



Series: Ruth	Reference: Ruth Chapter 2	Title: A Chance Meeting?	Date: 9.10.17
Website Writeup:			
In this story of contrasts, hope & faith, we see God, in His providence, putting together our cast of characters on the stage of life. Is this a chance meeting between Boaz & Ruth or something more? Let's find out in Chapter 2 of Ruth.			

Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

UPG Prayer of the Day... (replaced by CG Testimony Joe Gargano)

Sermon...

Ruth & Naomi have returned to Bethlehem from Moab, their husbands dead. No way to make a living. And Ruth has given up all security to follow Naomi's people & her God. Let's continue the story in Chapter 2.

*1*Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz. *2*And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." *3* So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

*4*Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The LORD be with you!", "The LORD bless you!" they called back. *5*Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is that?" *6*The foreman replied, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi. *7* She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

*8*So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. *9* Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." *10*At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"

*11*Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. *12* May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

13"May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls."

14At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. **15** As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. **16** Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her."

17So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. **18** She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

19Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!" Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said.

20"The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers." **21**Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.' "

22Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else's field you might be harmed." **23**So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth's a foreigner on a faith journey. Legally married into Judaism. But she's said, your people will be my people, your god my god. A faith decision, foregoing security back in Moab. No way of regaining inheritance from her dead husband without a Kinsman Redeemer; another male relative to take her as his wife. No means of making money. All she has is a depressed older mother-in-law for which she's taken responsibility.

Have you ever left anything to follow Christ? Home, security, money, relationships, or even a past sin life in obedience to God's call? Some maybe, but for many the call of God may not even be a question. We make our own choices & build our own lives.

In Lampung, South Sumatra we'd started a sending base to develop teams of Indigenous missionaries among the Lampungese. A hard people. Sumatran culture was unlike Javanese culture. On one side of the Sunda Straits on the island of Java the people were polite, soft spoken, non-confrontational, always bowing & bobbing around, "Yes sir, yes sir." Javanese wouldn't even use the word no, rather substituting it with 'not yet'. Even someone single at the age of 80, if asked if they were married would respond not yet. No was too definitive; too rude. At one point a new employee of the school I'd started came by my house to meet me. Very Javanese - stereotypical large smile & posture of submission. It took ten invitations to get him through my front door! He was too afraid to offend. We grew to be very good friends.



The Lampungese on the other hand were like New York cabbies on crack. Once you met a Lampungese man there was nothing stopping him & family from showing up at your house & rifling through your belongings, which they did on occasion. Thankfully I lived far enough from the village, this wasn't a regular occurrence. In your face. Nosy. Asking all the wrong questions. Straight forward. Loud. They carried knives which they'd use if you offended their self worth. They were the anti-Javanese.

But most indigenous missionaries were Javanese, and as a result, I often had to sit with Javanese Missionaries counseling them through a recommitment to the work. The soft-hearted Javanese got chewed up in spiritual warfare & cultural differences. They were afraid of the Lampungese. Indigenous missionaries were often killed. Teenage Christian girls beheaded; men chased down & hacked to death, churches burned with Christians huddled together inside. Dangerous work. Simple things were difficult too. Javanese homes would never have a bathroom built off the kitchen for cleanliness, but in Lampung, bathrooms were always just off the kitchen & these nice little meek Javanese wives struggled with such details.

These people had left family, friends, prosperity, status, comfort, safety, all with only the promise & call of Christ on their hearts. Like Abraham in Genesis 12, the first missionary leaving culture & land for another, here's Ruth, a young Moabite woman leaving all to go to the Promise Land. Placing herself among the Israelites in a very dark time of history & by her faith & actions, she's become an ever present reminder to the Jews of the providence of God - but she's like a reverse missionary; a prophet without words.

Her actions match her new found faith. The God of Israel's concerned for the poor, the downtrodden, the brokenhearted. Ruth mirrors this by her choices to commit herself to Naomi, doing for her what she can't do for herself. Ruth not only makes a profession of faith, she embodies it in action reflecting God's character!

God's hovering over the scene, providing for this young woman in her obedience. Ruth would have every reason, even more than Naomi, to be melancholy, but wastes no time to get out & provide. The only thing she can do is beg; eating only what she needs, giving the rest to Naomi. It's like moving from Mexico to the States & waking up the first day saying, *"Naomi, I'm gonna go pick garbage, or beg, to find us something to eat."*

Imagine looking out your window seeing a young woman picking through your leftovers. Think about that, God honors & cares for that person rifling through your garbage. Moreover, she becomes a model of obedience, hard work & faith. When was the last time you considered a homeless person a hard worker & thought, God's gonna use them!

