

# Session 12: The Bride in the Book of Ruth

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## I. The Bride in the Book of Ruth

### 1. In type and shadow form, the book of Ruth illustrates the bride's growing devotion to the Man Christ Jesus as her Bridegroom.

- a. In this session, we continue to look at another important Old Testament book which speaks of the bride in type and shadow form. You will recall that Session 11 (Parts 1 and 2), we delved into the bride in the story of Adam and Eve and also the story of Abraham sending his servant to take a wife for Isaac. In this session, we will look at the bride in the book of Ruth.
- b. Bridal types and shadows are important as they expand our understanding of the bride and the need to make ourselves ready as a bride. Types and shadows provide key nuggets that are often hidden in New Testament bridal passages. So, it is my prayer that you dig into these different stories so as to learn what the Bible teaches us about our bridal relationship with Christ. Now, let's look at the bride in the Book of Ruth.
- c. The book of Ruth depicts the journey of two Moabite women, Ruth and her sister in law, Orpah. Whereas Orpah never left Moab, Ruth devoted her life to following Naomi with the journey ultimately ending with Ruth marrying Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer. The story wonderfully pictures two key principles for us today: 1) a believer's determination to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit so as to be made ready as a bride and 2) a believer's ever increasing devotion to the man Christ Jesus above any other pursuit.
- d. The story beautifully pictures the different phases in a believers life along the journey of readiness. As I look at the various stages of Ruth's journey toward bridal preparation, I see myself and my own personal journey. My belief is that you will learn some valuable lessons for yourself to help you along your journey toward being made ready as Christ's bride. Let's begin with looking at the story and the types and shadows in the story.

### 2. The following is a brief overview of the story.

- a. Ruth's journey begins in the pagan land of Moab where she has been widowed, and ends in Bethlehem, where she marries Boaz, her wealthy kinsman-redeemer. During her journey from Moab to marriage, Ruth's heart changes. She makes several important decisions along the way that ultimately results in her becoming the wife of Boaz. Before drawing principles from this powerful story related to the bride making herself ready for Christ, let's refresh our memory about the story and highlight some of the types and shadows from the story.
- b. During the time when the judges governed Israel, a devastating famine hit the land. To provide for his family, Elimelech took his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, from their home in Bethlehem to the neighboring land of Moab to wait out the famine. While living in Moab, both sons married Moabite women—Orpah and Ruth. During the 10 years they lived in Moab, Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion all died. Naomi, now a widow, heard that the famine had ended in Israel and prepared to return home to Bethlehem. Before leaving, she encouraged her two daughters in law to remain with their families in Moab, but Orpah and Ruth both wanted to go with her to Bethlehem.

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After some intense conversations, however, Orpah decided to remain in Moab, whereas Ruth was still adamant about returning with Naomi.

- c. When the two women arrived in Bethlehem, Ruth went almost immediately to the barley fields belonging to a man named Boaz, who was a kinsman of Elimelech. There, Ruth collected the grain left by the reapers. Boaz took notice of her and treated her with great kindness. He not only allowed her to glean from the extra piles of grain but he even gave her additional grain stalks from the bundled plants. Day after day as Ruth would go to the grain fields to glean food, Boaz would provide abundantly for her.
- d. Toward the end of the harvest season, Naomi wanted Ruth to rest from her labors, but more importantly, to marry Boaz. So she told Ruth to wash herself, anoint herself with ointments, put on her best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor where Boaz was resting after completing the harvest. Ruth obeyed. When she approached Boaz, she received his favor, and the two were later married. Some years later, Ruth and Boaz gave birth to Obed, the grandfather of King David.
- e. This is a wonderful rags to riches story of a poor Moabite widow marrying her kinsman-redeemer who loves her and cares for her. Even so, for our purposes, this story contains types and shadows of the journey of a believer as he or she is transformed from living a worldly lifestyle to being married to Christ. Hidden in the pages of this book is the bridal journey of a maturing devotion to Christ which believers must undertake to ultimately become the bride made ready for Christ. Before delving into the principles we learn from this story, let's highlight the types and shadow in the book.

