Real Ones: Real Love Expressed in Real Relationships

**Ruth Chapter 3**

**Series Recap and Intro:**

We are in week three of our series Real Ones: Real Love in Real Relationships. Here’s our theme statement for this series: **Our character choices can reflect God’s character. Therefore, God can show up in everything we do and in every relationship we have.**

In Ruth, we see models of godly character and love in action. God's love is not simply an emotion, but is expressed through thoughtful actions guided by understanding, where He exercises patience and self-control even in challenging situations, demonstrating a deep and mature kind of love.

Our character choices reflect God’s character, and so God can show up in everything we do and in every relationship we have. This includes family, friendships, co-workers, girl/boy friends, any relationships. In each chapter of the book, we are asking this guiding question: **How does each character of the story reflect God’s character in their relationships?**

For the past two weeks, we've studied the book of Ruth. In Ruth 1, Ruth showed God’s faithfulness by staying by Naomi’s side when she was left abandoned and alone. In Ruth 2, Boaz showed God’s kindness to Ruth, a Moabite, by allowing her to work in his field. Our **Big Idea** today is: In Ruth 3, Ruth and Boaz show **God's wisdom** to each other by mutually recognizing each other’s character as attractive and in seeking a relationship.

The book of Ruth is set in time during the book of Judges; everyone doing what was right in their own eyes. Today everyone does what is right in their own eyes with regards to relationships. How can we do it differently?

**Read Ruth 3:1-5**

**God’s Wisdom is shown by Naomi to Ruth**

Fast forward six to eight weeks after Ruth met Boaz. Naomi had an unconventional, yet clever plan for Ruth and Boaz. Naomi crafted a plan to remind Boaz of his potential kinsman-redeemer obligation. Naomi was playing matchmaker in this chapter. She wanted the best for her daughter-in-law and she trusted and had faith in God that Boaz would look after her, not just because of his wealth, but because of his character.

Naomi trusted Boaz’s character and knew he would not put Ruth in danger. His behavior up until this point had proven he was a kind and generous man (chapter 2).

Or maybe Naomi, led by God, knew this was the only way to guarantee the conversation, and she trusted God with the outcome of her plan.

Ruth had to prepare herself before meeting Boaz at the threshing floor. In this we learn that we have to prepare before seeking the things we ‘desire’ because it is in our preparation that we will truly know whether it is truly worth seeking after. This goes for anything in life: Godly relationships or good grades, they all require preparation and sometimes an elder like Naomi to give advice. Although, sometimes, because the advice that Naomi told her was to go and propose marriage to Boaz. We must be careful when we seek out wise counsel. Ask yourself, is this advice I have been given from the Word, or is it someone’s opinion?

**Application**: Naomi’s plan in chapter 3 reminds us we also have a role to play in God’s redemptive work. God expects obedience along the way. God’s sovereignty should not give us freedom to be passive in life. We are not sitting at the sidelines letting our lives pass us by. We seek God’s wisdom and move forward with open hands, trusting that if our hearts honor Him, He will intervene where He needs to.

***Discussion questions****: When have you done something that appeared risky out of obedience to God? Or when have you avoided doing something because it felt too risky? What happened? Have you ever tried to rush ahead of God’s plans? What happened when you did? (Leaders you can share your own example.)*

**Read Ruth 3:6-11**

**God revealed to Boaz both Ruth’s character and her commitment to Naomi.**

Ruth chose obedience even though she did not know the outcome of Naomi’s plan. She put her trust in God and honored her mother-in-law even though it had the potential to cost her greatly. This takes place at the threshing floor that evening, then into midnight, the THRESHING FLOOR! This seemed a bit scandalous….while we may think ‘I hope they don’t do what we may think they do’, both Boaz and Ruth remain Godly in a situation that could have turned into something else. They both showed their strength in character. **This reassures us that Godly character can be evident in ungodly settings.** We live in a time where ungodliness is everywhere, but we need to be that light, a light that leaves no room for darkness. How must have Ruth have felt? It’s likely there were others around sleeping, but she was essentially alone in the dark, getting ready to approach a man, not knowing how he would respond.

Now, put yourself in Boaz’s shoes. Verse 7 says he was in good spirits after a night of celebration where he ate and drank before he went to lie down. Boaz celebrated the harvest after many years of famine. Boaz enjoyed God’s provision and the fruits of his labor. Now she has to wait for Boaz’s response. While she may have been uncertain of Boaz, she remained faithful to Naomi and to Yahweh. Let’s look to Ruth’s example of obedience to God, even when we are unaware of the outcome.

Up until this point, Ruth had followed Naomi’s plan, but some people believe that in verse 9 Ruth made a different decision than Naomi expected. Ruth didn’t wait for Boaz to tell her what to do; she told him what to do. Ruth asked Boaz to marry her instead of waiting for Boaz to make the next move. In the NLT version it says, “spread the corner of your covering over me, for you are my family redeemer.” Why did Ruth pivot from the plan? Maybe she spoke quickly to ensure Boaz did not misinterpret her actions. Or maybe this reveals a change in how Ruth saw herself. She saw herself no longer as a foreigner or widow but as one worthy of Boaz’s redemption. Ruth chooses Boaz, a man of noble character, instead of a younger man or one who is rich.

