

PROVERBS 31 & RUTH BIBLE STUDY



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Objective:

To understand Proverbs chapter 31 as it pertains to the "excellent" woman and the parallels to the way Ruth The Moabite is described in The Book of Ruth, as well as, to understand the events leading up to Ruth's marriage to Boaz - all through the lens of The Gospel and God's redemptive plan. This will be presented in the following three sections.

Section 1a: What is the "excellent" woman in essence?

The description of The Proverbs 31 Woman begins in Proverbs 31:10:

"An excellent woman who can find? She is far more precious than jewels."

The Hebrew word excellent used in this verse is *eshet chayil* which translates into *woman of virtue; valor and nobility; worthy*. Going deeper into the virtue and nobility being referred to in this context, we have to put ourselves in the mind of the author (most widely accepted to be the Prophet Samuel). Ask yourself these questions:

- What was important to him?
- How did the culture and his environment influence his thinking?

Hold those answers up to what was important in his society in that time. By this we get to the essence of the *eshet chayil*... woman of excellence. To define this faithfully, we will look at two things:

1. The actual meaning of the word "chayil"
2. What The Bible provides as an example of the excellent woman.

We've already looked at the Hebrew translation of *eshet chayil*. Let's get into the heart of what *chayil* means. How did the ancient Jews use the word "virtue", "valor", "nobility", "worthy"? *Chayil* has been mentioned over 200 times, both in the Old and New Testaments. The intent of usage always spoke of virtue/valor/nobility in terms of "might", "bravery", or "success" with mostly military connotations and bring to mind masculinity and physical power. But when applied to the image of a woman, the word *chayil* has a different application. In the context of describing a woman, Scripture indicates that, although Galatians 3:28 and other passages makes it clear male and female are equal in value, dignity, and inheritance in Christ, the woman is the "weaker vessel" by God's design (see 1 Peter 3:7). She is not spiritually weaker, not intellectually weaker, and so on. A woman is only weaker by physical strength and lower in household rank/second in command (see 1 Peter 3:1 where it talks about the wife being 'subject to' her husband & Ephesians 5:23). So how should we define a woman of *chayil* if not by masculine attributes and physical power? Her character. Both men and women are accountable to grow in

character (in conformity to Christ now that we have the New Covenant) and emulate those with *chayil*... valorous, noble, virtuous, worthy... character.

Valorous & Noble

The *eshet chayil* is mighty in valorous and noble character -- a fortress of quiet and gentle strength for her husband and their family -- which is more spiritually formiddable than our Western loud and proud stigma of what strength means. With strength comes power and power must be wisely controlled. That kind of strength can only be sourced from and sustained by God.

Virtuous

The word "virtuous" brings high moral code and chastity to mind and it certainly applies to the *eshet chayil*. However, if we are to understand the essence of the *eshet chayil* we must go deeper. The word "virtuous", more than the word "valor" would have been the prevailing thought attached to the word *chayil* for a woman in that culture and time. Also in that culture and time, across the board -- man or woman -- the word "virtuous" coincided with godly righteousness. Samuel, the Prophet who authored Proverbs, was trained up in godliness from the time he was a toddler (refer to 1 Samuel 1:21-28). By such hermeneutics, it can be concluded that it was important for Samuel (and foremost important to God, the Author of the Scriptures) to highlight godliness when writing about the *eshet chayil*. Therefore, the *eshet chayil* is one who is devoted to God and the things of God, nurturing a godly home for the benefit of her family and ultimately, to the glory of Christ. The *eshet chayil* is her family's refuge, second to the Lord as the ultimate and perfect refuge, and she is the one who enables her husband to succeed and hold his head high at the gate (Proverbs 31:23) by the things she does to care for the home and family. If her husband is the gatekeeper, then the *chayil* wife functions as the screen, after entering the gate, through which everything filters before it is allowed into her home. She helps her husband and partners with him in training up their children in righteousness. Though she takes good care of her body and appearance, she is not consumed with vanity. Rather, she appropriately tends to the maintenance and nourishment of the temple in which The Holy Spirit dwells; she is a good steward to what God has given her which includes her children, husband, home, finances, her body, and so on.

