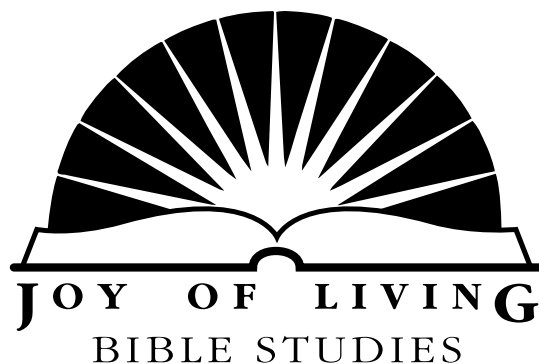


Judges, Ruth & 1 Samuel Lesson 7



If you are doing the Single Book Study on 1 Samuel, turn to page 5 of this lesson to begin with the Study Questions.

Ruth 3 and 4—Ruth and Love’s Rich Dividends

Introduction

Have you ever had to leave friends and loved ones and move to another state or to another city? If you have, can you recall your feelings of apprehension and loneliness at facing a new job, finding Christian friends, or enrolling in a new school? I was ten years old when my family moved and I had to change schools. How I dreaded it! I was a very shy child and it wasn’t easy for me to make friends. My mother reminded me frequently that the Lord would be with me. We talked often about making new friends and how the Lord would prepare the way. How well I remember the evening prior to my first day at the new school. While Mom and I prepared dinner we again talked about the next day and then together we sang that old gospel hymn that says in effect, “if Jesus goes with me, I can go *anywhere!*”

Some of these same feelings must have been in the heart of the unknown poet who wrote these lines:

God is your Father, Redeemer and Friend,
He is the faithful One, true to the end;
Guiding, protecting, and keeping His own,
He cannot fail you—so trust Him alone.

Anon.

This verse is an excellent description of the Lord’s hand upon the lives of Ruth and Naomi. Whether or not they were always aware of Him, He did guide and protect them as His own. Perhaps Ruth had feelings of apprehension and loneliness as she left her home in Moab and became exposed more fully to the teachings of the God of Israel and to some of the unfamiliar customs and traditions of Naomi’s people, which we will discover in our study of Ruth 3 and 4.

Ruth 3:1—Naomi’s Plans for Ruth

The two months of barley harvest were quickly coming to an end and Naomi was deeply concerned for her daughter-in-law and for their welfare. Where would they find food after the harvest? Jobs were not readily available. In that day the role of the woman was far different from what it is today, and both Ruth and Naomi were far from being the “liberated women” of our century.

In that day a woman was first and foremost a wife and mother. While a wife called her husband “lord” or “master” (see Genesis 18:12; Judges 19:26) she was still on a far higher level than a slave. A man could sell his slave—but

never his wife! She earned her husband’s respect by doing the hard work at home: tending the flocks, working in the fields, spinning, cooking, etc. (See Proverbs 31:10-31.) Giving birth to children, especially sons of course, increased her respect in the eyes of her husband, and children were expected to show as much respect to their mother as to their father (Exodus 20:12; 21:17; Leviticus 20:9, Deuteronomy 21:18-21). Because of the woman’s role as a wife and mother, a widow had a very difficult time on her own.

Why has the role of women changed so greatly in our day? Is it due to our twentieth-century women’s liberation movement? No! A thousand times no! As women we have been truly liberated because the *Lord Jesus Christ* has set us free! He accomplished this liberation through His victorious death on the cross and His resurrection. By faith in Him we may become children of God. The Bible says, “You are all sons [children] of God through faith in Christ Jesus” and it says we have been clothed with Christ. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, *male nor female*, for you are *all one* in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26-28, italics added). Because we are on this side of the cross, God sees no sexual distinction among His children. It was Christ who raised the role of the woman to a place never known in the ancient world. While the Bible pattern is for the man to be the head of the home—the leader—and the woman to be submissive to him (see Ephesians 5:21-33), at the same time the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. And Galatians 3:26-29 tells us that women are spiritually equal with men in God’s sight. Women and men are on an equal level when it comes to receiving spiritual blessings. Why not take a moment right now to earnestly thank the Lord Jesus for what He has done for women. Moslem women still do not have this equal status under their religion—nor do women in many other religions.

