

God's work in the hearts of his people leads them to love toward others

Love leads you to do things you maybe never considered doing before. When I first began spending time with Natalie, quite certain that she was the one I would marry, we used to go out to Shari's after I got off work at 10pm, sometimes sitting and talking for hours. But I was in love with Natalie, and this was shown by my labor of staying up late to spend time with her. I didn't dread those late nights or complain about a lack of sleep, because my love for her led me to gladly do these things. I didn't just love the idea of loving her, but I actually loved her. That love translated into sacrificing sleep to be able to spend time with her. This is the way love works, isn't it? Love is more than a feeling we have, but love leads to labor, to work, to sacrifice and give for someone else. In fact, Scripture tells us that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for another ([John 15:13](#)). On the other hand, the lowest form of love is love of self, love only concerned with self. *This love of self comes naturally to us.* It was displayed by Eve in the Garden when she chose to eat the forbidden fruit because it looked good for food, delighted her eyes, and promised to make her wise. But love that works for others, that puts the interests of others above your own, is the real and genuine love.

Scripture Passage: [Ruth 3:1-18](#)

In our passage this morning, we see love leading to labor, to work, to sacrifice and give for someone else. **We see the work of God in the hearts of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, leading them to love others.** The chapter we're studying this morning unfolds in three scenes. First we have Naomi and Ruth in their home, where Naomi tells Ruth the plan she has that will, hopefully, lead to Ruth's rest. In the second scene we have Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor, where Ruth acts on Naomi's plan. In the last scene we are again back at the home of Naomi and Ruth, where Ruth reports to Naomi how things went. While the chapter divides up nicely in this way, I think the best approach for our study this morning will be to invest time in each character, to see how **God's work in the hearts of his people leads them to love toward others.**

Naomi's Love Through Words (vv.1-5, 16-18)

1. [v.1](#) "*Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her...*" - About seven weeks have now passed, from the beginning of barley harvest in [Ruth 1:22](#) to the end of barley and wheat harvest in [2:23](#). Seven weeks that Ruth has been gleaning, laboring in the fields of Boaz to pick up scraps to provide for her and her mother-in-law. Now Naomi reveals her plan to Ruth.

1. Her plan is to have Ruth go to the threshing floor, find where Boaz is sleeping, pull the covers off his feet, lay down at his feet during the night, and wait for instruction from him. But before she goes, she needed to prepare herself.

2. [v.3](#) "*Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak...*" - This wasn't instruction for Ruth to get "dolled-up" and put on a fancy gown. The cloak was the typical garment worn, a large covering that would even serve to keep her warm as she spent the night out in the open. It may be that Ruth was still in the clothes of mourning following the death of her husband, Mahlon, and Naomi was instructing Ruth to change out of her clothes of mourning. [2 Samuel 12:20](#) "*Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped.*" If this was the case, the changing out of the clothes of mourning would signal to Boaz that her period of mourning was over and she was ready again to marry.

1. Why was Naomi planning this way? [Verse 1](#) tells us she was seeking rest for Ruth. Isn't this evidence of God's work in the heart of Naomi? Naomi in chapter 1 is a woman who left the land of promise with her husband in search of bread, then had her husband and sons die. She encourages her daughters-in-law to return to their families and their false gods. This isn't the action of a woman committed to loving others with the love of the one true God. When she returns to Bethlehem with Ruth she tells the women there to call her Mara (bitter). Her statements in [Ruth 1:20-21](#) are self-centered and self-focused. Then, in our study last week we saw a progression in Naomi as she moves from a general blessing to invoking the name of the Lord in blessing Boaz. She even begins to show concern for the safety and well-being of Ruth. God was at work in the heart of Naomi, and the evidence was a greater concern for others; moving away from being self-centered and toward being others-centered. Naomi wanted Ruth to be free from the stress and strain of gleaning, and to have stability.

2. **Naomi's love was shown primarily through words.** At the very end of this chapter (v.18), we again see Naomi displaying love through her words. She gives words of comfort and consolation to Ruth, giving Ruth assurance that Boaz would settle the matter at hand that very day. **James (3:1-12) speaks about the power of the tongue, about how so much good or so much destruction can come from what we say. Naomi showed the work of God in her heart through loving others by the words she spoke. She took decisive action to seek the good of Ruth. Don't underestimate the power of the words that you speak.**

Transition: God was at work in Naomi's heart, leading her to loving words spoken to Ruth. Next we see God's work in Ruth's heart, leading her to loving deeds and words.

Ruth's Love Through Deeds and Words (vv.6-10)

1. **vv.6-7** "So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law commanded her."

1. **v.7** doesn't say there was any sin or wrongdoing. It doesn't say Boaz was drunk and passed out on the threshing floor. The threshing floor was the place where the grain was separated from the straw and chaff. Naomi knew that Boaz would be spending the night there, perhaps to cut down travel time and get the most labor in a day, or perhaps to guard his harvest from theft, either by animals or other people.

Boaz was a man that had worked hard, and now was appreciating and celebrating the provision of God.

2. **v.8-9** "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer." - Ruth has been carefully following the plan of Naomi. She washed and anointed herself and put on her cloak, she went to the threshing floor and waited for Boaz to lay down. She went and uncovered his feet and lay down there. Now Boaz awakes and asks who she is, and she responds, and at this point she goes off script from what Naomi told her. She says more than Naomi told her to say.

1. In **Ruth 2:12** it was Boaz who spoke a blessing over Ruth, recognizing that she came to take refuge under the wings of the Lord. Now Ruth uses this same language, asking Boaz to be the instrument through which God would cover her and give her refuge. But she goes even further, bringing before Boaz that he is a redeemer.

