

I

While the first chapter of Ruth chronicled the desperate situation facing Ruth and Naomi, the opening verse of chapter two introduces us to someone who will eventually alter the course of their lives...

“There was a relative of Naomi’s husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz” (Ruth 2:1).

While Boaz is only briefly noted here, his introduction furnishes us with some background information that foreshadows his later emergence within this chapter. First, the name Boaz is thought to convey the idea of strength. ⁽¹⁾ That may explain why Solomon, his great-great-grandson, later adopted that name as a designation for one of the Jerusalem Temple’s structural support columns ([1 Kings 7:21](#)).

Boaz is further identified as a ***prominent man (CSB)*** of ***great riches (WYC)***, ***influence (AMP)***, and ***outstanding character (GW)***. We’re also informed that he was a relative of Naomi’s late husband, Elimelech. That family lineage will later play a pivotal role in the events to follow.

Boaz’ status as ***“...a rich and important man” (CEV)*** is also interesting to consider in light of some events that occurred a decade earlier. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Boaz’ relative, Elimelech, relocated to Moab in response to a famine that had gripped the Bethlehem area. However, it seems that Boaz chose a different path in response to that development.

Boaz evidently opted to remain in Bethlehem, where he undoubtedly had to face the hardships that Elimelech sought to avoid. With this in mind, we might reasonably conclude that God enabled Boaz to persevere through those difficult conditions.

Ten years have now passed in our narrative, and Boaz is established as a wealthy, prominent, and respected individual. Tragically, Elimelech’s life ended in Moab, leaving only his sons to care for his wife. When his sons later passed away, his widow possessed no further means of support.

While it is difficult to draw a direct correlation between Boaz and Elimelech, there is nothing to indicate that Elimelech prayed or sought God’s direction prior to his decision to relocate to Moab. On the other hand, Boaz will later emerge as a man of exemplary, God-honoring character. Perhaps that may account for the differences in their respective fates.

(1) Boaz’s name is generally interpreted to mean [fleetness](#). However, several references (including [Fausset’s Bible Dictionary](#), [Hitchcock’s Bible Names Dictionary](#), and [Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#)) also link his name with the concept of strength.

II

“So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.’ And she said to her, ‘Go, my daughter’” (Ruth 2:2).

This passage highlights a key aspect of Ruth's character. An unprotected young foreign widow might be easily susceptible to various forms of assault. But despite those potential dangers, Ruth sought to provide for herself and her mother-in-law by going to ***“...gather the grain that the harvest workers leave” (GNT)***.

As mentioned earlier, this referred to the act of following a group of harvesters in order to collect any produce that was left behind. The Old Testament law legalized that activity by issuing the following directives to farmers and landowners ...

“When you harvest your land’s produce, you must not harvest all the way to the edge of your field; and don’t gather up every remaining bit of your harvest. Also do not pick your vineyard clean or gather up all the grapes that have fallen there. Leave these items for the poor and the immigrant; I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:9-10 CEB)

“If you forget to bring in a stack of harvested grain, don’t go back in the field to get it. Leave it for the poor, including foreigners, orphans, and widows, and the Lord will make you successful in everything you do. When you harvest your olives, don’t try to get them all for yourself, but leave some for the poor. And when you pick your grapes, go over the vines only once, then let the poor have what is left. You lived in poverty as slaves in Egypt until the Lord your God rescued you. That’s why I am giving you these laws” (Deuteronomy 24:19-22 CEV).

This act of “charity with dignity” allowed those with limited financial resources to meet their essential needs. Unfortunately, these events took place during a period when ***“All the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25 NCV).***

If a landowner was unwilling to follow those directives, it’s easy to understand why Ruth might feel dependent on someone who was ***“...kind enough to let me gather the grain he leaves behind” (NCV).***

III

“Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech” (Ruth 2:3).

So, to support herself and her mother-in-law, Ruth proactively went to work by gathering the leftover grain that remained following the harvest. Although our text from Ruth 2:3 implies that Ruth entered this field by chance, it’s easy to perceive God’s unseen choreography as Ruth worked to support their little family.

But shortly after Ruth began her endeavors, the landowner arrived to inspect the ongoing work...

“Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, ‘The Lord be with you!’ And they answered him, ‘The Lord bless you!’” (Ruth 2:4).

As a prosperous and influential figure in that region, Boaz might have been managing some of his other business affairs that morning prior to arriving at his estate. And since laborers often began work early to avoid the oppressive heat of the day, it’s not surprising to learn that harvest operations were already underway when he appeared.

We should also note that Boaz greeted his employees by saying, ***“...‘The LORD bless you!’ They replied, ‘And may the LORD bless you!’” (CEV).*** Much like Ruth's demonstrated willingness to labor for the food that would ensure her family's survival, this simple exchange of greetings offers some insight into Boaz' character.

While a typical business owner might first ask a foreman or supervisor to submit a production report, Boaz did not subordinate his business interests to his relationship with the Lord. In fact, it seems the opposite was true; Boaz placed God first in greeting his employees.

This suggests that Boaz cultivated a business environment that honored God in an era when others did whatever seemed best for them. While this may seem like an overstatement based on a simple exchange of greetings, the fact that Boaz’ laborers reciprocated his message tells us that his God-honoring character had a positive impact on his employees, at least externally.

IV

“Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, ‘Whose young woman is this?’” (Ruth 2:5).

Today, we might seek to identify an unknown person by asking, *“Who is he or she?”* However, that was not Boaz' question. When Boaz saw Ruth gleaning in his field, he responded by asking, ***“Whose maiden is this?” (RSV).*** This difference between *“who is she”* and *“who does she belong to”* reflects the culture of Boaz’ day.

The patriarchal society of Boaz' era categorized a young woman of marriageable age in one of two ways. A young, unmarried woman belonged to her father. A young, married woman belonged to her husband.

Since a young woman working alone was subject to a variety of physical dangers, the answer to that question would quickly allow Boaz to determine if Ruth was under the protection of a father or a husband.

However, the subject of Boaz' inquiry did not align with either category...

“So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, ‘It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab’” (Ruth 2:6)

It's been said that news travels quickly, and word of Naomi's return from Moab with her widowed daughter-in-law had apparently spread throughout the Bethlehem community. But even though Boaz may have been unaware of Ruth's identity, we'll find that he was not unaware of the circumstances of her arrival.

It also seems that Ruth had quickly established a positive reputation among Boaz' employees in the brief time she spent gleaning in his field. That involved a specific type of work ethic that caught the attention of Boaz' field supervisor.

V

“...It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house” (Ruth 2:6-7).

This passage identifies some key elements of Ruth's conduct that readily apply to a contemporary work environment. For example, the Old Testament Law allowed Ruth to glean within any field she wished ([Leviticus 19:9](#), [Deuteronomy 24:19](#)). However, Ruth extended the courtesy of requesting permission from Boaz' foreman before entering his field. Ruth thus exhibited respect and discretion in exercising her lawful right.

Next, Boaz' foreman noted Ruth's work ethic in offering him an unsolicited report: “...***she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest” (ESV)***. This seemingly offhand comment reminds us that others take notice of our labors. As far as we know, this supervisor never complimented or acknowledged Ruth for her efforts. Yet, he was clearly aware of the quality of her work and reported it to his employer without being prompted to do so.

While it is often disappointing when others fail to appreciate our efforts, our primary aim in work or ministry should not involve the acquisition of praise or accolades from others. Instead, our commitment to quality work (whatever our profession), stems from a desire to honor God and uphold our personal reputation, even in the absence of external recognition.

For this reason, we must be alert to the subtle temptation of laboring to gain the affirmation of others. As the Apostle Paul observed in the New Testament epistle of 1 Corinthians...

“...I am not at all concerned about being judged by you or by any human standard; I don't even pass judgment on myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not prove that I am really innocent. The Lord is the one who passes judgment on me.

So you should not pass judgment on anyone before the right time comes. Final judgment must wait until the Lord comes; he will bring to light the dark secrets and expose the hidden purposes of people's minds. And then all will receive from God the praise they deserve” (1 Corinthians 4:3-5 GNB).

VI

“Then Boaz said to Ruth, ‘You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn’” (Ruth 2:8-9).