As we come to Ruth chapter 3 it is interesting to compare verse 1 as given in three of the prominent Bible versions: *King James* says, “Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?” The *New American Standard Bible* says, “Shall I not seek security for you?” while the *New International Version* says, “Should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for?” All are correct translations, but it seems the *NIV* is especially good in view of what a concerned mother would say in loving concern for her daughter-in-law.

Since Naomi herself was also a widow, you might question why she was not concerned with finding a husband

for herself. Naomi, however, already answered that question when she said, “I am too old to have another husband” (Ruth 1:12). Naomi is ready to take second place and, in love, help Ruth find a future and a home. All of us might make 1 Thessalonians 3:12 our prayer: “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else.” If this love were typical in our present-day homes and family relationships, what a different world we would have. It is not easy to deny ourselves and to let our love grow. We can only do it through the power of the Holy Spirit living within us.

When Frederick Arnot, missionary explorer, was traveling with a group of his African converts, one of the young men was suddenly attacked by a lion. Immediately Arnot went into action. He pushed the young man to the ground and threw himself over the youth. No doubt Arnot uttered a prayer to his heavenly Father even as he tried physically to protect the African. For some unknown reason (except God’s intervention) the lion backed off and did not attempt to attack Arnot. Needless to say, Arnot became a hero among the African tribe. “I’d go anywhere with a white man who would put his own body between a lion and his black friend,” said the chief when he heard the report of the brave rescue.

All during harvest while Ruth was busy gleaning in Boaz’s fields, perhaps Naomi had been making plans of her own concerning Ruth’s future. Long before she shared the plans with Ruth, Naomi may have discussed these plans with the Lord, for the ideas listed in Ruth chapter 3 indicate very careful, thorough planning. What better home or “rest” for Ruth than Boaz, who had already shown a great deal of interest in her with special favors as she worked in his fields. Naomi shares, step by step, what was to be done, for she was well acquainted with the Israelite method of harvest and their wedding customs.

To “winnow” the barley (Ruth 3:2) the sheaves were scattered over a threshing floor—a hard, dry, flat piece of ground. To loosen the kernels and break the stalks into chaff, oxen were driven over the stalks or the stalks were beaten by hand or animals were hitched to a wooden sled and the sled was pulled over the stalks. Finally, the winnowers tossed the mixture into the air against the wind so that the lighter chaff was blown away and the heavier grain fell to the ground.

Naomi knew that Boaz would be out on the threshing floor at night. You will recall from our study in the book of Judges that it was often during harvest-time when the Midianites and Amalekites would invade the land, robbing the people of the threshed grain. So, to protect their harvest, the Israelites slept on the threshing floor during the winnowing. While the work was hard, winnowing was also a festive time, a time of celebration and thanksgiving for the Lord’s provision. The timing was perfect for Naomi’s plans; if the grain was plentiful, Boaz would be in a receptive mood.

Note Naomi’s careful instructions to Ruth in Ruth 3:3-4. The two widows might have been poor, but Ruth was to put on her “best clothes” for the occasion. Some biblical scholars

believe that “best clothes” may refer to a large mantle which Ruth was to wear to hide her identity until the right moment. At any rate, Ruth was not to approach Boaz until he had eaten and retired. Naomi had thought of everything, for many women know the futility of approaching a hungry man for a decision!

Ruth 3:5-10—Ruth’s Obedience to Naomi

To our twentieth-century minds it is difficult to understand what Naomi was asking Ruth to do. She is not suggesting anything improper or immoral. Ruth was to wait until Boaz had retired, then she was to slip over to him and lie at his feet—a position of humility. When Boaz discovered her, Ruth was to follow his instructions.

