

Growth Group Preparation
For the week of February 5th, 2012

QUICK REVIEW: Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. If you are married, share the story of the proposal?

2. What's more important for you to hear from this week's message – a warning not to run ahead of God or an encouragement to keep waiting for God?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Ruth's reputation has become the talk of the town. Boaz was aware of her character which he summarized with this phrase: "worthy woman." This phrase is used in Proverbs 31:10. Read Proverb 31:10-31. What characteristics of the woman described stand out? What does she do? What is her heart? What are her priorities? What is missing from the description?

Proverbs 31:10 ¹ An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. ¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. ¹² She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. ¹³ She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. ¹⁴ She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. ¹⁵ She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. ¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. ¹⁷ She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong. ¹⁸ She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. ¹⁹ She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. ²⁰ She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. ²¹ She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. ²² She makes ^abed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. ²³ Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land. ²⁴ She

makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant. ²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. ²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. ²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. ²⁸ Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ²⁹ "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all." ³⁰ Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. ³¹ Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

Is the scriptural definition of a worthy woman different from the world's description of a worthy woman? Explain.

2. When the work of God begins to advance, obstacles often appear in the way. Put another way, obstacles almost always follow opportunity. Ruth chapter three illustrates the challenge the Christian faces in interpreting God's providence and seeking guidance when such obstacles are in our way. Look at some of the providences of God in this chapter, what are the range of conclusions that could be drawn from each situation? What lessons about guidance do you take away from chapter three?

Here are three to prime the pump:

- We need to commit to never running ahead of God.
- God's providence is never self-interpreting. It must always be interpreted in light of scripture.
- And open door does not mean we are to walk through it.

What warnings are contained in the following sentences?

- Providence is a Christian's diary, not his Bible?
- It is risky business to extrapolate our own conclusions from the providence of God.
 - It is not always easy to distinguish the purpose of God from the desires of our heart.

How do the following verses help encourage us to develop biblical instincts?

Psalm 119:11
Romans 12:1-2
Psalm 119:105
Proverbs 3:5-7
Joshua 1:8

3. Naomi was impatient and wanted to help God out. Boaz determined not to get ahead of God. Naomi encouraged Ruth to wait for Boaz to act. What do the following scriptures have to say about waiting? Why is waiting so difficult.

Psalm 37:4 Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires. ⁵ Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you. ⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun. ⁷ Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. (Psa 37:4 NLT)

Isaiah 30:15 For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength."

Psalm 130:5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope.

Isaiah 30:18 Therefore the LORD ^awaits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. (Isa 30:18 ESV)

Where is God asking you to wait?

TAKING IT HOME

Looking back at Ruth 3, what is the most important thing for you to remember and why?

PRAYER REQUESTS

The Hand of the Lord in the Present Ruth 3:1-18

The art of narrative.

A Chapter 1:1-22 – many years

B Chapter 2:1-23 – a single day

C Chapter 3:1-18 – a single night

B¹ Chapter 4:1-12 – a single day

A¹ Chapter 4:13-22 – many years.

The Evening Plot – Naomi, what were you thinking?

Ruth 3:1-4

A Careful Obedience – Ruth, you are going to do what?

Ruth 3:5-7

Midnight on the Bethlehem Threshing Floor – Boaz, think before you act!

Ruth 3:8-13/ Psalm 119:55/ Proverbs 31:10

It's Always Darkest Before the Dawn – When the mind races.

Ruth 3:14a

Early Morning Departures – Boaz, thank you for thinking!

Ruth 3:14b-15

Breakfast at Naomi's – Naomi, now you're thinking!

Ruth 3:16-18/ Psalm 37:4