

## Ruth Chapter 2 – John Karmelich

1. As I studied Chapter 2, I was considering calling it "Cinderella" as I was taken by how much Ruth humbled herself over and over again in this chapter. Since we think of Cinderella as being a fairy tale of a humble girl, it's a good but not perfect title choice. I don't want us to think of the story of Ruth as being a fairy tale. Therefore, let me focus on what is important for the Christian believer: Humility. That's my alternate one word title. Remember my favorite expression (in an expanded form): "I believe Jesus is God and died for every sin I've ever committed or ever will commit, OK, now what do I do?" My "now what" for this lesson is on the importance of being humble in living out the Christian life. That's what Ruth does in this lesson and it's a good model for our lives.
  - a) It reminds me of the old joke of a man who won an award for being the most humble, and when he went on a stage to accept the award, they took it away from him as he no longer deserved it because accepting it is considered bragging about how he lived.
  - b) In the first five books of the bible, Moses is called the most "humble man that ever lived". That reference is in Numbers 12:3. If Moses wrote that about himself, doesn't that lose his stature as humble if he wrote that? In most English translations, that reference is written in parenthesis as if to say an "editor" added that line to the text. The important point is if we study Moses' life throughout the first five books of the bible, he constantly humbled himself to God and to others, and he did deserve that title.
  - c) I bring all that up to start the lesson, because this chapter focuses on the main character of the book of Ruth, and how she acts as a stranger in a strange land. This was a woman not born of Jewish faith who adopted that religion to support her mother in law after she lost her husband and her children. Most commentators speculate Ruth was in her late teens or early twenties at this point in the story.
  - d) Anyway, let me go over the main points of this chapter as it teaches us how God wants us to walk humbly as a witness for Him as we live out our Christian life:
2. The chapter opens with a comment that Ruth's mother in law had a wealthy relative through her late husband. His name is Boaz and he'll become a major character in this story in this chapter as well as the last two chapters. He's the "prince charming" of this story. His character is important in that one of the Old Testament laws (Deuteronomy 25:8) is that if a wife's husband dies without having any children, a relative of the man who died has the option, (not an obligation, but a thing he should do) is taking that widow as a wife as to raise children in the name of the deceased man.
  - a) As this story unfolds, we'll read of Boaz taking that option, as we'll discover he was either unmarried or a widower himself. If we're to study the book of Ruth "typologically", think of Boaz as a type of redeemer, (i.e., think of Jesus in His role of redeeming lost sinners so we can spend eternity with God). Boaz himself can be seen as a model of redemption and Ruth was very humble in her dealings with him. What is that saying about us in how we should act in our dealings with God?
  - b) Let me put this one more way. It's not like we should approach God by thinking, "I have agreed to accept Your payment for My sins, so now I demand You do this or that for me, since You claim to love me so much!" That's the false view of the "prosperity preachers" and not the view how God wants Christians to live, in humility toward Him and others.
  - c) Anyway, Chapter 2 opens with Ruth by "coincidence" happening to go work for food in the field that belongs to Boaz. He finds out who Ruth is and tells her to work in the field where his female employee's are cutting the crops. Essentially this is an invitation to go work where it is safe and take what the workers miss as a "welfare payment" for her and her mother in law, Naomi. Ruth asks why she's allowed to do this and Boaz tells her that he knows about her plight and agrees to accept the Jewish God and that way of living.
  - d) The model for us is how eternally blessed we become when we choose to follow God.

3. The story continues with Ruth finding more favor as she worked in Boaz's fields. She's allowed to eat with Boaz and all who worked for him. You get the impression that everything done for her was done after she asked permission for it to be so. Like I said earlier, it's not like she made demands on him saying, "I know you're related to Naomi, so you owe us". It's more like I (Ruth) am desperate enough to do anything to survive, so will you please bless me and Naomi so we'll have food to eat for awhile. One gets the impression that Boaz was a godly man and invokes His name to bless her for her hard work in the field. I don't think Boaz intended to marry her at this point as much as he was just impressed how this foreigner was willing to return to live in Israel with her mother in law and take care of Naomi as a widow who's lost everything.
  - a) The short version is after working all day in the field and having a meal with Boaz, Ruth returns home with a big bag full of food. Naomi is "blown away" by how large a crop that Ruth brought home. Naomi finds out that Boaz is the one who blessed Ruth, and Naomi explains to Ruth who Boaz is, (a relative of Naomi through her late husband).
