

DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

INDESCRIBABLE LOVE

RUTH 3:1-18

10.31.21

MAIN POINT

The depth of God's love for us is indescribable.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Are you typically a risk taker or do you like to play it safe? Why?

What is the riskiest thing you have done lately?

What role does risk play in your relationship with God?

We find both risk and love all over the page in Ruth 3. We will learn from Boaz's and Ruth's examples that there is risk involved in following God. Boaz will risk his property, his rights, and his reputation to reach out to Ruth. Ruth will risk her reputation and her life to reach out to Boaz. Through it all, God will reveal His indescribable love.

UNDERSTANDING

Although Naomi struggled with feelings of bitterness over her losses (see 1:20-21), she affirmed that God had shown kindness to her when Ruth was allowed to gather grain in the fields of none other than a close relative of her deceased husband (see 2:20). Furthermore, Naomi was surely aware of the stipulations in God's law about preserving family names and property allotments (see Lev. 25:25-28; Deut. 25:5-10). Finally, and to her credit, Naomi continued to consider ways that she could contribute to her and Ruth's well-being and future security (see Ruth 3:1). In particular, she recognized an opportunity for Boaz, a close relative, to act as the family redeemer.

READ RUTH 3:1-9.

What has remained constant in Naomi and Ruth since chapter 1? What is different?

What risks did Ruth take as she followed Naomi's advice to approach Boaz (vv. 5-9)?

Since God is sovereign and was clearly working on Ruth and Naomi's behalf, why didn't He just put the idea in Boaz's head to approach Ruth?

**How has God required risk-taking from you as you have followed Him?
How have you seen His love in the risk-taking?**

This was a unique opportunity. Boaz would be winnowing barley in a more secluded place than the field where they previously encountered each other. The message in uncovering Boaz's feet was clear. By this act Ruth was inquiring about Boaz's willingness to fulfill the role of family redeemer, to take her as wife and provide for her.

READ RUTH 3:10-18.

What risks did Boaz take to reach out to Ruth and allow her into his life?

What does Boaz's response to Ruth's request (vv. 10-11) and his actions in verses 14-16 tell us about how he treated Ruth? What temptations likely existed for them both?

Boaz complimented Ruth as a noble woman and agreed to pursue the matter of family redemption the next day, explaining that a closer family member first had to be consulted. In verse 11, Boaz told Ruth he would do what she asked. Knowing that Boaz was a close relative of her late husband, Ruth had come to Boaz privately and asked him to spread his cloak over her (v. 9). In Hebrew, this is the same phrase Boaz used when he observed that Ruth had come for refuge under the wings of the Lord God of Israel (2:12). Ruth was asking Boaz to be her family redeemer who would protect her and marry her so her late husband's line and inheritance would continue.

What would Boaz need to do before agreeing to be Naomi and Ruth's family redeemer? What is the lesson here for us?

Although Boaz was willing to take Ruth as his wife, the matter was not yet settled. There was another man who, from the standpoint of Israelite legal practice, had the right to marry her first. Boaz could not marry Ruth unless the closer male relative passed on the opportunity. Boaz's words reveal two things about his character. First, he was careful about following the law and yielding to the rights of others. Second, Boaz was concerned primarily for the well-being of Naomi and Ruth. If in fact this relative would take care of them, then all was good. In other words, Ruth's and Naomi's future care took priority over what Boaz was personally willing to do.

What kindness did Boaz recognize in Ruth's behavior? What kindness was evident in Boaz's behavior? What do these acts of kindness reveal about the lovingkindness of God?

The word translated "kindness" is "hesed," which has no comparable word in English. It is kindness, grace, mercy, compassion, love, loyalty, and faithfulness all rolled into one. The majority of the time that word is used in the Old Testament is to describe God's love toward His covenant people. It is a uniquely divine love that always originates in God.

In what ways do you see grace-filled kindness in this passage? Mercy? Compassion? Love? Loyalty? Faithfulness? Which of those words best describe the kind of love God has demonstrated toward you?

