RUTH – A VIRTUOUS WOMAN

Ruth 3:11(NKJV) “And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know you are a virtuous woman.”

Proverbs 31:10(NKJV) Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.

The Meaning of the Word Virtuous

The Hebrew word is most commonly translated valiant or of valor when referring to men (59 times in the NASB). The NIV translates it a man “of standing” in Ruth 2:1, as a description of Boaz. The most common translations of the Hebrew word in Ruth 3:11 are worthy (15), virtuous (14) and of noble character (5). It is also translated at least ten other ways.

Not Born into Virtue

Ruth 1:1&2 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man’s name was Elimelek, his wife’s name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

Ruth 1:3-5 Now Elimelek, Naomi’s husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

Numbers 25:1&2 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people at the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods.

2 Kings 3:26&27a When the king of Moab saw the battle had gone against him…he took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall.

I Kings 11:1-3a King Solomon, however, married many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter – Moabites…They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, “You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your heart after their gods.

Choosing Naomi and God

Ruth 1:6&7 When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Ruth 1:8&9 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.”

Ruth 1:16-18 But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Working Hard

Ruth 2:1-3 Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor. Naomi said to her, “Go ahead, my daughter.” So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

Ruth 1:5-7 Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, “Who does that young woman belong to?” The overseer replied, “She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.’ She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.”

Her Virtuous Character Noticed

Ruth 2:11&12 Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband – how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

Ruth 3:1&2a One day Ruth’s mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, I must find a home for you where you will be well provided for. Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours.

Ruth 3:7-9 When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned – and there was a woman lying at his feet! “Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.”

Ruth 3:10&11 “The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character.

What Ruth Asked

Leviticus 25:25 “If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold.

Deuteronomy 25:5&6 If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

What Boaz Did

Ruth 4:9&10 Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people. “Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses.

The Rest of the Story

Ruth 4:13-15 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi, “Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”

Ruth 4:16&17 Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

By Ruth and Boaz marrying and having a son and by Boaz buying Elimelek’s property, they guaranteed that Naomi would have a grandson that would inherit all Naomi’s husband had owned, and that there would be someone to take care of her in her old age.

By choosing to leave the gods of her childhood and take care of her mother-in-law, Ruth became the great grandmother of King David and a distant ancestor of Jesus.

Things to Think About

When we celebrate a godly mother on Mother’s Day, we usually talk about someone famous as a judge or prophet or queen. We usually talk about someone who grew up knowing God and serving Him.

Ruth grew up in a pagan culture, married a Jewish man who disobeyed God when he married her, and learned about God from her husband and mother-in-law and perhaps her brother-in-law.

Yet she developed a faith strong enough to leave everything that was familiar to follow God and help out her mother-in-law.

By working hard and caring for her mother-in-law she gained the respect of the people of Bethlehem, found a husband and became the great grandmother of King David.

Godly behavior that wins respect doesn’t have to involve huge events and dramatic actions. Sometimes godliness is best shown in loving behavior in the situations in which one finds themselves.