  - b) One can sense the "wheel's turning" in Naomi's head as she sees a potential marriage of Ruth and Boaz. Naomi tells Ruth when she goes back the next day to continue to work with the girls in Boaz's farm for her own protection and "maybe" catch the eye of Boaz. That last part is not in the text, but that's what I suspect she's thinking based on what is coming up in Chapter 3.
4. OK, most of us know the story. It's a cute story of two desolate women going from losing all that they had to living a good life once Boaz marries Ruth coming up later in the story. What is it God wants us to learn from this story and this chapter? Well, it's not exactly we're all Cinderella's like Ruth in this story. However, it's close to the truth. The point is if we're willing to act humble in our dealings with God and people around us, He promises to bless us far more than we can ever imagine. No I'm not saying we get a "fairy godmother" who turns us into a princess when we go and accept Jesus. I'm saying if we're willing to live humbly in our dealings with each other and our dealings with God, we'll be blessed by God as living that way is proof of our trust in God to guide our lives.
  - a) Let me explain this one more way and then I'll start the text. The way we get saved for all of eternity, is of course to trust that Jesus is fully God, fully human and died for every sin we ever have committed or ever will commit. That's not the end, but just the beginning of how we're to live the Christian life. Living that life essentially means we become a slave to His desire for our lives. We pray for God to guide us and we make the best decisions we can based on principals taught in the bible, and can assume He's guiding us as we live that way. The point as it ties to Ruth, is she's a model of our redemption as she lives in humility before a God she knows little about. She gets blessed beyond whatever she probably could imagine her life would ever be.
  - b) So if we humble ourselves before God, do we get the Cinderella blessing? Yes in that we get to spend eternity in God's presence for our trust for Him to guide our lives. It doesn't mean we get riches in this life, only a promise that He'll continue to guide us for His glory as we live to make a difference for Him in this world. Just as Ruth gets blessed as she gets food for her and her mother in law, so we'll be blessed as we trust God to guide our lives as we live to make a difference for Him. That's the story of Ruth up to this point, and I'd like to encourage you to read along with me as we go through the text verse by verse.
5. Chapter 2, Verse 1: Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz.
  - a) In Verse 1, we get introduced to Boaz. I don't think he was a brother of her late husband, but probably a close relative, maybe a first cousin. Remember that Naomi and her late husband left this town due to a famine probably ten years or more earlier. Yet while she was gone, we can see God not only provided for those who stayed in Bethlehem, but we even read of Naomi having a rich relative who prospered while she was gone. It's just a little proof that God takes care of those who trust in Him, even in the bad times.

- b) Keep in mind that this book takes place during the time of the "Judges" (the previous book in the bible). During that time, there was no king in Israel. God raised up judges to lead the Israelites to victories over their enemies. My point is for the most part, the Israelites still lived tribe by tribe in different parts of Israel. I state that here as when the text says that Boaz was from the "clan of Elimelech", it's like saying that was Boaz's last name. It's a way of saying Boaz was related to Naomi's late husband. It's a small point, but I wanted to explain why that word Elimelech is given in the text.
  - c) What's more important to the story is that Boaz was a "man of standing". That's the bible's way of saying he was an important man in that he had some wealth or was considered to be an important person in that community.
6. Verse 2: And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."
- a) While Verse 1 was a "footnote" to introduce us to Boaz as a character in this story, Verse 2 returns to the main characters, Naomi and Ruth. I picture Ruth at this point thinking, OK, we're now here living in Naomi's hometown. She told me that the Israelites have a form of welfare by allowing people to collect whatever grain is missed by the workers as well as the fact that the farmer's are to leave part of the field so that the desolate can go and get food for themselves. (This is from Leviticus 19:9.) My point is Ruth didn't say, OK, we're entitled to this, so I'm going to go work out there somewhere. Instead, Ruth realizes as a stranger, she's living in a foreign country and asks permission to go do this.
  - b) It seems strange to us to ask permission to be a beggar. The issue is more like Ruth sees herself as being under Naomi's "wing" and therefore only wants to do what Naomi thinks is best for both of them. Ruth is asking, "Isn't the best thing for us to do to have food is for me to go find someplace to go work to collect food? After all, it's harvest season here. We don't have much and if I go work out there, I can collect food for us to live on." The point as it relates to you and me is we don't "assume" anything about living the life God desires we live. We look to His word for guidance and make the best decisions possible based on what the Word teaches us. Think of Naomi as a "model" of Israel as our guide as how He wants us to live once we commit our lives to serving Him.