## 3. There are several types and shadows in the Book of Ruth which illustrate a believer's journey toward being made ready as a bride for Christ.

### Moab and their gods:

- a. As the story reveals, Ruth was a Moabite woman. Understanding the Moabite culture is helpful in our look at Ruth's journey to becoming the wife of Boaz. In Ruth's day, Moab was a neighboring land to Israel. The Moabites came from the incestuous relationship between Lot and his eldest daughter. As Genesis 19:30-37 records, when Lot and his daughters fled Sodom, the two daughters thought that there was no man for them to marry in their new home. So, desiring to preserve their family line, they entered into an incestuous sexual union with their father. Moab, the father of the land of Moab, was birthed from the union between Lot and his eldest daughter.
- b. Helpful to our understanding of what Moab represents, the language of Moab was very similar to Hebrew and it appears also that the Moabites practiced circumcism like Israel. Note this passage,  

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised —Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and *Moab* and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart" (Jer. 9:25-26).
- c. The point for our study is that the Moabites were related to the Hebrews with a similar language and practicing some of the religious rituals practiced in Israel, specifically circumcism. Yet their worship was not at all consistent with how God had told Israel to worship. The national pagan god of Moab was Chemosh. Chemosh was "honored with horribly cruel rites like those of Molech, to whom

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children were sacrificed in the fire”.<sup>1</sup> The Moabites as Jeremiah had written were “circumcised, yet uncircumcised” in their heart and lifestyle.

- d. Therefore, as a type and shadow for our study, Moab represents a person who is either born again or not but in either case is still deeply enmeshed in the immoral, antichristian culture. Of course, for our study, Ruth left Moab and the worship of Chemosh whereas Orpah remained in Moab. It is written of Orpah that “she went back to her people *and her gods*” (Ruth 1:15).

## Naomi, Orpah, Ruth:

- a. Naomi means “my pleasantness, delight”.<sup>2</sup> Orpah means stiff-necked.<sup>3</sup> And Ruth means “friendship”,<sup>4</sup> “comrade”, or “companion”<sup>5</sup>. Looking at these three ladies in type and shadow form, Naomi is a picture of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Book of Ruth, Naomi leads Ruth on a journey—first from Moab to Bethlehem. Then to the fields of Boaz and finally to become the wife of Boaz. Of course, consistent with God’s eternal purpose, the Holy Spirit is the believer’s “Helper”, and as Naomi’s name suggests, her companion to lead them to become a bride for Christ.
- b. Orpah’s name is very telling in our analogy. Although initially wanting to go with Naomi, Orpah ultimately could not pull herself away from her people or her gods. The pull of the Moab lifestyle was too much for her to separate from. She is representative of the believer who wants to be transformed but can’t pay the price to leave the comfort and pleasure of a compromised life.
- c. Ruth is a type of the believer who becomes a real companion of the Holy Spirit and follows the lead of the Holy Spirit throughout her life so as to be made ready as a bride for Christ. Whereas Orpah did not follow Naomi, Ruth did and became the wife of Boaz.

## Elimelech, Mahlon, Chilion, Bethlehem:

- a. In the Hebrew, Elimelech means “my God is King”<sup>6</sup>. Mahlon means “sickly”.<sup>7</sup> Chilion means “wasting away”<sup>8</sup>. Bethlehem means “house of bread”.<sup>9</sup> There is a rich symbolism in the meaning of these entities. Elimelech was a man in which his God was king living in the house of bread. He left this place, not because God led him to Moab, but because of the trial of a famine in the land. Because of that, he experienced sickness, death, and the wasting away from the blessings of living in the house of bread.
- b. An application for us is that every believer lives in a house of bread where God is King. However, famines, trials, tribulations come to everyone. The challenge for every believer is to not take actions into our own hands when these things happen. They will often lead us into Moab, a place of compromise, or even into sin. Acting as Elimelech will many times lead to sickness, death, or wasting away in the wilderness away from God’s intended plan for our life. The trials and tribulations of life are intended to test us and equip us to trust Christ when difficulties come. We must remain in Christ trusting Him when trials come.

