

Plan Of Attract

Ruth 3:1-6 October 26, 2025

Have you ever had to deal with an 800 pound gorilla in the room? How about a 16,000 pound whale on your beach? In 1970, a dead whale carcass washed up on shore near Florence, Oregon. It had been so long since the last beached whale, no one could remember how to get rid of it.

They weighed their options: Leave it and let nature take its course. That would require a few years of smelly patience.

They could drag it off and bury it, but were pretty sure they wouldn't be able to put it deep enough to not cause an even *bigger* problem down the road.

They could hire people to cut up the carcass and deal with it piece by piece, but nobody was willing. And so, the Oregon State Highway Division drew up a plan to fix their problem: It was time for *dynamite*. A military veteran with explosives training consulted with them. He said 20 sticks of TNT would do the job. But the engineer in charge decided to pack a little more of a punch. He used 20 cases of dynamite. *Half a ton!*¹

The planners were *convinced* the explosion would vaporize most of the whale. Whatever pieces might be left, seagulls would eat. All they had to do was sit back, watch it blow - problem solved.

It was *not a great plan*. The whole thing is captured on video by a local news station. The blast goes off, but as the smoke clears, huge chunks of blubber and gore start raining down on the crowd which is sent running for safety.

It's only by God's grace no one was hurt or killed. The video shows how a huge piece of blubber shrapnel fell on a parked car over a quarter mile away, totaling it.²

As the newsman on site ended his report, he said: "It might be concluded that, should a whale ever be washed ashore in Lane County again, those in charge will not only remember what to do, they'll certainly remember what *not* to do."

How do you deal with problems in your life? When that proverbial 800 pound gorilla looms in the corner, what sort of plans do you make to deal with it? What do you use to navigate your future?

I ask this question because this text is about someone trying to deal with a very serious life problem. We sympathize with her desire to get a solution going. But, as we watch her plan unfold, we become increasingly concerned for how *dangerous* the plan is. Naomi goals are good, but she's playing with fire. She packs cases of dynamite on a delicate situation.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exploding_whale

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6CLumsir34>

She *thinks* she's got a great way to move the plot of life along, but the only thing that saves her and Ruth from disaster is God's grace. Naomi becomes another example preserved for us of how God's people *sometimes* make the mistake of using human wisdom to try to direct our futures.

Abraham did it when he left the land of promise and went down to Egypt. Isaac did, too. Sarah did in regard to Hagar. Moses did when he killed the Egyptian. David did it when he fled from Saul into Philistine territory. So did Jonah, who didn't want to go to Nineveh.

In all of these examples, God's people *thought* they were making a good decision, when they weren't. Of course, God's grace and providence are strong enough to deal with their mistake. But these examples remind us that God's will should be accomplished *God's way*, not the human way.

Naomi wants to help Ruth. She has *good* intentions. But her plan is not sanctified, it's *scandalous*. And it's only by God's grace that some very serious shrapnel didn't total some lives as a result.

Ruth 3:1 - ¹ Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, shouldn't I find rest for you, so that you will be taken care of?"

Naomi is *concerned* for Ruth. That's a good thing. She says, "I need to find *rest* for you." Your Bible might say "security." The word is the one the Old Testament often uses for the Promised Land.³

Naomi wants Ruth to be settled into a loving, Godly, marriage relationship. That's how she used this term back in chapter 1, verse 9. She's thinking about her *current* difficulties *and* her future life.

The goal is good. The need is real. The *problem* is, Ruth can't just go out and find any old husband. There are two issues: First, she is a widow, which at the time carried its own complications, stigmas, and legalities in Israelite society. Second, she is a *Moabite*. That's a *big* problem.

The *only* real hope for Ruth is for her to be *redeemed*. A *redeemer* must take it on himself to *rescue* Ruth from the hopeless position she is in. And of course, the same is true of you and me. *We* are the debtors, the beggars, helpless, and hopeless *unless* the *Redeemer* intervenes and rescues us, which of course, He is ready to do because He *loves* us with an everlasting, never failing love.

