

Acceptance in the Community

God's Word:

Ruth 2:5-12, 3:9-11

Key Verse:

“And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.”

Ruth 3:11

Breaking It Down:

In the previous lesson, “Family as Community,” we left off where Ruth decided to leave her family, her home and her religion, to follow her mother-in-law, Naomi, after her husband died. The two women were on their journey back to Bethlehem, just in time for the beginning of the barley harvest.

Ruth asked Naomi if it would be okay if she went to the fields to gather grains. If we go back to Deuteronomy 24:19-21, we see God commanding the Israelites to leave any forgotten sheaves of grain in the field for the alien, orphan or widow. This means that while they were harvesting, whatever stalks of grain were left behind were to be gathered by the poor. Since Ruth was a foreigner, she couldn't claim the right to glean, but she knew that she had to take care of her mother-in-law and herself and hoped to find favor in somebody's eyes. Ruth came upon the land belonging to Boaz, who was a kinsman, or close relative, of Naomi's deceased husband. Boaz noticed Ruth gleaning in his land and asked his servant who she was. When he found out this woman in his field was Ruth, he approached her and told her not to gather in any other field. He told her to stay in his field there with his maidens.



What Ruth did for her mother-in-law by staying by her side and not leaving her alone was admired greatly and many knew her story. When Boaz asked about her, he learned who

she was. Boaz was willing to show favoritism toward Ruth because of the respect he had for her because of what she had done. Even though Ruth was a foreigner -- not just to the land but also to the religion -- she was still accepted into the community because of her inspiring and selfless actions.

Living It:

It is quite difficult to be a foreigner in a new land with different customs. Even so, Ruth was willing to bear all of this because of the love she had for Naomi. Her task was hard,



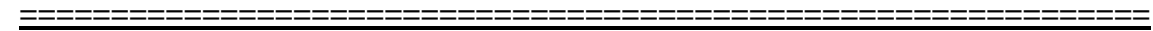
but it would have been even harder if the people in this new community had rejected Ruth. It is the same for newcomers to today's church community. For many people, it is strange because we use unique terminology and have different customs. Even people we live near find our practices unusual. Sometimes this makes it hard for someone who is considering visiting a church. People may feel nervous, even afraid of being rejected by us Christians. This is important to remember when sharing the message of the Gospel and salvation with people who are not part of the Christian community.

We are a people with great blessing and responsibility. We have been given forgiveness and love with a message that will transform even the darkest heart. Still, the effectiveness of this message can be weakened when we choose not to live it out. We must be people of honor and love, fulfilling our God-given responsibility just as Boaz did. Even if some don't want to show love and mercy, we must step up to the plate.

Remember, we as believers have been redeemed by our "Kinsman," Jesus Christ. The Messiah loves us and showed us compassion when no one thought we were deserving of it.

Understanding It:

1. What was Ruth’s reaction to Boaz when he expressed that he wants her to stay in his field to glean there and nowhere else?
2. What is the symbolism of the garment covering in Ruth 3:9? (For help, see Ezekiel 16:8.)
3. Who is our “Kinsman,” or redeemer, today?
4. If you were talking to a non-Christian friend about being “born again,” what would be another phrase you could use to help them understand?



Doing It!

Have you ever brought a friend to a Christian event or church service? If not, why not? This week, reflect on your answer and consider what you can do to change your approach or get rid of your nervousness. Then, go forth and do it!