In referring to Ruth as “**my daughter**,” Boaz provides us with a clue that helps gauge the age difference between them. This phrase indicates that Boaz was probably old enough to be Ruth’s father. That, along with the fact that he referred to his field laborers as “**young men**,” highlights the difference in their respective ages. Since Ruth was probably in her late teens or early twenties during this time, this means that Boaz was probably 40-50 years old at the time of these events.

Boaz’ counsel to “**...keep close to my young women**” also reflected the customary labor arrangement for a harvest of that time. A group of men typically began the harvest by cutting the grain with a sickle or other implement. They were followed by a second group of women who collected the cut stalks and bundled them into sheaves for transport. By staying close to that second group, Ruth could maximize the amount of grain she might collect.

This simple act of kindness also brought an additional benefit: it provided Ruth with an opportunity to build relationships with other young women of her age. As a stranger with no other acquaintances in Bethlehem (other than Naomi), Ruth surely welcomed the chance to develop her own social network.

Boaz next addressed Ruth’s personal vulnerability by issuing an order of protection: “**I have warned the men not to bother you**” (CEV). As one commentator observes, “*Boaz is hereby instituting the first anti-sexual-harassment policy in the workplace recorded in the Bible.*” ⁽¹⁾

Finally, Boaz anticipated Ruth’s needs and made provisions for her: “**...when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn**” (ESV). This provided Ruth with a degree of dignity and relieved her from the need to ask (or beg) for a drink of water during her long hours of labor under the scorching sun.

In all these things, Boaz offers an excellent representation of God’s gracious provision for us.

(1) Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, p. 660 quoted in *Constable’s Notes On Ruth*, Dr. Thomas L. Constable, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/htm/OT/Ruth/Ruth.htm#p341>

VII

“So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, ‘Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?’” (Ruth 2:10).

Boaz’ act of generosity clearly made a significant impact on Ruth. Her response to his gracious display of compassion conveyed a deep sense of gratitude, respect, and appreciation for his efforts on her behalf.

As a man of God-honoring character, Boaz shouldered the legal obligation to permit travelers, foreigners, and other disadvantaged individuals to glean within his fields. However, Boaz’ kindness towards Ruth extended far beyond what was minimally required of him. In response, Ruth acknowledged his compassion by bowing deeply, an act that continues to be recognized as a universal expression of respect.

Boaz then explained the reasoning behind his generous response...

“And Boaz answered and said to her, ‘It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The

Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge” (Ruth 2:11-12).

A prominent business owner like Boaz surely had a network of employees, business associates, and others who could supply him with the news of the day. Having learned of Naomi’s return along with Ruth, Boaz seized the opportunity to acknowledge her kindness and devotion towards Naomi, a person who had been a member of Boaz’ own family.

In addition to providing for her needs, Boaz also conveyed his desire that God would bestow His favor upon Ruth. He did so by employing the imagery of a bird protecting its young under the sheltering presence of its wings. This same imagery also appears within the Biblical book of Psalms to illustrate God’s providential care and protection (see [Psalm 61:4](#), [63:7](#), and [91:1-4](#)).

Nevertheless, Boaz was surely unaware that *he* would eventually become the means by which God would fulfill his stated desire: “...***the LORD reward you for what you have done***” (GW).

VIII

“Then she said, ‘Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants’” (Ruth 2:13)

Life had been extremely difficult for Ruth. She lost her husband, and then completed a long journey to a foreign nation where she had no friends or acquaintances. She was isolated within an unfamiliar culture with no means of income. Now she had to scavenge leftovers to feed herself and her widowed mother-in-law.

But a previously unknown individual had suddenly appeared with an offer of extraordinary compassion. With this in mind, it’s easy to comprehend Ruth’s outpouring of gratitude, appreciation, and respect: “***You really are being kind to me, sir, for you have reassured and encouraged me, your servant, even though I am not one of your servants!***” (NET).

However, Boaz would go on to demonstrate his generosity towards Ruth in a far more immediate manner...

“Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, ‘Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.’ So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back” (Ruth 2:14).

Although common today, people in the Biblical era typically dined without utensils such as knives, forks, or spoons. A typical meal of that day would have included bread, torn by hand from a larger portion. Each person would then take turns dipping their bread into a communal bowl of sauce. In this instance, the “sauce” comprised wine or vinegar.

