



The Guardian-Redeemer

Ruth gleaned at Boaz's field to provide for Naomi and herself. However, what is the long-term plan for their welfare? What plans does God have in mind for both Ruth and Naomi? Chapter three of Ruth can be a strange chapter if we are unfamiliar with the customs of their day. This has resulted in many interpretations of what Ruth did. However, at the heart of this chapter is once again the result of two characters of integrity doing what they can in a potentially compromising position for the both of them. Let us dive deep into the passage and explore how Ruth and Boaz reacted in this situation.

Launch

- 1) Tell of a time when you have been asked to potentially compromise on your convictions or values, and how you dealt with it.

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Read Ruth 3:1-18.

- 2) What was Naomi's desire for Ruth? (v1)
 - a. What did she ask Ruth to do with regards to Boaz? (v2-4)
 - b. What do you think Naomi presumes that Boaz will be doing after a long day's worth of threshing? (v3-4) (cf. Hos 9:1)
 - c. What then do you think is Naomi asking Ruth to do to Boaz? (cf. v14)
- 3) What do you think was surprising about Ruth's response to Naomi? (v5-6) (cf. 3:11b)
- 4) Do you think Ruth did everything Naomi asked? What do you think is the difference? (v4, 9)

- a. What did Ruth ask Boaz to do? (v9) What do you think that means? (cf. Eze 16:8)
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- 5) How did Boaz respond to Ruth's request? (v10-13) What promises did he make? (v13)
 - a. Why do you think Boaz praised Ruth? (v10-11)
 - b. What does Boaz's promise show about what he is like as a person?
 - 6) What else did he do for Ruth? (v15)
 - 7) What does this show about Boaz and Ruth's integrity, especially when the both of them were put in a compromising position?
 - 8) What do you think we can learn from Boaz and Ruth's actions?

Conclusion

Naomi had great intentions for Ruth – to secure a home for Ruth. However, she most likely asked Ruth to seductively manipulate Boaz into marrying her. In those days, after a long day's threshing, the men would be celebrating the harvest, often with prostitutes. They would then end up sleeping on the threshing floor. Naomi knew this and asked Ruth to dress up and possibly get Boaz into a compromising situation and force his hand into marrying her.

However, instead of seducing him, Ruth asked Boaz to marry her.¹ Boaz, realizing that she could have easily compromised him, praised and blessed her. He promised to do what he can to be her guardian-redeemer, but there is someone closer related to her than him. Before sending her back to Naomi, Boaz once again blesses them by giving them more barley.

Both parties could have easily comprised themselves in this situation. However, they maintained their integrity, and Boaz continues to show how much he cares for Ruth and her reputation (v14). May we act shrewdly and with integrity in the same way in our world today!

¹ "Spread the corner of your garment" is the equivalent of today's "put a ring on my ring finger". Ruth was also likely asking Boaz to be God's answer to his own prayer in 2:12. "Wings" (2:12) and "garment" (3:9) are the same Hebrew words.