

Ruth: A Model of a Virtuous Woman

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[0:00] Looking at learning about the life of Ruth, some lessons from her life. And really Ruth is a virtuous woman.! She's the role model, the model virtuous woman.

! A virtuous woman.

And the setting here was a time of instability in the land. There was unrest. There was moral decay. In those days Israel had no king. Everyone did just as they saw fit.

Sounds a bit like Australia today, doesn't it? There's no king. People just do what they like. They do everyone as they saw fit in their own eyes. And in this time there was a famine in the land.

And a man from Bethlehem in Judah called Elimelech, together with his wife Naomi and their two sons, they travelled to live for a time in the country of Moab.

[1:09] And the sons married women from the land of Moab. So they married these, the sons married these women that were Gentiles. They were from the land of Moab.

And one of them was Ruth. She was a Gentile, a Moabite woman. So she was outside of the nation of Israel. A foreigner really. And Ruth marries one of Naomi's sons.

And what happens next is that Ruth's husband dies. And her father-in-law and her brother-in-law as well. So it was a desperate time now for Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi.

She'd lost the people that she loved. And her wealth and security was gone. All that she had cherished was gone. And now there were no males left in their family who would normally have supported them.

So it was a time of great stress and sadness and disappointment. And then Naomi heard that the famine was over back in Judah. So she just decided to leave Moab and to go back home to Judah.

[2:18] Now, Naomi was poor and destitute. She had nothing. And Naomi said, I'm going to go back to Judah. And so she said goodbye to Ruth and her other daughter-in-law.

And we pick it up there in Ruth chapter 1 verses 8 through 9. And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, she says, go, return, each to her mother's house.

The Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband.

Then she kissed them and they lifted up their voice and wept. So Naomi was saying, I'm going back home to Judah. I'm going to say goodbye to my two daughters-in-law, now widows, and leave them behind.

Perhaps Naomi had hopes that one of her kinfolk back home would take pity on her and let her glean grain from one of their fields. Ruth decides not to stay behind though, but to go with her mother-in-law Naomi.

[3:27] And to travel with her back to Judah. Her sister Orpah decided to stay behind. So we see that there in verse 14. And they lifted up their voice and wept again.

And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her. So Ruth clave unto her. She cleaved unto Naomi. She didn't want to let her go.

Ruth was not going to let her mother-in-law go. She said, I'm standing with you. Verse 15. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods.

Return thou after thy sister-in-law. But Ruth said no. She would rather go with Naomi than go with her sister-in-law, one of the fellow Moabite women.

Ruth was not going to let Naomi go without her. And the first thing we notice here about Ruth is her loyalty and her commitment. The first lesson we learn from Ruth is that she was sticking with her mother-in-law.

[4:31] She wanted to be faithful. And here's a key statement now. In verse 16 it says, Ruth says, Ruth says, look, I'm going to go with you, Naomi, and nothing's going to take me away from you but death.

Ruth's got this strong dedication to her mother-in-law. She loved her mother-in-law. And what's more, in verse 16, what's even more important, she confessed her faith. She says, your God is my God.

Your God is my God. She confessed her faith in God. Even though ahead was going to be more hardships and uncertainty, Ruth still chose to stay with Naomi.

Then verse 18 it reads, When Naomi saw that Ruth was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So Naomi accepted.

Ruth's not going to give up. She's made up her mind. She's steadfastly minded. And Ruth was committed to leaving her homeland and all of its gods and embracing that new life.

[5:56] Because she had faith. Your God is my God, she said. What's more, Ruth trusted in the God of Israel. So just like Ruth committed to Naomi, how about you and me?

Are we going to be steadfastly minded? Is our heart going to be steadfast that we're going to commit? Thy God is my God. Naomi's God is my God.

And that was Ruth's declaration. She trusted the God of Israel. What about you and me? Will we have that trust? Will we be like Ruth and have that steadfastness that my faith is going to stay strong?

I'm going to wholly trust myself to God and to his plan, his guidance, even though it was scary what lay ahead. And when they got back to Jerusalem, sorry, when they got back to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them.

We see that in verse 19. It says, It says,

[8:51] And you could say, Well, I feel like my story is a bit like that. There's bitterness there. There's pain. This was Naomi. This was Naomi. Little did she know, and who would have ever imagined it could be, that a sad predicament, word in the providence of God, lead first to the conversion of her daughter-in-law, Ruth.