If you are not redeemed, you are doomed to death. You may think you can scratch out a living, lay hold of success, make your own way in life, but in reality it is an "empty way of life."⁴ To have a future, you must be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, Who is Christ Jesus, our Savior.

But Naomi says, "I've gotta figure this out for you." Now, it's *clear* that God has already starting putting things together on their behalf - Naomi acknowledged as much in our last passage - and Naomi *is* learning to trust the Lord again and to worship Him again. But here she puts her hands on

³ Justin Jackson *The One Who Returned: A Retrospective And Prospective Reading Of Ruth*

⁴ 1 Peter 1:18

the wheel, she takes the helm with her own navigational plan to try to solve this problem. We don't see her seeking His wisdom, we don't see her discerning what God was unfolding in their lives. We see an understandable urgency, but it leads Naomi into old patterns of human calculation.

Ruth 3:2 - ² Now isn't Boaz our relative? Haven't you been working with his female servants? This evening he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.

Naomi has a complicated plan and she *pressures* Ruth into it. In fact, verse 6 reveals that Naomi *commanded* her to do these things.

Notice the *rushing* of the situation. Tonight! Right now! No time to think, we've just gotta move!

But, pause - Ruth had been in Boaz's fields every day. He was clearly a very involved, hands on boss. He's there at the harvest, he's there at the threshing. Why did this plan have to happen *right then*, under the cover of darkness? Why not see what God was already putting together and move in *that* direction with faith? Because we don't *like* giving God the helm of our lives.

When we face difficulties or struggles, sometimes we become anxious and hasty in our desire to get *out* of those problems. We rush decisions. We talk ourselves into choices before considering them and evaluating if they align with God's principles and His methodology.

Rushed life choices don't usually lead to great spiritual outcomes. Much more often, the Lord asks us to walk by faith in patience, waiting on Him for wisdom and for insight and for clarity of direction. We should discipline ourselves to investigate what God *has already been doing* in our lives. How has He been speaking to us and preparing for us? Remember - God *leads* us. He *teaches* us to do His will as we walk with Him - as we hear His call and follow His voice. But that will often require that we *wait* on the Lord.

Naomi calls Boaz "our relative." She uses a word that is *not* the word "Goel" that we'd expect. Goel is the Kinsman-Redeemer. The word Naomi uses here suggests some distance.⁵

She would've known that he was *not* the nearest redeemer in Elimelech's family. Certainly, Boaz was the *best* man, so perhaps she is trying to *bypass* the legal process and just get this thing done.

Ruth 3:3-4 - ³ Wash, put on perfumed oil, and wear your best clothes. Go down to the threshing floor, but don't let the man know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, notice the place where he's lying, go in and uncover his feet, and lie down. Then he will explain to you what you should do."

Most of us know how this story is going to turn out. Most of us are charmed by the midnight meet-cute. But, listen - this was a *terrible* plan. It wasn't at God's direction and it wasn't above reproach.

⁵ *Dictionary Of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Hebrew Old Testament*

First of all, the threshing floor was known as a place of illicit sexual behavior.⁶ That doesn't mean Boaz and his guys were doing anything wrong, but in the wider culture, *that's* what the threshing floor was associated with. Prostitutes would often frequent these locations.⁷ Hosea chapter 9 even makes reference to that fact.

Second, Hebrew linguists point out that Naomi specifically uses *multiple* words that can have the normal meaning we read but are elsewhere often used in overtly sexual ways.⁸

I'm not saying that Naomi told Ruth to proposition Boaz...but what *is* she asking her to do? It's a bit unclear and open ended. One scholar writes, "Under ordinary circumstances these look like the actions of a prostitute."⁹ And she says, "Do whatever Boaz tells you." But she *doesn't know* what he will do. She can assume. She can *hope*. But this is a serious gamble with someone else's purity.

When we look at this blueprint, it does not look like something the Lord would do. It puts Ruth in a compromising position. It totally endangers her reputation if *anyone* was to see her coming and going that night. It also puts Boaz in a dangerous position. I mean, Naomi says, "Wait till he's a little loose from the wine. Wait till he's secluded and tired and his inhibitions are a little lower."