7. Verse 2 (cont.): Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." <sup>3</sup> So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.
- a) Notice Naomi didn't say, "let's pray about this first". Naomi didn't say, "let's check what it Moses said and make a good decision. (The bible was smaller in those days). She didn't say let's go ask a rabbi what we should do for food. My point is Naomi understood how God wanted Israelite men and women to live and made a decision within that framework of how we're to live.
  - b) Ruth didn't know specifically where to go. She probably just saw people working out in the fields harvesting grain and figured, "OK, I'll go there". As I stated in the last lesson, an old Jewish expression is "Coincidence is not a kosher word". That just means what we see as a coincidence is often God working in the background to guide our lives for His glory. I state all of that because Ruth just happens to pick the field owned by Boaz to go work.
  - c) To be on welfare in those days didn't mean you just sat there and the government mailed you a check for food. You had to earn it by working in order to receive "welfare". In this case it meant to pick up what the workers dropped or failed to cut. This was God's way of providing for the poor without having the poor lose their dignity. The poor had to go and work hard to provide for themselves. It's a great model of how God wants us to help the less fortunate in life without just us handing them things.
  - d) So does that mean I shouldn't give money to beggars? The best answer is to let God guide us as to that type of decision. I know Christians who keep bags of food on them for those who ask. I know some that give. Again, let God guide us as to what's best when we give.

8. Verse 4: Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The LORD be with you!" "The LORD bless you!" they called back.
- a) I've yet to see one business where employees think the boss is paying them enough. I've also noticed that in most businesses, employees are keenly aware of what their bosses do and don't like in order to earn their boss's favor. I state that here as we get the impression that Boaz is a religious man. He greets the employee's by saying "God be with you". The employee's then call back "May God be with you too!"
  - b) Yes it's a simple "hello" greeting, but it shows something about Boaz's character and how his employee's react to that character. For those who don't know, when the word "LORD" is in all capitals, it is God's most holy name. To this day, religious Jewish people consider that name to be so holy, they won't even pronounce it out loud. There are code names to describe that same word out of respect for what that name is. Again, for those who don't know, that word means, "I am that I am". It's God's way of reminding us that He always has and always will exist and we have to accept the fact that He's perfect, always exists and whether we like it or not, He's in charge of our lives, so "get used to it".
  - c) The last thing to catch from this text is that Boaz "arrived from Bethlehem". Think of that town as a farming community where people lived. Then they went out into the fields to go work just outside of that town. Remember in those days, cities had walls around them or else the people built towns "huddled together" for protection. The people had to go out of that town to go work in the fields. I say all of that so you don't think that Boaz is riding from a long ways away to go help his employees come work.
9. Verse 5: Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is that?"
- a) Remember that at this point in the story, Boaz doesn't know who Ruth is. If he's in charge of the harvest over his crops, he'd notice if a stranger was working in his fields. He doesn't see her as a threat. I think it was simple curiosity at this point.
10. Verse 6: The foreman replied, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi." <sup>7</sup> She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."
- a) As I said in the introduction, notice Ruth's humility. She doesn't say, "I heard that in this country I'm allowed to work by picking up what other's missed, so let me get at it." What we do hear her say to the foreman (someone who worked for Boaz as being in charge of all the workers of the field) that she asked to work. I'm suspecting what caught Boaz's eye was how hard she worked for a "beggar". This wasn't a lazy "welfare bum" taking a little and then leaving. This stranger to Boaz probably worked as hard as any of the workers hired by Boaz to work the fields. I don't know if Boaz noticed her because she worked hard or simply because she was a stranger, but either way, Ruth caught his eye.
  - b) When most Christian pastors teach Ruth, they emphasize the fact that Boaz is a model of our "redeemer". In other words it's a model of Jesus "redeeming" what was lost. Think of it as a model of our lives without caring about God and Jesus coming into our lives to pay the price for our sins. The point as it relates to these verses is that when we work hard in order to help others as Ruth was doing for her mother in law, "God notices" whether we think about it or not. Here is Ruth working for her own survival and for Naomi's survival in a foreign land to Moab. Just as Cinderella's "fairy God mother" was watching over her in that fairy tale, so we must realize God's watching over how we're working in His land as we work to make a difference for Him.
  - c) My point is Ruth humbled herself and asked permission to work in Boaz's field. Boaz let her work away and was aware how she humbled herself in order to provide food for her mother in law and herself.