Now, Ruth has trusted. That was, of course, for joy. But Naomi maybe didn't miss. She missed that. But that was really quite a blessing. And, of course, we see as the story unfolds that, of course, Ruth would then be in the lineage of the birth of David, the great king of Israel.

And then, in turn, of the line of the coming, Messiah. So, there was good in store, even though Naomi saw only the bitterness at the time.

So, we've seen Ruth's loyalty and commitment. Secondly, we could see Ruth's faith and trust in God. It was a huge step of faith. It took immense faith for Ruth to journey from Moab to Bethlehem. She trusted in the God of Israel. Now, that can be true for you and me, can't it? Through life's journey. We don't know what lies ahead, but we've got the faith to believe God's going to reveal his way and direct our path.

[10:12] And this was Ruth, even though she didn't know what the future held. And her faith was rewarded, as we all see. How God provided for her. She was stepping out into the unknown.

And God was going to provide for not only Ruth, but Naomi too, through the kindness of Boaz. There wasn't anywhere for Naomi and Ruth to live. They were going into this unknown.

Back to Bethlehem, Naomi and Ruth did not have a crop to harvest or money to buy food. It was a desperate situation for these two widows. They arrived in Bethlehem, as the barley harvest was just beginning.

We'll pick up Ruth 2 now. Chapter 2, verse 1. So, Ruth goes out to work humbly in the fields. She takes this humble work. She wasn't afraid of hard work. To get her hands dirty, to go out into the fields and earn a living. And guided by God's sovereign hand, Ruth ended up in a field belonging to Boaz, a relative of Naomi's.

[11:27] Chapter 2, verse 2. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn. After him, in his sight I shall find grace.

And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. So here's Ruth. She's saying, I'm going to go out in the field. I'm going to go and make some returns so we can have something to eat. And God blessed Ruth's faith as she trusted God's plan.

Now that can be true for you and me as we face uncertainty where the future's not clear. It seems uncertain. Ruth teaches us, have faith, have trust in God.

That he will provide. Trust in God's plan. Trust the outcome to him. And God's provision and timing are always perfect. God cares and leads as we see next.

Boaz takes note of her. And we're going to skip bits and pieces here. But we see the point that Boaz takes notice of Ruth. And it reads, verse 5.

[12:25] Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitess damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab.

So he saw this woman who was different. She was a foreigner and she was in the fields. And Boaz noticed her. And then verse 7. And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.

So she came and hath continued even from the morning until now. That she tarried a little in the house. So it's telling us here of Ruth. Look at the work ethic here.

Look at her industry here. How industrious she is. It's saying she works from morning till evening. She works hard from dawn till dusk.

And she goes above and beyond really to ensure that Naomi is not left alone in her old age. She wanted to care for her and provide for her.

[13:29] So she had that mind, that integrity that she wanted to stand by her mother-in-law and provide for her. And it reads on verse 8. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, So Boaz says to Ruth, Hey, stay here, stay in my field.

Verse 9! Let thine eyes be upon the field that they do reap, and go thou after them. Have I not charged the young man that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

Boaz made provision for Ruth. And he said, I've charged the young man that they shall not touch thee. He wanted to make sure she was safe. He kept her protected in that vulnerability that she had.

And also that there was provision for her to drink and to eat as the others that were working for him. So here she was tagging along with Boaz's work team, and she was welcome there.

And that's a great sign by Boaz, because Moabite folk were not welcome. They were strangers, they were unwelcome, they were outsiders.

[14:48] Yet Boaz showed kindness. And Boaz treated Ruth as his own daughter. And he befriended her, he gave her water, he made sure of her safety. And one of the recurring themes through the book is kindness.

The kindness and mercy of Boaz. And it pictures for us, because of course, it's like a picture of Christ as the Redeemer, as we'll see. We see the character of Christ in Boaz.

We see the kindness, the mercy, the grace of God in how Boaz treated Ruth. And then reading on Ruth 2 verse 10.

Then she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

She noticed the grace that Boaz extended to her. And again, it's a picture of how Christ extends grace. That as Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, it says that Ruth found grace in the eyes of Boaz.

[15:54] Notice her humility here too. She bowed herself to the ground. And another characteristic of Ruth as well, and we'd all do well to copy, is that Ruth was thankful.

She was thankful. Do we stop and give thanks? Here's this man who's showing kindness and grace to an outsider from a foreign nation, the enemies of Israel, Moab.

Yet, Boaz extends grace. And she appreciates that. She shows her appreciation. Notice God's provision. Really, the story of Ruth and Boaz is a testament of God's provision.

