

**Ruth**  
**A Bold Proposal (Part 2)**  
**Ruth 3:1-18**  
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Well, I invite you to turn with me tonight back to the Book of Ruth. It's been a while since we studied the Book of Ruth together. And so, before we dig into our text for tonight, let me briefly remind you of how the dramatic story of Ruth unfolds, like any good drama, in a series of acts. That's how we're looking at it together.

Act number 1 I entitled *The Far Country*. This is how this little book begins. The story of Ruth occurs in the dark period of the Judges, and even darker still in the time of a desperate famine in the land of Israel. It begins, according to the first two verses, with the disastrous choice of one Jewish family. A man named Elimelech, apparently with the full agreement of his wife, decides to move his family to Moab.

If you lived in those times and you were a faithful believer, a faithful Old Testament believer, the very mention of that fact would have made you gasp, because Moab was a people who had historically been Israel's enemies. It was also a land that was filled with the worship of idols. Specifically, the false god of the land of Moab was a god named Chemosh, a god who demanded even child sacrifice. The author goes on, then, in verses 3 - 5 of chapter 1 to document the divine consequences of this family's rebellion.

We've noted that within ten years (think about that) within ten years this family experienced the unexpected death of Naomi's relatively young husband Elimelech; their two boys both married Moabite women, idolaters, women who worshiped the false god Chemosh; and both of these boys were married for ten years without children (which in that day would have been a desperate thing); and then both sons died prematurely and unexpectedly. In the far country, this Jewish family from Bethlehem experienced nothing but God's chastening hand. So, with everyone else dead from her original family, Naomi decided to return to Israel.

Which brings us to act 2, the second half of this first chapter, *The Journey Home*. This act is really a remarkable story, a story of the repentance and the spiritual restoration of Naomi, and the spiritual salvation of Ruth her daughter-in-law. But as I noted for you, the real focus of these verses is not Naomi. It's not Ruth. Rather, it's Yahweh, because in this section He demonstrates Himself to be in every sense a Savior—by restoring the land from famine and drought to food, by restoring Naomi from sin to repentance, by converting Ruth from idolatry to salvation. In fact, the remarkable story of Ruth is that God in His sovereignty, in His sovereign grace, reaches into the middle of an idol-worshiping country and snatches one of His own to Himself.

The third act is *Yahweh's Protection and Provision*. The key verse (in really the bulk of chapter 2), the key verse to help us understand this section is verse 12, Boaz' statement in prayer. "May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, [this is 2:12] under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." Boaz noted that both of these women had sought refuge in Yahweh under His wings, which is a beautiful picture. Naomi had repented and returned to her God. Ruth, who had worshiped a false god her entire life, came to believe in Yahweh, Israel's God. Since both of them had sought refuge in Yahweh, He took complete and personal responsibility for their care. So, in chapter 2 we learn that through His providence, God always cares for those who have sought refuge in Him.

The last time we studied Ruth together we began the fourth act in this real-life drama, *A Bold Proposal*. A bold proposal. This is the third chapter. We looked last time at just the first five verses. When you look at the timeline of the Book of Ruth, I pointed out to you that most of the book occurs in a very short period of time. The first 5 verses of chapter 1 describe a period of 10 to 12 years, when they were in Moab and all the disastrous things that happened there. But most of Ruth occurs over the period of a couple of months in the late spring or early summer of the year. The rest of chapter 1, about 7 to 10 days journey back from Moab, a journey of about 60 to 75 miles.

Chapter 2, most of it occurs on one day in the fields, the harvest fields. But chapter 2, you'll notice, ends in verse 23 by speaking of both the wheat harvest and the barley harvest being complete. That's a period of about 6 to 7 weeks. Chapter 3 happens on a day and one night.

That's where we are in the story.

Now, this fourth act teaches us that God in His providence uses wise plans carried out in obedience to His Word to provide for those who seek refuge in Him. God is providentially superintending the whole process, but we must act. We must make decisions based upon the Word of God, implementing as wise a plan that we can, and God superintends that to accomplish His own purposes. It was a plan that was not only bold, but it was a biblical plan. Let's read again the first 5 verses of chapter 3.

