

DAILY QUIET TIME GUIDE

BREVARD COMMUNITY CHURCH

STORY — MAKE IT COUNT

05/21/2017

HOW TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME

The QT Guide is designed to help you MOVE with God through Bible Reading, reflection and prayer. It can be completed in a about 7 mins.

½ Minutes Preparing Your Heart: Invest the first 30 seconds preparing your heart. You might pray, “Lord, cleanse my heart so You can speak to me through the Scriptures. Make my mind alert, my soul active, and my heart responsive. Surround me with Your presence during this time.

4 Minutes Listening To God: Take the next four minutes to read the Bible. Your greatest need is to hear a word from God. Allow the Word to strike fire in your heart. Meet the Author!

2 1/2 Talking To God (Prayer): After God has spoken through His Book, then speak to Him in prayer.

DAY 1

Ruth 3:1-5

At this point in the story, Ruth and Boaz have taken center stage. Their relationship commenced with great hope as Boaz spoke kindly to Ruth, prayed for her, protected her, and provided for her all as one would expect from a man ready to be a godly husband. Furthermore, Ruth has at this point in the story been laboring in Boaz’s field for perhaps six to seven weeks until the time of harvest. Time is running out, since Boaz and Ruth won’t be seeing one another anymore when the seasonal work comes to an end and they go their proverbial separate ways. The author is a wonderfully gifted storyteller who has led us to a place of crisis and urgency where, like every good television show, movie, and novel, we want the main characters who are friends to fall in love and live happily ever! But how could this happen given the culture Ruth and Boaz lived in?

As a Moabite, it would have been common for Ruth to perhaps date, and possibly even sleep with or even live with, a man as the route to marriage. Ruth needed the sort of courtship detailed in Scripture. But she lacked the kind of family to help in that process. Today, these two paths to marriage—courtship and dating (see chart below)—remain for us.

For the first time in U.S. history, single adults outnumber married adults.¹ This trend is also becoming increasingly common in other Western nations. Part of this is due to the fact that people are waiting longer than ever to marry. The first marriage for most men is around age 30. For women, it is in the late 20s. This is considerably higher than at any point in U.S. history.² Relatedly, single people are sexually active and using birth control and abortion hoping to prevent conception. Furthermore, people are cohabiting during their single years. It is estimated that about a quarter of unmarried women between the ages of 25 and 39 are currently living with a partner and about half have lived at some time with an

unmarried partner (the data are typically reported for women but not for men).³ Over half of all first marriages are now preceded by cohabitation, compared to virtually none earlier in the century. The most likely to cohabit are people aged 20 to 24.⁴

Subsequently, the 3,000-year-old story of Ruth is incredibly timely. Many, if not most, Christian singles like Ruth don't come from a godly family but aspire to marry a godly person and have a godly family. In Ruth, we see that she seeks wise counsel from an older woman and in faith takes an enormous risk and "pulls a Ruth" to put herself in front of Boaz for marriage.

Looking back at your life, are there any situations where you put yourself in a potentially unsafe situation, but God was gracious to protect you from harm?

Adapted From: Ruth: A Big Little Love Story By Mark Driscoll

DAY 2

Ruth 3-6-11

Naomi's counsel is questionable. Knowing that Boaz had only seen Ruth dirty and sweaty at work in his fields, she counseled Ruth to get a full makeover, buy a new party dress, and put on some nice perfume. She was then instructed to attend the great party Boaz would be at and wait patiently for him to have fun celebrating his great success in business, eat well, and have a glass or two of wine before getting in front of him. Ruth was furthermore counseled to take the risk of actually approaching Boaz while he was asleep to invite him to propose marriage!

Heeding Naomi's counsel, Ruth went to the threshing floor, which would have been a packed plot of ground where the grain from the harvest was threshed by being hit with a sledge, trampled by animals (Micah 4:13), or crushed under the wheels of a cart (Isaiah 28:28). The goal was to separate the kernels from the husk, chaff, and stalk. The straw would be used for animals, the chaff for fuel, and the grain for food. The entire occasion was a time of great celebration and partying (Isaiah 9:3, 41:14–16), and this party would have been particularly enthusiastic because it was the first after many years of famine.

