

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 3**

**RUTH**

**CHAPTER 3**

**INTRODUCTION**

Ruth chapter three is the climactic chapter of the book for it explains all that had happened in the previous two chapters — the uncompromising commitment of Ruth, Naomi's return to Bethlehem, Ruth "accidental" gleaning in Boaz's field. There were no coincidences in the lives of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz and the circumstances in which they found themselves. We are all familiar with Romans 8:28: *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* The people, the places and the phenomena that happened in Ruth evidenced the providential working of the LORD God for the good of His people who love Him and who are called according to His purpose or His will.<sup>1</sup> When God's people love Him

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<sup>1</sup> Many people who quote this verse to comfort themselves miss out the latter part which is as important as the first part for it establishes the basis of God's working for

and co-operate with His plans, He intervenes and draws them to Himself.

The events in Ruth 3 need background information and careful explanation. The customs and cultural practices at the time were quite different from those practised today, in particular, with regards to the proposal of marriage. We will examine Naomi's plan which put Ruth at great risk and made her seem so forward. However, they trusted the LORD God knowing that what they did was in accordance with His will and purpose.

**OUTLINE**

The following is an outline of the chapter:

- (1) Naomi initiates marriage (3:1-5),
- (2) Ruth claims right of kinsman redeemer (3:6-10),
- (3) Boaz acknowledges duty of kinsman redeemer (3:11-15),
- (4) Naomi evaluates encounter (3:16-18).

**COMMENTARY**

**Naomi initiates marriage  
-- 3:1-5**

It was the end of harvest and the next job would be to winnow the

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good. It is therefore important to quote the verse fully and apply it appropriately to the circumstances in order to avoid self-deception.

barley. Naomi felt it was time to end Ruth's period of mourning. She called Ruth and told her that she would find "rest" for her (v.1). The word "rest" refers to "a home". Naomi remembered what she had said to Orpah and Ruth in Moab when she had tried to encourage them to return to their own natural families. She had asked that the LORD might deal kindly with them and that they might find "rest" having the security and love of a home and a husband (1:9). Naomi felt that it was the right time to seek this "rest" for Ruth so that she might have a home with a husband to protect, love and care for her.

Naomi explained her plan to Ruth. The suitor she had in mind was Boaz who was a clan relative. The Levitical law stipulated in God's Word (v.9b) allows for kinsman redemption.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 25:5-10 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. {her husband's...: or, her next kinsman} 6 And it shall be, *that* the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother *which is* dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. 7 And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. {brother's: or, next kinsman's} 8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and *if* he stand

She thought that the end of harvest was the best time to implement the plan as Boaz would be winnowing on the threshing floor of his barn. She instructed Ruth to wash, perfume herself, and put on her best clothes. This act would symbolize the end of her period of mourning for her late husband, Mahlon.<sup>3</sup> Naomi told Ruth to go to the threshing floor privately and not let her presence be known to Boaz until he had finished eating and drinking, and retired for the night. Then Ruth was supposed to go and *uncover his feet* and lie down at his feet. To *uncover his feet* was customarily a symbolic act requesting for marriage. It placed Ruth in the position of a bride-in-waiting.<sup>4</sup> Naomi

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*to it*, and say, I like not to take her; 9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. 10 And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Samuel 12:20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed *himself*, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. David performed this in the context of his child by Bathsheba.

<sup>4</sup> Some have suggested that it was a euphemism for sexual intercourse. This is far from the truth considering the integrity of Boaz and Ruth, who would not have agreed to the plan.

added that Boaz would tell her what to do (v.4).

Ruth had to make a critical decision. It is one thing to say that she would be buried wherever Naomi was buried, it is another to commit her future into Naomi's hands. Certainly there was a chance that Naomi's plan might succeed because it was legal (biblical) and right according to God's law, and Boaz had been showing exceptional kindness to her. Ruth chose to accede to Naomi's guidance for her future. Why?

Could it be that Ruth believed Naomi would do what was morally right since she knew the custom and culture of her people? Could it be that Ruth trusted Naomi wholeheartedly? Could it be that she believed in Naomi's love for her, that Naomi would not put her through undue risk even though this biblical custom must seem strange compared to her Moabitish custom? Could it be that she trusted in Naomi's good intention, that her plan was borne out of love and a genuine concern for her future welfare? All the above are certainly legitimate possibilities. However, based on what Ruth had said in chapter one, we know that it was her faith in the LORD God of Naomi and Israel that caused her to submit completely. Her future was in God's

hands, not Naomi's or Boaz's. This episode was a testing of her faith.