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley ... [in] the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself ... 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 [are to] do." [Ruth] said to her, "All that you say I will do."

Now, what is Ruth told to do here? What exactly is it that Naomi was suggesting or really urging Ruth to do? As we noted, the bottom line in these verses is that Naomi has instructed Ruth to propose marriage to Boaz. She's to take the initiative. She is to approach him with a proposal of marriage. And Naomi expected that Boaz would understand that that's exactly what Ruth was doing, and he would respond. Verse 4, "Then he will tell you what you shall do." Naomi said once you've done what I've told you, wait for his instruction.

Now, we asked the question last time (and it's an important question to remind ourselves), where in the world would Naomi have come up with such a plan? Well, we learned that it was from the Scripture. It was from an old custom that God had sanctioned in the Mosaic Law—with certain limitations. It was custom called *levirate marriage* found in Deuteronomy 25:5 - 10. We looked there last time. It worked like this. If an Israelite man married but died without children, it was

the duty of his brother to marry his widow, that is, his sister-in-law. The first child that came from that marriage would take the name of the deceased brother so that the family name might not be extinct in Israel. That first son, then, also became the legal heir of the one who had died.

According to Ruth 4:5, this custom ensured that the land that had been given to the various families in Israel remained in the family and that land wasn't permanently lost. Naomi stakes her future, and she stakes Ruth's future (listen to this now, this is the crucial part) she stakes their future on a plan laid out in an obscure passage of Scripture, but a passage that spoke specifically to the circumstances in which she found herself.

Now, what's remarkable about this is, because this isn't how Naomi had always acted. In fact, if you go back to chapter 1, they find themselves in famine, and what do she and Elimelech do? They make up their own scheme. They come up with their own plan. And it ends disastrously. She's learned the lesson. Here in the desperate situation she finds herself, she looks at the Word of God. She sees what God has to say about her circumstance, and that is the course she pursues even though it's an obscure passage in the Law. She tried in the past to solve her problems through human plans, through human schemes that were, frankly, contrary to God's will and purpose.

How often do we do the same? We find ourselves in the middle of trouble, in the middle of difficulty, in the middle of hard times. How many times do we, like Elimelech and Naomi, come up with our own schemes? And how often do they end in disaster? But she's finally learned her lesson. What does the Bible say? What does God say? This time Naomi determined to seek security for Ruth and for herself God's way. Her plan was a biblical plan at heart.

Now that brings us to where we left off last time. We also need to learn that not only was this a biblical plan, but it was a wise plan. That is, it was an intentional application of what the Scripture taught suited to her own circumstances and times.

Now, verses 6 and 7 describe what happened between dark and midnight. Verse 6, "So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her."

She hid, and she waited for the right time. Notice verse 7, “When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain...” Now, this text is not in any way implying that Boaz was drunk. After several years of drought and famine in the land, he was simply enjoying the fruit of a good harvest. He’d had a successful, long day of work. He had a full stomach. He was feeling the effects, no doubt, of the wine he’d had with his meal. And that’s the picture that’s described here. In fact, one commentator says, “The narrator paints an image of a contented man at peace with himself and in harmonious step with a world that is yielding its fruit as a result of Yahweh’s blessing and his hard work.” You’ve felt that. You’ve sensed that in your own work from time to time as well.

Now at this point the grain, remember, has been harvested. It’s been transported to the threshing floor. It has been then winnowed, but it has not yet been transported into the city. Let me just remind you of the process. This is near Bethlehem as it would have been in the time of Boaz and Ruth. This is how it would have been. These are fields near Bethlehem where the wheat has been harvested and stacked. That would have been the first step.

