

### Boaz is Introduced

#### Ruth 2:1-7

Ruth 2:1-7 - *“There was a relative of Naomi’s husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz. <sup>2</sup> 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.”*

*<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they answered him, “The LORD bless you!” <sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.”*

#### Background Notes

The two widows, Naomi and Ruth, had come from Moab and were now living in Bethlehem. Naomi, the mother-in-law, had returned home. She had gone to Moab with her husband Elimelech and her two sons during a time of famine. Elimelech and her two sons had died unexpectedly and prematurely, probably a sign of God’s discipline for leaving the land of promise and intermarrying with foreigners from a pagan culture. Ruth, one of Naomi’s daughters-in-law from Moab, showed great faith and decided to leave her homeland with its pagan gods and come to Israel with Naomi. More importantly, Ruth decided to identify with the people of Israel and the God of Israel: *“Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.”*

But just because they had settled in Israel didn’t mean that all their problems were solved. What about food and other needs? They had no “man of the house” to be the provider, very difficult situation in that day. It was at this point that Ruth decided to do something about the situation. As the younger woman she sensed her responsibility to care for her older mother-in-law.

Ruth is a great example of someone who takes on responsibility for herself and for others -- a lesson that we all need to learn. Ruth didn’t sit back and wait for others to help, even though she was in a new situation and unfamiliar surroundings. She didn’t say “This is Naomi’s problem, not mine.” No, she realized her responsibility and took action.

Ruth decided to take advantage of the “gleaning laws” in Israel. Under God’s Law, when farmers harvested their crops, they were not to reap the corners of the fields or gather every last stalk of grain, or every last apple or every last grape. No, some of the crops were to be left for the poor people of the land to “glean,” or reap for themselves, so they could feed

their families. Leviticus 19:9-10: *“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup> And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God.”*

Also Deuteronomy 24:19-21: *“When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. <sup>20</sup> When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. <sup>21</sup> When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.”*

And so Ruth went out to glean, and she “just happened” to start gleaning in a field that belonged to Boaz. Boaz was a relative of Elimelech, Ruth’s father-in-law, and he became a major character in the story of Ruth.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God’s plans are accomplished through events that the world calls “happenstances.”

God’s accomplishes His plans through what the world calls “happenstance.” What does that word “happenstance” mean? A happenstance, as defined by the dictionary, is a circumstance regarded as due to chance.

*“Then she...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” (v3).* Do you think it was just by chance that Ruth happened to glean in the field of Boaz? Of course not! And the inspired writer did not intend to convey that concept. No, the idea is that from the human perspective it looked like that it was just by chance that Ruth happened to glean in the field of Boaz. But the rest of the book of Ruth shows that this was no happenstance. This was divine providence at work.

Boaz was a close relative, a kinsman. He was eligible to be a “kinsman redeemer.” As kinsman redeemer, Boaz had the responsibility to help Elimelech’s widow and widowed daughter-in-law. In Boaz we have a wonderful spiritual picture of Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer, who took on the responsibility to help us and redeem us from sin. Was it just by chance that Ruth gleaned in a field that was owned by Boaz? No way! This was no “happenstance”! This was God’s sovereign grace at work.

Ephesians 1:11 says that God works all things according to the council of his will, but God’s plans are accomplished through events that the world calls happenstances. This was not only true for Ruth and her future blessing, it’s true for you and for me. Romans 8:28 says that God works all things together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. God work all the events of our lives together for our good, if we’re believers.

After I left my secular employment as a research scientist, I worked with the Young Life ministry for several years in the early 1970s. Here's how our involvement in Young Life "just happened." I made a job change, and we "just happened" to rent a house temporarily. This rented house "just happened" to be next door to the home of a high school student who had just become a Christian through the Young Life ministry. The Young Life club "just happened" to be meeting in his home that week, and he invited me to attend. The local Young Life volunteer leader "just happened" to be a very young believer himself. He mentioned that he needed someone to teach the Bible to these kids (and to him!) -- and did I "happen" to know anyone that would be willing? I "just happened" to be readily available. To make a long story short, within a couple of weeks of when we "just happened" to move into that rented house, I was teaching Young Life high school Bible studies in three different towns in the area! And it wasn't long before the Lord opened the door for us to be involved in the Young Life ministry full time. Now do you think that was all just coincidence, just happenstance? No way! Not a chance! God's plans are accomplished through what the world calls happenstances. We certainly see that teaching in the first 5 verses of Ruth 2.

## **2. God's "workfare" program is better than the world's welfare programs!**

More and more these days we're hearing the term "workfare," as opposed to welfare. Why? Because the welfare system in this country is not working the way it's supposed to work. There are too many people are just looking for handouts. And as long as something is free, most people are reluctant to work -- even when work is available. So more and more these days we're hearing that the welfare system must be overhauled and it needs to be more a workfare program.

How interesting! That's exactly what the Bible teaches! In 2 Thessalonians 3:10 we read: "... *when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.*" In the Old Testament God had a welfare program to meet the needs of the poor, but it involved work on their part. They had to glean. It was a workfare program. There were no "freebies" or entitlements or handouts to sluggards under God's workfare program.

God's workfare program is certainly better than the world's welfare programs! God's gleaning laws were a wonderful provision in the Mosaic Law to meet the needs of the poor, like Ruth and Naomi, but Ruth had to go out and glean. Gleaning was work -- hard work -- but Ruth was willing to work hard. In fact, the foreman told Boaz that Ruth had taken only a short break in the shelter (v7).

Notice another thing about God's gleaning laws. The gleaning laws were not a government-run program, but a private responsibility. The individual landowner had the responsibility to leave the gleanings for the poor who were willing to glean. It was not a centralized government-run program where all kinds of graft and red tape could make it corrupt and ineffective. By being decentralized and private, it was more flexible, and the individual landowner was more accountable. God's workfare program is much better than the world's welfare programs!

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. Are we conscious that all blessing comes from the Lord?**

In verse 4, Boaz greeted his workers with, “the Lord be with you!” And they answered him, “The Lord bless you.” This not only showed that there was a good relationship between Boaz and those working for him, but it shows that they were all conscious of the fact that all blessing comes from the Lord.

Are we conscious that all blessing comes from the Lord? James 1:17 says that every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above, and comes down from the Father. Are we thankful to Him for all His provision? Are we conscious that all blessing comes from the Lord?

### **2. Are we willing to glean?**

Gleaning was hard work, and it was the work of the poor. There probably were some people in ancient Israel who thought they were “too good” to glean. They were too proud, or too lazy, or they didn’t want to get their hands dirty by gleaning.

Are we willing to glean? I mentioned that I worked for a few years with the Young Life ministry, and during that time the ministry funds ran out in our particular area. With a family and home to maintain, I had to find a part time job to make ends meet. I got a job as a technician where I could set my own hours and still keep the ministry going. Here I was, a former research scientist who had technicians working under me -- and now I was working as a technician myself. It was somewhat humiliating, but it was good for me! And -- although I had no idea of this end result when I took the job, God worked “all things together” so that my boss on that job ended up giving us some major financial assistance so I could further my theological education!

Are we willing to glean? I know two Christian men who are unwilling to glean. They’re not willing to work at what they consider to be “menial” jobs – in fact, they’re not working at all, because they’re waiting around for the perfect high-paying job to come along! They are unwilling to glean – and it’s hurting their families.

If the Lord asks us to glean, are we willing to glean?