

## *“What’s in a Role?”*

### **Living Wisely in an Unwise World**

Ruth 3:1 - 4:12

Pastor Jeff Stivason

January 5, 2018

**Jeff:** Thank you. All right, Don. Lead us in prayer. *(Music)*

Our Father and our God, we are so thankful for the many blessings that you pour out upon us day by day. Chief among them is that You permit us, allow us, demand us to call You Father in the Lord Jesus Christ, because You’ve brought us into Your family through Him by the power of Your Spirit. And Father, as we bow before You, we are mindful that You are our Father, and that we can come before You as a child comes to a father in confidence and in tenderness, knowing that there’s mercy. But Father, we also know that You are God and that You reign supreme. You are sovereign, and that there is nothing that surprises You or escapes Your notice because You planned the end from the beginning. And Father, we’re thankful for that. And we come before You today recognizing that You are Father and God. And as we open Your word which You’ve given to us as a gift for our comfort and for our benefit, we come expectantly, asking that You will bless us, strengthen us, praying that You will make us more like Christ even than we were yesterday.

Father, we pray and we ask that You’ll not only do those things for us, but we pray that You’ll minister to the needs of our hearts and minister to those whom we love. Father, we think about Bruce and we think about his ongoing recovery. And we commit him into Your hands, knowing that You love him even more than we love him, knowing that You are his God and his Father. And so we put him in your hands, and we pray that You would do with him what You will. And yet You’ve asked us to pray for our will that he would recover, and that he would benefit from this time of suffering and affliction.

Father, we also pray for Paul and give You thanks for the good news that he’s received, and we pray that that good news would continue. Father, we ask and pray that You would be with Mike, that You would strengthen him. And Father, we’re thankful for him. We pray for Kevin as well, and ask that Your hand would be upon him. And we rejoice with Don. Father, these names we put before You. And we suggest these requests before You, even ask them with earnest hearts. And yet we know that You love each one of them as they belong to You, and that You will do with them what You will. And so we pray that Your hand of mercy would be upon each one.

And now, Father, we pray that You’ll turn our attention, our hearts, to Your word. And we pray it in Christ’s name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well today I want us to look at Ruth chapter 3. I want us to start looking at verse 1. And I want us not to close out the book today. We have a bit more to go when we think about what Ruth teaches us about decision making. In the last class we’re going to look at Boaz really as the type of Christ. And so what we’ve been hinting at all along will actually come to fruition in our next class. And so we’ll save some of that till then.

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I want us to look today at Boaz the man for a little while. And I want us to think about him in light of what’s happening in his context, what’s happening in light of the decisions he has to make. And in order to do that, we’re just going to look at chapter 3 again. We’re going to look into chapter 4 and read to verse 12. So that’s a little taste of what we’re going to be doing today. Don, do you happen to have it open?

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Can you read it loudly?

**Don:** Sure.

**Jeff:** Thanks.

**Don:** Okay. Where do I start?

**Jeff:** 3:1 to 4:12.

**Don:** Okay. *“Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.’ And she said to her, ‘All that you say to me I will do.’*

*“So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.*

*“Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. And he said, ‘Who are you?’ So she answered, ‘I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.’*

*“Then he said, ‘Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman. Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning.’*

*“So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, ‘Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.’ Also he said, ‘Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it.’ And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.*

*“When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, ‘Is that you, my daughter?’ Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, ‘These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, ‘Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’”*

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*“Then she said, ‘Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.’*

*“Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, ‘Come aside, friend, sit down here.’ So he came aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, ‘Sit down here.’ So they sat down.*

*“Then he said to the close relative, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. And I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.’” And he said, ‘I will redeem it.’*

*“Then Boaz said, ‘On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.’ And the close relative said, ‘I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it.’*

*“Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel. Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, ‘Buy it for yourself.’ So he took off his sandal.*

*“And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, ‘You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day.’*

*“And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, ‘We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman.’” This is the word of the Lord.*

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** Okay. We have a major problem today. And you say, “Which one?” (*Laughter*) The major problem that we have today has to do with *roles*.

Now I want to talk to you about Boaz’s role. And when we talk about Boaz’s role we’ve got to see how there’s overlap and how it’s going to minister to us. But we’re going to think about his role. We’re going to think about how Naomi forces him to either be a man of his role or to be a puppet. And it’s interesting how it works out. We’ll see it play out in his response.