That would have been followed, then, by taking the grain to the threshing floor. And it was usually transported by wagon or (like this) by donkey, so that it would make its way to the threshing floor. Then you found a threshing floor. They were typically not as high as the cities. The highest peaks were reserved for the cities, because those were the most protected areas. Before jets you couldn’t get a safer place than the highest point. And so just below those hills, then, as you see in the picture, the other hills would be reserved for the threshing floors: a hard surface, sometimes ground, sometimes stone (it varied), where the wheat would be threshed and winnowed.

Here’s another example of a threshing floor in a different context. The grain would be laid out on the threshing floor, and then there would be a sledge that would be pulled across it again and again by man or by donkey in order to separate the chaff from the wheat grains themselves. But there was one more step in the process, and that was winnowing the grain.

Once you had separated the wheat and the chaff, you had to come in (as you see here) with a

pitchfork. And when the wind was blowing strong enough not to blow all the wheat away but strong enough to blow the chaff away, you would throw the contents of the pitchfork into the air, and the chaff was light enough that it would blow away. And the grain was heavy enough that it would fall back onto the threshing floor. And you can see that piles of wheat would accumulate. And so that's the picture of what's going on here. At this point the grain, according to the story, has been winnowed, but it is not yet been transported into the city. And so, it formed a huge pile like the pile you see even in this photograph.

Naomi watched as Boaz finished his meal and went to lie down on the far end of the grain pile. Obviously, as the man who owned the field, who had many servants, he's going to have the premier location separate from the rest of the workers on the other end of the pile in some privacy. The text assumes that Ruth then waited until Boaz and the rest of the workers were asleep.

Notice verse 7, "... and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down." Once everyone was asleep, she went to where he was sleeping, and with stealth she uncovered his feet. Now what's going on here? We talked about this in the first part of chapter 3. Let me remind you. The Hebrew word that is translated "feet" here occurs in only one other place outside of this passage. It occurs in Daniel 10:6, and there it refers to the lower limbs, limbs that include the feet, the legs, and the thighs. So essentially, she removed the blanket or the cloak that was shielding him from the cool air from the lower half of his body. And then she lay down nearby and waited for him to notice.

Verse 8, "It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward." The "middle of the night" in Hebrew is, literally, "at the half of the night." It's a figure of speech, but clearly around midnight. This story gets more interesting. Boaz apparently slept for some time after his legs were uncovered before something startled him. It's possible that something frightened him. Maybe he awoke from a nightmare or some other frightening experience. But the word for "startled" actually means "to tremble." That time of the year it was likely a warm, spring evening. So, apparently, he had not noticed that his legs were uncovered until close to midnight.

Around that time of night at that elevation the air begins to get quite cool. And so, what seems to be implicated here is that he trembled, or he shivered because it was cold. That may have been the whole intention of uncovering the lower half of his body. The expression “bent forward” (as you can see from the marginal note in the *NAS*) means that “he twisted himself.” The only other place in Old Testament where this form of the Hebrew verb occurs is in Judges 16 where Sampson takes hold of the pillars of the Temple of Dagon. So, it’s possible that Boaz took hold of or attempted to take hold of his blanket or the cloak that was covering his legs.

You can get the picture. He awakens with a start in the middle of the night. He’s cold. You’ve had this experience as I have. And he twists himself and bends down to grab his cloak or blanket and pull it back over his legs. And there’s a woman. That experience I’ve not had, except my wife. Verse 8, “Behold.” I love that. “Behold, a woman was lying at his feet.” This is one of those funny biblical moments. It was definitely a “behold” moment. As Boaz turns to pull the covers over his feet and legs, he discovers that there’s a woman lying by his legs. And so, he does the only natural thing. Verse 9, he said, “Who are you?” And she (you know, I love some of these stories, because they just have that ring of reality to them.) And there was lot of humor in them as well. ““Who are you?’ ... she answered, ‘[I’m] Ruth, your maid.’”