In verses 10 and 11, Boaz responds. He has definitely been watching Ruth. He noticed her worthiness, beauty and work ethic. Boaz’s response shows us his heart for Ruth. 1) he respected her, 2) he desired to protect her, and 3) he wanted to provide for her. Their commitment to one another came from their common character–worthy man (2:1) and worthy woman (Proverbs 31:26). While this may not look like our modern definition of falling in love, it gives us a glimpse of what matters when it comes to love. More than that, it gives us a look at God’s love for us. His love is not based on outward appearances, performances or even our feelings–and we can experience His perfect love whether God gives us the gift of marriage, like Ruth and Boaz, or the gift of serving Him through singleness. (1 Corinthians 7:7). Ruth diverted a bit from Naomi’s plan not only for herself but also for Naomi. Naomi’s plan found a husband for Ruth, but Ruth asked Boaz to redeem her and therefore redeem Naomi. Ruth’s commitment to Naomi once again exemplifies God’s *hesed*, lovingkindness.

**Application: Self-control as responsible love:**This aspect implies that God's love is not impulsive or uncontrolled, but is practiced with a mindful self-control that prevents harmful actions. Be mindful of your actions and words, choosing to act with love even when tempted to react impulsively.

*Discussion Questions: How are you tempted to earn love and affection from others?*

**Read Ruth 3:12-15**

**Boaz’s response to Ruth showed Godly wisdom, commitment and patience toward both Ruth and Naomi.**

Boaz showed glimpses of the coming fruit of the Spirit when he put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience in his interactions with Ruth (Galatians 5:22-23). For example, Boaz asking Ruth to stay the night in verse 13 did not necessarily imply anything physical. Boaz’s offer for Ruth to stay the night provided protection for her reputation as well as for her safety. Boaz never rushed ahead of God. He made a promise and intended to keep it. He kept his integrity intact. His character and his choices displayed his trust in God. But, there was a closer redeemer before Boaz, but Boaz considered the cost of marrying a Moabite and knew what he wanted to do. Reading about Ruth and Naomi’s redemption by Boaz, which involved so much more than marriage, reminds us about our redemption by Jesus.

Boaz realized the flaw in Naomi’s plan. Wouldn’t people wonder why the widowed Moabite snuck away from the threshing floor in the morning? Boaz revealed his concern for Ruth’s integrity. He did not worry about his own image but rather, once again, protected Ruth. He approached the situation with wisdom and purity. Before Ruth left, Boaz gave Ruth a gift; six measures of barley, close to 80 pounds! **Boaz’s gift revealed his heart toward Naomi and protected Ruth.** Boaz’s gesture of kindness revealed his intent to fulfill his role as the kinsman-redeemer for both Naomi and Ruth, signaling the end of their emptiness. Ruth left home empty and returned full. Naomi returned home to Bethlehem empty, and Boaz and Ruth filled her with food. We can be encouraged by this! Not all hope for Ruth and Naomi was lost. Nor is all hope lost for you and me. God is working in ways we cannot see right now. Even if we feel uncertain about what’s ahead, our God has already gone before us and prepared a way.

**Application: Discernment as insight:**God's wisdom allows Him to see beyond the surface of situations and understand the true needs and motivations of people, enabling Him to respond with appropriate love.

*Discussion question: How does Boaz’s example of patiently trusting God encourage you to trust God today?*

**Read Ruth 3:16–18**

**Naomi showed patience with Boaz’s response.**

While God orchestrated every detail, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz didn’t just wait around doing nothing; they actively chose to participate in God’s work. Just the day before, Naomi rushed her plan, but now she seemed okay to wait. She acted by sending Ruth to meet Boaz; then she waited. We see a different woman here compared to the “Mara” in chapter 1. Naomi was now not a woman who believed God was against her but a woman confident in His character and provision. She didn’t make another plan or come up with another solution. **She finally rested in God being the One to take care of her and Ruth.**

**Application: Patience as enduring love:** Just like in 1 Corinthians 13, "love is patient" means God doesn't react hastily, but waits for the right moment to act with love, even when faced with difficulties or opposition.

*Discussion questions: How does Naomi’s example of patiently trusting God encourage you to trust God today? Where are you looking for other people or worldly things to solve your problems instead of God?*

*Take a few moments to surrender to God whatever you are waiting on. Write down what you are trying to control, and tell God, “I give this to You today. I chose to trust You are working everything out.”*

**Questions:**

1. Relationship question of the day: How do I know if someone is right for me or if this relationship is honoring (to) God?
2. Does the person reflect God’s character, or are you settling for external criteria (money, success, popularity, physical attraction, etc.)?
3. Do your relationships and the choices you’re making in those relationships reflect God’s character?