

Lesson 3 – Ruth Chapter 3 Naomi's Efforts for Ruth, and Ruth's Cooperation

In Chapter 2 we read about Ruth's work ethic. She worked diligently, day and night in the fields. The LORD, seems to have guided Ruth to the fields of Boaz, who was a member of her father-in-law's clan. Boaz had heard of Ruth's loyalty to Naomi and extended many kindnesses to Ruth. He offered her protection from those who might harm her. He invited her to follow along as the women of his family harvested the grain. Boaz invited her to dine with these same women. Ruth had enough food to satisfy her hunger and still had more to take home to Naomi. Boaz was described as a redeemer or close relative by Naomi.

1. Read Ruth 3:1-6 and footnotes. Share any helpful footnotes.

- a. Ruth and Naomi are widows and would have been wearing the garments appropriate for a widow. What does Naomi hope to accomplish by giving Ruth the instructions in 3:3?

- b. Read Judith 8:4-5, 10:1, 3-4 here. Compare the actions of Ruth and Judith.

Judith 8:4-5 Judith was living as a widow in her home for three years and four months. ⁵ She set up a tent for herself on the roof of her house, *put sackcloth about her waist, and wore widow's clothing.* ¹ As soon as Judith had ceased her prayer ... ³ She took off the sackcloth she had on, laid aside the garments of her widowhood, washed her body with water, and anointed herself with rich ointment. She arranged her hair, put on a diadem, and dressed in the festive attire she had worn while her husband, Manasseh, was living. ⁴ She chose sandals for her feet, and put on her anklets, bracelets, rings, earrings, and all her other jewelry. Thus, she made herself very beautiful, to entice the eyes of all the men who should see her.

Do you recall *why* Judith changed out of her widow's garments?

2. There are multiple commands in the Old Testament requiring care for widows and orphans. In Genesis 38 we find the story of Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. Judah's son was given in marriage to a woman named Tamar. Tamar was childless when her husband died, and she was then given in marriage to his brother. When her second husband died, Judah was afraid to have her wed another of his sons. After the death of *Judah's wife*, Tamar reaches out to Judah in disguised as a prostitute, engages him in sex with him, and she became pregnant. (Read Genesis 38 for the full story.)

2a. How does the story of *Tamar and Judah* help to inform us about culture and the role of women in Ancient Israel and the necessity for women to have a husband or son to provide and protect them properly?

3. Read Ruth 3:7-15 and footnotes. Share any footnotes with your group.

a. Why do you suppose Boaz was sleeping near a pile of grain?

b. Compare *translations and footnotes* for Ruth 3:9. Share what you find with your group.

3c. What is Ruth *really* asking Boaz by her actions in 3:9?

3d. What does Boaz say about Ruth's character in 3:10-11?

3e. What does Boaz suggest in 3:12-13?

3f. How does Boaz protect Ruth's reputation in 3:14?

4. Read Ruth 3:16-18.

a. Ruth returns home to Naomi and tells her all that happened. What does Naomi say they should do next?

5. How and where has *Chesed* or *God's merciful fidelity* been evident in this story so far? (*Theme 1 from lesson 1*)

6. How does this book so far portray Gentiles as sympathetic people? (*Theme 2 from lesson 1*)