Now, Ruth here is still expressing her humility, and she calls herself “your maid”. But here, interestingly, she uses a different Hebrew word for servant than she did back in 2:13. There, the word “maidservant” refers to the lowest slave. She’s no longer using that word. Here in 3:9, she uses the Hebrew word “amah”. A person in this status was still a servant, but a servant that had all the privileges that came with belonging to an Israelite household. In fact, in Exodus 20:10, even the Sabbath law covered this kind of slave. More importantly, more significantly, an amah could give birth to an heir. This very word is used of the woman who was given to Jacob, you remember, Bilhah, to have an heir in Genesis 30. So, she is not his equal. She’s not saying she’s his equal, but she’s not the lowest slave anymore either. She’s acknowledging just her humble state.

Verse 9 goes on. “She answered [and said], ‘I am Ruth your maid. [I love this] So spread your covering over your maid.’” Now, that’s probably not how you proposed to your spouse. But in

ancient Israel, those words were clearly understood to mean that Ruth was asking Boaz to marry her. Let me show you one example.

Turn over to Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel and chapter 16. Here is a chapter where God describes His relationship with Israel (with the northern tribes) and with Judah (the southern tribes) as a marriage. Notice how He describes marriage in verse 8 of Ezekiel 16. God says, “‘Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine,’ declares the Lord.” What I want you to see is even though this is a chapter that is figuratively describing our Lord’s relationship with Judah and Israel as a marriage, when He comes to describe the marriage itself, He describes it as spreading His skirt over her. That language meant marriage.

Now go back to Ruth. What was happening, then, here when Ruth says “spread your covering [or your skirt] over your maid,” she was proposing marriage to Boaz. Now why? Why in this case did Ruth need to propose to Boaz? It wasn’t because she was desperate. There were two specific reasons. One is that Boaz was significantly older than she was. In fact, as we saw, he may have actually been closer to the age of her father-in-law, Elimelech, than to her age. In other words, he may have been old enough to be her father.

In addition, Ruth had apparently still been in official mourning over the loss of her husband. You can see that in even the language used in the early part of chapter 3 where Naomi encourages Ruth (verse 3) to “put on your best clothes.” You can see that “best” is in italics. It’s added by the translators. Literally, “put on your clothes.” The word that’s used is likely a reference to your everyday clothes as opposed to the clothes for mourning that you’ve been in. It’s time to end your mourning is likely what Naomi was telling her. So, it would have been culturally inappropriate for Boaz to have made any overtures of romance or marriage during that time. So, Ruth had to let her desires be known to him. The clear implication of this text is that while this was unusual, it was not completely unknown in their culture, because notice verse 4. When you do this, Naomi says, “he will tell you what you ... [should] do.” He’ll get it. He’ll understand, and he’ll respond.

Go back to verse 9. “She answered [and said], ‘I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid.’” Marry me. And then she gives the reason. “For [because] you are a close relative.” Now, notice the important marginal note in the *NAS* at verse 9. A “close relative” is, literally, a “redeemer.” The Hebrew word is “goel”. It is sometimes translated “kinsman redeemer”. It is a technical term from Hebrew family law. It really comes from the idea that close relatives have a special responsibility for their family members.

Under Mosaic Law, the goel had a general responsibility for the well-being of his relative. And in addition to that, he had specific responsibilities if a relative was in distress or crisis and was unable to help himself. Daniel Block identifies five different duties of the kinsman redeemer, the close relative. And we went through those last time. But two of those five duties of the goel are important here in Ruth.

First of all, the goel was responsible to buy back land that a needy relative had sold under duress because of financial need. And they were to buy it back in order to ensure that that inherited land, that land that had been stipulated by God as part of that tribe, that family’s inheritance, never passed out of the family’s control. The other responsibility (and by the way, you can see this). Turn over to 4:3. We’ll see this next time. “‘Then he said {Boaz says to the other close} relative, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.’” In other words, she needed the money from the family land. But it was the responsibility of the goel to buy that land in order to make sure that it didn’t pass out of the family. It stayed an inheritance of that family.

The other responsibility that factors in here in Ruth is the goel was responsible to marry the widow of a close relative who had died without children. Again, look at 4:5: “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.’”