Boaz, along with the other men who had attended the harvest and accompanying party, slept on the threshing floor next to the grain to protect it from thieves. While Boaz slept, Ruth took the very daring and bold counsel of Naomi and uncovered his feet to lie at them. Startled, Boaz awoke and asked who was with him there in the dark. Boaz probably wondered if a prostitute was there to tempt him, as prostitution was common on the threshing floor where men had a few drinks, were in good spirits, and had money to spend (Hosea 9:1).

Ruth revealed herself as his humble servant, but there was likely a moment of uncertainty for Boaz about her intentions. She had recently converted, but Ruth was a Moabite whose entire race began when a young woman climbed into bed with her inebriated father and seduced him (Genesis 19)! Furthermore, the entire story happened in the dark days of the judges when there was great sexual immorality of every kind.

Ruth asked Boaz to answer his own prayer of 2:12 and be God's wing of covering over her. In short, she didn't propose marriage to Boaz, but rather declared her love for him and invited him to ask for her

hand in marriage. The phrase spread your wings is also sometimes translated spread your garment/blanket and is elsewhere used as a symbol for engagement much like our current engagement ring (Ezekiel 16:8; Deuteronomy 23:1, 27:20; Malachi 2:16).

In the act, a man demonstrated that he would both lovingly cover the woman for the entirety of her life and invite her into his bed as his beloved wife. In 1 Corinthians 7:39, Paul says that a widow, like Ruth, is free to marry any Christian whom she chooses to love, and here, Ruth took an enormous risk in declaring her heart to Boaz. Furthermore, while she didn't break any clear command of Scripture, Ruth did indeed trample many cultural taboos as she was younger and Boaz was older; she was a servant and he was her boss; she was a Moabite and he was an Israelite; she was poor and he was rich; and she was a woman and he was a man.

Bible commentators vigorously debate whether Ruth's actions were godly or good. While it doesn't seem like her actions technically crossed a line, it does seem that they danced on it vigorously late at night after a few glasses of wine. To say the least, it's complicated!

Today, single people often ask where the line is in dating. But Ephesians 5:3 (NIV) says, "among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality." Furthermore, in the great romantic book Song of Songs, the refrain is "do not arouse or awaken love before its time." Indeed, the question is not where is the line as much as when is the time. The time is marriage, but not before.

Our true character is often exposed when no one is around and/or when we're caught off guard. How can you pray for yourself to have integrity like Boaz?

Adapted From: Ruth: A Big Little Love Story By Mark Driscoll

DAY 3

Ruth 3:12-13

The story hits a crisis when Boaz reveals to Ruth that as a law-abiding man, he must find a way to marry her legally. Because Naomi had chosen to welcome Ruth as a full daughter, the women had the legal right to their family land. And, closer to the women than Boaz was another family member who had the first right to redeem the women and obtain their land.

With such a quick answer, it appears that perhaps Boaz had been thinking about marrying Ruth and considered the obstacles in his way. But Boaz's mind was already racing to devise a plan by which he could obey the law and still marry Ruth. In this we see that Boaz was a man of action who was highly motivated to act quickly and decisively. Furthermore, Boaz trusted the providence of God to work through the legal system—and in not sexually sinning with Ruth or breaking the law, Boaz showed a determination to act in holiness and in faith that God would bless them.

Boaz then invited Ruth to lie at his feet for the evening. In doing this, he didn't engage in any sexual activity. Rather, knowing that a single woman trying to walk home in the dark of night would be in grave danger, he kept an eye on her as her defender and protector.

Early the next morning before anyone else awoke, Ruth and Boaz arose, and he sent her home before they were seen to safeguard her character from scandalous gossip and unfounded rumor. Before sending Ruth home, Boaz asked her to open her shawl and filled it with an unspecified amount of grain, which was likely very valuable—showing himself yet again to be a generous and gracious man.

