

The Book of Ruth – 6

What To Look For In A Husband

Introduction

It seems like every week there's a news item of someone accusing someone else of wrongful sexual aggravation or even abuse, including rape. Men throughout the entertainment world, business and politics have been put on notice: '0' tolerance. There are even a few allegations against some women. I doubt if we would not all agree that it has been the story of the last few years.

Even Christian pastors have fallen under the hammer of these charges. In some cases, men who had the attention of the world had to leave ministry under a cloud of shame. In today's message we are introduced to "the first anti-sexual-harassment policy in the workplace recorded in the Bible."¹

Text: Ruth 2:5–16

The Story, in a Nutshell

There will be two sermons, God willing, drawn from this text. This morning I'm going to focus on Boaz's treatment of Ruth. In the next sermon we are going to look at the theme of God's favor in this account.

Summing up the story, we read that this prominent, mature, wealthy landowner is interested in Ruth, the Moabite. He swiftly issues a series of executive orders to guarantee her success. Not only does he ensure her safety, but he enables her efforts to provide food for her and Naomi. He willingly breaks traditional and cultural boundaries to ensure her care. At mealtime he invites her to join his workers and serves her a meal of roasted grain, giving her more than she can eat. He grants her access to water drawn by his male workers. He further instructs his harvesters to pull out stalks of grain from the bundles and place them in her path, so she can glean even more.

His name likely means "in him there is might". How does Boaz use his strength and authority in relation to Ruth?

The Strength of Boaz.

From this story, how does Boaz treat Ruth. Let's just go through the account and identify the strengths of Boaz:

1. He understood boundaries (v5) *"Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, 'Whose young woman is this?'"* (Ruth 2:5, ESV). In our culture that is a strange

¹ Block, D. I. (1999). [*Judges, Ruth*](#) (Vol. 6, p. 660). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

question. “Who does she belong to?” It could mean that he was asking, “What family or clan does she belong to?” Or, he could have been asking, “Who does she harvest for? What landowner? (He knew she wasn’t part of his crew.). Or he could be asking, “Who is she married to?” In either case he as a man is establishing his boundaries. Men who operate without boundaries in life are dangerous predators. That is the first principle to note.

2. He understood how to treat a woman appropriately (v.8) “*Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women.”* (Ruth 2:8, ESV). We will soon learn why he treats her with such respect and honor but notice how he addresses her: “My daughter”. Boaz was likely the same age as Naomi. He was older than Ruth. But he addresses her with tenderness and proper distance. A godly man will speak to women with appropriateness. Younger women will be treated as daughters. Older women will be treated as mothers. Women about the same age will be treated as sisters.
3. He treated her with respect and care (vv8-9).
 - a. Ruth is not to go and glean in any other field; she has no need to leave at all. Why he felt to assert this we aren’t told. Maybe he sensed some doubt from his foreman as to whether she should be there. For whatever reason he was willing to take a stand and assure her rightful place.
 - b. Ruth is to attach herself to Boaz’s regular female servants. What is that saying? He must be suggesting a that she has gained a status in his household. This outsider is now being treated as one of the inner circle. “His workers would treat her as if she belonged with them because he said so.”²
 - c. Ruth is not to worry about irritation from the male workers. A godly man will treat a woman with respect and dignity. A godly man will ensure that others do to.
 - d. Ruth may drink freely of the water that is provided for Boaz’s regular field workers. Now this is important. In this society, women drew water for men and nobody drew water for foreigners. Boaz crushed that inequity. Ruth, the Moabite was given equal status to drink water that the men had drawn! That is an earthshaking transition.

[We’ll come back to his reasoning (vv11-12) in a moment.]

4. He was a servant (v14). As we recall, in ancient traditions, eating together was also a statement. It had huge symbolic overtones. Boaz invited this widowed refugee to eat with him. To dip her morsel into his wine. He served her his food. He served her with abundance. Godly men, along with Jesus, could say, “I was not sent to be served, but to serve.”
5. He was a protector and provider (v15). Boaz reinforced his edict that protected her from harassment, but he also told the harvesters to intentionally put out some grain from the

² Hubbard, R. L. (1988). [*The Book of Ruth*](#) (p. 156). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

bundles, so she could pick them up. He was ensuring that she was fully satisfied and her needs were fully met.

Boaz treated this foreigner, this destitute widow with respect and significance. His actions overwhelmed Ruth and she humbly fell down before him. Why, why would he do all this? The author tells us that he has done this for 2 reasons:

1. He has witnessed her faithful, self-sacrificing care of her mother-in-law. *"But Boaz answered her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.'"* (Ruth 2:11, ESV)
2. He has embraced his role in bringing her shelter, protection and care. Notice these words (the key phrase of the entire book): *"The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"* (Ruth 2:12, ESV). Don't miss this. This is the whole point. This is the theological point of this sermon and this book. God has positioned himself as a mother bird, in which those who come under his wings find refuge. Note: Psalm 36:7; 57:1; 91:4; and Matthew 23:37

This woman had come to the God of Israel for refuge. Boaz acted in God-likeness to her. This is the key to godly masculinity. Men who are god-like see their role under God to provide care and protection of women. We can see what a violation of God's righteous character it is when that does not happen. As a side note, godly women surrender to that plan. Godly women embrace with glad surrender God's calling on men to treat them with dignity and equality; and provide protection and care, as God Himself would. Boaz becomes the Lord's protective "wings" when he "spreads his wings" over Ruth.

Summary

From the beginning of the story and throughout, whenever Boaz speaks he is presented as a man of compassion, grace, generosity; a man who sees his ultimate calling as a servant; and a man who incarnates God's love in his acts of provision and protection.

Application

There is something in this story for everyone. Imagine you're a young lady wanting to be married. What are you looking for in a man? A man who speaks with grace, acts with generosity, who is bent on providing for you and protecting you, is a man most greatly to be desired!

If you are a young man, this is what God, in Christ, is working in you, shaping you, forming you into. If you're a mother or father, these are the disciplines and the traits that God is calling you to impart to

your young sons. These are the traits that your daughter ought to be taught to look for. These are the examples that we as parents ought to represent to our children.

Secondly, (I am going to deal with this in more detail in the next sermon). Notice verse 2: *"And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter'"* (Ruth 2:2, ESV) ". Although it was not expressed as a prayer, God had heard her wish. Boaz is kind to Ruth because God has prepared his heart for her!"³ If you desire a man of God to be your husband, or your son-in-law – pray, pray, pray.

³ Block, D. I. (1999). [*Judges, Ruth*](#) (Vol. 6, p. 662). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.