

Are You Ready?

Ruth 2:5-6, 8-13

Dr. Paul Cannings

A. God's Providential Hook-Up (Ruth 2:5-6):

1. Then Boaz said to his servant - Boaz initiated the conversations with no plans ever to stop inquiring about Ruth.

a) This expression may be translated in some languages as “the head man of his reapers,” “the chief of his reapers,” or “the man who commanded his reapers.” nab has “the overseer of his harvesters,” and Moffatt has “the foreman of the reapers in his service.” The man in charge may be translated as “the servant who worked for him” or “the servant who worked for Boaz,” and “his workers” may be “those who worked for him.” In other languages, however, a possessive case of reapers may be required.*

b) Was Boaz physically attracted to Ruth? Yes (vs. 5-6), but Boaz admired her character (vs. 11). He loved her loyalty (vs.11) and dedication (vs. 12).

2. Then Boaz said to his servant - Boaz found someone whose opinion he could trust (a person he placed in charge of the reapers; a person who would be in charge of making sure no one touches Ruth) and would be fully exposed to the issue when he repeatedly inquired about Ruth.

a) She was devoted to God [vs. 16; (Naomi 1:6,20-22; had a consciousness of God); 1 Cor. 7:32-35].

b) Loyal friendship (1:17).

c) Hardship is not God's curse (vs. 20-21; 2:20).

d) Her testimony preceded her (2:8-11).

e) She worked hard with her hands to her satisfaction (vs. 14,18).

f) God provided protection (2:9,15).

4. Who is this woman – Boaz recognized Ruth as being different from all the other women in the field. Saying woman also demonstrates a person who is responsible; a sense of maturity.

a) Ruth was qualified to glean (2:2) from the fields after the harvest because she was a widow and a stranger (Lev. 19:9–10; Deut. 24:19). “As it happened” (Ruth 2:3) she came upon the field of Boaz. God's sovereign hand is clearly seen in leading Ruth to the field of this kinsman. Such God-honoring greetings (2:4)

would have been very unusual during this period of the judges. The book of Ruth is an oasis of fidelity in a time of Israel's idolatry, sin, and infidelity.

b) Her appearance and dress were different from those of the girls he usually saw gleaning behind his reapers. 6. It is the Moabitish damsel. The reply was almost derogatory: "It is that foreigner who came back with Naomi from Moab!" 7. She came, and hath continued even from the morning until now. Ruth had asked permission to glean in the field of Boaz. When the overseer of the reapers gave her permission to do so, she worked diligently. She tarried a little in the house. These words probably refer to her time in the hut erected in the field for rest and refreshment. The Hebrew text implies that Ruth spent a little time there, although the LXX translates, She has not rested (even) a little. The Vulgate reads, She has not returned home (even) for a short time.

5. Moabite woman – The trusted servant did not just call her woman; he carefully distinguished Ruth from a Moabite. In other words, she is the lowest of the low, born from an incestuous relationship. The only thing that gave her value was that she was with Naomi, a widow (Ex 22:21; Ps 9:13). The Mosaic Law protected a widow.

a) Ruth the Moabite is indeed descended from Lot by his eldest daughter, but the narrator is careful to present her as the antithesis of the stereotypical Moabite. She is deliberately portrayed throughout as embodying the Israelite standards of *hesed*.

b) She was the lowest of the low, with no recourse but to scavenge in the fields behind the servants of the landowners. But the townspeople knew her true character because of her devotion to her mother-in-law and willingness to abandon all for her. But she did not gain this reputation by trying to be somebody, by associating with the important people. On the contrary, her self-effacing embodiment of Israel's lofty covenant standards, her *hesed*, her kindness, and her loyalty to her deceased husband's family, especially her mother-in-law, have won her the praise of all. Boaz could have treated her as Moabite trash, scavenging in the garbage cans of Israel, and then corrupting the people with her whorish behavior, but with true *hesed* of his own, he sees her as a woman equal in status and character to himself.

