

Why the Book of Ruth Is More Relevant to America Today Than Ever Before

Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the harvesters, "May the Lord be with you!" And they said to him, "May the Lord bless you." Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is this?" So the servant who was in charge of his harvesters answered, "She is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the land of Moab. She said, 'Please let me glean and gather grain among the bundles behind the harvesters.' So she came and has remained from morning until now, though she rested a little while in the house." Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field and leave this one. Stay close to my young women. Keep your eyes on the field in which they reap and follow after them. I have commanded the men not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn" (Ruth 2:4-9).

The timeless book of Ruth is timelier than ever. For the first time in U.S. history, as well as in many other nations, the majority of adults are single. And anyone seeking a mate can testify that finding a safe person is perhaps more difficult than ever.

Who can you trust, especially if you're a single woman who's poor and new to a big city? That's the situation Ruth found herself in as a new Christian on the brink of starvation in Bethlehem.

For the first time, the human hero of the book of Ruth, Boaz, steps onto the stage. His name means "strength," and he rose above the previous men in the book who had failed in so many

ways. Illustratively, his name also appears on one of the pillars in Solomon's temple (1 Sam. 9:1; 1 Kings 11:28; 2 Kings 5:1; Neh. 11:14). This is fitting because Boaz was a man with enough character and strength to hold up Ruth and Naomi so that their life wouldn't crumble around them.

We are told that Boaz was a distant relative in some way through the family of Elimelech, Naomi's deceased husband. Furthermore, he was spoken of as "a worthy man," which is used throughout Scripture to refer to men of wealth (2 Kings 15:20), war (Josh. 6:2-3, Judg. 6:12, 2 Sam. 17:8), and wherewithal (1 Sam. 9:1, 1 Kings 11:28, 2 Kings 5:1, Neh. 11:14). Boaz continually displayed such impeccable character, blessing everyone in the story, that many have called him a "type" of Jesus Christ. The great preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon affectionately referred to Jesus as "our glorious Boaz." Though Boaz wasn't a prophet, priest or pastor, he is a paragon of piety.

Ruth's character was also impeccable. Rather than dating, relating and fornicating, this single and broke young woman worshipped, worked and waited. With the two women likely very hungry and desperately in need of food, Ruth asked her mother-in-law, Naomi, for her approval to glean in the fields. In this request, we see that the women had hit the proverbial rock bottom. Ruth took a great risk, venturing out in faith as a foreign woman to scavenge for food in a new town.

Looking at the character traits displayed in this passage, what would a man like Boaz look like today? A woman like Ruth?
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