Our Lord cares for those who trust in him. And God is still on the throne, even in uncertain times. Even though it be in seasons of pain. Seasons of loss.

Times of discouragement. God is still with you. God is still with you. Even if you're going through, as Naomi had, a time of great bitterness and struggle.

[16:56] Yet, we see God's encouragement in such a time. Notice also this theme of kindness and generosity. As we see Boaz's kindness to Ruth.

Boaz not only allowed Ruth to glean the fields, but he gave protection and he gave extra. He made extra provision. He took extra pains that Ruth abundantly gathered.

The gleanings. Boaz saw her faith too. We see that in verse 11. Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband.

And how thou hast left thy father and thy mother and the land of thy nativity. Now come into a people which thou knewest not heretofore. So, Boaz says, yeah, I can see you left your father and mother.

You've come into this strange land. You've come and you've looked after your mother-in-law. She saw the love that Ruth showed. And he prays that she'll be blessed. Verse 12. This is a lovely verse here too, isn't it?

[18:07] To think that Ruth is under the shelter. The overshadowing of the wings figuratively of God. Like a mother bird watching over her little ones.

And it's the picture of how God covers us with his wings. And that Ruth had come to trust in God's protection. I like to that picture of a covering of a bird's wings over little ones.

And she was from nowhere, a foreigner. She was excluded. But by the grace of God, she was included. She was included. And what a beautiful picture. Under his wings. We can think of that as it talks in the Psalms too.

For you and me. That we're under his wings. Amen. We're under his wings. Praise God. Under God's care. And then verse 13. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my Lord.

For that thou hast comforted me. And for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid. Do not like unto one of thine handmaidens. So she knew that she was an outsider.

[19:10] And yet he spoke to her in a kind way. And again we see her thankful heart. Verse 14. And Boaz said unto her, A mealtime come thou hither, And eat of the bread, And dip thy morsel in the vinegar.

And she sat beside the reapers. And he reached her parched corn. And she did eat. And was sufficed and left. So it's a picture then. You see how he had a gathering time. It was kind of mealtime, Meal break for his workers.

And he said, You come and eat too. Come and join the work team. And you can have some bread. And have some food. Have some corn. And she was cared for by the kindness, Again, Of Boaz.

Even though she was a stranger. She was included. She was accepted. It's like that for you and me, Isn't it? As we're outside of his grace. And when we save, We're included. We become part of the family of God.

It says, As many as received him. So then gave you the power. To become the children of God. And so, It's the same picture here. Of Ruth. Accepted now. As a child of God.

[20:13] As one of the nation. Accepted. And so much so, That she ends up in the lineage of the Lord Jesus. So Ruth, This Moabite, Ends up in the course of time, To being the great grandmother of King David.

Who was to know? This foreigner, This outsider, Excluded, A Gentile, From the nation of Moab, Which was a hated nation by Israel.

She became the great grandmother of King David. Who knows what God can do for you and me too. We don't know what God is working. And this is what God was orchestrating.

And we see the kindness and generosity of Boaz. And we could think, How can we be like Boaz? How can we be more like him? To show grace. Grace to those that might be different from us.

How can we be like a Boaz? And be including those who would call on the Lord. And be a brother, a sister to them. Each one of us can make a significant impact on the lives of others.

[21:12] So we see Boaz's hospitality. It reminds us, How can we be hospitable? How can we be welcoming to others? How can we be caring for

strangers, For those less fortunate? We reflect God's love through our hospitality and compassion.

We see that with Boaz. Wow, he's really like, He acted like God. In the way that he extended grace and practical care and provision. What about you and me?

For those that might be different in our lives. Can we show that same consideration? So Boaz directed that his workers drop barley that Ruth could gather. We see that in verses 15 and 16. And it says, When she was risen up to glean. So she went out getting the kind of scraps, The fallen bits of barley. And Boaz commanded his young men saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves.

And reproach her not. So even where the grain was already gathered. He says, Let her glean amongst that. Let her fill of the grain.

[22:15] And it says, Let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her. And leave them not, That she may glean them. And rebuke her not. So what Boaz is saying here, He's saying, Deliberately let handfuls fall.

That she can glean them. And so she had abundance. It was God's provision through Boaz.

Ultimately the story of Ruth is one of redemption and hope. Think of the story.

God's orchestrating this. The story of Ruth is going to culminate in the coming of the Messiah. The ultimate picture of redemption. And even in the time where Ruth was present, Boaz was really a picture of the Redeemer.