1. She is essentially proposing marriage to Boaz, and asking him to do the part of the kinsman redeemer (HEB *goel*). The redeemer would be a relative who was obligated to buy his relatives back if they sold themselves into slavery to pay off their debts (**Lev. 25:25ff**). In certain cases the kinsman redeemer was obligated to marry his brother's widow in order to raise up an heir for the dead man, who would inherit his property (**Deut. 25:5-10**). This is called levirate marriage. Boaz, in this case, was a relative and one who could act as a redeemer, but wasn't first in the line of obligation to do this. And this is what becomes really interesting. Naomi's concern for Ruth was that Ruth would have rest, have some stability and assurance. But Ruth, in making this request of Boaz, goes beyond what Naomi had said, but it's for the sake of Naomi. Not just marriage, but redemption. Continuation of the family line of Elimelech, which would bring rest and security for Naomi as well as for Ruth. Ruth takes decisive action to seek the good of Naomi. Ruth understood that she had God-given responsibilities in her relationship with Naomi, and she was determined to carry those out. Her love is shown by putting the good of Naomi in the place of priority.

3. **v.10** Boaz responds, and here we see more of Ruth's love on display. "You have made this last kindness greater than the first..." - Did you pick up on that word again? Kindness, steadfast love, *hesed*. The first kindness Boaz refers to seems to be pointing back to **2:11-12**, where Boaz recognized Ruth's service to Naomi. But he says this last kindness is even greater, and I believe this is referring to Ruth's request that Boaz perform the part of the redeemer. Boaz commends Ruth for not going after young men, poor or rich. In a time like Judges was, when everyone did what was right in their own eyes, Ruth did what was right in God's eyes, and what was in obedience to God's Word.

Transition: Ruth's love is seen in the obedience to Naomi, and even more in the obedience to God's Word, and also in the brave words she spoke. Lastly this morning we see God's work in Boaz's heart, leading him to loving words and deeds.

Boaz's Love Through Words and Deeds (vv.11-15)

1. **v.11** "...you are a worthy woman." - Boaz recognizes how brave, and even risky, Ruth's request was, and he seeks to console her, telling her not to fear, and tells her that he will carry out her request. He commends her as a worthy woman, and certainly she was. He shows love through the words that he speaks to her.

1. Isn't it interesting that Ruth is presented to us as a beautiful woman, even though we're not given a physical description of her? What is it that is commended, and what is beautiful about her? Her godliness, her conviction to do what is right, her concern for others, her labor on behalf of others, her obedience to God's Word. This is what Boaz recognizes in her. This word *worthy* is also translated as *excellent*. The description of the excellent woman in **Proverbs 31** is book-ended with this (**vv.10, 29-31, cf. 1 Peter 3:3-4**). *Women and young women here this morning, is this what you aspire to? It should be. Not like the mom of my high school friend, who I didn't recognize when she answered the door of her home. Men, is this what you recognize and praise?*
2. **vv.12-13** "*Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.*" - Boaz was a man of integrity. In **2:1** he's introduced to us as a "worthy man", one who was valiant and upright, brave and full of strength of character. He knows there is a man more closely related, one who is in line before him to perform the part of the kinsman redeemer, and Boaz wants to make sure that he conducts himself in a godly and upright manner, full of integrity. He wants to make sure he is living in obedience to God's Word. **Love can't be shown where integrity is absent or God's Word is disregarded.** If there's a void of integrity, call it what you will, but it's not love.
3. Boaz also shows love through his restraint. His aim is to serve Ruth, not take advantage of her. He tells her to stay the night and return home in the morning. Nighttime around Bethlehem was dangerous for a woman during the time of Judges (**Judges 19**), so he instructs her to stay where she will be safe.
4. **v.15** Boaz also shows love through what he provides. He loads her with six measures of barley and sends her home. Ruth reports this to Naomi, informing Naomi that Boaz's concern was extended to Naomi in the giving of the grain (**v.17**).

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I want to remind you of the work of our Redeemer, Jesus. We know what love is because Jesus first loved us. Even when we were still sinners, even unworthy, Christ set his affection on us, purchased us at the price of his own life, and has given us new life and new hearts, eager to glorify him in the love we show to others. It is God's work in the hearts of his people that leads them to love toward others. **1 John 4:7-11** "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*"

Family

Table Talk



February 4, 2018



GOD'S TRUTH

God's work in the hearts of his people
leads them to love toward others!



Family Discussion ?s

1. Love. This is a word you undoubtedly hear and use often. Do you know what love is? Discuss this question as a family.
2. To know what love is, we must know the source of love. Read the Scripture listed. Who is this source?
3. How do we know what Love looks like? Who is our ultimate example of love?
4. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz displayed this kind of love. Their story points us to love Himself, and the redemption of our souls through what Jesus Christ accomplished. Sacrifice and provision. This is what love does. How about you? Do you show this kind of selfless love to your family and friends? To strangers?
5. How can you grow in this area? Spend time together as a family in prayer over your hearts- that they would be soft, obedient and loving as the Holy Spirit works in them.

Key Verse

"Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?"
Ruth 3:1 (ESV)

TABLE READING

Lead your kids further into God's Word...

1. 1 Corinthians 13
2. 1 John 4:7-8
3. 1 John 3:16-18, 4:9-12; John 15:13-14
4. Ruth 3:1, 6 & 11-13
5. Romans 12:1-2; 1 John 4:13-21

Scripture Memory: Exodus 34:6



"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." - Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)