Without complaint Ruth goes straight to action. Like my wife, Kim, who'll move into a new neighborhood & know everything about it the first day. Exploring, finding places to shop, walk, take the kids, the library, etc. Kim's a worker. Ruth gets to Bethlehem & right away finds an avenue for provision & takes it. She's diligent, resting only when needed. She doesn't take advantage, only eats what she needs. Grateful for what she's been given falling on her face before this man. She could've asked for & taken more.

Lounged around. Could've been prideful. Grumbled about doing such a lowly thing, or said, "It wouldn't be like this in Moab!" But none of that, she sets herself to task.

God, in His providence, has given her this wonderful gift of suffering; allowing her to develop under pressure, immortalizing her in the pages of Scripture. A pearl set on the dark pages of Israel's history. God leads her to the field of her Kinsman Redeemer – it isn't happenstance. He gave her favor before this man, providing more than she needed; an ephah, 4 gallons, 30lbs+, enough for a week. **In his providence, God's brought protection on her in a foreign land in a time when "everyone did as he saw fit."** And, when men have no moral compass, you can imagine what might've happened to an attractive destitute young woman.

Ruth, the reverse missionary to Israel, used by God, in a male dominated society, showing true faith & obedience; a prophet of few words but clear action. God seems to choose the small to teach large lessons. A young girl, humbly living risky faith who intuitively reflected *Romans 5:3-4* 'We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.'

And now we're introduced to Boaz in 2:1 - no mistake the writer sets him up as he does, as if to say this meeting is no accident, but God's plan. Remembering the state of Israel, everyone did as they saw fit & this is a book of contrasts, entering our story is a 'man of standing'. What does that mean? Translated it meant he was a man of wealth, influence & his character & moral fortitude were in contrast to other men. He could be called a warrior & man of valor. Listen to the background, Boaz stands in contrast to Elimelech; endured hardship with character, coming out on top. But Elimelech sought comfort running from the situation & brought more hardship than necessary on his family.

Boaz's mother had been a prostitute. He also stands in contrast to his lineage; God changed his family. In comparison to Ruth, he's higher in societal standing. A business owner, a boss, a man of means & wealth. And, Ruth, a young girl begging. Contrasts. And, for us, this man becomes a Christ figure - the Kinsman Redeemer. The one with power to take their burden upon himself as Christ does for us as foreigners, as it tells us in Ephesians 2:11-13... **11**Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth...**12**remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. **13**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Boaz clearly & quickly becomes a mirror image of God's kindness & love, drawing us into his family & providing for his children; a god who takes the burden of his own people on his shoulders & making sacrifice for them. Levitical Law would've allowed for provision for the poor as seen in *Leviticus 19:9-10: 9* "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. **10** Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.



And notice, not only does Boaz do what's required of the law, in a time when others weren't, but goes above & beyond. He's living in a dark time, people had little concern of walking with the Lord, but immediately he speaks boldly as a man of faith. Unashamed of who God is, pronouncing blessing on others. There's no mistaking what Boaz is about, He's about God. So many times we play Jeckyl & Hyde before others - remember we want to be people of integrity, not just people who say we *want* to have integrity.

I remember talking with two neighbors. The man, I knew was a Christian & when he talked with me privately he would talk of how God was leading his life. He was Catholic & attended the same church of the woman with us. She was culturally Catholic & clearly had no use for God. They'd been friends many years. As he spoke in his way with me, she began to make fun of him. He was very embarrassed since it became clear he was one person with me & another with her. She'd never heard him talk this way, it made her question his integrity. How could she take him seriously as a person of faith if she'd never heard him talk as a Christian before, even after years of close friendship?

