

God Our Provider

Printed Text • Ruth 2:8–18

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **UNDERSTAND** how Boaz met Ruth and Naomi's need for survival, **SYMPATHIZE** to a need of someone we know, and **DETERMINE** ways to help meet someone's needs.

In Focus

After Araba lost her great job at a hospital in Detroit, the Jacksons all moved back near family. Their daughters, Tamika and Darlique, weren't happy about the move, but both Araba and Harold had sisters there.

While job hunting, Araba took on shifts at the corner store that their relative, Robbie, was managing and renting. The community welcomed them, and she quickly got to know the regular customers.

Mister Tull was there, the plumber who had fixed the water heater at the store the previous winter. Mister and Missus Brown always stopped by on Wednesday nights after Bible Study to enjoy some ice cream.

One family that particularly caught Araba's attention was the Alexanders.

Every Friday, missus Alexander and her three children would buy one small bag of rice and two cans of beans.

Araba noticed that the children's clothes were worn and dirty. Curious, she asked her niece Monique about their situation, and she informed her that Missus Alexander had lost her husband to a heart attack a few months ago. Since then, she had lost their home and was living with her children in a nearby motel.

From that day forward, Araba began adding extra food to the Alexanders' grocery bag every Friday.

Just as Araba has a heart for helping those in need, today's lesson highlights how Boaz allowed Ruth to glean in his fields, enabling her to provide for herself and Naomi.

What systems can you help put in place or strengthen to make sure people are helped?

Keep In Mind

The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. (Ruth 2:12, KJV)

May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done." (Ruth 2:12, NLT)

Words You Should Know

Glean (Ruth 2:8, 15–18) laqat (Heb.)—To pick up, gather.

Abide (v. 8) dabaq (Heb.)—To cling, stay close, follow closely.

Grace (v. 10) hen (Heb.)—favor, beneficial treatment.

Say It Correctly

Boaz. BOH-az.

Elimelech. ee-LIHM-eh-lehk.

Ephah. EE-fuh.

KJV Ruth 2:8–18

8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:

9 Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

13 Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

14 And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.

15 And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:

16 And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. After the meal, Ruth returned to gleaning.

18 And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

NLT Ruth 2:8–18

8 Boaz went over and said to Ruth, “Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don’t go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field.

9 See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well.”

10 Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. “What have I done to deserve such kindness?” she asked. “I am only a foreigner.”

11 “Yes, I know,” Boaz replied. “But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers.

12 May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done.”

13 “I hope I continue to please you, sir,” she replied. “You have comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, even though I am not one of your workers.”

14 At mealtime Boaz called to her, “Come over here, and help yourself to some food. You can dip your bread in the sour wine.” So she sat with his harvesters, and Boaz gave her some roasted grain to eat. She ate all she wanted and still had some left over.

15 When Ruth went back to work again, Boaz ordered his young men, “Let her gather grain right among the sheaves without stopping her.

16 And pull out some heads of barley from the bundles and drop them on purpose for her. Let her pick them up, and don’t give her a hard time!”

17 So Ruth gathered barley there all day, and when she beat out the grain that evening, it filled an entire basket.

18 She carried it back into town and showed it to her mother-in-law. Ruth also gave her the roasted grain that was left over from her meal.

The People, Places, and Times

Boaz

Boaz was a wealthy landowner from Bethlehem. He was a compassionate farmer who cared about the well-being of his workers. As a relative of Elimelech, Naomi's husband, he felt a sense of responsibility to look after his extended family. Boaz served as the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth and symbolizes Christ's role as our Redeemer.

Gleaning

During harvest time, Israelite law required farmers to assist the poor, orphans, and strangers (Leviticus 19:9–10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19–22). Farmers were obligated to leave a portion of the harvest for these individuals. They could not harvest all the way to the edges of their fields, nor could they collect the leftover stalks that were missed during reaping. In vineyards and olive groves, any fallen fruit and fruit missed during the harvesters' first pass had to be left behind. The poor, orphans, and strangers were permitted to gather the leftover grain, grapes, and olives after the workers had completed their task.

Background

Ruth was compelled by her love to stay with her mother-in-law, Naomi. She vowed to remain with Naomi no matter where she went, to accept the Israelite people as her own, and to worship the God of Israel even though she was a Moabite. Ruth promised that only death would separate her from Naomi (Ruth 1:16–17). They journeyed to Bethlehem together, and upon their arrival, the women of the city were shocked to see Naomi. She told them to call her "Mara," which means "bitter," because she felt that God had dealt with her harshly (Ruth 1:20). Naomi had left Bethlehem with a husband and two sons, but they all died in the land of Moab.