Section 1b: Verse By Verse Notes on Proverbs 31:10-31

Since we have extensively covered 31:10 let's look at the subsequential verses. Verses 10-12 describes the *eshet chayil's* character while verses 13-24 describes her behavior and verses 25-31 describe her spirit/soul...

v.11) This verse is referring to an ancient Jewish practice where it was common for a man to keep valuables locked up so that no one could access them, not even his wife. The *eshet chayil* is so trustworthy in character that her husband does not keep anything from his wife. In this second part of this verse, "he will have no lack of gain" refers to his wife's frugality. With the money saved from her wise spending his finances will be healthy and most likely grow.

v.12) Her intentions towards her husband is always good and well-meaning

v.13) She is joyfully industrious and resourceful

v.14) Goes out of her way to make sure her family eats as well as they are able to afford

v.15) Women in that culture and time would wake up before the sun rises to prepare breakfast and create an inviting, loving atmosphere for her family to start the day with. The *eshet chayil* does this with joy **in her heart**... even if she is not naturally a morning person ;)

v.16) Considering a field would be compared to, in our day, as entrepreneurial in her investing and reinvesting. This does not apply just to financial investments in the stock market or purchasing land as an investment. It also includes things like being a small business owner, long-term food prep and storage (shout out to the gals who like canning!), edible gardening, even homeschooling -- anything that requires significant investment, maintenance, and reaps benefits for the entire family.

v.17) By virtue of keeping her body healthy and rigorously working in/for the home, she dresses herself with' strength.

v.18) The foremost priority in her life is the care of her family and her home. The majority of her waking hours are devoted to producing what ever will benefit (be profitable to) her family. (it seems exhausting, but by God's grace, you will be empowered to do so and by His grace you will carve out time for rest, spiritual rejuvenation, quality time with each of member of your family)

v.19) The distaff and spindle mentioned in this verse refers to tools for making textiles for clothing and certain home goods. This verse reinforces verses 13, 15, and 18.

v.20-24) Describes all the ways the fruit/work of her hands is a blessing to others -- her husband, her children, the needy, her community. She is also a productive member of society.

v.21) The snow mentioned in this verse indicates the cold weather that occurs in the high altitudes of Israel. The *eshet chayil* anticipates the needs of her family for every season and every stage of life, preparing accordingly.

v.22) "She makes bed coverings for herself" indicates that she is not enslaved to her family with the work of her hands and dedication to the home for her family. She also creates things for her own enjoyment - after the needs of her family are met, she takes care of herself too. The fine linen and purple garments are expensive quality and evidence of God's gracious blessings upon her. Don't mistake this for karma, law of attraction, or any such transactional beliefs. God's grace and rewards are presented in a plethora of ways and oftentimes those blessings have nothing to do with robust resources. The high price of these material things is not the point of this verse. It is to demonstrate the appropriate response of gratitude on the husband's part for faithfulness and dedication to God's call on the woman's life. In that culture, a wife did not buy clothes for herself to update her wardrobe or 'just because'. When a wife dresses in fine clothes she obtained them due to her husband gifting her with the silks, vibrant colors, and jewelry.

v.23) A man's good reputation and success begins with his home and thus the virtue and nobility of his wife, not that she is responsible for him, but that one of the fruits of her positive influence and domestic dedication benefits her husband in this way.

v.24) Once her primary responsibilities are faithfully fulfilled, the *eshet chayil* contributes to her outer community/society at large.

v.25) This verse is indicative of a woman who honors The Lord. Her spirit is such that her flesh has lessened dominance over her actions, thinking, and speech but instead bears the Fruit of The Spirit, dignifying her behavior (the way she carries herself) and giving her the confidence to face the future and all its unexpected challenges. (this is personally my favorite verse of the *eshet chayil* description and one that encourages me daily)

v.26) When she is speaking truth and wisdom she does not do so as a harsh, cerebral know-it-all but in love, being a walking witness of the unmerited grace and mercy abundantly poured out to her by The Lord. (God has been so gracious in refining me in this area)

v.27) The *eshet chayil* is a good manager of her home, nurtures godliness in her home with her virtue and takes seriously the care of her home and family. This responsibility is paramount to a woman/wife who loves The Lord (see also Titus 2:3-5, 11-15). Sound pastors and theologians, like John MacArthur for example, agree that the ideas of radical Feminism were rooted in ancient Babylonian and Assyrian mythology as well as Greek Gnosticism which was very much widespread throughout the Roman Empire during New Testament times which posed a constant threat to the early church. Modern Feminism, contrary to majority belief, is neither new or progressive. Feminism goes back to early millennia and is regressive, tearing down God's original design and decrees. Historical and cultural context supports this. Our Western culture today is heavily influenced by this, both subtly and brashly, even among Christians.

