

## NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

### LESSON THIRTY-ONE: RUTH 2:5

**"Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?"**

After Boaz and his reapers exchanged greetings he looked around and discovered a stranger in his fields. Boaz would have known the law that required farmers to leave behind grain for the poor. And, as the owner of a large field, he would have been used to seeing the widows, fatherless, and "strangers" following the reapers and gathering stalks of barley for themselves and their family. There must have been something special about Ruth that caught his attention.

Before speaking to Ruth herself, Boaz checked with his foreman to get some background information. As the foreman's boss, Boaz is paying him a compliment by assuming that he (the foreman) was well aware of who was in the field and why they were there.

The way Boaz phrased his question highlights how different our culture is from that of the Jews in Old Testament times. He basically asked, "Who does this young woman belong to?"

Women were subservient to men in ancient Israel. That does not mean they were slaves or ill-treated. As a general rule, women were held in high esteem because of their ability to bear children. Many women were beloved of their husbands and children. But a young woman would not live alone. She would continue in the house of her parents until she was married. Then she would reside with her husband.

Perhaps Boaz's question was his subtle way of finding out if Ruth was married. Who does she belong to? That is, who is in charge of her care: her parents or her husband? He might have had a suspicion she was a young widow given the circumstances of her gleaning in his fields as allowed by the Mosaic law.

Regardless, Boaz was taken with Ruth the moment he set eyes on her. He saw something in her that brought out his protective instincts. He wanted to help her, lift the burden from her shoulders. We know from the passage that Ruth was a hard worker. Perhaps Boaz admired her work ethic.

One commentator stated that it was love at first sight for Boaz. Maybe. Or, his feelings for Ruth may have begun with admiration and deepened to love over time. As we will see, the reports of her were all good. She was kindly and selfless in her care of her mother-in-law.

Boaz may have noticed her because she was a "stranger," an outsider. He was probably familiar with most of the people who lived in Bethlehem, including the poor who routinely gathered food from his lands. Boaz may have had a soft spot for a young Gentile woman who had come to live with the people of God, just as his mother Rahab had done so many years before.

Ruth had endured grief and sorrow but she persevered. Even more, she dedicated herself to lightening the burden of another instead of dwelling on her own loss. She was faithful to her God, and loyal to her husband's mother. Ruth's life was about to change once again. But this time for the better.

Life is change. Nothing stays the same forever - except God. We need to be flexible. Accept those changes over which we have no control. But meet with courage those challenges that God allows in our life to strengthen and mature us.

*"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hand to the needy. Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Proverbs 31:10, 20, 25, 26*