B. Real Attraction (Ruth 2:8-13):

1. Then Boaz said to Ruth, listen carefully - Boaz spoke directly to Ruth with no plans to stop communicating with her. This is after he clearly understood she was Moabite and a person who did not neglect a distressed widow.

a) Boaz provided her direction (vs. 8-9a), protection (vs. 9b), and provision (vs. 9c, 15-16).

b) She had a submissive heart (vs. 8-10). She had a heart that was not so damaged that it could not trust. It did not mean that she did not ask any questions (vs. 10).

2. Then Boaz said to Ruth, listen carefully - Boaz demanded her attention and was completely committed to gaining her full attention to what he was saying so that she clearly understood what he was saying.

a) The Israelites were commanded by their law to be merciful to the poor. The corners of fields were not to be reaped, and the sheaf accidentally left behind was not to be taken away, according to the law of Moses (Leviticus 19:9, 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:21). They were to be left for the poor to glean. Similar laws were given regarding vineyards and olive yards. Basing her words on this law, Ruth the Moabitess said to her mother-in-law Naomi: "Let me go to the fields and pick up (glean, KJV) the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor" (Ruth 2:2).

3. Do not go glean in another field – Upon hearing what Ruth did for Naomi, Boaz persistently emphasized to Ruth that she must not go towards another field. These fields were only separated by hedges. Being a Moabitess, looked upon as trash, he immediately offered her protection. She was a widow taking care of another widow.

a) Harvesting grain in ancient Canaan took place in April and May (barley first, wheat a few weeks later; 2:23).

b) The fields not being divided by hedges, but only by unplowed ridges, it would be easy for her to pass off Boaz's land without being aware of it, and so find herself among strangers where Boaz could not protect her. (from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft)

c) In these several ways Boaz was providing for Ruth beyond what was required by the Law (cf. v. 16).

4. Stay with the other maidens - Boaz persistently requested that Ruth sticks like glue (same as is spoken for a married couple) to his field. Her every effort must remain cognizant of her location as she gleans.

a) Follow along after the girls: It was customary for the men to cut the grain and for the servant girls to go behind them to bind the grain into sheaves. Then Ruth could glean what they had left behind.

b) Ruth was not a complainer but a diligent worker (vs.14).

5. I have commanded the servants to not touch you - Boaz made a concerted effort to communicate firm orders to all his staff that no one have any physical or sexual contact with Ruth. Not only did Boaz protect her by telling her not to stray into another field, he also made sure no one on his staff treat her like trash because she is a Moabitess. She

is to be treated like the other women, even when thirsty. She can drink from the same water jar, which is incredible for a Jew to allow a Moabitess to do.

a) Normally, the verb *nāga* means “to touch,” but in this case, it functions more generally for “to strike, harass, take advantage of, mistreat.” Contemporary readers will be struck by how modern this comment sounds. Boaz is hereby instituting the first anti-sexual harassment policy in the workplace recorded in the Bible. Fourth, Ruth may drink freely of the water provided for Boaz’s regular field workers.

6. She fell on her face – Ruth immediately continuously made every effort (get rid of whatever she had on her or around her so she could glean) to throw herself to the ground before Boaz. It’s as if she knew the dangers, with the sun as hot as it could be, needed to go to the water jars and, therefore, clearly understood the gravity of his generosity.

7. Bowing to the ground – Ruth’s appreciation began with a grave sense of respect. Here is a man who has full authority and can probably get away with a lot. She is a Moabitess but willfully demonstrated kindness towards her after learning about her. Recognizing his authority and kindness, Ruth made herself vulnerable towards Boaz while providing him with respect.

8. Bowing to the ground – For a relationship to go to the next level a woman should not become vulnerable, especially since, in most cases, she is physically weaker than a man unless he, on his initiative, demonstrates he would protect her, (not given anything or asking for anything in return), be kind towards her and make sure she is cared for just like any reasonable human being should do (Philippians 2:1-5; this is what God is requiring of him as a husband so a woman needs to see this before she becomes a wife; Ephesians 5:25-31).