Have you ever been asked to do something unfamiliar to you and you weren’t quite sure how it would be received? Perhaps Ruth also had questions, for remember, she is now living among people whose customs may appear strange to her. Questions or not, Ruth agrees to obey. She was being true to her commitment she’d made back in Moab.

Following Naomi’s instructions, Ruth took a position where she could watch Boaz as he finished his meal and settled down for the night. After a hard day’s work he was soon sound asleep. That was Ruth’s signal and she went quietly to lie down at his feet.

During the night something startled Boaz and he discovered a woman lying at his feet! Imagine his surprise. No doubt he went to sleep with thoughts of robbers and enemies, and protecting his grain. Now abruptly awakened he demanded, “Who are you?” (Ruth 3:9).

Ruth immediately told him her name, but she takes nothing for granted. She maintained her spirit of humility as she called herself “your servant.” Then in the same breath she said, “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.” In order to understand what Ruth meant, we need to know that it was an ancient custom for a bridegroom to cover his bride with his *talith*, a fringed garment, as a symbol of his protection and authority (see Ezekiel 16:8). The word *kinsman-redeemer* is an interesting term that refers back to a law of redemption of a childless widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Under this law, the kinsman was to marry the widow and raise a son to keep alive the name of the dead husband. A man’s name was very important, so a kinsman-redeemer was a legal arrangement. The kinsman was usually a brother, or the very next of kin, and he really had little choice in the matter—except to refuse and take the consequences as described in Deuteronomy.

In light of this custom, Boaz saw nothing strange or unbecoming in Ruth’s actions. Instead, he praises her conduct. Ruth had proven herself as a godly woman by taking care of Naomi and by her modest conduct as she worked in the fields. And her actions that night were in accordance with the Levitical marriage laws. He commends Ruth for choosing to keep her family relationship through the nearest relative and for her loyalty to Naomi, rather than running after “younger men, whether rich or poor” (Ruth 3:10).

Ruth 3:11-18—A Promise of Marriage

A careful reading of the rest of the chapter gives us an insight into the personality of Boaz. He must have been a sensitive, kind, observant person. While considerably older than Ruth, he obviously had noticed her modest behavior during the weeks she had been working in his fields. Apparently God had already planted a deep love for Ruth in Boaz's heart. His words, "Don't be afraid" imply his understanding of Ruth's coming to him. No doubt he heard fear in her voice as she obediently followed Naomi's instruction for this Israelite custom. It took courage to do what she was told to do, even though it was unfamiliar to her.

Without hesitation Boaz agrees to give Ruth complete protection. He further gives her a compliment for her beautiful godly witness when he says, "All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character" (Ruth 3:11). As a foreigner and a widow she could easily have been molested while working in the fields, but her actions portrayed to all that she belonged to the living God.

What about our actions, words, and attitudes? Whether you are a new Christian or have been a Christian for many years, what is your community saying about you? Is it evident that you belong to the living God? The Apostle Paul says, "You show that you are a letter from Christ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God" (2 Corinthians 3:3). It is the Spirit of God shining through our lives that causes our friends and neighbors to know we belong to Him.

Apparently Boaz had been thinking of Ruth as more than just one of the servant girls working in his fields, for he immediately points out a problem. There was a man who was a closer relative than Boaz. Had Ruth's action been a complete surprise, would Boaz have been so quick to think of the closer relative? Some biblical scholars believe Boaz was a nephew of Elimelech. Jewish law carefully stipulated that the kinsman-redeemer was to be a blood relative. If for some reason—such as sickness, a mental problem, or insufficient funds—the nearest blood relative could not assume this responsibility, then the next man in line could become the kinsman-redeemer.

It was no easy thing to take on the role of kinsman-redeemer. The man filling that role may already have a family of his own; but if his brother died, the kinsman-redeemer had to continue caring for his own family as well as take over all of his brother's possessions: land, houses, business, as well as any mortgages and debts. As we've already mentioned, a kinsman was also required to father a son so that his brother's name would be kept alive. A portion of the inheritance would go to this son and *not* to the kinsman-redeemer.

