

Ruth 2:22-23; 3:1-2

After Ruth shared more of the interaction between herself and Boaz, Naomi continued to encourage Ruth to listen to Boaz's directions. [Ruth 2:22 And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, lest \[others\] fall upon you in another field."](#) Picture Ruth in this new situation – an unfamiliar land with customs that are new to her and a culture she may not completely understand – Boaz and Naomi have taken care to protect and encourage Ruth. Boaz has offered wise advice and Naomi tells Ruth to follow His suggestion.

Sometimes, we are unsure of the direction to turn. God often uses those around us as encouragement.

- ♥ Do we listen to the wise recommendations of others?
- ♥ Do we seek counsel from God's word to help us avoid danger?

Naomi tells Ruth it is good to follow Boaz's instruction. The *Family Bible Notes* says this, "When in a course which we find by experience to be safe and useful, and in which the Lord blesses us, it is ordinarily wise to persevere and not be disposed to change". In other words, if what you have been doing is blessed by God, do not turn to a different direction!

As we read the special care Boaz is offering Ruth, it seems he may have some personal interest in her. Perhaps Naomi is recognizing the possibility of Boaz's fondness toward Ruth. If Ruth continues to glean in Boaz's fields, her safety is assured and she will send a positive message that she is grateful for his attention. The following observation is made in the *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary*, "the observant mind of the old matron had already discerned, in all Boaz' attentions to Ruth, the germs of a stronger affection, which she wished to increase".

When someone offers to help, and encourages us towards a wise direction, it is prudent to listen to their sound advice. There are instances where others may recognize what we are unable to see. Ruth chose to return with Naomi to Bethlehem to care for her and to follow her God. Naomi is watching out for Ruth and is helping to guide her with instruction. In the last verse of this chapter, we read that Ruth does indeed heed the advice of her mother-in-law and accepts the favor of Boaz.

[Ruth 2:23 So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.](#) Ruth joined the female workers in Boaz's fields, following behind them as the grain was cut, gleaning what was left behind. Ruth worked in the fields during both barley and wheat harvests. This is a considerable length of time. Barley harvest began in early spring in March and wheat harvest was toward the end of May or beginning of June. Ruth worked in the fields approximately three to four months through both harvests.

There is every reason to assume that Ruth experienced the kindness of Boaz throughout these several months of work. It is probable that the pleasant interaction between them continued. The last sentence of Ruth 2:23 says that Ruth "lived with her mother-in-law". This is not to go unnoticed. Ruth lived with Naomi. Lived <yashab> means to sit down, to dwell, to remain. Ruth returned to Naomi each day after her work in the fields. This piece of information says something about Ruth's character.

Picture Ruth working long days in the fields, she gleaned what she was able in order to provide food for herself and Naomi. She then goes back to her lodging with Naomi in the evening and cares for her. They probably engage in conversation about the day's events and Naomi continues to instruct and encourage her in the faith. What Ruth does not do is seek entertainment elsewhere or neglect her mother-in-law. Ruth was young and it may have been tempting to push aside her responsibilities at home in lieu of 'having fun' yet she followed God by serving well.

There does not seem to be much indication at this time of Ruth's attraction to Boaz but she did notice his special treatment for her and as his care grew, she must have been at least intrigued by his actions. Remember where Ruth has come from and where she is now. Consider the section of scripture in Proverbs 3: **"My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life, and peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. *So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight*"**, Proverbs 3:1-6.

Matthew Poole's Commentary explains the Hebrew translation for 'lived' or 'dwelt' as she 'sat or continued at home' meaning "when she had dispatched her occasions abroad, and did not wander or gad abroad, after the manner of idle persons and harlots".

This is a good example of continuing throughout the day with the responsibilities God has set before us. In other words, there is no 'me' time such as 'I have worked hard all day now I deserve some time to myself'. Taking time for self is somewhat encouraged in our society today. This does not mean you do not have the freedom to enjoy things, but even in recreation, our focus needs to be God-centered, always taking thought as to what actions, words, etc. would be pleasing to the Lord.

Another commentary explains verse 23 with these words, "when harvest ended, she did not gab abroad, but kept her mother company at home; for so the Hebrew, "she sat with her mother-in-law", *Patrick/Lowth/Whitby/Lowman Commentary*.