## Boaz:

- a. Ruth 4:14 reads as follows in the NIV translation, “Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a *kinsman-redeemer*. May he become famous throughout Israel!” (Ruth 4:14, NIV). Seven times in the book of Ruth, the New International Version of the Bible translates the Hebrew word *go’el* as “kinsman-redeemer.” This word means “to redeem, to avenge, to revenge, or to ransom”<sup>10</sup> and has the basic meaning of “coming to the help or rescue”<sup>11</sup> of one in need. The idea of *go’el* originates in the Old Testament Law. The basic concept is that the nearest male relative was

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responsible for certain aspects of his family, such as avenging harm done to a family member or redeeming a relative in great need.<sup>12</sup>

- b. For our purposes, the kinsman-redeemer was responsible for marrying his relative's widow. There were three basic qualifications for being a kinsmen-redeemer, and, as such, to purchase Ruth as his wife. First, he had to be a close relative; second, he had to have the wealth to redeem; and third, he had to be willing to pay the price of redemption. As we examine Boaz's relationship with Ruth, we see that he met these three conditions. He was a close relative to Elimelech's family (Ruth 3:12). He had the ability to redeem since he had great wealth (Ruth 2:1). And he was willing to pay the price of redemption and take Ruth as his wife (Ruth 4:9).
- c. What a beautiful image of our loving Bridegroom! As Boaz was a close relative to Ruth, Jesus is our close relative; in fact, He is our brother (Heb. 2:17-18). Just as one came in line before Boaz to redeem Ruth but did not have the means to complete the task, Adam attempted to take dominion over the earth but could not do it. However, just as Boaz was able to purchase Elimelech's land, redeem Naomi, and take Ruth as his wife (Ruth 4:9-13), Jesus is the only One who is able to redeem mankind and to complete what Adam could not do. And the great news for us is that Jesus was not only *able* to purchase us from the slave market; He was also *willing* to do it. Because of His great love for us, He willingly left the glory of heaven to purchase us from bondage and to take us as His eternal wife (Phil. 2:5-8). Therefore, Boaz represents Christ as our Bridegroom King.

## 3. The types and shadows in the Book of Ruth depict a believer's journey from worldliness and compromise to being married to Christ.

- a. Just like Ruth journeyed with Naomi from Moab to Bethlehem to ultimately be married to her kinsman-redeemer, the story depicts an individual who follows the leading of the Holy Spirit from involvement in worldliness and entanglement with worldly compromise to an ever growing devotion to God's principles and to the Person of Christ.
- b. The story is filled with wonderful pictures of a believer's journey from being ensnared in the world to receive the ultimate prize, that being to be married to Christ. In the remaining discussion of the book of Ruth, we present seven principles for a believer to follow in their pursuit of Christ as Bridegroom.

## II. The Journey of Cooperation and Devotion

- a. As I wrote earlier, the steps of the journey recorded in the book of Ruth parallels my personal journey of devotion to Christ and cooperation with the Holy Spirit. My belief is that the different phases of Ruth's journey to readiness summarizes the journey of many believers. The challenge for all of us is to not stop in our journey thinking that I have come far enough. God's desire is for all of us to complete the journey of devotion and cooperation so as to be made ready as a bride for Christ.
- b. Let's now look at several steps, decisions, and actions that Ruth took that we must also take in the pursuit of our Bridegroom King.

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1. First, we must be determined to leave a life of worldliness and compromise and sin.