  - d) So why does the text mention she took a short rest from working? It probably wore her out to work that hard. The point is the foreman took note of how hard she worked. It's reported to the field owner of her activities, just as God notices what we do for Him.

11. Verse 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 my servant girls. <sup>9</sup> Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."
- a) Here we have Boaz's first direct contact with Ruth. Most commentators believe Boaz was significantly older than Ruth. If Naomi was aware of Boaz as a relative of her husband, it would make sense that Boaz was roughly of Naomi's generation. Even by the fact that he called her "My daughter", is a sign that he was an older gentleman. I bring that up here as when we get to the point later in the story of Boaz marrying Ruth, it's not to be seen as a "dirty old man being attracted to a young girl for sexual purposes". It's to be seen as our "redeemer" taking notice of us making a difference for God by obeying one of His laws (as she worked the fields as God commands), whether Ruth realized it or not, she's obeying a law of God. Here is Boaz taking notice of that.
  - b) My whole point is simply that a reason we study the book of Ruth, is not to read about the romance between these two as much as it is to see a model of our redemption as we work to make a difference for God in the world we live in.
  - c) In the meantime, back to the story itself. At this point, all Boaz is saying to Ruth is just go work in the field where his female servants are also working. Boaz also told her how she would be safe her as Boaz commanded the younger men not to touch her. In other words Boaz is "protecting" Ruth and now is making known to her how much he's protecting her as she works away in the heat of the day. The final line in these verses tell of us that Boaz even allowed Ruth to drink from the water jars that were filled for all the workers.
  - d) Let me return to "Cinderella" for the moment. In that story, Cinderella worked hard even though it seemed no one cared how hard she worked. In this story, we have the head guy taking notice of Ruth and stating how he's protecting her from harm and even providing water for her as she works. Now think about our Christian lives from God's perspective. We may think we don't have much in life as we work hard to make a difference for Him. Yet, God's still protecting us from harm and providing what we need to survive so we can make that difference for Him. That is how we're like Ruth in this story.
    - i) OK, what about Christians who've gone through horrible tragedies? Why did God allow that in their lives? I can't explain all tragedies. I just know that He allows us to go through things ultimately to glorify Him in all that we do. Just as He allowed Ruth to lose her husband and all she had to take care of Naomi, so we can be sure that God watches over us and protects us as we make a difference for Him.
    - ii) If you get nothing else out of this lesson, simply realize one can study this book on more than one level. It is a wonderful little romance story. It's also a wonderful model of our redemption. Enough of all of that, back to Ruth herself.
12. Verse 10: At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me--a foreigner?"
- a) One of the best ways to appreciate what Ruth says in this story is to consider what she's not saying. For example, she doesn't say, "Yes, I deserve that water given how hard I've been working out here all day". She doesn't say, "Hey, I'm here trying to provide food for my mother in law who has nothing else to live on". In summary, she's not inserting her right to be here, but again, we see her humility as she's working to help someone in need.
  - b) My point here is one way we show humility in life, is to be grateful for whatever we get. In Ruth's case, she thanks Boaz, the owner of the land she's working on for being kind to Ruth in her hour of need. Ruth asks the classic question most Christians ponder early in their walk with God: Why me? What did I do to deserve this? The answer of course is "nothing". Again, God loves us just because He does and wants to develop a relationship with us, faults and all. Ruth's a wonderful model our relationship with God as she asks what did I do to deserve this? The answer coming up is effectively how God answers us.

13. Verse 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. <sup>12</sup> 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."
- a) Let me give you my very loose translation as it applies to us: Hey (fill in your name), you didn't do anything to earn My love. I know all things. I'm well aware how you've made an effort to put other's needs ahead of your own. (In this case, Ruth taking care of Naomi, her mother in law as opposed to running back to her life.) While Boaz is complementing her for trusting in God, that in effect is the same message God's giving us. My point is as we dedicate our life to serving God, we don't get an out loud voice saying to us, "Thanks for putting Your trust in Me, I'll now be guiding your life if you let Me". Instead, we just accept the idea that God's working in the background of our lives as we live to put others needs ahead of our own.
  - b) Let me explain it another way: When we're making the effort to do what Jesus commands us to do, which is to "Love others more than ourselves", God takes notice of that whether we realize it or not. I find that if we're willing to make that commitment to God, His way and on His timing, He makes it known to us that He's aware of the effort we're making on His behalf.