Ruth's humility, diligence, and wisdom are examples for us to follow. Her good character sought to honor those in her family. Her faithfulness to her responsibilities and to God was evident to those around her and gained the attention of Boaz. God's blessings are evident as He directs Ruth's path in fulfilling His perfect plan.

We begin Chapter 3 with additional instruction from Naomi to Ruth. Earlier Naomi had encouraged Ruth to walk to the fields in the hope of finding a place to gather grain for their food. Ruth did as she was told and reported the events of her day to Naomi. Naomi hears it is Boaz who has shown Ruth kindness and Naomi is looking once again to Ruth's future.

Ruth 3:1 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?"

Naomi's concern for her Ruth's future was demonstrated in Chapter One also when Naomi suggested her daughters-in-law return to their homes rather than follow her into Bethlehem. **Ruth 1:9 May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."** Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. As Naomi was preparing to journey to Bethlehem without Ruth and Orpah, she had shared her heartfelt desire for her daughters-in-law to find a husband and be settled.

According to what Naomi understands of Jewish law, she now sees an opportunity for Ruth in Palestine with Boaz. Her desire for Ruth is to have a home. Remember the 'special' attention Boaz seemed to show toward Ruth after he asked his worker who she was. Boaz was certainly aware of where he stood in the line of Elimelech's family.

Look at the words used in Ruth 3:1.

"shall I not seek security for you" – this means to search out (by any method, specifically in worship or prayer); to strive after; desire, make inquisition, procure ... a settled spot, figuratively a home or place of rest.

"that it may be well with you" – to make well, literally – sound, beautiful; figuratively – happy, successful, right: to be accepted, to make better ...

Naomi truly has a desire for Ruth's future to be blessed and she lets Ruth know what she is thinking. Perhaps Naomi feels even more responsible to procure a better life for her daughter-in-law because she realizes Ruth's sacrifice in giving up all she knew in order to help Naomi and follow her God. Naomi is encouraged by Boaz's treatment of Ruth and she knows he is in a place to redeem the family's name and offer Ruth a better future. Jewish law had set in place a way to preserve a family's name if a death occurred without having children. Deuteronomy 25:5 says, "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be [married] outside [the family] to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her".

Recall that women at that time were largely dependent on their male relatives or husbands to provide the means for shelter, food and clothing. There was a need for a woman to work in the home full time. Just imagine all the daily tasks involved in running your home smoothly. We have so many conveniences; it is difficult to imagine life without them. Machines wash our clothes and our dishes. Purchases of ready-made food and clothing can be made only a few miles away.

In Ruth 3:1, we have an account of Naomi's care for Ruth and her desire that Ruth not be confined to the uncertain and difficult life they were now living.

- ♥ Do we seek the welfare of others?
- ♥ Do we have a genuine concern for their future?

Naomi continues her conversation with Ruth, with an explanation of the plan she is about to propose. She goes on to remind Ruth of Boaz's position in the family line (Ruth 2:20). He is their kinsman, their relative. Ruth 3:2 "And now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.

Ruth found herself gleaning in a field, which belonged to Boaz, a relative of her late-husband (Ruth 2:3). Boaz had shown her exceeding kindness in the fields (Ruth 2:8). Naomi recalls this information and adds that Boaz would be working on the threshing floor that evening.

"He winnoweth barley tonight It is very likely that the winnowing of grain was effected by taking up, in a broad thin vessel or sieve, a portion of the corn, and letting it down slowly in the wind; thus the grain would, by its own weight, fall in one place, while the chaff, would be carried to a distance by the wind. It is said here that this was done at night; probably what was threshed out in the day was winnowed in the evening, when the sea breeze set in, which was common in Palestine; and as this took place in the evening

only, that was the time in which they would naturally winnow their corn.” *Adam Clarke’s Commentary*

The *Annotated Bible Notes* says, “It was important that the owner should look well after his produce, to secure it from depredations; and he would therefore be likely to sleep at the threshing-floor.”

Matthew Poole’s Commentary gives this description of the area where grain was winnowed, “A place covered at the top, but open elsewhere, whither Ruth might easily come. And this work of winnowing corn was usually begun or ended with a feast ...”

In our next study, we will consider the very specific instructions Naomi gives to Ruth.