Now, if you look in Deuteronomy at levirate marriage, you discover, as we did, that levirate marriage is not specifically tied to the role of the goel in the Old Testament law. However,

clearly by the time of Ruth it was considered the goel's responsibility to marry the widow, as we just saw there in verse 5. The goals, then, of levirate marriage were to care for the widow, to preserve the family name, to ensure that property that had been allotted by God stayed within that family.

Now, Naomi decided that however radical it may be, she and Ruth were going to follow the biblical model for how God had said they were to be cared for in Israel at that time. Now, there is an absolutely crucial lesson for us here. Although, obviously, the commands for levirate marriage are no longer binding on us today, we still face exactly the same temptations they faced. We find ourselves in the middle of trouble, difficulty (sometimes external to us like the famine in the land, other times trouble that we've caused), and we're tempted to abandon what the Scripture clearly teaches us and to resort to our own wisdom, or even worse to the wisdom of the world. We buy into what the culture says we ought to do. The message of Ruth 3 to us (listen carefully) is that when we stop our rebellion and turn to the Lord, when we stop our sinful scheming to meet our own needs, when we seek to make wise plans that reflect God's Word and then entrust ourselves to the Lord, He will take care of us and our future.

Now, if you had never heard the story of Ruth before, we would be sitting on the edge of our seats waiting to see how Boaz responds, because this doesn't seem on the surface like a very good plan. It doesn't look like it's going to turn out very well. But what we learn is that God had prepared Boaz' heart for this moment. His response to her is just as remarkable as her proposal to him. Notice, Boaz responds to Ruth's proposal in four ways.

First of all, in verse 10, he pronounces a blessing on Ruth. "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, this is amazing at a number of levels. I have to confess, as a man it is especially amazing that here is another man who awakened from a dead sleep at midnight and has the presence of mind to respond like that. That's not how I respond when I'm awakened at midnight. I'm still trying to figure out where I am and what's going on.

Notice that what impressed Boaz most about Ruth's proposal of marriage was her motive. It was her motive. It was not based on mere physical attraction. It was not based on her own personal desires. It was not based on wealth. It was based on, notice, "kindness." That's the Hebrew word "hesed", steadfast love: her loving loyalty, her steadfast love to Naomi, to her family. It would have been completely natural, certainly understandable, for Ruth to pursue marriage that would be solely to her advantage. She could have married (notice what Boaz says.) She could've married for appearance, a "young" man. She could have married for romantic love, a "poor" man. That would be the only reason—right? She could have married for wealth, a "rich" man.

But clearly, (while this marriage will, in the end, benefit her), Boaz recognizes that her choice of him is based far more on her "hesed", on her steadfast love for the people in her life and for her God. When she asked him to marry her because he was the goel, Boaz understands that her motive is steadfast love, first and foremost to God and what He had prescribed, and secondly to Naomi because of her love for her. He praises her, pronounces a blessing on her.

The second part of his response is he accepts. He accepts her proposal of marriage in verse 11. "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 excellence." Notice, first of all, he comforts her. One of the most common statements in Scripture to administer comfort: don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Certainly, if you were Ruth at this point, you would have cause for fear. He says don't be afraid. He then accepts her proposal directly, "I will do for you whatever you ask." He knows what she's asked. He then explains why, why he would consider such a seemingly inappropriate proposal. It was because of Ruth's character: "All my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence."

In less than three month's time, all of those in Bethlehem had come to see Ruth as a woman of noble character. This is how the author, by the way, had described Boaz back in 2:1. Boaz was a man of, literally, a mighty man, a valiant man, a man of nobility, a man of excellence. This same word is used to describe the wife of excellence in Proverbs 31. You know, if I could encourage those of you who are not married, who are considering marriage? Here's a really good reason to

pursue a relationship with someone. Not because of their appearance, not because of romantic notions, often misguided, of love, but because of their character. Do you respect that person? Can you follow their spiritual leadership?

Daniel Block writes of this response of Boaz to Ruth: “Boaz could have treated her as Moabite trash scavenging in the garbage cans of Israel. But with true hesed, true steadfast love of his own, he sees her as a woman equal in status and character to himself. “You are a woman of [noble character].”