This represented an act of great kindness, for outsiders would not typically receive permission to share a meal with the host or his employees. Through his invitation, Boaz signaled his intent to accept Ruth as “part of the team,” so to speak.

Nevertheless, an attentive reader will notice a subtle aside hidden away within this passage: Ruth ate until she was full, but “...***kept some back.***” We’ll see why Ruth did so (and what it tells us about her character), later in this chapter.

IX

“And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, ‘Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her’” (Ruth 2:15).

While the Law of Moses commanded a landowner to make portions of his field available for harvest by the disadvantaged, Boaz permitted Ruth to glean within the area where the workers bundled the cut stalks of grain for transport. Since the act of collecting those stalks was sure to dislodge a significant amount of grain, this provided Ruth with the best opportunity for success.

Boaz also instructed his employees to support Ruth's efforts by saying, “***Be sure to pull out some stalks of grain from the bundles and leave them on the ground for her***” (CEV). While Boaz could have given Ruth some grain from his fields, he chose instead to help her in a manner that preserved her dignity as she worked to support herself.

Boaz' response illustrates the way a God-honoring person can employ a Scriptural directive as a guideline for righteous living. For example, Boaz took the principles that appear in [Leviticus 19:9](#) and [Deuteronomy 24:19](#) and adapted them for use with Ruth.

As the Apostle Paul would later go on to say, “...***we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully***” (1 Timothy 1:8 ESV). Boaz provides us with a good example that exemplifies this “lawful use of the law.” He adapted a Biblical mandate to align with this unique set of circumstances in order to extend mercy to someone who was in great need (see [Hosea 6:6](#), [Micah 6:8](#) and [Matthew 12:7](#)).

This passage also recalls a precept from the New Testament Gospel of Matthew: “***Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy***” (Matthew 5:7). Ruth showed mercy toward Naomi in working to provide for their mutual needs. In turn, Boaz demonstrated mercy toward Ruth by helping her meet those needs more effectively.

This brings us to another Biblical principle that fits well within the agricultural theme of Ruth chapter two: “...***let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart***” (Galatians 6:9).

X

“***So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied***” (Ruth 2:17-18).

The act of gleaning was a physically demanding task that typically yielded a meager return on one's efforts. A day's work gleaning might sustain someone for a day or two, and virtually ensured that he or she would have to return to the fields to scavenge for anything edible that others overlooked.

Of course, a person with nothing to eat might view that option as better than nothing, especially if he or she had no other choice. However, the return on Ruth's investment was quite a different story.

When Ruth completed her day's work in the field, she took what she collected and “...***pounded the grain off the stalks***” (CEV). This involved the act of separating the grain from the surrounding husks by striking or beating them with a stick. This process was known as threshing, and it provided Ruth with an ephah of barley.

An “ephah” was an ancient measure of dry volume that was roughly equivalent to two-thirds of a bushel or about thirty to forty pounds (14-18 kg). This was substantially more than anyone might reasonably expect to glean from a field. It also provided enough to sustain Ruth and Naomi for at least a week or ten days. As one source observes, “*This was a huge amount of barley for one woman to gather in a single day. It testifies both to Ruth's industry and to Boaz's generosity.*” (1)

While Boaz clearly assisted Ruth in her efforts, that did not stop her from doing the best she could. In this manner, Ruth's conduct embodied the noble qualities attributed to the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31...

“She also rises while it is still night, and gives food to her household, and a share to her young women... She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness” (Proverbs 31:15, 27).

(1) NETBible: Ruth 2 - Bible.Org, <https://netbible.org/bible/Ruth+2#>. Accessed 21 Feb. 2026.

XI

After Boaz invited Ruth to join his employees for lunch, “...***she sat down beside the harvesters. Then he handed her some roasted grain. She ate until she was full and saved the rest” (Ruth 2:14 NET).*** For someone like Ruth (a person who didn't know where her next meal might come from), we might expect to read that she kept those leftovers for herself.

But Ruth had a different motivation for saving the rest of her meal: “***Ruth also took out what she had left over from lunch and gave it to Naomi” (GW).*** So, instead of simply looking out for herself, Ruth elected to share her blessings with someone who was equally in need.

