

# Don't Be Greedy, Feed The Needy

Read the story below. It's about two women - Naomi and Ruth - and a man called Boaz. It's from the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament. Working in pairs, read the story then answer the questions. For each answer, show where you found the information by drawing a line to the relevant part of the story.

There was a time when Israel didn't have kings to rule over them. But they had leaders to help them. This is a story about some things that happened during that time. There wasn't enough food in the land of Judah.

While Naomi was in Moab, she heard that the Lord had helped his people. He had begun to provide food for them again.

So Naomi returned from Moab. Ruth, her daughter-in-law from Moab, came with her. They arrived in Bethlehem just when people were beginning to harvest the barley.

Naomi had a relative on her husband's side of the family. The relative's name was Boaz. He was a very important man from the family of Elimelek.

Ruth, who was from Moab, spoke to Naomi. Ruth said, "Let me go out to the fields. I'll pick up the grain that has been left. I'll do it behind anyone who is pleased with me."

Naomi said to her, "My daughter, go ahead." So Ruth went out to a field and began to pick up grain. She worked behind those cutting and gathering the grain. As it turned out, she was working in a field that belonged to Boaz. He was from the family of Elimelek.

Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem. He greeted those cutting and gathering the grain. He said, "May the Lord be with you!"

"And may the Lord bless you!" they replied.

Boaz spoke to the man in charge of his workers. He asked, "Who does that young woman belong to?"

The man replied, "She's from Moab. She came back from there with Naomi. The young woman said, 'Please let me walk behind the workers. Let me pick up the grain that is left.' She came into the field. She has kept on working here from morning until now. She took only one short rest in the shade."

So Boaz said to Ruth, "Dear woman, listen to me. Don't pick up grain in any other field. Don't go anywhere else. Stay here with the women who work for me. Keep your eye on the field where the men are cutting grain. Walk behind the women who are gathering it. Pick up the grain that is left. I've told the men not to bother you. When you are thirsty, go and get a drink. Take water from the jars the men have filled."

When Ruth heard that, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why are you being so kind to me? In fact, why are you even noticing me? I'm from another country."

Boaz replied, "I've been told all about you. I've heard about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband died. I know that you left your father and mother. I know that you left your country. You came to live with people you didn't know before. May the Lord reward you for what you have done. May the Lord, the God of Israel, bless you richly. You have come to him to find safety under his care."

"Sir, I hope you will continue to be kind to me," Ruth said. "You have made me feel safe. You have spoken kindly to me. And I'm not even as important as one of your servants!"

When it was time to eat, Boaz spoke to Ruth again. "Come over here," he said. "Have some bread. Dip it in the wine vinegar."

She sat down with the workers. Then Boaz offered her some grain that had been cooked. She ate all she wanted. She even had some left over. Ruth got up to pick up more grain. Then Boaz gave orders to his men. He said, "Let her take some stalks from what the women have tied up. Don't tell her she can't. Even pull out some stalks for her. Leave them for her to pick up. Don't tell her she shouldn't do it."

So Ruth picked up grain in the field until evening. Then she separated the barley from the straw. The barley weighed thirty pounds. She carried it back to town. Her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out the food left over from the lunch Boaz had given her. She gave it to Naomi.

*Who was the richest person in the story? How do you know that?*

*Who was the most vulnerable or weakest person in the story? How do you know that?*

*Why do you think Boaz was kind to Ruth? Can you find any evidence for your answer?*

*And finally, do you think Boaz lost out by being kind to Ruth? Why/why not?*