Another scholar writes, "*No man, especially in the period of the Judges, was incapable of unrighteousness...Naomi's brazen scheme endangers the purity of this union from the start.*"¹⁰

As Bible students, we have to recognize that Naomi's plan is a *little* too close to the plan Lot's daughters had back in Genesis 19. The terrible plan that *led to the Moabites!*

What happens if Ruth and Boaz don't make a Godly choice that night? What happens if Boaz misinterprets Ruth's behavior and throws her out, assuming she was trying to seduce him? What happens if the other people there see her come dressed and perfumed, then see her leave with a bag of grain? What sort of scandalous cloud might follow this family for the rest of their lives?

The potential for disaster is extreme. Naomi has packed this problem with dynamite. Her intentions are good, but Godliness never uses compromise as a means to the end. We can't use worldliness or temptation as tools for good. Our impatience can sometimes lead us to spiritual impropriety.

Thankfully, God had His own plans. And so He kept this situation from going up in flames. But, as we deal with our problems, as we try to make progress in life, as we plan for our futures, we can't just assume that God will always exempt us from the consequences of bad plans. And even if you've been born again, we still reap what we sow. If we sow faithlessness and compromise, the fruit that grows is not going to be spiritual fruit. If we refuse to wait on the Lord or to apply His way of life to our choices, then we will follow in the folly of Abram and Isaac and David and the others.

⁶ Daniel Block *The New American Commentary, Volume 6: Judges, Ruth*

⁷ David Schrock *One Beautiful, Scandalous Night: How God Brings Redemption Through A Foolish Plan, A Faithful Woman & A Righteous Man*

⁸ Block

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Schrock

Why didn't Naomi just go meet with Boaz herself? Why not go to the city gate? Why not tell Ruth to speak to him in the *field* rather than on the floor? There were other ways - ways that lined up with God's methods *and* which would've flowed from what God was *already doing* in this situation.

Ruth 3:5-6 - ⁵ So Ruth said to her, "I will do everything you say." ⁶ She went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law had charged her to do.

This book is full of cliffhangers. What's going to happen? We must conclude that Naomi's plan is "far from sanctified."¹¹ One scholar writes, "Naomi has unwittingly put this couple in a compromising position. In the wisdom of Moab, she almost blew up the whole thing."¹²

It's interesting - the word used there for "charged," or your version may say "instructed," is the same word used to describe what God commanded Noah to do in building the ark.

Naomi saw this as the best way to get Ruth what she needed. Ruth needs a redeemer, she needs a provider and a protector. She needs a long term solution for her future. Naomi had right goals in mind, but she borrowed worldly wisdom in trying to get there. And when believers do this, the result is *not* what we want. Not in the Bible, not in our lives.

God commanded Noah to do certain things, go about them a certain way. He did so because He wanted Noah and his family to be saved. But He gave the method and the measure and the mandate for them to get where they needed to go.

Naomi *wants* to do what's right and she's *starting* to live by faith. But she's still using man's wisdom, man's schemes. The very thing that led to so much disaster for her family back in chapter 1. In the end, she *will* learn that God wants to be the Deliverer of this family. That God Himself has the power and the plan to solve the problems they faced. She learns that it's not *her* responsibility to find Ruth rest, but that *God* had taken on that responsibility Himself.

Who cared *most* about Ruth's *and* Naomi's future? The Lord cared most of all. And He cares for you more than *you* care for you! Rather than try to navigate our own way forward, the Christian must hear and obey everything *He* has said to us. Following His word and His ways so that we can lay hold of the promise, the hope, the provision, the *rest* He wants to give.

Jesus said, "Come to Me so *I* can give you rest." The Lord has had a specific plan for *your* life before the earth was created. God cares the *most* about you. And, as the book of Ruth reveals, He is working His providence for you and through you, to accomplish His good plan for your life. So the question is: What is God doing in your life? How is He leading you? What commands has He given you for your good and His glory? Answer *those* questions and you will find the answer to an uncertain future, difficult circumstances, 800 pound gorillas and beached whales in your life.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*