

Bible Heroes

Boaz

Teachers
Story notes



Essential Teachers notes:

This story is an amalgamation of chapter 3 and 4 of the book of Ruth. The significance of uncovering feet and shameful presence of a woman on the threshing floor is skimmed over and instead the process of halitzah - literally 'taking off' of the shoe - alongside the scheming of Naomi and Boaz take centre stage. Halitzah is actually quite a shameful process and Boaz is kind to his kinsman by not bringing Naomi and Ruth to be part of the proceedings. This story may make the kids look at their shoes differently.

Main Passage : Ruth 4

Additional passages : Ruth 2, Deuteronomy 25: 5-10

Look at your shoes. Take off your right shoe and hold it in your hand. I wonder how valuable that shoe is for you, I wonder if it holds any meaning. Keep hold of your shoe while you learn about how a very ordinary old shoe changed our heroes lives.

Naomi had an idea. When men died they sometimes left behind land and money and family. A special Jewish law said that the closest relative could claim everything. But nobody had claimed Naomi and Ruth and so they were left to survive alone. Boaz was one of Naomi's relatives and while he may not be the youngest, nor the most handsome, he would make a good husband for Ruth.

Ruth though Naomi's idea was a good, but first she needed to talk to Boaz alone. Ruth went to find Boaz who was working on the harvest. She waited until bed time and when everyone else had fallen asleep she moved over to lay down by his feet. Then she moved the blanket off his feet so they would get cold. Is your foot getting cold? When Boaz' feet got really cold, Boaz woke up and saw Ruth there. Boaz was surprised but listened as Ruth whispered Naomi's idea.

He was really happy Ruth had chosen him, but there was a problem, Boaz wasn't their closest relative. Quietly Boaz sent Ruth home, now he needed a plan. As everyone slept Boaz sat and thought about what he could do. He sat thinking until the sun rose into the sky and the other men around him started to wake up. The closest relative must have a reason why he hadn't claimed Naomi and Ruth. What could it be? Finally Boaz had a plan. Boaz grabbed his cloak and walked to the town gate where the important men in the village would often gather. He settled himself on the ground just as the man he wanted to speak to came along.

"Come sit with me" said Boaz and the two men sat to talk as the others arrived around them.

"I hear Naomi is selling the land that belonged to her husband Elimelek" Boaz said in a loud voice.

It worked, everyone went quiet. Everyone was listening. That was a good piece of land.

Boaz turned to the man besides him, "I thought I should tell you. You could buy it right now, there are enough people here to witness. If you don't want it, tell me. As her closest relative only you have the right to buy it, and I am next in line."

Everyone was nodding their heads

"Oh yes. Yes I will take it" said the man eagerly

"Good, with the land comes with Naomi and Ruth the Moabite, the widows, so the name of Elimelek may continue."

The man's face fell. The land was great, but a new wife would make his home very difficult, he had a family already.

Boaz knew the man did not want to have Ruth as his wife. He was trapped, if he wanted the land he would have to take Naomi and Ruth, if he said no to the woman he would lose the land too. Boaz had made sure there were lots of people to watch so the man had to make a decision. The man slowly shook his head, "No, no I can't take all that" he said with a sigh "it, it would not be good, you can have it"

Boaz smiled, he watched as the man took off his right shoe as a symbol. Usually the widow would take off the shoe and spit in the face of the relative who refused to claim her and look after her, but Boaz was being kind. He had tricked the man into making a decision and didn't want to embarrass him too. He took the shoe and showed it to the crowd. Then in a loud voice he said " You have seen, today I have claimed Naomi and the land of Elimelek, also Ruth the Moabite, his sons's widow, as my wife, in order to continue his family name!" Everyone cheered.

Boaz went and found Naomi and Ruth, he showed them the shoe and took them to his house. Boaz and Ruth has a son called Obed, and Obed was the grandfather of the great King David, and King David was the great great ...well a lot of greats... grandfather to Jesus.

Today's hero is Boaz because he shows us the gift of A Shoe