Eager as Boaz was to redeem Ruth and provide protection for her, he had to work within the law of that day (Ruth 3:12). So he insisted that the closer relative be given first choice. The unspoken message of Boaz's love for Ruth is nevertheless clear as he assures her that if the nearest relative chooses not to redeem her, "I vow that, as surely as the Lord lives, I will do it" (Ruth 3:13). Notice, too, the time

factor. Boaz was not willing to expose Ruth to a time of waiting. He wanted to settle the matter as quickly as possible—in fact he would take care of it the very next morning.

Still the perfect gentleman, Boaz wanted to protect Ruth's good name and reputation, thus he suggested she leave for home before dawn under cover of darkness so she would not be recognized. Although there was nothing immoral about her visit, Boaz was concerned lest people misunderstand. Before sending her home, Boaz gave Ruth "six measures of barley"—another indication of his feelings for her.

One of the remarkable facts about Ruth was her openness with Naomi. Showing her gift of barley, Ruth "told her everything Boaz had done for her" (Ruth 3:16). Naomi apparently knew Boaz quite well and she told Ruth to wait, "For the man will not rest until the matter is settled *today*" (Ruth 3:18).

"Wait" is perhaps one of the most difficult things to do when the heart and emotions are involved. Yet how important for us to wait for the Lord to guide in matters of marriage and love. How many broken homes and hearts could be avoided if more young people (older ones too!) would wait for the Lord's leadership before rushing into marriage.

Ruth 4:1-8—Boaz and His Opponent

True to his word, Boaz immediately set the wheels in motion for settling the problem of redemption. Ruth 4:1 says he went to the city gate. In that day the city gate was like our city hall. It was the place where government and business transactions were conducted. One of the most important functions of the gate was its judicial activity: there laws were made and people were sentenced before the elders—even execution sentences were issued there (Deuteronomy 22:15,24).

Boaz took "ten of the elders of the town" (Ruth 4:2). These men would serve as jury and were required for the marriage benediction. In the presence of these ten men and the general public the proceedings started when the nearest relative (whose name is never given) arrived. No doubt there was tension—if a kinsman refused to take on his responsibility, the rejected widow could, according to law, take off one of the kinsman's sandals in public, spit in his face and say, "This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line!" (Deuteronomy 25:9).

While he was willing to abide by law and give the nearest kinsman his rightful first choice, Boaz himself was very eager to assume the responsibility for the lovely Ruth. By announcing that the land belonging to Elimelech was for sale, Boaz gave his opponent a chance to buy it. The phrase "our brother Elimelech" in Ruth 4:3 should be translated, "friend." Boaz is quick to add that if the relative is not interested in buying, "Tell me, so I will know... For... I am next in line" (Ruth 4:4). The unnamed kinsman apparently assumed that the land belonged only to Naomi and that his responsibility would end with the purchase of it, so he agreed to buy.

Perhaps at that very moment Boaz saw his dreams of a wonderful future with Ruth crumble before him! Read Ruth 4:5 and notice how quickly Boaz spells out further stipulations concerning the obligation of redemption. It meant more responsibility for the kinsman—not only was Naomi involved, but he would “acquire” Ruth, a Moabitess, a stranger from a despised people. Since Ruth had no son, the possibility of fathering a son who would not be pure Jewish but would have Moabite blood in his veins, was unthinkable! Further, the kinsman would face a financial loss, for he would have to spend money for land that would belong not to him but eventually would belong to Ruth’s son.

As his responsibilities are spelled out, the kinsman’s enthusiasm suddenly evaporated. The price was too great. As quickly as he decided to buy the land, the kinsman did a complete about face. He didn’t want to “endanger” his own estate. He almost begged Boaz to assume the role of kinsman-redeemer. Taking off his sandal was an old symbolic custom of transfer. The man who took off his sandal renounced any legal rights he had in a matter. The ball was finally in Boaz’s court. At last he was free to legally take on the role of kinsman redeemer not only for Naomi but also for his beloved Ruth.

