

Alien woman meets covenant man

Ruth 2:1-29

What's going on in this section

In this chapter we are introduced to Boaz. From his behaviour towards Ruth, a poor widow, an alien, a despised Moabitess, we see that he is what we might call a man of integrity. But it is more than just integrity. He is following the covenant requirements (Deut 29:1), which he understands to be an expression of faith in the God who brought his people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

Boaz is in fact a relative of Naomi's husband, and this means he has obligations under the same covenant. But that is to pre-empt the story.

- The first verse of chapter 2 tells us Boaz was "a man of standing" (NIV). This might be a reference to wealth. But more probably it tells us he was a man at the height of his powers AND who trusted God, like great men of the past. Given that these events took place long before Jesus walked the earth, what would faith (trust) in God look like at this time in history? Cf. Deut 6:1-8; Ps 40:4; Prov 1:1-7
- If you take special note of the fact that the barley harvest has just begun (1:22), imagine the scene described chapter 2. How much information can you gather about the life and times of Ruth and Naomi? The following site might help you:
<http://www.studylight.org/dic/hbd/view.cgi?number=T695>
- Boaz is extraordinarily kind towards Ruth. Where did he get such principles from? (Deut 24:19-21) What might they reveal about Boaz' faith and priorities? How does Boaz behaviour to Ruth exceed the minimum requirements of the covenant relationship with God? Do you think there is any significance to this?
- Did you notice the connection between Israelite history and their care for the poor? (Deut 24:18, 22) Why do you think God made this connection? Why isn't everyone blessed with wealth and prosperity in a "land of milk and honey"?
- We are not just meant to see the characters in this story but that God is behind all the events that occur. Even at this point in the story, what might be the evidence of this?
- Naomi, on hearing of Ruth's success, calls Boaz a "kinsman-redeemer." Before you and/or your group go any further, use the

following verses to profile the idea of “kinsman-redeemer” Lev. 25:23-28, 25:47-55; Deut 19:1-13. Now look up the following site <http://www.studylight.org/dic/hbd/view.cgi?number=T3653> and think about why God would make provision for such a role?

What about us here and now

- Boaz acts with integrity, allowing the widow and the alien to glean his fields, in a way that exceeds the requirements of God’s covenant. Do you only do the minimum that you think God requires? If you only do the minimum, what sort of attitude might this reveal? Can you think of any simple ways of relating to others that demonstrate Boaz’ generosity?
- “Our responsibility as Christians in politics is to not cherry-pick the gospel but understand its complete dimension, including the social dimension as well.” So said Kevin Rudd, Australian national politician and activist for what he calls Christian Socialism. (Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) transcript of interview on *Compass*, Sunday May 8, 2005) Have you ever thought there was “social dimension” to the Gospel? If you were asked what the consequences of your faith were for social issues, what would you say? What do you think Kevin Rudd means when he says we “cherry pick” the gospel?

So what can I do?

- Think about when and where your life intersects with the poor, other cultures, the marginalised and the grieving. Is there any intersection? Why or why not? Do you think of biblical principles when you intersect with these groups?
- Meditate on Jesus words in Matt 26:34-46. Why **doesn’t** Jesus focus on hallmarks like prayer, Bible reading, spiritual gifts and evangelism as the evidence of changed life? Can you see any connection between Jesus’ priorities and Boaz’ actions towards Ruth? What activities in your life are like Jesus’ list?
- Acts 6:1-7, 1 Tim 5:3-16 and James 1:27 reveal that the support of widows was a significant and sustained feature of the early church. Widows in those days were without any welfare support and lived day to day. The plight of widows is not the same today. But are there other individuals or groups that might benefit from your compassion and interest?