



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

## **Ruth 3:1-12 & 16-18** **New International Version** **August 18, 2019**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 18, 2019**, is from **Ruth 3:1-12 & 16-18**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Ruth 3:1) One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for.**

As poverty-stricken widows, Ruth worked hard to support her elderly mother-in-law by gleaning wheat and barley in the field of Boaz, a kinsman, a relative of Elimelech, Naomi's deceased husband, who had died in Moab. Ruth proved herself a good provider by working long hours at gleaning according to the Law of God, and Boaz took

notice of her as a virtuous woman who cared for her mother-in-law as though she were her own mother; therefore, Boaz protected her and made certain she took to Naomi more than she could have humanly gleaned in a day. Naomi loved Ruth so much that when Ruth wanted to go to Bethlehem with her to care for her, on the way Naomi told her to go back to her family and find a husband in Moab. Ruth refused, and put her mother-in-law's happiness and security above her own. She did for Naomi what she would have wanted done for herself had the situation been reversed. So, after Ruth had proved herself so faithful and had won the respect of the whole village, Naomi wanted to help her find a husband in Bethlehem so she would have security in her old age. Naomi chose to apply and follow the Law of God that provided for a widow's security through a kinsman redeemer should she die childless, for Ruth had no children by Mahlon, the eldest of Naomi's two sons (see Deuteronomy 25:5-10 for the laws concerning Levirate Marriage).

**(Ruth 3:2) Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.**

Boaz was "a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech;" therefore, a kinsman who might qualify as a kinsman redeemer (Ruth 2:1). Boaz was much older than Ruth and the young women that Ruth, as a gleaner, had been working with in the fields. Because Boaz had protected and provided for these women as he would have

cared for his own daughters, Naomi knew that Boaz had the moral character to be a good husband for Ruth and possibly a kinsman redeemer for her. Therefore, Naomi devised a plan that would keep Boaz and Ruth from disgrace or embarrassment should Boaz refuse to marry Ruth according to the Law of God. She knew that Boaz was too old to propose marriage to Ruth with decorum, so she planned for Ruth to follow the laws of God and quietly propose marriage to Boaz through a Levirate Marriage.

**(Ruth 3:3) Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking.**

Ruth obeyed her mother-in-law. She washed and anointed herself and put on her best clothes instead of following the ways of the adulterous as described in the Book of Proverbs. Naomi told her not to propose marriage to Boaz in front of others, which might cause embarrassment to them both.

**(Ruth 3:4) When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.”**

Because Ruth and Boaz were virtuous, Naomi did not tell Ruth to go and lie beside Boaz, which would not have been a marriage proposal. “Feet” is not a euphemism for anything else. By lying down at his feet, Ruth showed Boaz that she was willing to serve him and be his wife, even as

she had been serving Naomi as her daughter. Boaz would be able to depend on her as his wife because he had seen how dependable she was to care for Naomi as a gleaner in his field. Naomi planned for Ruth to speak quietly to Boaz about marriage in a way that would not dishonor them before the LORD or others.

**(Ruth 3:5) “I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered.**

Boaz was no stranger to Ruth. She knew Boaz had cared for and protected her and he would be a good husband for her. Ruth humbly submitted to Naomi’s request, and she did exactly as she was told to do. Though Ruth’s way of proposal might not be the way our Christian culture would do things (we have no Levirate Marriage laws), Naomi and Ruth did the best knew how under the circumstances obey the Law of God and let Boaz know that they would be blessed and pleased if he would agree to take Ruth as his wife in a Levirate Marriage.

**(Ruth 3:6) So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.**

After a hard day’s work, in the early to late evening when the wind was blowing stronger, they continued their work on the threshing floor. Workers would toss the wheat or barley into the air to separate the grain from the chaff, which the wind would blow away. Among the other young women, Ruth would have hardly been noticed.