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So let me say some things by way of introduction. I said to you that we have a problem today and we do. A friend of mine asked me if I would endorse his dissertation. He said, “Would you read it and then write an endorsement for the publisher?”

I said, “Sure.”

So I read it. But when I turned to the opening page, one of the things that I discovered was something that I had been warned against in my own Ph.D. program. He said, “To my wife, my ghost adviser.”

Now when I entered into my Ph.D. program, I had another man who was a professor in an institution say to me, “Look. When you are moving through your program, do not get a ghost adviser, because that person will tell you to do things and then he will really become the mover and the shaker. And then when it goes to your real adviser, you may have a problem. Don’t do it.” So I never did it.

And I thought to myself that it’s interesting. When you get in touch with people who are in academics, everybody has a suggestion about how you ought to do your work. And it’s easy because you have a lot of respect for people. It’s easy for them to move into the position of a ghost adviser, especially if your adviser isn’t all that active. Fortunately, mine was. But that’s just one example of role confusion.

There’s another example of role confusion. How about this? How about medicine? You know, did you ever meet that person who has a problem, maybe even a major problem? And you ask him and you say, “How are things going?” And you say, “Well, I went to Web M.D.” *(Laughter)*

You know, I want to tell you something. He who has himself for a doctor, *(laughter)* he is blessed, right? *(Laughter)* Role confusion.

I know what you’re going to say. You’re going to say that medicine’s only a practice. Okay. I want to get with somebody who has practiced for a little while longer than myself, okay? *(Laughter)*

All right. Culture. I mean, I don’t even have to say to you what the main role confusion is in our culture today. Men don’t know if they’re men or women, and women don’t know if they’re women or men. There is a definite role confusion.

And how about in the church? You know, there is just a plethora of books out there that tell us that we need to be and that there is a place for us to be manly men in the church, right? And so, you know, it tells us that we ought to have boxing matches in the church to prove that we’re men! You know what I mean, right? And then we’ve allowed that to happen in the church. We’ve stepped back and we’ve allowed it.

God bless them! Women are wonderful! If you see my wife, tell her I love her. But there’s a role for her in the church and a role for me in the church. And men have allowed for that role confusion in the church. They have. Look. We are in a place right now in our culture, no matter where we turn, no matter what segment of our culture we turn to, we are in a place where there is massive role confusion.

Now I want you to think for a minute about what a role is. I’ve thought about this. Maybe you have a better idea. My understanding of role is such that you can actually put it into practice as it functions. In other words, you can use my definition of what a role is in order to ask yourself what is my place in this situation?

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You know, I have a friend of mine who came to me one day and he said to me, “I’ve got a friend of mine in this situation and I want to know what I can do to help him.” And my answer to him was not very satisfying, because when I led him through the whole idea of what it meant to be a role to his friend, it really meant that he couldn’t do much of anything by his standard of thinking.

So my understanding of role is going to be functional. What do I mean? Well let’s look at it. I’ve just used the acrostic *role*. Do I have a clear versus an imagined responsibility in the given situation? I can imagine myself having a responsibility in any situation. But I’m not talking about an imagined role. I’m talking about a real responsibility.

And you have to be rigorously honest with yourself in that situation. For instance, let me put it to you this way. Here’s one of those nuanced kind of answers to this question. My son comes to me and he talks to me about a situation. Now I know how I would handle it if he were 16 or 17. But he’s 20. And so I handle it entirely differently.

And you know what he says to me. He says, “Dad, in this situation I want you to tell me what to do.”

I say, “Ha, ha, ha!” (*Laughter*) “No! You’re 20! My role, my responsibility in your life, is so much different now than it was when you were 16. When you were 16 I told you what to do, right?” (*Laughter*) “Now I coach you if you want me to. So let me coach you.”

How about this? Is there anything I need to obey? After I assess what my responsibility is, what do I need to obey? That’s a pretty simple one. What do I need to obey? And look, what do I do? How do I get that? Well I go to the word of God. What are the limits of what I can do?

Now I think that once you start to understand your responsibility, once you start to understand what you’re supposed to obey, what precepts, what principles, what commands you’re supposed to obey, you’re then going to know what the limits of your responsibilities are. That’s going to be the hardest thing for you to do, to stay within those limits.

But I want to say this to you. You may be coming out of this, saying what my friend said. My friend came to me and said, “I’ve got a friend in this situation and I want to know what I can do.”

I said, “Do you have a responsibility here?”

He said, “Well I really don’t know what you mean.”

