

“Divine Providence and Human Responsibility”

Ruth 3: 1-18

¹One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? ² Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³ Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

⁵ "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

⁷ When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet.

⁹ "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer."

¹⁰ "The LORD bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹² Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. ¹³ Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning."

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, "Don't let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor."

¹⁵ He also said, "Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and put it on her. Then he went back to town.

¹⁶ When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "How did it go, my daughter?"

Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her ¹⁷ and added, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.' "

¹⁸ Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today." (Ruth 3: 1-18 NIV)

Ruth 3: 1-18

Questions for personal or small group study and reflection

1. What do you think of Naomi's plan for Ruth? Do you agree with what she proposed? Why or why not?
2. In their male-dominated world, how do you account for such boldness on the part of Naomi and Ruth?
3. What factors could lead the readers to believe a sexual indiscretion took place?
4. What factors assure you that, in fact, no sexual encounter took place?
5. Why doesn't Boaz take advantage of Ruth? Why should he bless her and consider her proposal?
6. Does this story reflect some kind of romantic love, or a proper sense of duty to an ethical code of conduct? Why?
7. In your circle of friends, what "do's" and "don'ts" of sexual morality prevail? Which "rules" are the first to be bent or broken?
8. What risk have you taken because you felt it was the right thing to do?