

Are You a Spiritual Taker, Debtor or Giver?

At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here, and eat some bread, and dip your piece in the vinegar." So she sat down beside the harvesters, and he passed her some roasted grain. She ate and was full and had some left over. When she got up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, "Let her glean even among the bundles, and do not harm her. Also pull out some grain for her from the bundles and leave it so that she may glean it, and do not rebuke her." So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. She took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She drew it out and gave her what she had left, after she had been satisfied (Ruth 2:14:18).

As if his lavish treatment of Ruth weren't enough, Boaz again went beyond the letter of the Old Testament law all the way to grace in his treatment of Ruth. In a masculine and noble gesture, Boaz guaranteed Ruth's safety, and he also assigned her a most advantageous place from which to glean. On top of that, he ordered that she be ensured a very generous provision.

There are three kinds of people in the world. Takers have a sense of entitlement, seeing what is yours as theirs. Debtors have a sense of owing, as they expect whatever they give to be given back. But givers have a sense of generosity and give without any hope of receiving. In this way, givers are like God, who is the most generous of all. Understanding the generous nature of God's grace, Boaz gave to Ruth generously through his words, his works and his wealth.

Also demonstrating ongoing remarkable character, Ruth

continued her day of hard labor until the evening darkness fell upon her. The ephah of barley she received from Boaz's kindness and her day's labor is an amount that scholars debate, but it was perhaps four to six gallons, or some 30–50 pounds, which Ruth carried home. In our modern day, this would be the equivalent of perhaps a few weeks' wages or a few thousand dollars for one day's work!

Arriving home, Ruth gave the food left over from her lunch with Boaz and his employees to Naomi, who was likely to have been very hungry. Excited by God's provision for both their dinner and the riches Ruth obtained from her one day's work, Naomi simply had to know who had been so kind to her. Speaking for the first time in this scene of the story, Ruth reveals that the gracious provision of God had come to them through the hand of Boaz, the man of war and wealth and wherewithal.

Overjoyed, the bitter Naomi who hadn't lost all faith, prayed that God would bless Boaz for his kindness to her as well as bless the name of her family that had suffered greatly. In her prayer, Naomi spoke of the "kindness" of God by using the word *hesed*, which is an important theme throughout the book. It summarizes all of God's most beloved attributes, such as love, grace, mercy, kindness, compassion, patience and devotion. And *hesed* is occasionally used to describe people who reflect the character of God, such as with Ruth and Boaz. The debate among scholars on Ruth 2:20 is whether Naomi was saying that God or Boaz had acted in a way of *hesed*, and the truth is that both are true: God acted kindly through the providential kindness of Boaz.

Are you a safe person for others? How can you become a safe person for others, and what does it look like for someone to be safe in our culture? {eoa}

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