I’ll tell you what it was. His friend was in another congregation. My friend who was asking me was not an elder. He did not have oversight over him. He was not his father. He wasn’t his brother. He was his friend who was looking at this man from afar in this situation in his congregation. He had no real responsibility beyond his friendship.

I said, “Is there anything that you need to obey? What do you need to obey as an elder? What do you need to obey as a parent?” None of that. What are the limits?

Well there are some clear limits. You can’t function as an elder. You cannot function as his liaison between him and the session. But you can encourage him. You can pray for him. You can call him. You can say, “Hey, brother, look. I can’t listen to gossip. I can’t

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listen to slander. But I can be an ear for you. We can talk about this in a godly way. I can help you out in that regard. I can be an encouragement to you.”

And sometimes you have to content yourself with that particular thing and that alone. That’s hard. But I want to tell you something. There is such a role confusion today that we need to get this down.

All right, *Boaz and his role*. I just want us to think about this man for a minute. And I want us to think about him. And I said to you that I want us to think about the man. I want us to think about the man not as a type of the Redeemer. We’re going to think about that the next time, and that is an absolutely beautiful thing to think about. But I want us to think today about Boaz the man, because he is the type of man who is to be an example for us.

And we need examples. We need men who are good role models.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And Boaz is a man who is a good role model. I want you to think about him. He’s a worthy man. That’s what the text tells us. The text tells us that he is a worthy man. If you look at commentators on this, one of the things they’ll say is this. They’ll say that this idea of worthiness—well, you know how words are when you translate them from Hebrew into English or from Greek into English. One of the things that you realize is that there is a number of meanings. And so there are a number of words to choose from, and you have to choose a particular word that you think best fits the context and say that that’s the meaning of the word in this context.

Well some commentators will look at *worthy men* and they’ll say that when we really look at what *worthy men* is and we try to understand what it means, it means *wealth*. Now you look at the context and you would say, “Oh yes!” He is a wealthy man. He is a worthy man in that sense.

But then you see, if you look at the book more broadly than just that particular chapter that you know he’s wealthy because he has his own field. He has his own harvesters, and so on. But when you look at the book and you look in chapter 3 verse 1 and you find—I think it’s verse 1!—but if you look in chapter 3, you find that Naomi—not Naomi, Ruth!; I’m still thinking of the verse!—you think about Ruth and it says that she is “*a worthy woman*.”

You say to yourself, “I don’t think it can mean wealthy,” because Ruth and Naomi are not wealthy.

**Participant:** Right.

**Jeff:** What does it mean? What is the narrator attempting to communicate by telling us that both Boaz and Ruth are worthy?

Well, you know, as I said, there’s an overlap in meanings. And one of the places where you can find this word is in Proverbs 31:10—the virtuous woman. And what does it say? It says that she is a virtuous woman. It uses that word.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Proverbs 31:10, NKJV.

*“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.”*

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When we think about a worthy man, a worthy woman, we think about them not in light of their wealth or their means, or the lack thereof, but we think about him in terms of his character. We think about her in terms of her character. And they are virtuous.

Now let me tell you what that means. That means the exact thing that the Psalmist talks about in Psalm 1. *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the way of the wicked”*, right? Then he goes on and he talks about him doing what? Eventually sitting *“in the seat of scorners.”* Walking, standing, sitting. That is not a good man.

He says that the righteous man, the godly man, the virtuous man, is the man who what? *“He is like a tree planted beside streams of water.”*

Now I want you to just think about the two different trees, the imagery of that Psalm. You think about the one tree that the wicked man is, the non-virtuous man, and it’s dying. It doesn’t have water moving throughout its root system and up through its limbs. But then there’s that tree that’s planted beside the river. And it pulls the nutrients from the river all throughout its trunk and throughout its branches. And it’s just lush and it’s green and it’s beautiful.

You see, that’s the idea. What we’re thinking about is that internal virtue of Boaz. This is a good man, all right?

Now that means two things. Now I want you to think about this in light of *sanctification*. When we talk about sanctification, there are basically a number of things we think about. But there is a pattern of sanctification that we need to keep in mind. It’s simple, and it’s throughout Scripture, throughout the New Testament. I put certain things off, I put certain things on. I put off, I put on.

Now when it says—and we can at least read it in the text—and see that he is unlike his generation, we understand that there were certain things that this man put off. And he counseled others to put them off. Think about what he told those young men. To those young men he said, “Don’t touch this woman who is working in the field.” He’s helping them to put off bad behavior. He’s putting things off. He’s not like his generation.