When the LORD is in all the equations of our life, there will be no mistakes or accidents. The will of God was paramount in Ruth's life. Not only did she embrace the God of Naomi but she demonstrated her faith through her works. Such a life will surely bring glory to the LORD.

### **Ruth claims right of kinsman redeemer -- 3:6-10**

After hearing Naomi's plan to approach Boaz with a request for kinsman redemption that would secure a home and family for her, Ruth said that she would carry out everything as instructed by Naomi. She went to the threshing floor. She made sure that she was not noticed by Boaz while she was there. She might have stationed herself in a place where she could observe Boaz and yet remain unseen.

When Boaz had finished his dinner and drink (not drunk), he turned in for the night *at the end of the heap of corn* (v.7). Note the inclusion of this last minor detail which indicated that there was some privacy for what was about to take place. Boaz soon fell asleep and Ruth came quietly to uncover his feet and lie at his feet. In the middle of the night, Boaz *was afraid* and turned himself, and *behold a woman lay at his feet*. His initial

reaction was one of shock. He asked: “Who are you?” And Ruth answered: *I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt* (“kanaph”—literally “the wings of a bird”; figuratively “a lateral extension” like a part of a bed covering) *over thine handmaid: for thou art a near kinsman* (v.9).

Ruth described herself as Boaz’s *handmaid* (“á-mah”— a bond female slave”). It was a different word from the one she had earlier used in her first encounter with Boaz (2:13— “*shiph-chah*”—which means “a family of female slaves”). In 2:13, the word refers to a female slave who is viewed as a class of slaves no better than a labourer who stands ready to take orders. But the word used in 3:9 refers to a female slave in a personal capacity. Ruth was telling Boaz that she was “his” female slave. It therefore aptly connects with her next statement requesting Boaz to *spread therefore thy skirt*. This Hebrew word *kanaph* is the same word which Boaz had earlier used to describe Ruth’s relationship with the LORD God *under whose wings (kanaph)* she had come to trust (2:12). Ruth’s choice of the word, *wing (kanaph)* was purposeful. Boaz had earlier used that word and so she was telling him that she would like to be protected under his wings. In other words, she was asking Boaz to exercise his right of kinsman

redeemer which was the only way he could protect her that was pleasing to the LORD.

She immediately stated the important theological basis of her request, namely that Boaz was a near kinsman (v.9). Ruth made her desire for marriage perfectly clear. Her action was a symbolic act requesting for marriage! There was nothing sullied about this incident. It was cultural and biblical.

#### **Boaz acknowledges duty of kinsman redeemer -- 3:11-15**

Boaz understood Ruth’s request perfectly. He responded immediately by blessing her: *Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter* (v.10). Boaz had called her “my daughter” (2:8) and twice here (vv.10, 11). It seemed that Boaz considered himself much older than Ruth. Boaz continued by praising her greater kindness (Hebrew, *che-sed*) *in the latter end than at the beginning* (v.10). The Hebrew word *che-sed* has been used twice in the previous two chapters to designate the covenant love and faithfulness of the LORD (1:8; 2:20). In this regard Boaz had noted Ruth’s first act of *chesed*—compassionate love, kindness, and loyalty to Naomi. And, in his words, her latest *chesed* to offer herself to him as his wife was even greater. Boaz said that she could marry one of

the young men, whether rich or poor, either for money or love, instead of him. He praised her because her request for marriage to him was not for his money or love but solely on the basis that he was a kinsman-redeemer (Hebrew, *go'el*).<sup>5</sup> Boaz saw Ruth as showing unconditional *chesed* to him. But there was an obstacle. Boaz acknowledged that while he was her kinsman-redeemer, he knew of another relative who was closer than he. In other words he did not have the first choice as a kinsman-redeemer.

This could have caused Ruth to be anxious but Boaz quickly calmed her, saying: *Fear not, I will do to thee all that thou request*, and added that the whole city knew that she was a morally upright and strong woman (v.11).

Biblical guidelines have to prevail. This was not a personal matter but a godly exercise where all things must be done in accordance with God's Word. Boaz promised to proceed with the matter the next day.

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<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew word *go'el* refers to a kinsman-redeemer based on Leviticus 25:25-49. The law instructs the redemption of family property, houses, and relatives in difficulty or need. The underlying sense is that of "buy back." This arrangement is described as "levirate marriage" (from Latin term *levir*, "brother-in-law." New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis, s.v. *ga'al*).

If the unnamed kinsman-redeemer refused to do his part, Boaz pledged that he would do the part of the kinsman-redeemer, *as the LORD liveth*, thus binding himself by an oath to take Ruth to be his wife (v.13).