Furthermore, Ruth received his kindness in the same way that God asks us to humbly and gladly receive

His grace and provision in our lives.

Naomi then demonstrated full faith in both God and Boaz by counseling Ruth to do nothing but wait patiently in faith. She was certain that Boaz loved Ruth and was a worthy man who got things done, and he would have everything taken care of that very day so they could be married.

Principally we learn four things for singles from this scene of the story:

- Don't overlook the person in front of you. Boaz was single, but somehow overlooked Ruth who God placed in front of him.
- Feel free to get in someone's way. This is precisely what Ruth did, which allowed their relationship to move forward.
- Every relationship has obstacles to overcome, which reveals how committed one person is to one another. In this case, it was the legal and financial hurdle that blocked the path to marriage for Boaz with Ruth.

Every relationship has character tests that show us and the one we are with who we truly are. These tests, if passed, become part of our testimony, as was the case with Ruth and Boaz.

In conclusion, the story of Ruth and Boaz is one of the greatest love stories in Scripture. As such, it's a little love story that's a part and reflection of the big love story of Scripture (e.g., Ezekiel 16:8) where Jesus is "our glorious Boaz" who redeems His bride, the church. Jesus does this by grace, without any obligation, by doing all the work to redeem those who come to Him in faith—just as Ruth came to Boaz seeking redemption and then waited patiently as he alone redeemed her by grace.

How can you grow in being a person who gives and receives wise counsel?

Adapted From: Ruth: A Big Little Love Story By Mark Driscoll

DAY 4

Ruth 4:1-6

For many people, reading the Bible can be, quite frankly, a bit disappointing. They see God speaking to people, but they've never heard His voice. They see angels delivering messages, but all they get is bills in the mail. They see God perform miracles in the pages of Scripture, but not in the problems of their lives. For these people, Ruth can be a very encouraging book. In it, God never speaks, no angels show up, and no miracles occur. The entire book is painfully ordinary—people burying their loved ones, moving to another city, struggling to make ends meet, and having a complex romantic relationship.

In this latest scene, Boaz wants to marry Ruth and also take care of her mother-in-law, Naomi. But to do so, he needs to bump a relative out of the first position of legal right to redeem the women and their property.

So Boaz arrives at the city gate, which was the central place where business was transacted, legal matters were settled, and social relationships were established. Echoing the "chance" arrival of Ruth in the field of Boaz (2:3), here the providential hand of God is once again revealed as the very man with whom Boaz needed to negotiate the redeeming of Ruth just "happened" to walk past shortly after Boaz arrived at the gate.

By law, when land was put up for sale during this time, it was preferable for it to be purchased by a near relative to keep it in the family (Leviticus 25:25–30; Jeremiah 32:6–12). The other man was a nearer relative than Boaz and therefore had first position to purchase the land. So Boaz pressed the man to make a decision that very moment, revealing that if the man were unwilling or unable, he would be glad to do so, as he was also a relative and therefore able to redeem, if permitted.

Rather than accepting an answer he didn't want or breaking the law to get his way, Boaz chose to shrewdly negotiate and turn the conversation in his favor with both wisdom and clever bargaining, through which the providential hand of God could work for good. Yes, God can work through shrewd

business dealings, which is why Jesus told us to “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” Influenced by Boaz’s shrewdness, the unnamed man realized that he couldn’t afford to buy the land and care for the two widows and children that he would bear through Ruth. So, the man passed on the opportunity to redeem Ruth and in so doing permitted Boaz to assume first position and do so himself! It just goes to show that one man’s problem is another man’s princess.

Those present responded to the speech of Boaz by asking God’s blessing on Ruth, Boaz, and the child that everyone trusted God to provide. Indeed, Boaz shines forth here as a strong, bold, wise, and shrewd redeemer. He was able to do so because he had walked with personal integrity and professional ingenuity for many years, which made it possible for him to act quickly.

