

## NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

### LESSON THIRTY-NINE: RUTH 2:15-16

**"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: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leaven them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."**

When Ruth finished her meal she went back to work in the fields. But Boaz had gone before her and given his servants instructions concerning her. Normally, the gleaners would come along after the reapers had finished their work and moved on. But, Boaz instructed his reapers to let Ruth glean alongside them. Further, they were to cut some stalks and then drop them on purpose for Ruth to gather up.

Ruth not only got the opportunity to gather the stalks of grain first, she didn't have to work as hard or as long to get maximum results. Boaz's reapers purposely dropped grain by the handful for the widow to glean.

God does the same thing for His people. He drops blessings by the handful for our encouragement. Life can drag us down at times. Something unexpectedly awful happens. Or, lots of little things go wrong all at the same time. We feel overwhelmed or depressed. It's just too hard to go on.

This is when God steps in with that unexpected blessing. Suddenly things are looking up. We can breathe again. The burden is lightened. We are encouraged.

When Jesus walked the earth, He sometimes reserved His miracles for an audience consisting of His disciples only. His first miracle of turning water to wine was witnessed by a handful of His disciples. The result was that "his disciples believed on him" (John 2:11). Wait. They were His disciples. Didn't they already believe on Him? Yes, but the miracle reinforced their faith. It removed any tinge of doubt, perhaps. And, confirmed that they had not misplaced their faith.

Jesus purposely delayed His journey to Bethany until Lazarus had died. He told His disciples, "I am glad for your sakes I was not there, to the intent ye may believe" (John 11:15). Jesus could have healed Lazarus of his illness while he lived. But, then, this would just be one of many healings He had performed over a three year period. Perhaps His disciples had seen so many healings they were becoming commonplace. But, never before had a man who had been dead four days been called forth from his tomb.

Even the raising of Jarius' daughter who had just died that day (Mt. 9:23-25) and the son of the widow of Nain who had not yet been buried (Lk. 7:11-15) did not compare. Some Jews believed the soul hovered near the body for three days, hoping to re-inhabit it. By waiting until Lazarus had been dead four days, when the soul had abandoned hope and left, Jesus astonished even His disciples. While the souls of Jarius' daughter and the son of the widow had not yet left their bodies (in their belief system), Lazarus' soul had to be called back into his body before he was raised. This was such a great miracle the Pharisees wanted to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus (Jn. 12:10-11).

God is still in the business of reinforcing our faith. He still showers us with blessing that encourage. We are reminded that we belong to an all-powerful God who loves us, cares for us, and protects us. No matter what life throws at us, we are safe in the hands of God. Be of good cheer. Be encouraged.

*"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Isaiah 41:10*