**(Ruth 3:7) When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down.**

Though Boaz was a wealthy farmer, he too worked at threshing and became exhausted. That night, he gave a feast to all his workers. After celebrating, rather than go back to Bethlehem at that late hour, he found a comfortable place to sleep with the grain as a mattress. Ruth did as Naomi told her.

**(Ruth 3:8) In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!**

Something startled Boaz awake and when he turned over, he discovered a woman at lying at his feet. Ruth revealed herself to Boaz in the purest way possible under the circumstances and for good reasons.

**(Ruth 3:9) “Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.”**

When he asked who she was, Ruth identified herself by name and indicated that she considered herself his servant, not his equal; therefore, by lying at his feet she symbolically bowed before him as a servant would bow

down at the feet of his or her master. “Spread your cloak over your servant” was her way of making a marriage proposal. Would he marry her and grant her security as his wife? Her reason for proposing to Boaz was because they were “next-of-kin,” which meant that they were related through Mahlon, her deceased husband. When she used “next-of-kin,” Boaz knew what she wanted. Would Boaz follow the Levirate Marriage laws and marry her?

**(Ruth 3:10) “The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor.”**

Boaz blessed her for the way she had humbly presented herself to him at his feet and had proposed. He blessed her because she had not run after the young men who were harvesting his grain hoping that one of them would take notice and want to make her his wife. He called her his daughter, because that is the way he had treated her and had protected all the young women working for him. She had shown herself loyal to the LORD and to Naomi, and all Bethlehem knew her virtues. Boaz spoke of her kindness in her willingness to become his wife in Levirate Marriage even though he was old. Her kindness was an even better instance of loyalty than the way she had worked so hard to care for Naomi and herself. Ruth showed greater or better loyalty than the first to her deceased husband by her willingness to perpetuate his name in Levirate Marriage rather than seek after a man younger than Boaz, who

might have been about the same age as Naomi and Elimelech.

**(Ruth 3:11) And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character.**

Boaz and the whole assembly (all the faithful followers of the LORD in Bethlehem) knew that Ruth was a worthy woman, and Boaz planned for Ruth to remain a worthy woman. He told her not to be afraid, because he would not reject her or her desire that he exercise his rights in a Levirate Marriage as next-of-kin.

**(Ruth 3:12) Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I.**

Boaz agreed to marry Ruth, but he acknowledged that though he was a near kinsman, there was one nearer to her than him. The nearest kinsman had the first right of refusal. He would need to give the nearest kinsman the opportunity to marry Ruth, the opportunity to inherit the land of Mahlon, the opportunity to have a child by Ruth who would then inherit Mahlon's land and perpetuate Mahlon's name. In chapter 4 of Ruth, we learn that the nearest kinsman was happy to inherit Mahlon's land, but he did not want to marry Ruth which would complicate his inheritance, so Boaz married Ruth.

**(Ruth 3:16) When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?” Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her**

Everything Naomi told Ruth to do she did, and the LORD blessed her as Naomi hoped.

**(Ruth 3:17) and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”**

Boaz sent Ruth home with about as much grain as she could carry in a way that no one would know that she had been at the threshing floor. By taking this grain to Naomi, Boaz showed his appreciation to Naomi for encouraging Ruth to do as she told her.

**(Ruth 3:18) Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”**

From Ruth’s report and from the generous gift of grain, Naomi knew that Boaz would go and settle the matter as quickly as possible. She encouraged Ruth to remain patient, because they would learn the results of her proposal that very day. Ruth 4 describes what Boaz did.



## Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Do you think Ruth would have made a good wife for Boaz? Why or why not.
2. Do you think Boaz would have made a good husband for Ruth? Why or why not.
3. In what way did the Law of God provide for the security of childless widows?
4. What did Boaz mean when he spoke of Ruth's loyalty being better than the first?
5. What reason did Boaz give Ruth for doing what she asked?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly  
*International Bible Lesson.*

Visit the [International Bible Lessons Forum](http://theiblf.com)  
for Teachers and Students.

*Copyright© 2019 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.*

*Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.*

Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and [lgp@theiblf.com](mailto:lgp@theiblf.com).