It was all part of God's redemptive plan. And she was especially blessed to be included as a Gentile. Think of it too. We can think. It's only by the grace of God. He's included me.

He's included me in his plan. So Boaz is the kinsman Redeemer. He marries Ruth. Ensuring her and Naomi's future. God brought hope back.

[23:14] Restored hope. Naomi noticed how Ruth was blessed with this abundant harvest. She noticed that obviously she got more than would ordinarily be so because some handfuls were given to her on purpose.

She was purposefully given a greater measure. And Naomi noticed that. And so she asked about it in chapter 2 verse 19. And her mother-in-law said unto her, unto Ruth, Where hast thou gleaned today?

And where wroughtest thou? Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought and said, The man's name with whom I wrought today is Boaz.

She saw that Boaz was obviously very gracious. And verse 20. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord who hath not left off his kindness.

There's that word again, his kindness, to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto me. It's saying the Lord has not left off his kindness.

[24:17] It's the grace again. It's the kindness. It's the generosity, the mercy, the kindness of God seen through Boaz. Now think back. Naomi, she was hurt.

She'd suffered such loss. She'd lost everything. Here was the first time you could note that Naomi said really anything positive. She said, Blessed be he of the Lord.

She saw, yeah, something good's happening here. There's something changing in my bitter life that there's something we can say blessed is this man. Blessed is God's kindness through this man.

And as much as she was dwelling on all the bitterness, here now is a ray of light into Naomi's life.

God was doing a work in her. And Ruth's story assures us that no matter what, no matter what our situation, God can redeem and transform our life.

Naomi had such bitterness, such loss, such pain, such tragedy. Now there's a light shining. God's kindness is coming to light.

[25:21] And you can see the loving kindness of God through Boaz. It's a picture for us of God's grace. Naomi prompts Ruth to go and make herself known to Boaz. So again, I'm skipping through some of the more detail here.

But now to chapter 3 and verse 9. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth, thine handmaid. Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman.

So what happened in the occasion here is that Ruth made herself known to Boaz. She caught his attention as she came to him by night.

And he was surprised that she came to him. She caught his attention. And in simple terms, basically the course of actions here is that she was essentially asking Boaz to take her as his wife. So she wanted to tell him, Look, I am Ruth, thine handmaid. And she's saying, Thou art a near kinsman. She's effectively asking to marry him.

[26:26] She's saying, I'm in the family and you can be my kinsman redeemer. You can include me in your family. You can make me your wife. And so this kinsman redeemer picture is that in the custom of the time, it was a close relative who had responsibility to care for family members in need, including marrying a widow to preserve the family line.

So as she came to him by night, she lay at his feet. She was showing her humility and submission. And she was really grabbing his attention to ask Boaz to protect her, to provide for her, for her to come under his covering.

And that would have been understood in their culture to mean it was an invitation. She wanted to ask really that Boaz would marry her. Because Boaz was the one who could continue the family line if he wanted to do that.

And Boaz says, May you be blessed of the Lord, my daughter. It reads on, verse 10. Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter, for thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning.

And as much as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich. So he saw she was really a younger woman and she could have gone for a younger man.

[27:46] But she approached Boaz and sought that he would be her husband. And he acknowledges that, her kindness to him. And verse 11. And now, my daughter, fear not, I will do to thee all that thou requirest.

For all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. So again, Ruth is the virtuous woman. She's the picture of it. She's the Proverbs 31 woman.

And Ruth is that woman of noble character. What a testimony that she had that she was a virtuous woman. But there was just one problem. As much as she approached Boaz to be her kinsman redeemer, in the verses we're not touching on, basically there's another kinsman redeemer more legally obligated.

He's got a first call on her to perform this marriage. Really, he has got first call to perform this marriage. But as things turned out, thankfully, in the plan of God, it turned out that it was Boaz who was able to take that place.

The one who had first call declined to take that role. And so it was Boaz who redeemed Ruth. It pictures how the Lord Jesus is our redeemer. He's the kinsman redeemer.

[29:02] And just as, excuse me, Boaz redeemed Ruth, think how Christ redeems us. He's the one who pays for us to come into his salvation.

And it's a picture of that ultimate price of Christ's payment for our salvation as the one who's the ultimate redeemer and gives us eternal hope. And we read on chapter 4 now, verse 9.

So what happened prior to this verse?

A transaction was made by the customer of the time as he met at the gate. And the one who had first choice to be the redeemer declined. And so Boaz affected the transaction.