  - c) With that positive thought in mind, let's bring that concept back to this story. Here Boaz's saying to Ruth, may God bless you for the effort you're making to seek Him and trust in Him to provide for you and you're mother in law. Notice Boaz doesn't say at this point, I am going to marry you for your hard work. All it says is that Boaz is aware of how hard she's working and he took notice of her. That doesn't mean we have to earn God's love. It just means God's aware of the effort we're making to do what He calls us to do, use part of the time we're given to make a difference for Him. In Ruth's case, it's about helping out a woman who has no other means of survival, to keep on living.
  - d) I can hear some of you thinking, "I have enough problems of my own. Why should I go to help someone else?" What I've discovered is the best way to deal with our own problems is to be of service to someone else. It gets our minds off our own issues when we go help others in their needs. I find that God helps us with our own issues, when we see it from His perspective of seeing others in need themselves.
14. Verse 13: "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant--though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls."
- a) Again, we read of the humility of Ruth at this point in the story. We don't read her saying that "I've worked as hard as anyone out here, why don't you start paying me to work for you while you're here in the neighborhood?" Instead we get Ruth's humility to realize she is only getting what she's getting due to God's "welfare rules" that farmer's are not to take all that's in their farms, but to leave some for the poor. (Again, see Leviticus 19:9 for that.)
  - b) Ruth's essentially saying, "Hey, I'm not one of those girl's who's been hired to work. I'm just a lonely stranger. For what it's worth, this is also a great model to how to get the type of job one may want. First, be willing to volunteer to work cheaply and work hard at that type of job one desires. I guarantee if one makes the effort, one gets noticed. When we do get noticed, the attitude Ruth has "pays off" far more than say, demanding to get paid for our service or demanding more for our efforts. In short, "humility pays dividends".
  - c) On a side note, I doubt Ruth was particularly looked good at that moment. She's spent all day long working in the field. I don't think she played up her looks her hoping Boaz will notice her. I think this is a simple case, of Ruth humbling herself, realizing that a wealthy stranger has taken notice of her and she doesn't have the standing of an employee. She's grateful for what she's getting and not demanding anything more for it.

15. Verse 14: At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar."
- a) We're now have a lunch break in the story. At that time, Boaz called to Ruth who was probably still working or sitting away from the workers waiting for others to get back to work so she can take what they missed.
  - b) I'm reminded of Jesus telling the story that when one is invited to a big event like a large wedding, go sit in the back somewhere and let the person in charge of the event invite us up front. (Based on Luke 14:8.) Again, I don't think Boaz took notice of Ruth because of her looks. I think he just noticed her not eating and welcomed her to be a part of this meal along with everyone else. Again, the point is humility. Ruth didn't say, "I've been at this all day and I've worked as hard as anyone here, so give me some food". Instead I picture Ruth being away from where everyone's eating. Boaz spotted her and invited her to be a part of that meal.
  - c) I could probably have a field day making analogies about eating "bread and wine" as we gather in God's presence, but I suspect you get the idea. So you know, for those working out in the sun all day, bread dipped in that vinegar is actually satisfying to our tongue.
16. Verse 14 (cont.): When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. <sup>15</sup> As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. <sup>16</sup> Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her."
- a) First, realize "Roasted grain" is not part of what they've been collecting all day. It's food that has already been prepared for everyone to eat. For some reason, I was picturing how a young girl acts on a date with a man taking her out for a meal. My point is she doesn't eat everything on her plate as she wants to give the impression that she's not a financial burden who takes everything offered to her. A girl on a date won't eat all that's in front of her in order to impress the guy about her willingness to not take all that's offered to her. I state that here because that's what I see Ruth doing here. She didn't "scarf down" on all of the food offered to her, but left some as if to show Boaz she won't pig out if she's allowed to eat with him and the other workers in the future.
  - b) The point of that little tale of not eating all, is apparently it worked. I don't know if it was the fact she left some, or maybe Boaz as an older man is attracted to her. Whatever it was, Boaz gave the order to men working the field to not embarrass her because she's working to gather what they missed. Instead he orders them to specifically pick some grain, and to leave it there for her to gather. Remember that this is Boaz's livelihood that he's willing to give up part of it for Ruth's sake. Maybe he was attracted to her, or maybe he just liked the fact she was willing to work hard to support herself and Naomi as opposed to being a beggar and just asking for food. I'm also speculating that Boaz is giving a "signal" to these young men working for her as he effectively says, "Don't touch her, I like her myself".