This simple act of kindness offers a window into Ruth's character. Even while Ruth was enjoying the unexpected benefit of a free lunch, she was mindful of Naomi and the fact that she had little or nothing to eat. Then she met that need while she was enjoying a meal of her own.

With this in mind, we should not be surprised to read of Naomi's response in the following verse...

“And her mother-in-law said to her, ‘Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.’ So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, ‘The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz!” (Ruth 2:19).

So Boaz' generosity blessed two people. His example reminds us that our words and deeds may have an impact that reverberates far beyond our initial actions. In this instance, Boaz' simple act of compassion will trigger a series of events that will return those blessings to him; but it all started with the decision to help someone in need by providing her with lunch.

XII

When Naomi learned that Boaz had been responsible for displaying such generosity towards her daughter-in-law, she responded with an outpouring of thanksgiving to God...

“Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!’ And Naomi said to her, ‘This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives!” (Ruth 1:20).

Through this simple act of benevolence, Boaz became a living embodiment of a principle that God would later codify through the pen of the Apostle Paul...

“Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. ‘For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.’ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say, ‘They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.’”

For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. As a result of your ministry, they will

give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you” (2 Corinthians 6:6-14 NLT).

XIII

“Naomi said to her, 'The man is one of our close relatives; he’s one of our redeemers'” (Ruth 2:20 CEB).

Boaz was a “close relative” to Ruth only in the sense that...

- Ruth had once been married to a man (now dead),
- who had been the son of a man (also dead),
- who had been a member of Boaz’ family.

Nevertheless, that tenuous connection did not prevent Naomi from saying, ***“The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers” (ESV, emphasis added).*** So, despite the absence of any biological ties, Naomi held Ruth in the same regard as a blood relative. In doing so, Naomi foreshadowed what Christ has done in reconciling those who were far from God...

“Christ came and preached peace to you Gentiles, who were far from God, and peace to us Jews, who were near God. And because of Christ, all of us can come to the Father by the same Spirit. You Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens with everyone else who belongs to the family of God” (Ephesians 2:17-19 CEV).

It is also interesting to note Naomi’s change of attitude as she heard this news. For instance, Naomi was the person who once said, ***“Do not call me Naomi (or pleasant); call me Mara (or bitter), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” (Ruth 1:20).***

However, God’s gracious provision through Boaz had now caused Naomi to break out in a spontaneous expression of thankfulness: ***“May he be blessed by the Lord, who has not forsaken his kindness to the living or the dead” (Ruth 2:20 HCSB).*** To paraphrase a verse from the New Testament epistle of James, it seems that Naomi had started to grasp the divine purpose unfolding through her life’s experiences. That led her to discover that God is both compassionate and merciful ([James 5:11](#)).

This reference to God’s ***“kindness to the living and the dead” (NIV)*** alluded to the memory of her late husband and sons, as well as Boaz’ connection to those now-deceased family members.

XIV

The concept of Boaz’ role as a ***“kinsman-redeemer”*** may be unfamiliar to many 21st-century audiences, but it is an important Biblical principle that holds significance for everyone who follows Christ.

Contemporary versions of Ruth 2:20 convey the meaning of a kinsman-redeemer by translating this reference as ***“guardian” (NET)***, ***“family redeemer” (NLT)***, or ***“one of those responsible for taking care of us” (GNB).***

Naomi thus recognized Boaz as someone who was more than just a family member; he was a close relative who held an important position of responsibility. In the words of one commentary, ***“In this context Boaz, as a ‘redeemer,’ functions as a guardian of the family interests who has responsibility for caring for the widows of his deceased kinsmen”*** ⁽¹⁾

In the original language of this passage, Naomi identified Boaz as a ***“ga’al.”*** This phrase was used to describe someone who held the power to act in several capacities. For instance, a ga’al possessed the ability to:

- Repurchase family property.

- Redeem another family member who had been sold into slavery.
- Extract retribution on behalf of a relative who had been injured
- Continue the lineage of a deceased male relative.