Next Boaz reveals a serious problem with her plan, verse 12. I’m sure Boaz’ response to this point must have filled her with joy. But what he says next, I’m sure, made her heart skip a beat. Verse 12, “Now, it is true [I am a redeemer] I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.” It’s true. He is a goel. But (and this is absolutely huge) there is another relative who is closer to her. That means he would’ve had the first responsibility. It was his to decide.

Still, (in spite of this serious problem with her plan), the fourth part of his response in verses 13 - 15 is to reassure Ruth about her future. Look at verse 13, “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.” By the way, “remain this night” has absolutely no sexual overtones. In fact, it’s the same expression, the same word Ruth used in 1:16, of remaining with her mother-in-law.

Now, if you read his response at a surface level, maybe some of you ladies read that, and it sounds kind of cold. It’s like, well, he wants to marry you, great; if he doesn’t, I’ll take you. That’s not the idea at all. You can see that Boaz really wants to marry Ruth himself in three ways. First of all, his acceptance of her offer, her proposal, in verse 11. He’s already accepted the offer. Secondly, his reassurance in verse 13 that he will redeem her if he has the chance to do so. And thirdly, you see how much this is his desire by his swearing the greatest oath that was available to the Jews: “I will redeem you, as [Yahweh] lives.” You see his heart. You see his desire to do this: as truly and surely as our God is the one true and living God, I will marry you if I’m able to do so.

Now, verses 14 and 15 describe what transpired then between that midnight conversation and the next day. Verse 14,: “So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, ‘Let it not be known that the women came to the threshing floor.’”

Although their conversation happened at midnight, I can promise you that it’s highly unlikely that either of them got much sleep the rest of the night, because surely in their own minds they’re thinking about the ramifications of their discussion at midnight. They’re thinking about what this will mean. Undoubtedly, Ruth is apprehensive about this other man in the picture, this other kinsman redeemer, and what that might mean for her future. Maybe it’s even someone she doesn’t know.

I’m sure a lot of prayers went up that night from both Ruth and from Boaz. Because of his concern for Ruth’s reputation and for his own reputation, along with the necessary part of keeping their plan a secret, Boaz insisted that she stay there during the night (that would have been safer) and then that she leave before daylight when she could be recognized. This would protect his reputation, her reputation, and their plan. The narrator tells us what Boaz had been thinking there in verse 14, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.” He’s not likely saying that to someone else. Apparently, no one else was privy to this visit and this conversation. Instead, this is his own thinking.

Verse 15, “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. [And] she went into the city.” He sends her back to Naomi with six—notice the word “measures” is in italics. In Hebrew all it says is “with six of barley.” Doesn’t tell us the unit of measure. Possible choices are six small scoops; six “omers”, which was a measurement in Hebrew that would (six of them would) be equal to eighteen to thirty pounds (somewhere in that range) of barley; or, six “seahs”, which would have been somewhere between 60 and 100 pounds. We don’t know, but clearly he was generous man. Now, we learned what Boaz was thinking with this gift down in 3:17. Notice his thinking. “She said, ‘These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, “Do not go to your mother-in-law empty handed.”’” He’s such a generous, kindhearted man that he just couldn’t consider sending her back to Naomi empty handed.

Now, you'll notice the end of verse 15 in our *New American Standard* says, "Then she went into the city." You'll see the marginal note.: in many manuscripts verse 15 ends, *she* went into the city; but the Hebrew of verse 15 ends, and *He* went into the city. If that's correct, the narrator wants us to sense just how eager Boaz was to resolve Ruth's request, to get this thing done.

The author of this fascinating, little Old Testament book wants us to see that Naomi and Ruth not only followed a biblical plan, one that was laid down in the Old Testament Law, but they married that biblical plan and used biblical wisdom to create a strategy that reflected their own cultural circumstances. I wouldn't suggest that you follow chapter 3 the next time you want to pursue a relationship. But, in their culture, they were marrying what the Scripture clearly commanded with a wise plan that reflected their cultural situation. In the same way, we must not only follow Scripture as we make our plans, but we must also seek to follow strategies and processes that are wise in our own circumstances.