Ruth 4:9-21—The Wedding

There is no doubt that there were three very happy people in Bethlehem that day—Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi. Ruth 4:9-10 gives Boaz’s public declaration that he has taken over the property and has assumed sole responsibility for both Ruth and Naomi. For the first time we discover which of Naomi’s sons Ruth had married (Ruth 4:10). Continuing to follow the law, Boaz announces the purpose and result of the transaction, “. . .in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear.” Well wishes from friends and witnesses rang out for the happy couple. “Rachel and Leah” were the wives of Jacob, and the witnesses expressed the prayer that Boaz would be rewarded with a family as large as that of Jacob—who had twelve sons (Genesis 35:22-26).

Ruth’s choice to follow the living God rewarded her with many rich blessings. Her name was changed, her position

was changed—now she belonged to her kinsman-redeemer who could provide for her needs. God blessed this marriage and gave them a son. Through this son, Ruth finally became the great grandmother of David.

God’s Message of Love to YOU

The entire book of Ruth is a beautiful picture of what God has done for you—for us! First of all we see the greatness and sovereignty of God (see lesson 4 to review “sovereignty”). As God led Naomi, Ruth and Boaz and brought their lives together, He established a family through whom He would send the Savior into our sinful world. (Note carefully the lineage of Jesus in Matthew 1.) Ruth’s great desire was to follow God and to please Him (Ruth 1:16-17). As Ruth’s life unfolds in the book, see how it depicts the born-again believer who through faith in Christ has found new life! Who can deny God’s leading all the way in both Ruth’s and Naomi’s lives?

Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, is a picture of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Boaz loved Ruth, a foreigner, just as she was, and he was willing to reach down to her in her poverty. He saw her problem and her need and was eager to become her kinsman-redeemer. Lifting her out of her poverty Boaz made her his own to love and care for.

Do you realize what God has done for you? Because of His great love (John 3:16) He sent His Son Jesus to earth as a baby (Luke 2). He became man and took upon Himself our sins (1 Peter 2:24) and paid the full price so that He might bring us to God (Colossians 1:20). Through His death our position has been changed, for we are sons of God (John 1:12) and new persons in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Read again Ruth’s commitment in Ruth 1:16-17. Is the living God your God? Have you chosen to follow Him? Are “your people” born-again believers? What is the Lord Jesus to you? All of this new life is available to you, but you must choose. You must admit that you have a need for a Redeemer who can break the power of sin over you, who can bring you to God and make you His own. What is your choice?

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Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- a. Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- b. Use only your Bible and lesson notes for your answers.
- c. Write your answers and the verses you used.
- d. Challenge questions are for those who have the time and wish to do them.
- e. Personal questions are to be shared with the class only if you wish to share.

First Day: Read all the notes and look up all the Scriptures.

1. What new thought did you discover in these notes that will be most helpful in your daily life?

2. What personal application did you choose to apply to your own life this week?
3. The suggested memory verse is either 1 Samuel 2:2 or Mark 11:24, or you may choose another verse which was meaningful to you.

Second Day: Read 1 Samuel 1:1-8.

1. What was the main reason for the friction that existed between the two women, Hannah and Peninnah?
2. When did Peninnah tease or provoke Hannah most? What were the results of Peninnah's "teasing"?
3. How did Elkanah demonstrate his love for Hannah?
4. Challenge: Do you think Elkanah's actions helped to solve the friction and tension between the two women? What could he have done?
5. What feelings might Peninnah have experienced when she saw Elkanah's actions? (see 1 Samuel 1:4-5)
6. Have you ever dealt with emotions as Hannah did in 1 Samuel 1:7? How could the following verses encourage you?

Psalms 9:9

Psalms 50:15

Proverbs 20:22

1 Peter 3:12-13

Third Day: Read 1 Samuel 1:9-18.

