

RUTH IS LOYAL TO NAOMI

Ruth 2

In the second chapter, Ruth makes good on her promise to Naomi. She promised to leave everything she had ever known about life in Moab to go to Israel with Naomi (1:16–17). Now she is in Bethlehem, trying to provide for herself and her mother-in-law.

A LOYAL MAN (VV. 1–17)

To provide for their daily needs, Ruth began gleaning for grain behind the reapers during the barley harvest (cf. 1:22). Gleaning was a provision of the Mosaic law that cared for those who were poor, landless, or had otherwise no means of earning food. God had commanded the Israelites not to reap their fields to the edges, to pick up dropped grain, nor to use the fallen grapes or olives in their vineyards and orchards (Lev 19:9–10; Deut 24:19–21), but to leave them for those who could not plant fields for themselves. We see a glimmer of hope, because Ruth “happens” to begin gleaning in the field of a man who took his loyalty to God’s covenant seriously. Additionally, in God’s providence, Boaz was also a relative of Elimelech, Ruth’s father-in-law.

Normally the landowner did not personally oversee the harvest, but on this day, Boaz “happened” to come out to the fields from the city of Bethlehem. As he arrived, he greeted his workers with a blessing and reminder of God’s promised faithfulness to Israel and Israel’s responsibility to obey. When Boaz notices Ruth, we might be tempted to think he was romantically interested in her (and maybe he was), but it seems more likely—given their age difference—that Boaz is eager to demonstrate his loyalty to God’s law regarding showing kindness to sojourners in Israel. He insists that Ruth continue gleaning in his field, offers her refreshment and protection, and pronounces a blessing on her for her loyalty to Naomi, the Lord, and Israel.

A LOYAL GOD (VV. 18–23)

At the end of the day, the total grain she harvested was an ephah, about six gallons, fairly significant for harvesting by hand. Naomi was also impressed and asked where she had gleaned. Ruth reported to Naomi the kindness that Boaz had showed towards her. Here we see a chink in Naomi’s bitter front: she sees in Boaz’s loyalty to God’s law and to her late husband the loyalty of God to her. God had not forsaken her or her husband’s line: he was still faithful, despite her own lack of faithfulness.

Naomi praises the Lord for His faithfulness and kindness. The picture has definitely changed for Naomi: instead of being alone, she has a dependable daughter-in-law, Ruth, who continues gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvest. Even more, she has a powerful ally, Boaz, who is willing to come to her aid and help. Above all, she realizes that she has a faithful God who has not forsaken her or her family in spite of their disobedience and unfaithfulness.

Key verse: *“And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!’” (Ruth 2:20a).*

Do others see the faithfulness of God in my obedience? In what ways?

Does my obedience glorify my own sense of righteousness or do my words and attitudes make it clear that my obedience is only because of God’s faithfulness? How would this look (both the former and the latter)?

Am I faithful to obey God even when it doesn’t “make sense,” when it is inconvenient or difficult, or when no one is watching? When is it most difficult for me to show loyalty to God’s Word in my life?

Do I thank God for his faithfulness through the obedience of others? What are some specific ways I can thank God for his faithfulness in the lives of others today?