How do you gain that kind of wisdom, the wisdom to take what the Scripture clearly teaches and apply it to making practical decisions in everyday life? James 1:5 explains. If you find yourself in the midst of the troubles and trials and the difficulties of life and you lack wisdom, that's the context of this statement. You're in the midst of the trials of this life. You have decisions that need to be made. You're trying to figure out what to do next. The Scripture speaks somewhat to your situation, but you've got to create a plan. What do you do? James writes: "If any of you lacks wisdom [in that circumstance], let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

So, in their trouble, in their difficulty, they followed a biblical plan, and they followed a wise application of that biblical plan to their own cultural situation. And then they committed their plans to the Lord in an unwavering trust, an unwavering trust. We see this in verses 16 - 18. Verse 16, "When she came to her mother-in-law [back in the city], she said [the mother-in-law said], 'How did it go, my daughter?' And she told her all that the man had done for her."

Can you imagine Naomi sleeping in her bed in the city of Bethlehem that night? - I doubt she

got much sleep either. She wanted to know how the plan had gone. Notice the marginal note in verse 16 says that, literally, Naomi asked, “Who are you?” It doesn’t mean that she didn’t recognize Ruth. It means “In what condition are you?” , the idea is “How did it go?” And that’s why it’s translated the way it is. So, Ruth gives a complete report of the last 12 hours since she saw Naomi.

Verse 17, “She said, ‘[In addition] these six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty handed.’” By the way, why specifically in addition to his generosity would Boaz have given this to Naomi? There’re several possible reasons. One is he felt a sense of obligation as her goel. He knew she didn’t have anything. He knew she was poor, having to sell the land that she owned. She was land rich at that point, needed to get rid of the land, but she had no money. She had no food. They were living off what Ruth harvested and what Boaz had given her. So, he felt his responsibility to the family as the goel. It’s also possible that there’s a sense of gratitude. He knows this is all coming together because of Naomi’s suggestion, Naomi’s plan.

Another possibility is that it was a sign of good faith in his promise to marry Ruth. It’s even possible this was a kind of down payment on the bride price. The bride price was typically paid to the legal guardian, in this case Naomi, at the time of the betrothal. There may have been the promise of marriage in this.

Verse 18, here’s Naomi’s response. “She said, ‘Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out.’” Literally, “how the matter falls out.” Same expression is used of the lot falling in the lap. “For the man will not rest until he has settled it today.” Notice, Naomi rested, and she urged Ruth to rest (in two things). In Boaz’ integrity. He’s the kind of man who’s going to act on what he told you. He’s going to do what he said. He’s not going to let any time pass until he does what’s his duty. But she wasn’t merely trusting in Boaz’ integrity. She was trusting in God’s providence. She’s learned this lesson. She has followed what the Scriptures taught, and she’s waiting to see how God acts. This is how we’re to respond as well.

So, what are the lessons here in this third chapter, the implications for us in this passage? Let me

give you some things to think about. First of all, we must think about discovering God's will biblically. How do you make those decisions the Scripture doesn't directly address? Well, what's remarkable is in 3:1 to 5, we have an outline form of the process for making biblical decisions about the specific issues of our lives.

First of all, begin with biblical desires and aspirations. You see that in verse 1. I want to "seek security for you, that it may be well with you."

Secondly, follow any biblical directions that are available. There was a clear biblical direction about the course they should take.

Thirdly, verses 3 and 4, use wisdom to create specific plans to carry out to arrive at that biblical destination.

Number 4, consider and follow wise counsel. Ruth listened to the counsel of her mother-in-law.

And number 5, entrust yourself and your plans to God's providence. In other words, Proverbs 16:3, "Commit your works to the Lord, and your plans will be established."

You see, God holds us responsible to pray for wisdom, to apply His Word to our problem, to seek counsel, to make wise plans, and then to make a decision and act. And don't wait for God to put some feeling in the pit of your stomach. Don't wait to feel something. Make a decision, and act and entrust your plans to Him.