And I’ll tell you what else he is. *He is putting on godliness*, in terms of his virtuous character. We know this. But how do we know that he’s putting on godliness? Well I’ll tell you how we know.

Look! We’re told this wonderful greeting, that he blesses them in the Lord. We’re told that he obeys the law of gleaning. We’re told that he prays for Ruth. “May the God under whose wings you’ve come to seek refuge bless you.” This is a godly man. This is a godly man who is putting off the things of his generation. He’s putting on the things that God requires him to put on in order to be godly.

Now look. The thing that I want to ask you men is this. I want to ask you men. Are you doing this very thing? Boaz is a model. And it’s a simple, straightforward model for each one of us. It’s not hard, it’s not complicated. This is not brain surgery. This is asking us if we are like our generation.

And in one sense, let me ask you this. Are you like your generation in the role confusion that’s rampant out there? Because that’s what we’re really thinking about with regard to Boaz at this point, because he is put in a situation where Naomi is trying to confuse his role.

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Now let me just pause before we look at that and just continue to press home. Are you like this generation? Or have you eschewed it? Have you put it off? And are you seeking to put on godliness? Because that’s what we need to be doing.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Someone raises his hand.

**Jeff:** No. I’m just kidding. Go ahead.

**Participant:** You said that Naomi was trying to confuse his role. Can you make sure that I understand that and that I won’t confuse that further in my head? What was she doing to confuse his role?

**Jeff:** She was trying to make him act as the redeemer. We’ll get to that.

**Participant:** Okay.

**Jeff:** All right. Fourthly, *he is kind*. He’s a kind man. And I don’t really need to remind you of his kindness. But I want to do it in this way. I want to ask the questions of the role at this point.

Did he have a clear responsibility? Well we’re going to find that out. And the answer is going to be no. We’re going to find that out. He was not the redeemer. He did not have a clear responsibility.

Was there something Boaz needed to obey? Well, yes. He needed to obey simple things, like don’t touch this woman. I and my men are not allowed to violate this woman. And I have to obey the law of gleaning. She has come to me and wants to glean in my field. I’ve got to let her do that, and happily so.

Were there limits on what he was able to do? Of course there were. We’ve been talking about them. Was he able to encourage in this situation? Of course he was.

How did he encourage? Look at what he did. He told her, “Don’t go anywhere else. Stay in this field.” He provides protection. “No one will touch you.” He gives her a meal of some grain. And he says to his harvesters, “Leave some of the extra produce. Leave it on the ground.” He is providing encouragement for this woman.

I think that Boaz provides a wonderful study for what it means to assume yourself to be in a certain role. And let me just say it like this.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Jeff points to the example of a man in the audience who is engaged to be married.

**Jeff:** Don, I want to tell you something. Here is a man who had to show absolute restraint. In chapter 2, she says, “Why are you wooing me?” This is the translation. “*Why are you wooing me?*” Don, I can see it in your eyes, brother. You are a wooer. *(Laughter)* That’s why you’re in the situation you’re in. *(Laughter)*

I want to tell you something. Listen to me. I want to tell you. She says, “Why are you wooing me?” You see that kind of language in the Song of Solomon. There was a connection! And he’s not doing anything about it! Why isn’t he doing anything about it? Because he doesn’t have any ground to stand on. The best he can do is to encourage her. And he does! And that takes a fortitude of character and restraint!

All right. Let’s think about *Naomi’s role chaos*. “Who’s field did you reap in today?” She says this. “Ooh, Boaz! He is a close relative, one of our redeemers.” She knows. Sig?

**Sig:** Yes?



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**Jeff:** She knows. She knows he’s not the redeemer. “Of all the redeemers, he can redeem us.” She knows that he’s not the closest redeemer. He’s got to be the closest redeemer. Remember, if he’s not the closest redeemer, there is a closer redeemer. And it is the closest redeemer whose responsibility it is to redeem.

And Boaz knows that. Boaz knows he’s not the closest redeemer, and that’s why he’s not doing anything.

But Naomi knows it too. She knows that he’s not the closest redeemer. But he is a redeemer. So here’s what I want to say to you. There’s a positive and a negative. We always have to throw out a bone to Naomi, especially to the Naomi lovers in the crowd. We’ve got to throw out a bone to her. I don’t know if I would have that problem here with you men. *(Laughter)*

But let me just say that the positive is that *there is Biblical thinking here*. I mean, she’s thinking Biblically. She’s thinking about not just the situation, but she’s thinking about the redeemer of the situation. So she’s thinking Biblically. And that’s a good thing. I’m going to pass over the example.