9. Why have I found favor in your sight - Ruth did not just accept Boaz’s kindness and kept gleaning; she continuously kept asking him why he completely engaged in being purposeful, with all the other maidens in the field, about vividly having his entire staff serve graciously serve her. Gracious meaning, she did not earn anything, and he is continuously, with no hesitation, generously helping her take care of her needs. He said, ‘Since I am a foreigner’ to emphasize Boaz’s generosity.

a) The word “favor” (*ḥēn*, “grace, favor, acceptance”) is used often in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 6:8; 18:3; 30:27; Ps. 84:11; Prov. 3:4, 34 [“grace”]). Ruth had expected the opposite of the treatment she received. She was a recipient of grace and was grateful. Yet she was eager to find out why she had been singled out for such unusual treatment since she was a foreigner and a stranger.

10. Boaz replied - Boaz continuously remained engaged in communicating with Ruth. It did not say she was taken to the side or had a private conversation. Boaz seemed to persistently communicate what he wanted to do publicly.

11. All that you have done for your mother-in-law - Boaz explained to Ruth that it was not because of how she looked or how hard she worked. He extended favor because of how, from her own heart, on her own initiative, she would tirelessly labor, in the hot sun, for a person who she was not related to anymore and was helpless and destitute.

12. Has been fully reported; Tell – Boaz tells Ruth he knows everything. This exposes the initial question to his lead servant in chapter 2, verse 5, so impressed Boaz that he sought out all the information. He was moved to show Ruth kindness because he was impressed that she was a woman who sincerely loved God.

13. A people you did not previously know - Boaz was amazed that Ruth never lived in their town and never experienced living among Jews. She still committed to serving Naomi by working in the hot fields where men could possibly abuse her.

14. May the Lord reward your work – Because of what Boaz learned about Ruth and because of how diligently she worked in the fields, Boaz desires that God would obligate Himself to provide restitution to Ruth for all she sacrificially did.

a) Boaz had inquired about Ruth and learned of her faithfulness in her mother-in-law. Leaving the land of one's nativity was considered a real sacrifice.

12. A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel. Boaz recognized that he alone could not adequately repay Ruth for her faithfulness. He prayed that the Lord might abundantly reward Ruth.

15. Your wages will be full from the Lord – Boaz desires that God's restitution is continuous ('be') and comprehensive.

16. Under whose wings you have come to seek refuge – Boaz sees Ruth surrendering her life to the Lord God. Not just to walk in His ways as she cares for Naomi but to also experience His spiritual protection which is evidenced by her working with the other maidens, based on the Mosaic laws, in his field.

17. Ruth said I have found favor in your sight – Because of how Boaz responded, Ruth is convinced she is in a place where God will bless her by extending His free-hearted generosity because of the kindness Boaz has displayed to her. She is expecting the Lord God to do what Boaz requested.

a) Ruth had been deeply stirred by Boaz's remarks. She felt herself unworthy of his acts of kindness. However, I will not be like unto one of thine handmaidens. She regarded herself as inferior to the girls who worked for Boaz—perhaps

because of her poverty, her Gentile nationality, and her heathen background. His kindness to the others was understandable. His kindness to her was pure grace.

18. You have comforted me; Changed his mind – Because of these blessings, Ruth has a change of heart about what to expect, especially being a widowed Moabitess.

19. You have comforted me; Changed his mind – When God reigns, people find compassion, grace, and moral support, no matter how relationships may have begun or the circumstances of those involved. This refreshes relationships and makes them whole once again.

20. Have spoken kindly – Boaz has dynamically communicated his innermost and deepest feelings with Ruth exposing why he plans to do all that he told Ruth he would do.

a) The present case illustrates the principle enunciated in Prov 19:17: “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done.” Ruth has become indebted to her mother-in-law and Yahweh through her acts of kindness to Naomi. Thus, Boaz prays that Yahweh will repay her for her work.

21. Have spoken kindly – Because Boaz grew in his respect of Ruth and Ruth grew in her understanding of why Boaz decisively chose to protect, provide, and honor her, Ruth and Boaz connected emotionally.

22. Have spoken kindly – Boaz’s willingness to take the time to understand who Ruth was and then faithfully commit to treating her with respect created a spiritual and emotional connection. This causes them to be ready for a great future together.