Wanting to care for her mother-in-law, Ruth asked for permission to go into the fields to gather grain (2:2), and Naomi permitted her to do so. Unbeknownst to Ruth, she was gleaning in a field belonging to Boaz, a relative of Naomi's late husband, Elimelech. Boaz was a godly man. As he watched his workers, he noticed Ruth and inquired about her identity. Boaz learned who Ruth was and how hard she had been working in the fields to support her mother-in-law.

At-A-Glance

1. Divine Favor (Ruth 2:8–13)
2. Divine Provisions (vv. 14–18)

In Depth

1. Divine Favor (Ruth 2:8–13)

Boaz was very kind to Ruth. He saw how she faithfully worked in the fields to provide for herself and Naomi (her mother-in-law). His initial conversation with Ruth expressed his compassion and concern for her. Boaz addressed her as "my daughter" (v. 8). This can be interpreted in two ways. One, Boaz was an older man, and Ruth was a younger woman, and maybe he was being respectful and affectionate in relation to the age difference. Two, because

Boaz was a relative of Elimelech, and the foreman told him that Ruth had returned from Moab with Naomi, Boaz called her “daughter” to express his relationship with the family. Either way, Boaz’s words indicate that he wanted to make sure Ruth understood his motives were purely out of concern for her.

Boaz told her not to glean in another field, which suggested he wanted to protect and take care of her (v. 9). He also told her to remain with his servant girls, who walked behind the men cutting the grain and bound the grain into sheaves. Ruth could then follow and glean what was left behind. Boaz also directed the men not to harm her and told her that she could drink water whenever she was thirsty (v. 9). Ruth was overwhelmed by his kindness and bowed down in humble gratitude before him (v. 10).

Curious about his generosity, she asked Boaz why he was being so kind to her, especially since she was a foreigner (v. 10). Ruth was a Moabite, which meant she was viewed as an enemy by Boaz and Naomi’s people, the Israelites. Despite this, Boaz had learned about Ruth’s faithfulness (v. 11) and had personally witnessed her admirable qualities while she worked in his fields. He asked God to bless Ruth’s life (v. 12), demonstrating his godliness, his admiration for her, and his hope for her future.

2. Divine Provisions (vv. 14–18)

During mealtime, the workers gathered in a “shelter,” where they also took a short break earlier in the workday (Ruth 2:7). Although Ruth, a Moabite, might have experienced shunning, Boaz invited her to sit with his workers and eat bread dipped in vinegar (v. 14). This wine vinegar and bread, sometimes paired with olive oil, is a typical dish in the ancient Near East. Boaz treated Ruth just like the other workers and offered her some parched corn (which we might refer to today as dehydrated or recently roasted corn). She received such a large portion that she ate until she was full, with leftovers to spare.

Significantly, Boaz exceeded the requirements of the gleaning law by providing for Ruth’s needs. In the ancient Near East, a person receiving a larger portion of food was considered a person favored by the host. As she returned to the fields to glean, Boaz instructed the workers to pluck some stalks from their sheaves and leave them for her (vv. 15–16). This was an extraordinary act of generosity and kindness. Ruth brought her barley back to the city and presented it to her mother-in-law (v. 18). Additionally, she saved some leftovers from her lunch to share with Naomi. As a result, both Naomi and Ruth had more than enough to eat. This is an example of how God cares for His people. In the same way, we should strive to take care of one another. How can we be more mindful of sharing our blessings with others, and why should we?

Search the Scriptures

1. What reason did Boaz give for showing favor toward Ruth (Ruth 2:11)?
2. How did Boaz instruct his workers to treat Ruth while she was in the fields (vv. 15–16)?
3. How did Ruth provide for Naomi’s needs (vv. 17–18)?

Discuss The Meaning

- 1. How did Ruth utilize God’s law of gleaning to help support her mother-in-law?
- 2. What obstacles did Ruth need to overcome to find provisions?
- 3. How can we learn to be more generous toward those in need?

Liberating Lesson

Economic downturns affect individuals in various ways. Some struggle to find good jobs, pay their bills, or afford enough food. In such times, many people turn to social service agencies for assistance. These organizations are experienced in helping those in need. However, many agencies are forced to turn people away due to a significant decrease in funding. As a result, many individuals are left without their basic needs being met. As Christians, we recognize the urgent needs of others. We, like Boaz, can choose to go beyond the legal requirements in place to protect the poor. If we, like Boaz, choose to be generous with what God has given us, we can make a positive impact— one person at a time.