In the meantime, he told Ruth to lie down until the morning. Early the next morning while it was still dark, Ruth got up to go home. Boaz cautioned her not to let anyone know that a woman had gone to the threshing floor that night (v.14). He asked her for her shawl and bagged six measures of barley for her to take back home. This was a purposeful act on two counts. It was an indication to Naomi of his intentions. Naomi had openly testified that the LORD had brought her back "empty." But the LORD would now fill her emptiness through Boaz. The other purpose served as an explanation to curious neighbours as to why Ruth was out at such an early hour. Boaz was truly a considerate and caring man.

### **Naomi evaluates encounter -- 3:16-18**

Ruth arrived home to Naomi. As she stepped into the house, Naomi asked: *Who art thou, my daughter?* There was nothing wrong with Naomi's eyesight. It was not that she could not recognise Ruth. Her question was most appropriate. If Boaz had agreed to fulfil the duty of a

kinsman redeemer, then Ruth would become his wife. If not, then she would remain as the wife of Naomi's deceased son. Ruth came in and told her mother-in-law *all* that Boaz had done for her.

Ruth showed Naomi her shawl and said that Boaz had given those six measures of barley so that she would not go back empty to her mother-in-law. Naomi responded by telling Ruth to sit tight and wait patiently for the outcome of the matter at hand. She added that Boaz would not "rest" ( a different word from v.1) which means "be at peace" until he had finished settling the matter of the kinsman-redeemer. Naomi understood that Boaz's gift of barley represented his acceptance of Ruth's request.

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

Many things can be learned from this passage including the customs and culture of the Jewish people in those days pertaining to marriage. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz are admirable people whom we can emulate. The chapter demonstrates the balance of the interplay between the providence of God and the responsibility of man.

Naomi considered Boaz as a suitable husband for Ruth as he was a near kinsman. This was despite their

age differences. The Levitical law of marriage according to God's Word provided the basis to claim the right. Naomi was not passive. She acted on the basis of God's law and explained her plan to Ruth. Ruth readily agreed which was a clear demonstration of the fruit of her salvation. She went to meet Boaz with the request that he exercised his duty as a kinsman redeemer. Although the Levitical law was clear, Boaz was under no obligation to fulfil it. Yet he accepted Ruth's proposal willingly and without reservation. They were people who loved the LORD. They wanted to do what was right according to His Word. Their integrity was flawless. God was in control. Indeed, all things work for good to them who love God and do His will. Learn this wonderful truth!

We have seen Naomi's, Ruth's and Boaz's inherent love and consideration for others — Ruth for Naomi, Boaz for Ruth, and Naomi for Ruth. However it was their common love for the LORD that strengthened and gel their love together. The moral integrity of Boaz and Ruth were spotless especially in a period where every man did what was right in his own eyes. Such moral integrity and accountability are rare among both the young and the elderly of today. These virtues are within the reach of all Christians. They are the fruits of the

Spirit that must be seen in a truly born again believer. AMEN

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Ruth 3:1-7; Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

**TUESDAY:** Ruth 3:8-18; Leviticus 25:47-49.

**WEDNESDAY:** Ruth 3:1-18.

**THURSDAY:** Ruth 3:1-18.

**FRIDAY:** Ruth 3:1-18.

**Analysis:**

Text	Practical Value
Ruth 3:1-5	
Ruth 3:6-10	
Ruth 3:11-15	

Ruth 3:16-18	
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**Discussion Questions**

1. What did Naomi sought for Ruth (v.1)? Was Naomi driven by self-interest?

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2. What did Naomi advise Ruth to do (vv.2-4)?

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3. Why did Naomi ask Ruth to wash and put perfume on herself, and wear special clothes (v.3a)?

4. What was Ruth's response to the plan (v.5)? Was it a blind, mindless and unquestioning obedience?

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5. Why did Ruth have to implement the plan in private? Did she commit a sin by sleeping at the threshing floor where Boaz slept?

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6. How did Boaz react when he woke up? What was Ruth's response (vv. 8, 9)?

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7. Why did Boaz caution against letting anyone know that Ruth had visited him at the threshing floor (v.14)?

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8. What can you discern about Boaz from what he said to Ruth (vv. 8-15)?

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9. Why was Naomi certain that Boaz would settle the matter quickly (v. 18)?

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10. What impresses you most about Ruth and Naomi in this chapter?

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11. The word "levir" means "brother-in-law" in Latin. Write, in your own words, the stipulation regarding Levitical marriages as stated in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

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12. What impresses you most about Boaz in this chapter?

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13. What are the important individual decisions and choices that were made in this chapter? What do you think is the reason why each of these individuals make his/her decision?

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