

Life Lesson 56

Ruth

Text: Ruth 2-4

Introduction

Have you ever been all alone? The only one in a group with no friends? Think how hard it was for Ruth. She left all her friends and family behind in Moab. Besides that, the only way a woman could survive in that society was to get married. Her husband would take care of her. If he died, her sons would be responsible for her. Women couldn't go out and get jobs. Who would want to marry a Moabite woman? Not the Israelites. They didn't like Moabites. They looked down on them.

But Ruth decided she would rather have God than family, friends, or security. She was willing to give up everything and follow Naomi back to Israel where she would be a stranger. When we give up everything and trust God, amazing things happen. They certainly happened to Ruth!

The Story

Ruth went out to the fields to glean grain. That means she went behind the men who were gathering the crops and picked up the grain they missed. It was hard work -- and maybe embarrassing to be out with all the poor people. It didn't matter to Ruth, though. She went out early every morning and worked hard. She was pleasant and respectful to the other people, even though they probably weren't very friendly. And every day she took the grain home and gave it to her mother-in-law Naomi. She loved Naomi and took care of her.

The people noticed how hard Ruth worked and how good she was to Naomi. And God noticed.

One day the boss came out to check on the progress of the harvesting. His name was Boaz, a godly man who owned the fields.

“The Lord be with you,” he greeted his workers.

“The Lord bless you,” they answered.

“Who is that young lady working with you?” he asked.

“That’s Ruth the Moabite girl, Naomi’s daughter-in-law,” they said. “She is a hard worker! She has been out since early morning and has hardly stopped working all day.”

Boaz went to talk to Ruth. “Don’t go from field to field, but stick close to my workers,” he told her. “I’ve told everyone not to bother you, and you can eat the food I’ve provided for them and drink the water from our water jars.”

Ruth said, “Why are you so kind to me?”

“Everyone has heard how good you are to Naomi,” he said. “We heard how you left your family and your god to take care of her and to follow our God. Everyone knows that you are a virtuous woman.”

Boaz told the men to leave extra grain behind for Ruth. That night when she came home, Naomi was amazed at the amount of barley she had gathered.

“Where did you work today?” Naomi asked.

“I worked for a man named Boaz. He was really nice to me,” Ruth replied.

“Boaz! He’s a near kinsman of ours,” Naomi cried.

She explained to Ruth the directions God had put in His Word for the Israelites. When a young woman became a widow, the closest male relative of her dead husband should marry her

and buy back any land that had been sold. That way the property would stay in the same family -- and young widows would be cared for, too.

“Boaz is our near kinsman,” Naomi said. “We will remind him of that and see what he will do.”

After the barley harvest it was threshing time. The men would beat the grain off the stalk and clear off all the chaff -- or bits of the plant that weren't edible. At night they would sleep by the grain so no one would steal it.

Naomi told Ruth to get dressed up and put on some sweet-smelling oil. Then she was to go at night to the threshing floor and lie down at the feet of Boaz. “He is a good man and will tell you what to do next,” Naomi said.

Ruth trusted Naomi and did just what she said. The custom might have seemed strange to her -- as it does to us -- but she did it. Late that night she went to the threshing floor. So quietly that she didn't wake Boaz up, she lay down at his feet.

Later that night he woke up -- and was surprised to find a woman there!

“Who are you?” he asked. “What do you want?”

“I am Ruth,” she said. “Spread your garment over me to show that you will do your duty as a kinsman redeemer.”

Would he be angry? Not interested?

No, he was pleased.

“May the Lord bless you,” he said. “You have shown great kindness to me. Many men would want to marry you -- younger men than I am and richer. You didn't chase after them, though. Everyone in the whole town knows you are a virtuous woman. Don't worry about a

thing. There is one problem, though. There is a kinsman nearer than I am. He has the first right to marry you and buy the property. I will talk to him about it right away. Lie down and rest now until morning.”

Ruth lay at his feet until early in the morning. He filled her veil up with grain as a present and she went back to Naomi.

When Naomi saw the present, she knew everything would be okay. “He’ll take care of everything right away,” Naomi said. “Don’t worry about it.”

Sure enough, that day Boaz went to the gate of the city where the men conducted their business.

“Naomi is selling some land that belonged to Elimelech,” he told the man who was the nearer kinsman. “Do you want to buy it?”

“Yes, I’ll buy it,” the man said.

I can imagine Boaz was a bit worried about that!

“When you buy it, you’ll also have to buy it from Ruth, the Moabitess, and marry her,” he said.

“Well, in that case, I don’t think so,” the man replied. “You can go ahead and buy it and marry her if you want to.”

Boaz did want to -- and to show they had an agreement, he took off his shoe and handed it to the other man. That seems like a strange custom to us, but they probably would have thought shaking hands was weird!

Now there was nothing to keep Ruth from marrying Boaz. They were married right away and God blessed them with a little boy. They named him Obed. He was a special little boy,

because he grew up to have a boy of his own named Jesse --and Jesse had a son named David who became the King of Israel.

Many kings were descended from David -- but the most important was the King of Kings -- Jesus Himself.

The Life Lesson

Ruth surrendered everything -- her friends, her family, her security, her hope of having a family -- to follow God. When we give up to God, He is never cruel or unkind to us. He always gives us the very best.

Ruth was a foreign girl, but she became loved, respected and admired. She was the wife of a wealthy man who loved her -- and the great-grandmother of a king. Best of all, she was an earthly ancestor of the Messiah, Jesus!

Review Questions

Why did Ruth go out to the fields?

To gather grain for her mother-in-law and for herself.

Was she a hard worker?

Yes, everyone noticed how hard she worked without taking a break.

Whose field did she work in?

The field of Boaz

How did Boaz treat her?

He was nice to her and allowed her to eat with his workers. He told them to leave extra grain behind for her.

What did Ruth ask Boaz to do?

To marry her.

Did Boaz want to marry her?

Yes

What was the name of their son?

Obed

Who was Obed's son?

Jesse

Who was Jesse's famous son?

King David

Who was the most famous of King David's descendants?

Jesus