The negative: *She transgresses the boundaries*. And she’s trying to push others to transgress the boundaries.

What are the boundaries? What is Boaz’s responsibility? He has no direct responsibility. He’s not *the* kinsman redeemer. And she says, “Well, who cares? There’s a little spark here. I see a little cha-cha-cha in the future.” *(Laughter)* “We’re going to press this thing! We’re going to capitalize! We’re going to manipulate human emotions. And we’re going to bring this spark into a flame.” That’s what she says. And so she transgresses the boundaries.

And when she transgresses the boundaries, I want you to know something. She forces Ruth and Boaz to act outside of the boundaries. She tells Ruth to go to the threshing floor to force Boaz into redeeming when he’s not the redeemer.

Now you know what happens next. What happens next is that Ruth comes home. She tells her mother-in-law what happened. And then this is interesting. Naomi says, “He will not rest until he gets to the bottom of this situation for us.” Why? Because she knows what kind of man he is.

But the interesting thing is that it’s almost as if the narrator wants us to understand something. He uses a different word for *rest* in the telling of the story at this point. It’s not the rest of the Promised Land. It’s just a rest from activity. He will not rest.

In other words, there’s a sense in which I think that the Holy Spirit is helping us to see out of the lips of Naomi that her purposes and Boaz’s purposes are not the same. Their intentions are not the same intentions.

I mean, think about it. Naomi says, “I am going to get you rest, the rest of God’s promise.” And Boaz has had something put upon his plate, and now he’s got to deal with it.

And here’s what I would say to you, brothers. I would say to you, brothers, that one of the things that we need to learn when we look at this story is that people will put things on our plate that we don’t want.

**Participant:** Amen.

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**Jeff:** They will press us into doing things that we don’t want to do. And we have to remember at that point. There are just so many things about this that we have to remember. But one of the things that we have to remember is to be as gracious as Boaz, and yet as resolved as Boaz.

So what do you do? Well let’s look at his response for a minute. Boaz reenters the boundaries. Do you see what he does? He does not try to circumnavigate this in such a way as to make himself the redeemer. He doesn’t do it that way. He says, ‘Okay, this is what we’re going to have to do. We’re going to have to get the elders together at the gate. And we’re going to have to get this other redeemer here. We’re going to have to get everybody on the same page.’ We’re going to have to what? We’re going to have to step back inside the boundaries. “I know what Naomi wants. I’m hoping that Ruth wants the same thing as I want. But that doesn’t matter. That’s got to be outside of the boundaries in terms of our consideration of what to do next. We’ve got to step back into the boundaries and we’ve got to operate according to God’s principles. And here is God’s principle. God’s principle is that the closest redeemer redeems.”

And so he re-enters the boundaries. He collects the elders at the gate, finds the man who’s the closest redeemer. But notice what he says. This is great. He says to him, “There’s a piece of land. Do you want to redeem it?”

“You bet I do. Of course I want to redeem it. I’m the closest redeemer. I’ll redeem it.”

Now listen here. He says this. “If he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you.” I’m a slide behind.

He says, “Do you want to redeem this land?”

He says, “Yes, I want to redeem this land. Of course I want to redeem it. I’m a businessman.”

“All right, now listen. If you want to redeem this land, then here’s what you need to do. You need to redeem this woman as well. She’s going to become your wife.”

Now think about what that entails. That entails this. That entails that he fathers a child to Ruth. And that means that when Ruth’s child is old enough, that child will take that land that he redeemed and receive an inheritance as the firstborn from that man.

And that man says, “Whoa, wait a minute! This is a little bit more than redeeming a piece of land.” You see how everybody was doing what was right in their own eyes at that time. He’s going, “I can’t do that! I’ll redeem the land, but I can’t redeem this woman and father a child to her, and then give this land back and then give him the firstborn son’s inheritance. I can’t do that! I’ll ruin myself!”

And Boaz says, “Is that a no, stud?” (*Laughter*) You know, that sort of thing, right? (*Laughter*)

**Participant:** A Jeff interpretation. (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** A Jeff interpretation. And here is the beautiful thing about this. The beautiful thing about this is that we see in Boaz *grace*. If we don’t think that this would have cost him to do this, we’re mistaken. I mean we see the other man saying, “This is going to cost me. I can’t do this.” If we don’t think that it would have cost Boaz in the same way that it would have cost this other redeemer, we’re missing the point. It would have cost him. It did cost him. You see the grace involved in this.

