

## **Ruth's Faithfulness in Service**

### **Lesson Scope:** [Ruth 2](#)

#### **Lesson Focus**

Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. This was a time of hope and expectancy as the reapers went out to the fields to gather in the harvest. It was a time of blessing for the poor in Israel also, who were permitted to glean the fields after the reapers. Ruth dutifully went to glean for her own needs and those of her mother-in-law. God's eye was on this young widow who had just recently professed her faith in Him. He arranged the circumstances so that it was "her hap" to glean in the field belonging to Boaz. He was a generous man who showed interest in the welfare of his servants. He took notice of Ruth's labors and desired to know who she was. Upon learning that she was Naomi's daughter-in-law, he recalled what he had been told about her kindness to Naomi. He showed favor to her and permitted her to glean among the reapers. Through Ruth's diligence, greater privileges became available to her.

Ruth did not let feelings of inferiority as a stranger hinder her from filling her role. Neither did she wait for a more convenient time or a more suitable place to serve. God rewarded her efforts, granting her a place among His people.

The Lord has work for all to do. The faithful willingly and diligently enter into opportunities available to them.

"Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). In the previous lesson we were inspired by Ruth's faith. In this lesson we see her works, which were simply faith in action.

A Christian is a believer. But he is more than a believer; he is a worker. He believes and expresses his belief by serving God and his fellow men. He who claims to believe in God but is not actively serving Him is not a true believer.

Let us be challenged by Ruth's example and to seize the opportunities they have to serve today. Help them to find ways to be useful, employing their abilities in service to God.

**Lesson Aim:** To identify characteristics of a person who is useful to God.

**Theme Verse:** [Luke 16:10](#). He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

**Lesson Text:**

### **A Ready Servant**

[Ruth 2:2-7](#) <sup>2</sup> And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. <sup>3</sup> And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who *was* of the kindred of Elimelech. <sup>4</sup> And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD *be* with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. <sup>5</sup> Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel *is* this? <sup>6</sup> And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It *is* the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: <sup>7</sup> And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

### **A Rewarded Servant**

[Ruth 2:8-16](#) <sup>8</sup> Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: <sup>9</sup> *Let* thine eyes *be* on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of *that* which the young men have drawn. <sup>10</sup> Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I *am* a stranger? <sup>11</sup> And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. <sup>12</sup> The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given

thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. <sup>13</sup> Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. <sup>14</sup> And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched *corn*, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. <sup>15</sup> And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: <sup>16</sup> And let fall also *some* of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave *them*, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not.

### **A Reliable Servant**

**Ruth 2:17-23** <sup>17</sup> So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. <sup>18</sup> And she took *it* up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed. <sup>19</sup> And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day *is* Boaz. <sup>20</sup> And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed *be* he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man *is* near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. <sup>21</sup> And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. <sup>22</sup> And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, *It is* good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. <sup>23</sup> So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **A Ready Servant**

1. What does Ruth's willingness to glean show us about her character?
2. What evidence of divine providence do we note in this account?
3. What attitudes sometimes hinder our service to God?

## **A Rewarded Servant**

4. How does the compassion of Boaz for Ruth remind us of Jesus' interest in us?
5. What rewards did Ruth receive for her labors?
6. In what ways can we drop some "handfuls of purpose" for others?

## **A Reliable Servant**

7. What virtues of faithful servanthood did Ruth possess?
8. How can we promote willing service in the brotherhood?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

"Her hap" (Ruth 2:3) indicates that Ruth chose to glean in a field not knowing whose it was. But God had arranged the circumstances and was leading for her good. Her trust in God was not in vain.

Ruth appreciated the favor of Boaz, although she was unlike his handmaidens (Ruth 2:13). She did not assume that she had equal rights with them.

An ephah (Ruth 2:17) is nearly a bushel. Ruth's diligence, coupled with the kindness of Boaz and his servants, made such success possible. The menial labors of this Gentile woman are given attention because of her place in the lineage of Christ. The Lord rewarded her efforts because she trusted in Him.

Upon learning that Ruth had gleaned in Boaz's field, Naomi told her, "The man is near of kin unto us" (Ruth 2:20). She knew that he was potentially Ruth's redeemer.

Boaz is a type of Christ, who viewed the publicans and sinners as candidates for the kingdom of heaven (Mark 2:15). In Acts 10:34-35, Peter stated that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Both Jews and Gentiles can become Christians.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **A Ready Servant**

1. Humble submissiveness is a quality that God can bless (Ruth 2:2-3). Ruth was willing to work, and she did not presume upon anyone's generosity. She accepted her lot and was grateful for the privilege to glean. She was content with what she received. Her expectations were realistic.

2. A useful person takes advantage of the opportunities and circumstances God sends (Ruth 2:3). God arranges circumstances for the benefit of those seeking to be useful to Him. Using the resources God made available to her, Ruth took the initiative to provide for herself and her mother-in-law. We will miss many blessings if we focus on life's difficulties rather than putting our hands to the work we can do.

3. Faithful persons do not presume on the goodness of others (Ruth 2:5-7). Ruth courteously asked the reapers for permission to glean in the field. She was likely aware that they viewed her as a stranger, and the knowledge of her nationality might cause them to deny her request. We must never infringe upon the privacy, the privileges, or the possessions of others. We should express due appreciation for all that others do for us.

### **A Rewarded Servant**

4. A sense of personal unworthiness is a response of a useful person (Ruth 2: 10). As Ruth bowed herself before Boaz, she showed her gratitude for favors she had no reason to expect. Such should be the response of every person to God's grace, of which none is worthy. That gratitude will inspire a life of commitment to God and deeds of kindness to others.