If we even do evangelism we often vomit the Gospel up on someone in one conversation. We separate Evangelism from the norm of everyday life & do it outside the context of close relationship - one argument to be won devoid of the context of character. It's safer to evangelize those we don't know, since those we do may not have seen much of Jesus in our lives! The Truth of the Gospel will never have power without our modeling a living out the character of Jesus in all ways; **St. Francis said, "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary use words."**

Does that mean tomorrow morning you go to the curb, pick up your newspaper & say to your neighbor next door, "The Lord bless you neighbor!"? No, but it does mean people should know Jesus is central to us. But, I'd venture to guess we don't do this in front of people because we don't do it privately, not considering what God wants of our lives even in the simple things. We need to *be* Christian, not just holding to intellectual orthodoxy, or theological principles. The joy of a life lived in faith is undeniable & attractive, much more than a cold list of theological principles. Boaz lived his faith before others, people knew what he was about. Jesus calls us to the same, not obnoxiously or arrogantly, but naturally.

He was 'being' a follower. God central to everyday life - not only using the language, but his position & power to protect & provide for her, allowing for her dignity to stay in tact. A gentle loving astute man of wisdom, knowing the slightest decision & word can crush her in this vulnerable state.

Someone once said to me, *'Men don't like to follow men who live out of the heart'*. Like Kevin Spacey said in front of the Congressional Committee in *House of Cards* as he was on trial for corruption, *"You don't actually need me to stand for anything. You just need me to stand. To be the strong man."* Loving, gentle, compassionate men are painted as weak. Men are taught manhood is regression into brutishness. But God takes us forward becoming men of compassion & care of the broken, standing against hurt, violence & injustice.



It's hard to be a Christian man; ladies should extend grace to us as we fumble through it. It's much manlier to go against the flow of even Christian sub-culture, becoming a man who cries & bleeds for those less fortunate. A man like Boaz who'll extend himself with gentility & love to one who needs it. Single guys, do you know what's most attractive to a woman? Become a strong but loving, gentle, caring, man following after God's heart! Decisional. Taking responsibility. Making commitments - it's stronger than any cologne. Better than any pick up line. Goes farther than 40 days in the gym. A man reflecting the character of God. Look at Boaz...it has nothing to do with his money & everything to do with how he walks with God, and what he does with position & power.

But our goal isn't to be like Boaz. He only images God; our goal's to be like Jesus. The Character of Christ & the responsibility it brings guides us. Personality types aren't an excuse; "Well I'm just quiet, they'll have to accept that." "I'm just not talkative; I can't get to know my neighbors"not an excuse. "She's so emotional, I can't handle it!" Not an excuse; who made emotion & deemed them important? God. Maybe we can learn something from women. She's not perfect; her thighs are a bit large? Look at your gut brother! Can you see your toes! Is character your first criteria, or is it just looks?

The call of Christ on us as men is to love, encourage, protect, care, speak up & sacrifice. People come before football! If you're single & your only thought is, when will you get married? You're misdirected. If you come to church just to find a date, wrong answer. Our purpose here is to become like Christ, to seek first his Kingdom. Boaz was busy being a man of God & Ruth dropped in his lap by God's providence, nothing else. His central goal was God.

Imagine the comments from the workers he may've gotten? He allows her to work continuing in her position with patience. He encourages & speaks truth to her. Lifts her up physically & verbally. He doesn't treat her as a foreigner, but acknowledges her worth & honors her. He didn't have to. He could've sent her away. He could've turned a blind eye to how the workers would treat her, who would've blamed him? He could've taken advantage. She's not his responsibility, but he takes responsibility. He sees her with the eyes of God, as a person of dignity & worth who's worthy of his help. And, unlike Naomi in the previous chapter he acknowledges the work of the Lord in her life & leads her one step closer in her newfound relationship to God.

Ruth, a woman who had every reason to complain & grow bitter, chooses to react in faith & work hard. Boaz, a prostitute's son, who may've learned from his own mother's life the indignities which can be visited on women by men, chooses to walk with all integrity before God living out his faith before others. A man & woman who mirror the character of God & become a shadow of Christ for us today. And we can't forget Naomi, who has been in despair starts to show a glimmer of hope recognizing God's providence & now leading Ruth to make good decisions. This is a truly a story of contrasts, of hope of faith & care in community.



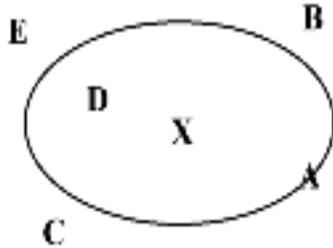
COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS

Blued Typeface is meant as notes for CGI's. This being your first meeting take the time to get to know group members & why they came. Maybe think of a good ice breaker. Don't feel the need to get to all the questions below, just what you feel is good, and creates conversation well. There's a lot here. You don't need to print these questions out for people either, just use it as your own notes to go off of, ask questions, and lead discussion.