  - c) The point for us is if we're in Ruth's situation, be willing to humble ourselves and express gratitude for what we do get. If we're in Boaz's shoes, we need to be willing to be kind to those who are less fortunate. It doesn't mean we give to everyone who asks. At the same time, God notices when we're willing to make the effort to help others in their need. If we are in the "middle" as neither being a great landowner or a true beggar, be willing to share with what we have. Sharing with others is not based on how much we have, it's based on our attitude about giving, and that's what we need to see here.
17. Verse 17: So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. <sup>18</sup> 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.
- a) If I just spent a hard day gathering wheat, the last thing I'd want to do is go home to work what I've got. Yet, that is what Ruth did, she went home to "thresh" the barley into food.

- b) For those who don't know, the way you make wheat into flour is by separating the good part of the wheat (or barley, a type of wheat) from the useless part of the wheat. That is what we read of Ruth doing here. Consider how much Ruth had to "lower herself" to go work in that field. She'd have to work all day bending over to pick up the wheat off of the ground to collect in whatever basket she had.
  - c) The text also mentions that Ruth brought back some of her lunch that she had with Boaz. The text is not saying she ate part of the flour she just sifted. The text is saying she didn't eat all her lunch and brought part of it back to Ruth. I speculated earlier why Ruth didn't eat all her lunch. We now know that she did it in order to save some for Naomi. If you'd like a good definition of humility, it's right here. She didn't eat all that was offered to her in order to share some of what she had with someone else. Ruth knew Naomi didn't have any food for herself. I have to admit, I'd have more respect for beggars if I saw them not take what they're given all for themselves, but use part of it to help others in need as well.
  - d) Remember that Boaz didn't know all of that. All he knew was that Ruth didn't eat all he put in front of her. As far as Boaz was concerned, she may have been the kind of girl who didn't want to eat all in front of her to impress him that she wouldn't be much of a burden to have around while everyone else is working. Most of us know that later in the story, we'll read of Boaz marrying this girl and I'm positive the fact she was a hard worker and not much of a burden impressed him enough to let her hang around more and more. Was he attracted to her physically? No idea, but Boaz being an older man and having a young woman humbly willing to accept what she's offered and be grateful for it, would be "turn on for most men". That may have been one of the reasons why Boaz gave the order to the young men working there in effect, "Hands off that girl, and leave her some grain".
  - e) All of that leads to what was probably the "big scene" for Ruth, where she gets to surprise Naomi with what she brought home. Verse 19:
18. Verse 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.
- a) As I love to preach, there are few things in life that give us more joy than we get to help others and bring joy to other's lives. I have to admit, there is little that brings me more joy than when I see others I love be joyful at any given moment. I'm sure Ruth's motivation to work as she did was that she was excited with anticipation of surprising Naomi with what she did that day. Here's the big moment when Ruth pulled out the big bag full of flour that she worked hard all day to collect and prepare.
  - b) The text focuses on Naomi's reaction: It wasn't let's eat! It wasn't even gratitude for what she just received. Instead, Naomi cared about Ruth more than the food and she asked her where she got all of this food. My point is I'm convinced one reason Ruth was attracted to stay with her mother in law, is they both shared the same attitude of putting others needs as priority over their own needs.
  - c) You can almost see the "wheel's turning" in Naomi's head at this point in the story. Naomi probably worked to arrange the marriage between her dead son and Ruth. Now she sees an opportunity not only for her own food in the future, but maybe a future husband for Ruth. Naomi realized that whoever helped Ruth may be their "meal ticket" for the future so that Ruth doesn't have to spend the rest of her life just taking care of her.
  - d) At this point we get the big announcement that Ruth told Naomi that the one who helped Ruth was Boaz. Naomi knew Boaz was a relative of her late husband, and again, I can just see the "wheel's turning" in Naomi's head about the possibilities. At this point I need to return to one of God's laws about the "kinsmen redeemer". That's based on a law given in Deuteronomy 25 that essentially says, if a Jewish woman's husband dies, it's a duty of a brother of the dead man to take that woman as a wife and raise up children on behalf of the dead man. If there is no brother, a nearby relative also has that obligation.



- e) Realize that the "kinsmen redeemer" is not an requirement, but it is considered a shameful act to refuse to perform that act. Naomi had enough of a Jewish education to realize that this law is still on the books, and by Boaz possibly marrying Ruth, Naomi in effect would have children again "by both of their names".