- a. When it was time for Naomi to return to Bethlehem, she urged her two daughters-in-law to remain in Moab where they were comfortable, had their own family ties, and were familiar with the customs of the land (Ruth 1:6-9). Orpah and Ruth's response to her was clear: "No, but we will surely return with you to your people" (Ruth 1:10). Initially, they both made a *decision* to leave Moab; however, Orpah ultimately could not resist the seduction of Moab, and she returned "back to her people *and her gods*" (Ruth 1:15).
- b. Orpah weighed all of these factors and ultimately determined not to go to Bethlehem. Ruth, on the other hand, was determined to leave with Naomi. After counting the cost and weighing the consequences of her actions (Ruth 1:11-15), Ruth made a six-fold declaration of her commitment to leave Moab and go to Bethlehem. She said to Naomi:

Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

- c. Ruth was determined to leave Moab in order to follow Naomi, but even more importantly, to pursue Naomi's God.
- d. Remembering that Naomi represents the Holy Spirit and Orpah and Ruth represent two individuals living in an immoral, antichristian culture: if we want to become the wife to our Bridegroom, we must be determined to leave our personal Moab and the culture it represents. With all of its evils, our world is a lot like Moab. For many, there is a powerful lure to the worldly lifestyle. Many believers are like Orpah. They have made a decision for the Lord Jesus, and they sincerely meant and, in fact, mean it. But when it comes time to leave their present-day Moab, they can't do it. The temptations are too entrenched, the seductions too strong, the old friendships too alluring.
- e. Jesus said, "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'" (Luke 14:28-30). For all who had made a decision to follow Him, Jesus called them to count the cost so that they would not start following Him if they were not able to finish the journey. If we truly desire to become a worthy bride for Jesus, we must count the cost and make the same six-fold declaration that Ruth made. In other words, we must be determined to leave our past and its seductions and evils.

2. Second, a believer must be committed to follow wholeheartedly the leading of the Holy Spirit throughout their life so as to be made ready as a bride for Christ.

- a. We mentioned a moment ago Ruth's sixfold declaration that she made to Naomi as she left Moab. In making this "covenant like" commitment, she was declaring that she would follow Naomi wherever she went and whatever she asked her to do. Remembering that Naomi represents the Holy Spirit, believers must make a similar commitment to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit

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throughout their life. Believers must not only commit to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit throughout their life, they must also develop a lifestyle of following the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has as His primary objective the goal of preparing believers to be conformed to Christ so as to be made ready as a bride for Christ. This is an extremely important way to live in order to be made ready as a bride for Christ. To help us understand more of what is involved, let's revisit Ruth's sixfold declaration and look into it in more detail. Repeating it, it reads,

Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

- b. Ruth's first declaration was "where you go, I will go." Like Ruth, we must commit to and live out the idea of, "I will go where You tell me to go, and I will do what You tell me to do." We are all faced with decisions from time to time to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. In some cases, the decisions are easy, but others require major acts of surrender. To pursue Christ, some require laying down jobs, abandon career paths for ministry, surrender of personal comforts or pleasures, even placing Christ above the desires of spouse or family. Even though living out this commitment is at times very difficult, it is absolutely necessary to follow the Holy Spirit on the journey of devotion to the Lord.
- c. Ruth's second declaration was "where you lodge, I will lodge." When we say this to God, we are vowing to accept a lifestyle of waiting on Him. Even in seasons of silence when we can't hear His voice or in times of confusion when we don't know which direction to turn, we must wait. We decide that we are not going to do our own thing. We are not going to act on what we think or what we feel. Instead, we are going to wait on God until He speaks.
- d. Ruth's third declaration was "your people shall be my people." Quite possibly, Orpah did not follow Naomi because she did not want to leave her friends and family—even though they were involved in pagan activities. However, for us to develop a life of devotion to our Bridegroom, we can't emulate Orpah. We must leave behind any relationships that would ensnare us in a lifestyle of compromise and worldliness. When I first came to the Lord, I had to leave several friends behind. I was still friendly to them, but when they went to places that I would not go or did things that I would not do, we eventually grew apart. Pursuing Christ requires us to put Him ahead of all other relationships (Luke 14:26).
- e. Ruth's fourth declaration was "your God will be my God." To make this declaration real in our lives, we must forsake every god or idol that takes priority over our relationship with Christ. Most of us don't keep wooden idols on our mantle or burn incense to a statue, but we can make idols out of things like recreation, pleasure, jobs, and possessions. God wants us to enjoy life; but, when any of these hinder us in our pursuit of God, we must lay them down.
- f. Ruth's fifth declaration was to die where Naomi died. For us, this means that we must make a commitment to embrace the cross. The Holy Spirit will regularly take us to the cross to die to sin and self. Even daily, the Holy Spirit leads us to take up our cross. Moreover, from time to time, He leads us to encounter major issues in which we are called to surrender. Things like jobs, pleasures, or relationships. In addition, we are on many occasions faced with a decision of whether to act to love others. Often there is an issue that we must choose—do I do what I want or lay down my life in love. With many of these things, there is a death to self involved. Even so, we must "die where the Holy