If a man died without a son to carry on the family name in the Biblical era, the oldest surviving brother was responsible to marry his widow and have children with her in order to preserve his brother's heritage. The first-born son from their relationship would then serve as an heir of the deceased (see [Deuteronomy 25:5](#)). (2) This suggests that Naomi had already started to contemplate certain possibilities that will later unfold in chapter three.

These concepts lead to a natural association with Jesus' role as our kinsman-redeemer in several respects. For instance:

- Jesus is related to us through our common humanity.
- His death on the cross served as the purchase price to redeem us from our estrangement from God.
- He cares for us, protects us, provides for us, and gives eternal life to those who accept and follow Him.

Jesus thus serves as humanity's spiritual kinsman-redeemer, and in the words of Naomi, "***Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!***"

(1) *NET Bible Notes* on Ruth 3:9 <http://classic.net.bible.org/bible.php?book=Rut&chapter=3#n39>

(1) This responsibility could also be assumed by the nearest male relative if the deceased had no brother. See also [Leviticus 25:25-28, 47-49](#), and [Numbers 35:19-21](#)

XV

"Ruth the Moabitess said, 'He also said to me, 'You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest'" (Ruth 2:21).

Although Ruth shared the blessings of her day's work in speaking with Naomi, there was something amiss in this report of her conversation with Boaz.

When Ruth began to elaborate on all that had taken place in the course of her day, she told Naomi, "... ***[Boaz] also told me, 'Stay with my young men until they have finished all of my harvest'" (HCSB).*** However, a closer look at that conversation between Ruth and Boaz reveals something different.

When Boaz invited Ruth to continue working in his field, he said to her, "***Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my maidens" (Ruth 2:8 RSV, emphasis added).*** So, it seems that Ruth interpreted Boaz' message as an invitation to get a little closer with the young men who worked for him.

There's something else as well. When Boaz invited Ruth to join his employees for lunch, she did not choose to sit among the members of his female workforce. Instead, she took a seat among the reapers or grain cutters (see [Ruth 2:14](#)).

So while Ruth may have welcomed the opportunity to meet and establish relationships with Boaz' female employees, these subtle clues indicate that she may have been equally interested in meeting an eligible bachelor. While it's difficult to fault Ruth if she harbored that desire, Boaz apparently possessed enough foresight to know that it was not in her best interest to socialize with the male employees under his supervision: "***I have ordered my young men not to touch you" (Ruth 2:9 GW).***

It seems that Naomi also picked up on that potential risk as well...

"And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, 'It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field'" (Ruth 2:22).

So just as Ruth was vigilant in seeking to provide for Naomi's needs, Naomi was equally diligent in drawing upon her experience to help protect her young daughter-in-law.

XVI

“So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law” (Ruth 2:23).

Although Ruth may have been interested in getting to know the young men of Boaz' workforce, Naomi wisely counseled her daughter-in-law to stay near his female employees instead. Naomi's apprehension was clearly evident in her exchange with Ruth: ***“Who knows what might happen to you in someone else's field!” (Ruth 2:22 CEV)***. Other translations express Naomi's fear that Ruth might be ***molested (GNB), harmed (NIV), or assaulted (ESV)*** if she left the protection of Boaz' leadership.

So, Ruth embraced the counsel offered by Naomi and Boaz, both of whom possessed the benefit of age and experience. Instead of dismissing their suggestions and acting solely on her own judgment, ***“... Ruth stayed with the young women who were working for Boaz...” (GW)***.

We can draw a comparison between Ruth's decision and the subsequent experience of a young man named Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon. Following Rehoboam's ascension to the throne, he elected to act upon the questionable counsel offered by the companions of his youth instead of the wise counsel offered by the men who had advised his father (see [1 Kings chapter 12:1-24](#)). As a result of that decision, a significant portion of the nation ultimately seceded from his leadership.

Unlike Rehoboam, Ruth's decision had no immediate national impact. Nevertheless, the fact that she followed her mother-in-law's guidance serves as a further testament to her good character. The fact that Ruth continued to work with Boaz throughout the barley and wheat harvests also indicates that she gleaned within his fields for perhaps as long as six to eight weeks.

So, Ruth faithfully persevered with Naomi through some very difficult times and continued to demonstrate that same degree of loyalty, dedication, and commitment now that their prospects were improving as well.