## *“What’s in a Role?”*

**Participant:** Explain to me the concept of cost that it would have been. Would it have cost him if he had a family already in place? Is that what’s going on here?

**Jeff:** Well that’s a great question that I wish you wouldn’t have asked. *(Laughter)*

**Participant:** From his congregation.

**Jeff:** Because here’s the thing.

**Participant:** There’s no family in place. There’s no cost to him because by definition the inheritance goes to the firstborn.

**Jeff:** I think that there was a family in place. And I think that there were multiple wives probably going on at that time, just like the patriarchs. So I think the cost would have come at that point.

Now you may disagree with me on that. I won’t try and defend that position. It’s too hard because I’m obviously not told. But I think that when you look at the patriarchs and you look at the situation on up through with the multiple wives, especially during the time of the Judges, even as it’s going on now in the story, I think this is what was happening.

**Participant:** Something that is in other accounts too, is that Boaz’s mother brings him up right. And he would have had a real place in his heart for a woman for his own wife. If it were someone from the outside, how much she would have been like his mother.

**Jeff:** Absolutely, yes. Absolutely. Somebody else?

**Participant:** This is probably my lack of understanding of the culture of the day. But wasn’t it that technically, if this man were married, that this would have disqualified him technically from being the redeemer?

**Jeff:** No. I think that this gets us into a murky sort of situation. The question I think people have a tendency to ask is that, you know, you have the patriarchs having multiple wives. And yet you have the prohibition brought up by Jesus in Matthew 19 that seems to indicate one man, one woman. And then you certainly have that in 1 Timothy 3. So the question then becomes well, are you saying that the patriarchs were living in sin throughout their lives, and throughout generations? And I would be one to say that if we’re describing the patriarchs as perfect, we’re missing the mark.

**Participant:** There you go.

**Jeff:** I think one of the reasons why we find Abraham doing the things that he does, for instance like almost losing his wife twice from the heinous things that he was willing to do, I think that the reason why we see that is because we see a man coming out of idolatry and paganism. And I would say that we see the generations of Israel moving out of that, even falling back into it in Egypt and growing out of it again. So I think what we see is that we see the multiple wives as a mark of their having been in a sinful culture and adopting that, and their willingness to do that. And yet that was not the way God would have had it from the beginning.

You know, people say, “How can you even say that?” And I would say that that’s why I’m willing to say that. All you have to do is think about the person who is converted not out of generations of faithfulness but out of the world, and see the mistakes that they made as they entered into the Christian life, and you have sort of a little snapshot of what that might look like in terms of days gone by.

## ***“What’s in a Role?”***

**Participant:** It’s similar to God allowing Moses to issue a certificate of divorce.

**Jeff:** I think that’s exactly it. It’s not the way it was meant to be, but certainly in Deuteronomy 24 the way that it was because of the hardness of their hearts. Yes, Bill? Uh-oh,. Bill! You’re smiling and you’re raising your hand. *(Laughter)* Bill’s going like this. Bill’s checking the bullets. Go ahead. Shoot at me. *(Laughter)*

**Bill:** Give the first redeemer the benefit of the doubt. He might have had his eyes on a more beautiful woman. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** All right, fair enough. *(Laughter)*

**Bill:** That didn’t hurt. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** All right. So what we see is that we see the grace of God in this man in his willingness, and what we see—and this is the thing I want to end with—we see *God in the midst of the chaos*. And I think that’s vitally important. I think this is the encouragement.

Here’s a mess. And we see God working out His plan and purposes in the midst of the mess. And we could say much more about that. But I’ll end at that point. If you don’t have any questions, I’ll pray.

Okay, let’s pray. Father, thanks for this day, for the time You’ve given, and Lord for this story, as we think about not only the truth of it and its historicity, but also the lessons that it teaches. Lord, help us to follow the model of a man like Boaz not because he was perfect, but because he was growing in godliness and in the promises that You made to him as he looked forward to inheriting them in the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, as we look back on the Lord Jesus Christ and what we have in Him, we pray that we would do the same, that we would grow in grace, that we would put off the things that we need to put off, put on the things that we need to put on, and we pray that we would be consistent in our doing it, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*