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Spirit leads us to die”.

- g. Ruth’s sixth declaration was to be buried where Naomi was buried. Likewise, we must bury our life in surrender. Jesus said that a grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die—implying that it must be buried—in order to bear fruit (John 12:24). Explaining what He meant by this, the Lord said, “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal” (John 12:25). If we want to be like Ruth and live totally devoted to our Bridegroom, we must surrender our life daily in order to follow Him fully.

### 3. Third, a believer must develop a lifestyle of spiritual discipline that produces favor.

- a. Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem at the beginning of the harvest season (Ruth 1:22). Immediately after learning of Boaz, Ruth asked to go to the harvest fields and ended up gleaning from the fields of Boaz (Ruth 2:1-3). She stated very clearly that her intention was to gain “favor” from the owner of the fields (Ruth 2:2). Upon finding Boaz’s field, she went regularly and remained there for long periods of time. Several interesting things happened to Ruth as she gleaned in the fields. Boaz saw her diligence and began to take notice of her (Ruth 2:5-6, 11). He wanted the Lord to bless Ruth for her work and sacrifice (Ruth 2:12). He fed her in abundance and allowed her to glean from the bundled grain, a much easier task than gleaning from the fields (Ruth 2:14-15). In addition, he told his servants to give her some extra grain from among the bundles (Ruth 2:16). So, as we see, Ruth received great favor from Boaz. Because of her discipline, work ethic, and perseverance, Boaz took notice of her. Ruth’s discipline had positioned her for blessings from her kinsman-redeemer.
- b. The same is true for us. As we discipline ourselves to glean spiritual food from the Lord, we will gain His favor. Specifically, there are four spiritual disciplines that will produce favor in our lives and result in blessings from our Kinsman-Redeemer.
- c. The first discipline is to dig deep into the Word on a regular basis. Ruth went daily to the fields to glean, and she “remained there” (Ruth 2:7). If we want God’s favor in our lives, we must find a way to consistently glean from the Word of God. We should not read the Word of God religiously in order to gain God’s approval. Instead, we should dig into the Word in order to be “doers of the Word” so that we “will be blessed in what” we do (James 1:22-25). Obeying God’s Word is the pathway to receiving God’s favor and blessings.
- d. The second discipline is to commit yourself to a local church family (Ruth 2:8, 21-23). In His sovereignty, God has chosen for us to grow in favor, not only by our individual efforts, but also in community with other believers. The early church devoted themselves to the community of believers, and as a result, they gained favor with God and man (Acts 2:42-47).
- e. The third discipline is to serve the Lord through a local church. Boaz told Ruth that all she had *done* for Naomi had been “fully reported to him” (Ruth 2:11). The Lord takes notice of us, as well, when we serve the vision of a local church. Peter also exhorts us to use our gifting to serve one another (1 Peter 4:10).