1. While the family was in Shiloh for one of the Jewish festivals what did Hannah do about her problem?

2. Describe in your own words the vow Hannah made to the Lord if He granted her request.

3. What does the phrase, “no razor will ever be used on his head” in 1 Samuel 1:11 mean? See Numbers 6:1-5.

4. What conclusion did the priest Eli make when he saw Hannah’s actions? Why?

5. What clues do you find in 1 Samuel 1:18 that tell you that Hannah’s feelings had changed from the time she went to prayer? Write down your answer.

6. a. Had her situation changed—did she have the answer to her prayer “in hand” at this point? What does this say to you about your own prayer life and your faith in God?

- b. What challenge and encouragement do you find concerning prayer in Romans 12:12, James 5:13a, and Luke 6:28?

- c. (Personal) What changes in attitude do you believe the Lord is leading you to make concerning the prayers you lift to Him daily?

- d. Could Mark 9:24b be a personal prayer and also an encouraging verse to share with other Christians who are discouraged with their prayer lives?

Fourth Day: Read 1 Samuel 1:19-28.

1. Why did Hannah name her son Samuel? Look for the meaning of the name in 1 Samuel 1:17,20,27.

2. What clue can you find that would indicate that Elkanah was not opposed to giving Samuel back to the Lord?
3. In your own words describe Hannah's dedication of Samuel to the Lord. Note especially 1 Samuel 1:24-28.
4. (Personal) For those of you who have children, natural or spiritual, do you echo Hannah's words found in 1 Samuel 1:27-28? Write out your dedication in your own words here.

Fifth Day: Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10. These ten verses include a word picture of the Lord. The following questions will help you "see" that picture.

1. What verse tells you that the Lord is a holy God?
2. 1 Samuel 2:3 tells you that God knows what is in man's heart. How would you write this verse in your own words?
3. Write down the phrases telling you that God controls life and death.
4. a. Describe in your own words how Hannah felt that the Lord responded to poor people (1 Samuel 2:8).

b. (Personal) If this is God's response to the poor, what do you believe your personal response as a Christian should be? Write out your thoughts. Will you add this to your prayer notebook? Also ask God to give you new insight about His will for your life in ministering to the poor—perhaps spiritually, physically, or in giving money responsibly.
5. What is most impressive to you about this prayer of praise?
6. **Challenge:** Begin a prayer list. Buy an inexpensive notebook that you can carry with you so that you may add requests as you hear of them. Ask God for specific requests. Jot down dates of answers. Update your notebook each month, praising God for answers to prayer and for His faithfulness in hearing you daily and acting on your requests in His time.

Sixth Day: Read Mark 11:23-25 and Mark 9:14-24.

1. In teaching His disciples about prayer, Mark 11, Jesus instructed His disciples to do certain things. Note especially Mark 11:23-25 and find the action words for effective prayers. Example: believe (Mark 11:23).

2. Reread Mark 11:24. When did Jesus say we would receive an answer to our prayers?

3. What does this passage say about holding a grudge and answered prayer?

4. a. What two things did the father in Mark 9 ask Jesus to do?

b. (Personal) What do you do when you feel your faith is weak?

5. a. What example in prayer did our Savior set for us in Luke 22:42?

b. Read Paul's way of praying for the Christians in Colossians 1:9. Jot down key phrases in this verse which you wish to apply to your own prayers.

6. **Challenge:** For an excellent example of prayer read Nehemiah 1:5-11. This is a prayer of a king's cupbearer. The man wanted to return to his beloved city of Jerusalem after it had fallen to a conqueror. Notice how Nehemiah begins his prayer with praise. Look for the confession of sins in the prayer. Notice that the man reminds God of a promise He made and prays the promise back to God—a good thing to do, because even though God has never forgotten a promise it helps us to remember the promises He has made, and we have a right as His children to claim His promise. What challenge for your prayer life do you find in this prayer in Nehemiah?