  - f) OK John, that's a cute story and we all know how it turns out. Why should we care? First realize why this story is included in the bible. It taught the Israelites something about the background of King David as this is the story of his great grandparents. I'm speculating that David heard this story growing up, and told it to Samuel as they got to know each other. Samuel thought it was a good enough story to write down and although he didn't realize it, it became part of the bible.
    - i) More importantly, let me talk about why we should care about this story. It has nothing to do with David's history. The point is we as Christians need to see Jesus as our kinsman redeemer. In the same way Jesus as a "stranger to Him" picked us to go spend eternity with us, so Boaz is going to pick this non-Jewish girl to spend the rest of his life with Him.
    - ii) God set up the law of the kinsman redeemer as He cares about the growth and spread of the human race, especially for those called to serve Him. Yes God did allow the tragedy to occur of Naomi's husband and children to die. However, it is not the end of the story. God's saying in effect, "Yes I know tragedies occur in our lives. Yet, by trusting Me to guide your life, I promise to fill you with joy in spite of whatever you're dealing with at this time."
    - iii) My point is just as this kinsmen redeemer brought joy to a woman who wanted to be known as "bitter" due to the loss of her husband and children, so God wants to bring us joy in our lives by being the "kinsmen redeemer" to our lives as well.
  - g) OK, by now you see where I'm going with this. It's about the joy we can have in our lives when we trust God to guide it and we trust in Jesus not only to pay the price for our sins, but to lead us to have joy in our lives as we serve Him. As I said in the introduction, my favorite Christian expression is, "I believe in Jesus, now what?" The "now what" is we use the time we have as Christians to bring joy to other people by making a difference in the lives of others and that effort in turn brings joy to our own lives. That's what Ruth's doing here by preparing that food for Naomi. That's what Naomi is doing here by realizing that Boaz is a "kinsman redeemer" for herself.
  - h) With all that happiness running through our heads, time to get back to the story.
19. Verse 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 kinsman-redeemers."
- a) You know for a woman like Naomi, who ran away from Israel ten years earlier due to a famine, she sure can praise God now that she's home. For a woman who now calls herself "Mara" meaning bitter, she's happy as can be about the big bag of food that Ruth brought back with her. I can just see the joy on Ruth's face as Naomi acted this way.
  - b) We can tell this is turning into a happy story about one's life being blessed by God. How do we apply it to our lives? Does all this mean that if we have to deal with some horrible tragedy, God will immediately bless our lives if we pray hard enough about it? Consider all the multitudes of Christians who've had to die for their faith. My point is God's favor is not usually measured in restoration from tragedy. What God does promise us is to help us through the rough parts of life if we're willing to trust Him to guide us through them.
    - i) My point is just as Naomi went back to Israel despite calling herself "bitter", so we learn that God wants us to turn to Him not only when we're bitter over something but to guide our lives in general. Remember the "now what" for Christians is that God wants to guide all our lives for His glory no matter what the situation.
    - ii) OK, enough "reality check", time to get back to the story itself.

- c) Notice how Naomi says effectively "May God bless this man who took notice of you." If we see someone being used by God to help our situation, be grateful for that.
    - i) Let me explain it another way to make it clearer: When Naomi and Ruth returned to Israel after their losses, they didn't stay home and say, "Let's pray that God will help us in our misery and not stop praying until food shows up on our doorstep." Instead, Ruth did the "footwork" of going out in the field in order to get whatever food they needed to survive. Yes, Naomi saw the big picture here, as she realized God was blessing them through this man named Boaz. Her way of saying thanks to God was to bless this man as she realized God was working through him.
    - ii) Suppose one is so sick, they can't even get out of their homes to get help. Suppose we can't be like Ruth to go out to do something about our situation. I've known of people in that situation and I've seen God work with them right where they are. I know of a fairly famous pastor (who died some years back) who stated there was a time in his life when he was that low, and some unknown person did deliver a bag of groceries on his doorstep. My point is God expects us to do the footwork if we are able to do so and I've also seen Him do some amazing things for those who can't even do "that much" at any given moment.
  - d) Anyway, coming back to the story, I can just see Naomi's wheel's turning as she realized that God is blessing her and Ruth through this man named Boaz. How God will work out the rest of the story is coming up in the next lesson or two. In the meantime, we still have three more verses to cover in this chapter.