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- f. The fourth discipline is to drink from the corporate anointing that comes from the leaders of the church. Just as Ruth drank from the water drawn by Boaz's servants, we should develop the habit of receiving the anointing from leaders in the church (Ruth 2:9). Whether through a teaching, a prophetic word, or a ministry action, God uses the corporate worship service to do things that will not happen in other settings.
- g. These four spiritual disciplines are important to growing in devotion for our Bridegroom. Discipline does not *earn* us God's favor or provision. We have His favor through grace alone. But discipline in these things does *position* us to be able to receive God's provision, acceptance, favor, security, protection, and bring transformation in our lives. And as we experience God's blessings, our natural response is to devote ourselves more fully to our Bridegroom.

### 4. Fourth, a believer must pursue the man Christ Jesus above His provision.

- a. Ruth obtained a great amount of provision, favor, and blessing from her daily work in Boaz's fields. Even so, after a season of gleaning from the field of her kinsman-redeemer, Naomi led Ruth to seek the man himself. Ruth 3:1-5 records Naomi's urging of Ruth to pursue a relationship with Boaz, in fact, to pursue a marriage relationship with him,

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do She said to her, "All that you say I will do" (Ruth 3:1-5).

- b. Although Ruth had enjoyed the favor of Boaz and was prospering from the favor she had obtained from gleaning daily in his fields, Naomi knew it was time for more. It was time for Ruth to pursue Boaz as her husband. Even though it was quite possible that Ruth had never thought of marrying this man who had been so kind to her and had blessed her so greatly, Naomi desired the two of them to be married. Because of her desire, Naomi led Ruth to be awakened to the idea of becoming the bride of Boaz. It was time for Ruth to not only pursue the blessings of a relationship with Boaz, but to pursue Him as her Bridegroom.
- c. In a similar way, there comes a time in our walk with the Lord when the Holy Spirit will lead us to transition from seeking the Lord's provision and blessing to seeking the Man, Christ Jesus, Himself. His provision is a wonderful aspect of our relationship with Christ; even so, on the journey to be married to our kinsman-redeemer, there comes a point in which we want Him even more than His blessings. The Holy Spirit will have done a work in our heart in which we love this Man Christ with a love much deeper than we would have ever imagined, and because of our great love for the Man Christ, we want union with Him. We want a much deeper revelation of Him and to know Him intimately. We love Him and we want to please Him and not grieve Him. We want intimacy with Him. We want to experience His presence and to hear His voice. We want to worship Him and adore Him, not to get something from Him. Even though we always enjoy and appreciate His favor and blessings, we want Him more than His blessings.

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- d. The Holy Spirit is the One who empowers our hearts to love Jesus with passion. Even so, this is not something that we passively wait for God to do. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to produce this type of love for Jesus in our hearts. This type of longing and desire for more of Jesus prepares our hearts to pursue Christ as a worthy bride and produces total devotion within us.

### 5. Fifth, a believer must pursue Christ as our Bridegroom.

- a. Naomi not only led Ruth to pursue a relationship with Boaz, she led her to pursue him so as to become his wife. Ruth 3:4-5 reads, "It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do." She said to her, "All that you say I will do."
- b. Naomi told Ruth to go to the threshing floor where Boaz was resting and pursue him there. In obedience to Naomi's leading, Ruth said she would do all Naomi had said to her. In other words, she began to pursue Boaz so as to become His wife.
- c. In a similar manner, a believer must do likewise. We must pursue Christ as our Bridegroom. It is not sufficient to passively understand that we can become the bride of Christ. Moreover, we must actively pursue Him just as Ruth did Boaz.