He affected the legal process that he could be now Ruth's husband and take responsibility for her.

[30:02] And so we read on verse 10. Moreover, Ruth, the Moabites, the wife of Marlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his place.

He are witnesses this day. So I know it sounds a bit strange to us, but this was the customer of the time, the legal obligation, the legal process. And obviously, Ruth was willing that Boaz be her husband.

And there was this legal process that now they could marry. She could be his wife. And so the legal witnesses were here to bear witness of that legal process that was complete now.

And the people bore witness of it. And then verse 11. And all the people that were in the gate and the elders said, we are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like

Rachel and like Leah, which too did build the house of Israel.

And do thou worthily in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. And of course, we read on again, I'm only touching on some of the verses that the Lord enabled Ruth to conceive and gave birth to a son.

[31:17] So what a blessing now. Ruth is now a mother. And verse 13. And Boaz took Ruth and she was his wife. And the Lord gave her conception and she bare a son.

And then the women said to Naomi, blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today. May his name become famous in Israel. So we see that now there was redemption come to the house of Naomi in the person of Boaz.

May he also be to you a restorer of life, a sustainer of your old age. For your daughter-in-law who loves you is better than seven sons and has given birth to him.

So now this one, her daughter-in-law who was herself a widow, now she's married to Boaz and now a mother. And so God's blessing was effected through all of these chain of events.

And then Ruth chapter 4 verse 17. And the women, her neighbours, gave her the name saying, There is a son born to Naomi and they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

[32:24] So with Naomi, for the longest time it looked like bitterness was going to be her lot in life. It was going to define her life. That Naomi was now just such a bitter, lonely, sad woman.

But now they saw that God turned everything around. And the people called Naomi blessed. They said, Naomi are blessed. This woman now who had been through much harshness and bitterness and emptiness, now she was truly blessed.

And it ends the book by saying, Obed begat Jesse and Jesse begat David. So think of Ruth today, a virtuous woman. This book is 3,000 years old but it's still very relevant today.

There's still lessons we can learn. There's still application we can make. That we think of Ruth, this model. This model of a woman of virtue. And she was blessed now to be a forebear of Christ.

Ruth and Boaz become great grandparents of King David. So think of it as we think about this book, just a short book, four chapters. It's a testament of the power of faithfulness, of faith, of kindness, of redemption.

[33:33] And it's an inspiration to us today. A powerful example as Ruth and Naomi can picture for us how God-concerned situations around. We see how a Gentile can be included.

God's salvation plan extends such that we can be included in this wonderful story of redemption. When we consider Ruth's life, we can learn from that.

We can see the godly virtues that she had. And we can attempt to copy that godly example. And likewise, Boaz too. Think of his kindness.

How can we be more like Boaz as well? He's very much Christ-like in his actions too. The kindness of God, the mercy, the grace that he extends. It's right through the book.

In the various shadows and signs, we see kindness, the kindness of God. Think of the loving kindness of God. That he would so extend his gift to such as we.

[34:30] That we can be included in God's plan of redemption. And we can see of Ruth how she was faithful in her relationships. She trusted in God's plan.

Stepping into the unknown. Going to this unknown land for her. Or going to Bethlehem. We can see how we can extend kindness to others in our lives.

We can see how we can find hope in the redemption that is in Christ. We can know God's redemptive plan. Which is, of course, in Christ. And so Ruth's story was part of that.

Because she was the great-grandmother of King David. And, of course, the son of David, ultimately the son of David, our Lord, is the Messiah. The Saviour.

So it's all part of God's salvation plan when you think about it too. So let's be encouraged today to think, how can I be, as a woman, more like Ruth?

[35:27] How, as a man, can I be more like Boaz? How can I follow the Saviour? How can I be encouraged in that same faith, that same kindness and redemption?

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that we see in Ruth this virtuous woman, a woman of virtue. We see the testament of a life of faithfulness. Lord, may we have the grace and the kindness that Boaz extended.

Lord, may we know the loving kindness that you extend in salvation. If there's any yet to trust you, Lord, that they might know the kindness that you do extend.

Even when life seems bitter and hard, Lord, we're under the shadow of your wings. We're under the cover of your wings. And the God that we trust is like an overshadowing wing that is shielding us. And that you're watching over us. You're looking after us, Lord. And even when life seems bitter, there can be a joy that we can know of your salvation.

[36:30] Lord, help us to take to heart the encouragement here and learn from these powerful examples, we pray. In Jesus' precious name, amen.