20. Verse 21: Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.' "
- a) The first thing I'd like you to notice is the text once again refers to Ruth as the "Moabitess" again. It's as if the writer wants to remind us that Ruth's still a foreigner in Israel. Despite that fact, she's being blessed by Boaz. That alone is a wonderful reminder to us who don't come from a Jewish background how we're blessed when we turn to worship God. As I'll state every so often, there's a classic Christian expression that goes, "The great mistake the Jewish people make is they fail to see Jesus as the Messiah. The great mistake Christians will often make is they fail to see the God we worship as a pro-Jewish God". My point is simply to see Ruth as a foreigner being welcomed and blessed by a Jewish person as she's turning to worship the true God who rules over the entire world.
  - b) With that said, remember we're still in the scene where Ruth's telling Naomi about what happened that day. Ruth mentions the fact the Boaz told her to "hang tight" with those who are working for me until we finish that job. Realize it usually takes a good number of weeks to finish harvesting a crop, depending upon the size of the field. My point is the collecting of food for Ruth and Naomi to live on, didn't end that day.
  - c) As we read this verse, think of it as a reminder to keep on trusting God no matter what is the situation we face. Remember that Ruth is a young woman who probably doesn't trust anyone yet but her mother in law. Ruth acted humbly that day toward Boaz's request and agreed to do what she said. My point is as we walk in humility with our God, He'll finish what He starts, in terms of guiding us for His glory.
21. Verse 22: Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else's field you might be harmed."
- a) Naomi is being the good mother here and interested in protecting Ruth. Let's be honest, for a woman to effectively go beg with strangers, increases the risk of rape. While God's calling people to help out the less fortunate by this welfare system, there's always danger as one never knows when one will encounter someone who doesn't put their faith in Him. This is Naomi reminding us that the world is still a dangerous place. To quote Jesus, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves" (See Matthew 10:16). That's Jesus way of telling us that as we make a difference for Him, there are always dangerous people out there.

- b) While Naomi is giving the practical advice here, I think Naomi's "wheels are turning" as she sees Boaz as a possible redeemer for Ruth. Therefore her advice is both practical and a way of encouraging Ruth to keep hanging around Boaz to "see what happens". It's like telling someone the right thing to do for practical reasons but at the same time to watch as God works out His will for our lives. OK then, last verse:
22. Verse 23: So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.
- a) Again notice Ruth's humility. She didn't go to wherever Boaz was watching over all his workers. She did as Naomi commanded her, which was to take what the workers didn't cut down. Again, picture Ruth going day after day, and week after week, working all day by bending down to pick up what the workers missed. Ruth humbled herself daily as she worked to provide for Naomi and herself. Notice the text mentions a harvest of barley as well as wheat. One "grain season" usually followed the other in separate fields. My point is just to show that this ritual went on for many weeks of Ruth being with those women who worked in the fields and picking up what they missed.
- b) What I assume is that some of the young Israelite woman probably got to know her Ruth as she worked there day after day. Word got to them that Ruth is to be accepted as one of their own and she became like family even though she was a stranger.
- c) To state the obvious, this isn't the end of the story, just the end of the scene of where Ruth agreed to humble herself before these Israelites, before her mother in law and before the man who she'll eventually marry. It shows how God works in the background as we do humble ourselves to make a difference for Him in our lives. Yes it's a "Cinderella story" as this foreign girl ends up marrying the prominent man of that location. What's there for us to notice is how she gained his favor not by making demands, but by humbling herself as she worked to provide for herself. In put all of this another way, she took the footsteps to do what was necessary to survive in "God's presence" and she was blessed by God as she humbly worked and lived as God commanded.
- d) Let me end this lesson this way: It's a wonderful reminder of what God wants us to do in our lives. The toughest decisions we make are not one's exactly like situations we read of in the bible. God's will for our lives is to make the best decisions possible given whatever situation we face as long as we're not violating biblical principals. That's what we read of Naomi and Ruth doing in this wonderful little story and that's a great model of how God wants us to make decisions, by doing what's logical to do while not violating His laws. That's living the Christian life in one thought. On that positive note, let's close in prayer:
23. Heavenly Father, we thank You that You are guiding our lives. While we don't always realize why we're going through whatever we're dealing with, we know that You're there and desire to guide us down the path that You desire we go. Guide us as we make the best decisions possible given the information at hand and living by the guidelines You're laid out for us in Your word. May our lives glorify You as we humbly use our lives to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.