Application For Activation

As we acknowledge the needs of our family members, neighbors, coworkers, and church community, we should take the initiative to offer help. Also, if you find yourself in need of assistance, pray that God guides you to the right person or agency that can provide the support you require.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Ruth 2:8–18

8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: 9 Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

Verse 8 includes three uses of Hebrew words that can be translated as “no,” emphasizing the importance of Ruth remaining in Boaz’s fields. Boaz poses a rhetorical question asking, “Hearest thou not?” (Heb. lo, LO), then follows with the phrase “Go not” (Heb. ‘al, ALL), and continues with “neither go from hence” (also using lo). Boaz is not merely suggesting that Ruth consider staying in his fields; he is urgently advising her not to leave the fields where she is gleaning. To further reinforce that she should not wander to another location, he instructs her to “abide” (Heb. dabaq, daw-BAK), which can mean “rest,” “remain,” or “dwell” with his female servants. In verse 9, Boaz again emphasizes the importance of remaining in his fields. He tells her to keep her eyes on the field, implying that she should not be distracted or follow others. He reassures her safety by stating that he has “charged” (Heb. tsava, tsaw-VAW), or commanded, his men not to touch her. In a strange land, unaccompanied women could be at risk of physical or sexual assault. This is why Ruth must stay where she can be assured of her safety.

10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

When Ruth falls to her face, it is a physical expression of her gratitude. The Hebrew word shakha, (shaw-KHAW) means “to bow down” or “to worship.” However, this does not imply that she worshiped Boaz as a god; instead, she honored him for the grace, that she received from him. Ruth’s question to Boaz about why she is receiving such favor reflects her awareness that she is a nakri (Heb. NAH-kree), meaning “foreigner or stranger,” in the land of Israel. Boaz shows that he does not care about her ethnic origin. In fact, neither does God. Despite being a Gentile widow, Ruth ends up being part of the lineage that would lead to David and eventually, Jesus.

11 Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. 12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

In verse 11, Boaz indicates that he has been informed about the situation. The Hebrew word nagad, (naw-GOD), translates to “to tell.” However, in this verb form, it conveys the meaning of “told” or “reported.” In Hebrew, the verb is doubled, suggesting interpretations like “certainly told” or “certainly reported.” While Ruth may not have been aware of it, the community recognized her good deeds toward Naomi. In verse 12, Boaz pronounces a blessing, emphasizing that the reward comes from the Lord. The Hebrew word shalam (shaw-LAM) can be translated into various terms such as “peace,” “pay,” “reward,” and “full.” It appears twice in this verse, where it is translated as “recompense” and “full.” This is the same root used in the Hebrew word shalom, meaning peace, wholeness, and prosperity.

13 Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of

thine handmaidens. 14 And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.

For verse 13, Ruth emphasizes that she is different from the other women. Despite this, Boaz continues to show kindness to her. For verse 14, scholars suggest that the “he” who handed her the parched corn is Boaz, not one of the reapers. Therefore, further confirming that she is welcome at his table.

15 And when she was risen to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: 16 And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. 17 So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. After the meal, Ruth returned to gleaning.

The phrase “risen up” in verse 15 comes from the Hebrew word qum (KOOM), which suggests a new beginning. This usage implies that after receiving a special treat from her host, Ruth gained renewed energy and motivation. Boaz again “commanded” (Heb. tsavah, tsaw-VAW) the young workers in his field, this time telling them to assist Ruth to ensure she benefited from her gleaning. In verses 15–16, the text notes for verse 17 that Ruth worked very hard. As a result, she and Naomi experienced abundance; Ruth’s plate was full. Ruth collected “about an ephah of barley.” The term ephah (Heb. ay-FAW) derives from an Egyptian concept that signifies a basket’s capacity—a basketful. Boaz tells them, “Let her glean even among the sheaves,” “do not reproach her,” “let fall also some of the handfuls for her,” “leave them, that she may glean them,” and “rebuke her not.” These directives underscore Boaz’s intention to support her in every possible way.

18 And she took it up and went into the city: and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

Verse 18 records that Ruth was a faithful and generous individual who wished to share the fruits of her labor with Naomi. Boaz supported her in achieving success, which ultimately meant survival and the possibility of a better life for both her and Naomi.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Reflecting on the Unfailing Love and Refuge of God
(Psalm 36:5–10)

TUESDAY

Naomi Realizes Boaz is Their Family Redeemer
(Ruth 2:19–23)

WEDNESDAY

Ruth Goes out to Glean in the Field

(Ruth 2:1–3)

THURSDAY

Boaz Notices Ruth and Inquires About Her

(Ruth 2:4–7)

FRIDAY

Boaz Shows Kindness and Speaks Kindly to Ruth

(Ruth 2:8–13)

SATURDAY

Boaz Shares His Meal and Commands Extra Grain for Ruth

(Ruth 2:14–16)

SUNDAY

Ruth Returns to Naomi with an Abundant Harvest

(Ruth 2:17–18)