"This God is the one who vows to protect you. The God of the universe spreads His garment over you. He becomes your refuge. when you are under the protection of your God, you will never find yourselves empty for all of eternity. He has staked His glory on providing for your needs and His love has a price. This is the gospel."

- David Platt

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In Ruth 3 we find that love is patient, love protects, love is pure, love provides, and love has a price. Which of these qualities of love do you struggle the most to receive? To give? Why?

What is a risk God wants you to take that would demonstrate your love for Him? What holds you back from taking risks for God?

When did you first receive the indescribable love of God? If you never have, what is holding you back? Who is someone you can take a risk on to share God's love this week?

PRAYER

Thank God for His indescribable love, and for the way people in the pages of Scripture reveal to us more about Him than we could ever understand in a list of names or adjectives. Pray for anyone you know who has not yet received His love, and invite God to give you the courage to take risks for their good and His glory.

COMMENTARY

RUTH 3:1-18

3:1-3. In view of Boaz's relationship to the family and his kindness and generosity thus far to Ruth, perhaps he could be persuaded to take the further step of marriage. At the end of the barley harvest, in late May or June, the barley had to be winnowed, tossed into the air with a fork allowing the wind to carry away the lighter chaff while the heavier grain fell to the ground. At night, someone would guard the grain against being stolen or eaten by animals. Apparently, this was Boaz's night to be on duty. Dressing as Naomi instructed would not only enhance Ruth's attractiveness to Boaz but would symbolize an end to her period of mourning for her husband (2Sam 12:20), signaling her willingness to remarry.

3:4-7. Naomi instructed Ruth to go to Boaz when he was asleep and uncover his feet, or, more precisely, "uncover the place of his feet." By this act Ruth was inquiring about Boaz's willingness to fulfill the role of family redeemer, to take her as wife and provide for her.

3:8-9. Whereas her mother-in-law had anticipated Boaz taking the initiative in the conversation, Ruth responded to Boaz's question about her identity with a clarification of her purpose. She asked him to spread the corner of his robe over her as a symbolic statement of a marriage commitment (Ezek 16:8). The request also involved a wordplay, since spread your cloak over me literally means "spread your wing over me," inviting Boaz to become the answer to his own prayer in 2:12 that she might find refuge under the wings of the Lord.

3:10-11. Boaz's first words, my daughter, showed he had not been misled by the potential ambiguity of the situation. He declared himself willing to pay the social and financial costs of welcoming this despised outsider into his family. Boaz rightly saw Ruth's proposal as another act of covenant faithfulness on Ruth's part. Just as she had left her own household and her own family to be with Naomi, so now she was subordinating her own interests to those of Naomi. In the Hebrew ordering of the OT, the book of Ruth comes immediately after the book of Proverbs, which closes with a description of a woman of noble character (Pr 31:10).

3:12-13. Even though Boaz was a near relative of Naomi, there was another who had a prior claim to act as redeemer. Yet Boaz reassured Ruth that, one way or another, she (and Naomi) would be redeemed.

3:14-15. If it became widely known that Ruth had visited Boaz that night, people would wrongly assume that Boaz had taken Ruth as wife or that they were guilty of sexual impropriety. Boaz was unwilling to preempt his close relative who had first right of refusal to Ruth, so getting Ruth home before daylight kept wrong impressions from being formed. To seal his commitment (and perhaps also to provide Ruth with an excuse for being out so early), Boaz gave her six measures of barley. If the unspecified measures are seahs, then that would be around 80 pounds, an enormous load. Yet the lack of a measure may be intended to focus attention on the number six, which often represents incompleteness in the OT. Even this generous gift is incomplete. Ruth still awaited the final installment of "seed" that would accomplish her rest.

3:16-18. On Ruth's return, Naomi asked her literally, "Who are you, my daughter?" This is the same question that Boaz asked in 3:8. Was Ruth merely an awkward and embarrassing duty to Naomi, or was she the one who would provide Naomi with an enduring place in the genealogies of Israel through the provision of a son? The answer depended on what transpired overnight. This was the real nature of Naomi's question, as evidenced by Ruth's answer.