So, pursuing God's will for the details of your life is actually pretty simple. We're not responsible, *you* are not responsible, to discover God's sovereign, eternal, secret will. He's not going to tell you. He's not going to write it in the sky. He's not going to send you a letter. He's not going to give you code in the Bible. He's not going to give you any indication of His secret, sovereign will at all. We are responsible, instead, to make wise plans that reflect God's Word, and then to trust Him with our plans and with our future.

By the way, that's a thumbnail sketch of the appropriate way to make biblical decisions. If you

want to sort of expand that, understand that more, I highly recommend a book to you that has been pivotal in my own life. We have it in the bookstore usually. *Decision Making and the Will of God* by Gary Friesen. Excellent book that will give you a biblical model for making the decisions of life.

There's another implication for us in this text, and that is that God orders His amazing providence to care for those who seek refuge in Him. Again, we see in this little book God's providence weaving the moments of our lives together to accomplish the plans of His heart for us. Often, He does so as we seek to follow the prescriptions of Scripture carried out with wise plans. I mean, just think about how God used Ruth and Naomi's obedience to His Word, (executed in wisdom), in just a few short weeks in Ruth's life, to care for Naomi, to care for Ruth, to meet the needs of Boaz, and ultimately to show mercy and grace to the dead Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, whose names would be preserved in Israel.

And He even provided a future king, David, for His people. God is amazing and good. Number three. God must grant success. By the way, before I leave number two, let me just make that very personal. He does the same thing in your life. He's doing the same thing in your life. This is the story of Ruth. It's a story of Providence. It's a story of seemingly insignificant days and insignificant events that God weaves together to accomplish His perfect plans in a human life, in a number of human lives in redemptive history. And He's doing the same thing in yours.

Number three. God must grant success to our plans, even those founded upon His Word. In other words, having plans is not enough. Again, Daniel Block writes, "From a natural perspective this scheme was doomed from the beginning as a hopeless gamble." I mean, think about it. Everything about Ruth's proposal to Boaz made his responding positively virtually impossible. She was a woman proposing to a man in that culture. She was significantly younger proposing to someone who was old enough to be her father. She was a worker in the field proposing to someone who owns the field. She was foreigner, a Moabite, proposing to one of the blue-blooded aristocrats in Bethlehem. Only God could make this plan work.

And the same is true for us. All of our wise plans will fail if our confidence is in our plans or in

ourselves. Proverbs 16:9 says, “The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” That has to be your confidence.

But by far the most important lesson in this text is none of those. The most important lesson in this text is this: God will stop at nothing to provide a kinsman redeemer for all on whom He has set His love. That’s the real lesson. You see, the real love story in the Book of Ruth is not that between Boaz and Ruth. It is, instead, the love of the eternal God for His people. Ultimately, this story (as we will see as chapter 4 unfolds) is a story of how God was providing a kinsman redeemer, not for Naomi and Ruth, but for us.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, our Lord, He would be a descendant of the marriage between Boaz and Ruth. Ruth is listed in the genealogies of the New Testament. This was part of God’s eternal plan of redemption that these two seemingly insignificant lives would come together, but He did it. He arranged it all, because of His love for you, Christian, and for me. This story of Ruth is much bigger than a human love story. It is a divine love story as God had set His love upon us in eternity past, and He would leave absolutely no stone unturned to accomplish our redemption. And He acted in remarkable ways. He would see it done for us, no matter how hard, no matter how unlikely.

Let’s pray together.

Our Father, we are amazed at Your love for us in the gospel. We thank You for this human story that reveals how You worked that love out on the pages of human history, in individual lives to accomplish Your best for them, but also, Father, to accomplish Your best for us. We thank You that You will leave no stone unturned, that You will allow nothing to prevent providing a kinsman redeemer for us, a goel for us, who would redeem us.

Thank You, O God, for our Lord Jesus Christ. May we love Him more as a result of this study and as a result of this passion week.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.