Jesus comes as our great redeemer who Boaz in many ways resembles:

- Like Boaz was related to Ruth and Naomi, so Jesus as God became a man to relate to us.
- Like the women couldn’t save themselves, so we too can’t save ourselves.
- Like Boaz who wasn’t obligated to save the women, so Jesus wasn’t obligated to save us.
- Like Boaz who redeemed the women, so Jesus redeems us.
- Like Boaz who satisfied the demands of the law, so Jesus lived without sin to satisfy the demands of God’s law.
- Like Boaz paid a personal price to redeem them, Jesus paid the ultimate personal price to redeem us.
- Like Boaz who loved Ruth as his bride, Jesus loves His church as His bride.
- Like Boaz who shared his land and home with the women, so Jesus has prepared an eternal home in His kingdom for us.

What has Jesus redeemed you from?

Adapted From: Ruth: A Big Little Love Story By Mark Driscoll

DAY 5

Ruth 4:13-22

The storyline of Ruth goes from a funeral to a wedding both practically and emotionally.

Ruth, which is one of the best-written short stories of all time, concludes with scenes of God’s hand of providential blessing resting upon Boaz, his lovely bride, Ruth, and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Subsequently, the story completes its cycle from barrenness to birth, widowhood to marriage, poverty to riches, bitter to sweet, idolatry to worship, and devastation to redemption. The big idea in this section of Scripture is that piety and providence are inextricably connected. Simply, those who continue to live in holiness, trusting God to bless them, aren’t disappointed because in His time and by His grace, God in His goodness smiles upon them.

Indeed, Ruth and Naomi were first wrecked and then redeemed financially, relationally, spiritually, and generationally. They accepted the reality of their lives, accepted that their lives had forever changed with the death of their husbands, had a funeral to grieve their losses, conducted a life autopsy to learn what had brought their painful circumstances, healed up, moved toward God’s people and presence, and enjoyed a fresh start.

Their little story, which echoes the big story of Jesus, reveals that life comes after death. If you’re reading this amidst a painful season of life, Ruth and Naomi’s example provides hope to keep going until you’re on the other side of the dark valley you’re currently in.

Ruth and Boaz had a love that rivals any love story in human history. And God gave them a son named Obed, who became the grandfather of the great King David, through whom Samuel (2 Samuel 7:1–7) promised would come Jesus Christ. Ruth is mentioned in only one place in the entire New Testament. In Matthew 1, the foreigner Ruth is included with the unwed Mary, the prostitute Tamar, and the adulteress Bathsheba as the only four women included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the

inclusion of each woman reinforces the truth that Jesus Christ saves us by pure grace and blesses even the least likely people from the least deserving backgrounds.

While God is the hero of the story, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz are wonderful mentors for us to learn from. Although Naomi was bitter about her life, she wisely chose to take her pain and problems to God and His people for healing and help. Although Ruth was a new convert with no guarantee of safety or welcome, she ran to God and His people in faith that somehow He would providentially take care of her if she simply woke up every day to do what was right in His sight. And Boaz stands above most other men in Scripture as an example for every man—particularly young men who aspire to be godly husbands, fathers, and business leaders. In fact, there are numerous lessons to be learned from the life and love story of Ruth and Boaz, including:

- God loves, saves, transforms, and blesses people from even the worst backgrounds and family histories.
- Older, divorced, and widowed people can find love and godly spouses.
- Character is what counts, especially when you think no one is watching.
- Jesus' family had some horrible people in it, which means there's room for us horrible people, too!
- Those without godly parents and/or the input of a godly family can have a God-honoring, romantic relationship with their spouse.
- Work ethic, character, income, and holiness are what show that a man is ready for marriage.
- Sometimes the family of God's people is a stronger bond than even blood family.

In a day when most adults are single, the timeless story of Ruth is perhaps more timely than ever. The story begins amidst seemingly hopeless circumstances for nearly hopeless people.

Are you the first link, strong link, weak link, or broken link in your chain of faith? If you don't come from a strong chain, how can you be encouraged by the life of Ruth? Boaz was a strong link in the chain. What can you learn from him?

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