### 6. Sixth, a believer must actively make himself or herself ready as a bride for Christ.

- a. Naomi told Ruth to make herself ready for Boaz. She told her to wash herself, anoint herself, put on her best clothes, meet Boaz at the threshing floor, keep herself hidden until she was ready, and lie at his feet (Ruth 3:3-4). Ruth's response to Naomi was simple but profound: "All that you say I will do" (Ruth 3:5). In other words, she said "yes" to being made ready for her future husband. Years ago in our church, the Holy Spirit led us as a church body to regularly say "yes" to the pursuit of Christ as our Bridegroom King. We would sing songs in which we would say "yes, Lord" repeatedly and respond with a "yes" in our hearts on a regular basis. Saying "yes" doesn't make us ready but it does keep us alert to the need to be made ready as a bride for Christ.
- b. Ruth not only said "yes" to being made ready for her future husband, "she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her" (Ruth 3:6). In other words, Ruth not only said she would make herself ready for her Bridegroom, she put ongoing energy and effort into making herself ready.
- c. In a similar fashion, saying "yes" to being made ready is not enough. We must actively prepare ourselves for our Bridegroom King. We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He leads us from season to season. We must devote ourselves to an ongoing work of preparation.
- d. To be made ready for Christ, we must do the same six things that Naomi instructed Ruth to do. Just as Ruth washed herself, the Holy Spirit wants to cleanse us with the blood of Jesus and wash us with the water of the Word (1 John 1:5-10; Eph. 5:26). Just as Ruth anointed herself with fragrant anointing oil, the Holy Spirit wants to produce in us a sweet aroma of Christ. Just as Ruth put on her best clothes, we are called to cloth ourselves with wedding garments, which are righteous acts leading to an overcoming lifestyle (Matt. 22:12; Rev. 19:8).

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e. And, finally, Ruth went secretly to the threshing floor and lay at Boaz's feet. In an agricultural society, the threshing floor was a place where the grain was separated from the chaff. The grain was separated by placing it on a hard surface and beating it. It is at the threshing floor, where we are sifted like wheat, that we meet Jesus as our Bridegroom (Luke 22:31-34). Laying at His feet in worship and bowed low before Him in humility, our selfish, chaff-like nature is separated from our Christ-like character. And like Ruth's encounter with Boaz, all of this is done in secret for an audience of One. In a similar fashion to Ruth, we are to follow the Holy Spirit's leading to meet Christ at our personal threshing floor experience.

7. Seventh, a believer must trust that by fully cooperating with the Holy Spirit, they will be selected as an eternal wife for Christ.

- a. After Ruth made herself ready, Boaz went before the city elders and asked them for permission to redeem Elimelech's land and take Ruth as his wife (Ruth 4:1-8). Her character and faithfulness had caught Boaz's attention and moved him to select her as his wife. Ruth had devoted her life to Boaz and to making herself ready for him. She had done all she could do to make herself ready so that he would choose her to be his bride. According to the law of that day, Boaz did not have to take Ruth as his wife, but because of her readiness, he desired her and wanted to marry her. Of course, until Boaz went before the village elders to get permission to marry her, she did not know for sure if she would be selected as his wife. She had to wait and, while she waited, trust that she had done all she could. She had to trust that Naomi had led her correctly to be made completely ready.
- b. Like Ruth, a believer after having done all must trust that when they reach heaven, they will be selected as part of Christ's bridal company becoming His eternal wife and partner.
- c. Let's actively make ourselves ready for Christ by yielding completely to the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to transform us into a person of excellent character who capture the heart of our Kinsman-Redeemer. Like Ruth, let's become totally devoted to our Bridegroom King, the Lord Jesus Christ!

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<sup>1</sup> Chemosh, The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright © 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Naomi, The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright © 1988.

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<sup>6</sup> Elimelech, International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

<sup>7</sup> Mahlon, Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

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<sup>9</sup> Bethlehem, Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers

# Session 12: The Bride in the Book of Ruth

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<sup>10</sup> The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon (Ontario, Canada: Woodside Bible Fellowship and the Institute for Creation Research, 1993), s.v. "go'el," referenced from PC Study Bible v3.2 (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft 2001).

<sup>11</sup> The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Kinsman," referenced from PC Study Bible v3.2 (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.