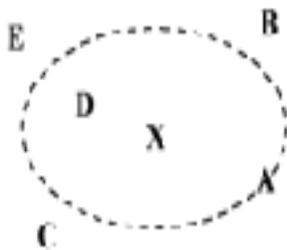
Recapping, Ruth & Naomi find themselves in a precarious position as women without a male in the household in a patriarchal society. They have no income, and no way to recover inheritance. They chose to move back to Bethlehem, Judah. Ruth, a foreigner & Moabite nonetheless has chosen to forgo all security and follow Naomi on this journey claiming that Naomi's people will be her people, and Naomi's god her god. In moving Ruth has this 'chance' meeting (which is really a providential meeting) with Boaz, a candidate as Kinsman Redeemer for these women.

1. Like Ruth, have you ever left anything significant to follow Christ?
 1. Is the call of God a concern for you?
2. What does His call entail for the Christian life?
 1. Discuss what is/are the General Call(s) on all Christians, and the Specific Call on an individual. How do these differ, and how do they compliment each other?
 1. *the General Call being that which all Christians are called to as the Body of Christ*
 2. *the Specific Call may involve vocation, or an individuals life direction under the overall guide of the Churches General Call*
 3. *For instance, "Jason was called to be a Pastor" (Specific) but he's always felt called to follow Christ & share Him with others (one aspect of the General Call]*
 4. *It may help to have a large sheet of paper or whiteboard available to write out some General & Specific Call statements as they're shared.*
3. How would, or do, others know you're a Christian?
 1. How important is CHARACTER in that witness?
 2. How important are WORDS in that witness?
 3. Have the people closest to you both seen the Gospel in your life, as well as heard it from you in word? (Don't feel guilty if not, just be honest - that's part of building integrity!)
 4. Discuss what this statement means, 'We want to be people who actually *have integrity*, rather than people who say we *want to have integrity*'.
 1. What does having integrity mean as a Christian?
 2. Would your neighbor, or friends outside of church be confused if they heard the way you speak or act in Christian circles?
4. How does this issue of Christian integrity & witness in word & deed relate back to the circle models we saw in the first sermon on Ruth? (I've reprinted them on the last page along with brief descriptions - you can also go back & read more fully from the Ruth 1 sermon from last week, feel free to print these circle models out for your group if you intend to use them.)
 1. How do we begin to see people not as 'foreigners' or 'outsiders' but as people created by God, to whom God may be calling into His presence?
 1. How did Boaz model this?
5. Take time to prayerfully write down 3 people each outside of church/group you'd like to take one step closer to Jesus in the coming weeks. Share those together & pray for them as a group with an empty chair in the middle as a reminder you'd like the Holy Spirit to fill it with these people.

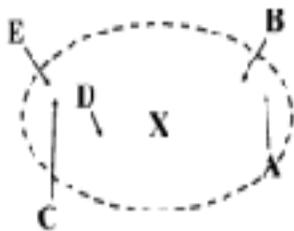
The Church's often gotten stuck in **Boundary Thinking** which only asks are people in or out? Christian or non-Christian? It looks like this...if X represents Jesus, we're very comfortable D is in & even that E, B, C are out (we at least know where they stand), but we're confused about A who seems to be on the line.



We could however erase that line a bit & bring ourselves to what's called **Centered Thinking** which gets rid of the boundary, and by doing so we place more of our focus on Jesus. Here we deemphasize 'in or out', becoming more aware of how close D is to the center & we make some interesting distinctions – such as, outsider C may be as close to the center as *almost* insider A.



Process Thinking takes this further further. Now let the arrows suggest direction & by their length, speed or momentum, two factors which are invisible in the other ways of thinking. Now it becomes clear that B & E are better off than A, even though they're outsiders by boundary thinking & distant by centered thinking. In other words, is someone closer to, or farther from Jesus?



Journey Thinking takes it even further. In Journey thinking we realize the center point isn't static. Jesus is moving, progressing, advancing & journeying (notice He's not changing, but doing something). Now the most important question becomes whether one is FOLLOWING. Somehow, this should resonate with Jesus' call to FOLLOW ME. *Now*, who in this diagram would you rather be? If X is Jesus, who's traveling with Jesus? Who has responded to the call, Follow ME?