5. Faithful persons leave a testimony of compassion and trust (Ruth 2:11-12). What has "fully been shewed" to others about us? Do people see us as full of compassion and faith or as those who drive hard bargains to benefit ourselves or take life's circumstances into our own hands?

6. Useful persons show respect toward their benefactors (Ruth 2:13). Ruth respected and honored Boaz, who showed her kindness, though she was not of Israel. She realized that he had gone beyond what she could expect, and she expressed due gratitude. Parents, church leaders, and even our creditors deserve all due respect.

7. Faithful servants enjoy the substance and security of the Master's house (Ruth 2:14-16). Full access to the fruitful fields and the well-spread table of Boaz became Ruth's reward. Her character and conduct were observed and appreciated. Her faith had given her a place among God's people.

### **A Reliable Servant**

8. A useful person is diligent and persevering (Ruth 2:17). Ruth completed her task. She not only gathered the handfuls of barley but also threshed it by hand. By evening she had nearly a bushel of barley, the product of her day's work. Are we teaching our children the merits of a hard day's work?

There is a direct link between diligence and endurance in material matters and diligence and endurance in the Christian life.

9. God uses people who are considerate of others (Ruth 2:18). Ruth provided not only for her own needs but also for Naomi. While we are responsible to meet our own needs, we should exercise concern for others also.

10. Useful people are open and communicative (Ruth 2:19). They understand that other people are affected by their choices and actions. Open sharing enhances teamwork and builds trust.

11. A useful person finds contentment in his field of service (Ruth 2:20, 23). Certain difficulties will be found wherever one serves. However, rather than fleeing in search of easier work or fewer challenges, God's servants

look to Him to find a way through, availing themselves of the opportunities near at hand.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Humble submissiveness is a quality that God can bless (Ruth 2:2-3).

2. A useful person takes advantage of the opportunities and circumstances God sends (Ruth 2:3).

3. Faithful persons do not presume on the goodness of others (Ruth 2:5-7).

4. A sense of personal unworthiness is a response of a useful person (Ruth 2:10).

5. Faithful persons leave a testimony of compassion and trust (Ruth 2:11-12).

6. Useful persons show respect toward their benefactors (Ruth 2:13).

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10. Useful people are open and communicative (Ruth 2:19).

11. A useful person finds contentment in his field of service (Ruth 2:20, 23).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What does Ruth's willingness to glean show us about her character?

Ruth was industrious and diligent. She was ready to do the task at hand. She took personal responsibility to meet her own needs and those of her mother-in-law. She humbly accepted menial labor and performed it willingly. She utilized the opportunity to gather food during harvest time.

2. What evidence of divine providence do we note in this account?

Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest (Ruth 1:22). It was a prime time of opportunity. God directed that Ruth's hap was to glean in Boaz's field, her future kinsman-redeemer. God was working for the good of these two widows.

3. What attitudes sometimes hinder our service to God?

Wrong priorities may keep us from giving our time for the Lord's work. Sometimes we focus on selfish interests and neglect kingdom interests. Notions of our inferiority may cause us to leave God's work to others whom we feel are more talented or capable.

4. How does the compassion of Boaz for Ruth remind us of Jesus' interest in us?

Just as Boaz provided what Ruth needed, so Jesus is able and willing to meet our needs. He does not turn away when we humbly come to Him with our needs. Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Boaz gave Ruth more than she asked for and more than she had reason to expect.

5. What rewards did Ruth receive for her labors?

She received the notice of Boaz, who was in a position to meet her needs. God rewarded her efforts because of her trust in Him (Ruth 2:12). She was permitted to eat at the master's table along with the reapers (Ruth 2:14). "Handfuls of purpose" were allowed to fall for her. And not least, she had the satisfaction that comes from providing for one's needs as the Bible commands.

6. In what ways can we drop some "handfuls of purpose" for others?

We can lend a helping hand to someone we are not obligated to help. We can share our abundance with those who lack. Jesus told His disciples, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). We who have received the riches of the Gospel can share the Gospel with persons outside those privileges. A smile, a cheery word, or a small courtesy or kindness can be a means of reaching the lost and introducing them to God, who loves all men and desires their salvation.

7. What virtues of faithful servanthood did Ruth possess?

She used the entire day to serve. It seems she was among the first to return to work after the noon meal. She completed the job at hand. She continued gleaning until the end of harvest. Thus she made full use of the opportunity she had to serve. She was grateful for what she received. She did not complain about the work.

8. How can we promote willing service in the brotherhood?

We should show our appreciation for the efforts of our brothers and sisters. We should cooperate with others, working together as a team. We should be content with the place we have in the church and serve cheerfully.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Jesus came into the world, not to be ministered to, but to minister to man's needs. He told His disciples that "whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:27).

Ruth did not seek recognition for her service; she simply did her duty. She lived for the good of others. Her example inspires us to use the opportunities we have to serve today.

There's work for the aged and work for the young; There's work for us all and excuses for none; There's work for the feeble and work for the strong; There's something for all to do.

### **Research Guide**

1. Read Scriptures pertaining to gleaning and the laws governing it. These include Leviticus 19:9, 10 and Deuteronomy 24:19.

2. See Scriptures relating to God's attitude toward the widows and orphans and any others who are in need. These include Psalm 82:1-3; Isaiah 58:6-11; and James 1:27.