because of what she has done for Naomi, and she is well-regarded by the people.

? From the narrative, what adjectives would best describe Ruth? What about Naomi? Boaz?

Possible answers: Ruth: Loyal, gracious, bold, humble, faithful, wise; Naomi: Encouraged by Ruth, grateful, expectant/hopeful; Boaz: Worthy, respected, respectable, gracious, inquisitive, concerned, honorable, generous, faithful

? In what ways does Ruth show favor to Naomi? In what ways does Boaz show favor to Ruth?

Possible answers: Ruth works for food for her mother-in-law. Boaz ensures Ruth’s safety and food by protecting her and giving orders to his men regarding her

? Why is Ruth so surprised to have found favor in Boaz's sight?

Possible answers: She knows her place as a foreigner to the people of Israel, so she is surprised to have experienced such kindness.

? Why might Ruth's actions and Boaz's response be important in the context of this passage? What is the result of their actions?

Possible answers: They are both caring for widows; and Boaz is showing kindness to a foreigner, both who would be categorized as vulnerable people.

? In what ways might this passage teach us about the character and heart of God?

Possible answers: God protects the vulnerable. God repeatedly shows his care to orphans and widows. God is concerned with the needs of the vulnerable. God loves the least of these. God brings rain on the just and the unjust, he is kind and provides. By showing kindness and generosity we mimic the actions of God, and in that way we show his character and heart to a watching world.

Part II: Gleaning

Next, we are going to look at a supplementary text that gives some background on God's law at work in this passage.

Deuteronomy 24:17-19 (NIV)

¹⁷ Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.

¹⁸ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.

¹⁹ When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

? Why might God have given a specific law on gleaning concerning the foreigner, fatherless, or widow?

Possible answers: God is concerned about justice to the vulnerable. God wants to see the foreigner, fatherless, and widow get justice. God is concerned for people in the community who have less, and wants Israel to remember and care for them, as God remembered and delivered Israel.

? What is the result of Boaz's obedience to this law in Ruth 2?

Possible answers: Boaz has much and generously shares that with Ruth and in turn, with Naomi. Boaz's obedience makes it possible for the destitute Ruth and Naomi to eat. They are provided for because he obeys this law from God.

? What does Boaz's generosity say about his view of God?

Possible answers: Boaz obeys the command of God from the Deuteronomy passage. In doing so, he shows that he remembers that Israel were slaves who have been redeemed by God. Boaz knows God.

Part III: Our Context

The obedience of Boaz shows itself in generosity for Ruth and Naomi, which ensures that they are cared for. The fact that Boaz responds with generosity and obedience shows that Boaz reveres the God who generously redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt. Similarly, as the redeemed in Christ, God calls us to be generous and obedient.

2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (NIV)

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written:

“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

? Why can it seem so much easier to sow sparingly than to sow generously for us?

Possible answers: We want to use our money to buy the things we want. Sharing seems less important than building our lives, especially in our culture and society in America. We are constantly told that less is not more, which makes it hard to trust that God will generously supply us when we are generous.

? How can our generosity showcase the character of God to others?

Possible answers: God is the God of grace who bestows his favor on sinners. Those that are vulnerable in society can see the love we have for them, and it represents the love God has for sinners.

For Discussion and Accountability

? Who has God placed in your wheat fields (i.e. your context) that you feel specifically called to show his kindness and generosity to?

? What does your generosity say about your view of God? How might you like to change that?