

## Love Story

Annie

### Scriptures:

The Book of Ruth

There is a book in our Bible that is only four chapters long yet it reveals the depth, strength and tenderness that happens when human relationships are committed to God's hands. The Book of Ruth is a history, not a fiction, of the life of the ancestors of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It is a book that I love and value greatly.

At its core, this short book is about love, marriage and faithfulness. Naomi who faithfully went with her husband into a foreign land; of her two sons who married wives from this foreign land; of the deaths of all three of the menfolk, leaving her with no support, no blood relatives to look after her and, importantly, it is about her two daughters in law.

When Naomi decided to return to her homeland, her daughter in law Orpah stayed behind while Ruth chose to faithfully go with Naomi, speaking those beautiful words "your God shall be my God". Ruth chose to sacrifice her way of life so that she could support and care for her mother in law. When they arrived back in Bethlehem it was the beginning of the barley harvest so Ruth went into the fields to glean, that is gather the grain that the harvesters dropped or missed. She did this so that they could have something to eat. There Boaz saw her and fell head over heels in love with Ruth.

Boaz forbade his harvesters to touch Ruth, they were to deliberately drop grain for her and to allow her to collect from the field, not just around the edges. When he heard what she had done in leaving her homeland to care for Naomi, he spoke a wonderful blessing over her: *"It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. **12** The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."*

When Ruth obeyed Naomi's instruction to lay at Boaz's feet after the end of harvest celebrations, Boaz showed absolute love, respect and honour toward Ruth. Then Ruth told Boaz that he was a kinsman redeemer. The custom in those days was for the closest male relative of a widow to marry her and raise children in her first husband's name. But there was one closer than him and, instead of abandoning Ruth, Boaz legally "redeemed" her from this other kinsman. In order to secure Ruth as his bride he also had to purchase the land that belonged to Naomi's family, and he willingly did it.

Out of love, not duty or compulsion, Boaz fulfilled the legal requirements of the day and took Ruth as his wife. He paid the price because he loved her. He treated her with respect and dignity, because he loved her. He acknowledged and valued her care for Naomi, because he loved her. He married her because he loved her.

We are the Bride of Christ, deeply loved, valued and treated with dignity and honour by our Kinsman Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Lord. The history of Ruth and Boaz is a foreshadowing of the love story between Christ and His Bride, as well as being the most beautiful instruction on how an earthly marriage should work. Marriage is meant to be the partnership of two people whose greatest desire is to honour, love and bless each other.

**Prayer:** Abba Father, Your precious word is our handbook for life here on earth as well as our promise of eternal Life with You. Grant us the insight, the humility to consider the needs and desires of our husband or wife above our own, to bless them with an eternal reward as, together, we live under Your wings, trusting You alone. Amen.