v.28) She is greatly respected and beloved because of the praise of her family. Her children grow up praising her as the primary earthly inspiration for their godliness (see 1 Timothy 2:15). In the second part of this verse, we see that her husband praises her which is quoted in the next verse.

v.29) Her husband praises her as an *eshet chayil* and delights in her for her godliness.

v.30) A woman who truly fears the Lord is far more beautiful than a charming or outwardly beautiful woman. Her genuine holiness and virtue commands respect and admiration over charm and physical beauty (see also 1 Timothy 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 3:1-6). The book of Proverbs ends the same way it began with these last two verses -- with the fear of The Lord.

v.31) "Give her the fruit of her hands" refers to the earthly rewards she ought to receive from her family and community for her faithfulness to God's call on her life as an *eshet chayil*. The way she exemplifies godly womanhood is what she should be known for in this life and what she should be remembered by at the end of her life.

Section 2: Ruth, the personification of the "excellent" woman

The term *eshet chayil* (excellent woman) in Proverbs 31:10 occurs only two other times in the Old Testament: Proverbs 12:4 and Ruth 3:11, where it describes Ruth. In Proverbs 31 King Lemuel is mentioned preceding the description of the *eshet chayil*. Both teachings were passed along to King Lemuel -- The Wise King and The Excellent Wife. According to ancient Jewish tradition, King Lemuel was identified as King Solomon since "Lemuel" means "devoted to God" and likely a family nickname for Solomon (refer to Jedidiah and 2 Samuel 12:25). Since Ruth's virtuous reputation is a family heritage of King David, it would make sense that Bathsheba, King Solomon's mother, would have described "The Excellent Wife" with Ruth in mind. It would also be logical that the Prophet Samuel, author of Proverbs, would know of Bathsheba passing along these teachings to Solomon. Samuel was well aware of the details that occurred in David's life, the one he anointed with oil to be King. Subsequently, Samuel would also know of Bathsheba and Solomon's interactions (see Samuel 2). Samuel was also credited with authoring The Book of Ruth. All of this supports Ruth being the example God intended to illustrate the *eshet chayil* in His written Word.

The Book of Ruth starts off with the Proverbs 31 Woman traits not being displayed in Ruth... at first glance. She had no husband to delight in her and reward her with fine clothes, she didn't have children to praise her and attribute her influence for their godliness, she had no resources to help multiply or to creatively purpose for her family. She was in poverty, a widow, and a foreigner from a detested land with a grotesque, incestuous lineage. Why would she be, essentially, the very personification of the *eshet chayil*? In Section 1 of this study, as we reflect on Proverbs 31, we can remind ourselves that the description of the *eshet chayil* was segmented to talk about the excellent woman's character, behavior, and spirit. The Book of Ruth displays all three of those aspects in Ruth's astounding humility and obedience towards the sovereignty of a God whose ways would not have been on her radar had it not been for her marriage into Mahlon's family (which was likely a marriage of convenience). She chose to stay with her aged, son-less, widow mother-in-law and the God she followed despite a very uncertain future amidst bleak circumstances. Throughout the account, Ruth unwaveringly demonstrated herself to be devoted to family, blessing her mother-in-law frequently, completely trusting in God, spoke respectfully, was modest in her behavior and appearance, particularly around men, and was hard working. Carefully reading the cross references in the Bible, provided below, will provide more clarification.

Now that we have learned what the essence of a *eshet chayil* is from both Proverbs 31:10-28 and to avoid redundancy with The Book of Ruth, we can summarize the description of the *eshet chayil* with scriptural cross-references below*:

1. Devoted to her family; tenaciously loyal (Proverbs 31:10-12, 23 & Ruth 1:15-18)
2. Delighted in the work of her hands for her home (Proverbs 31:13 & Ruth 2:2)
3. Diligent in her labor (Proverbs 31:14-21, 24, 27 & Ruth 2:7, 17, 23)
4. Committed to godly speech (Proverbs 31:26 & Ruth 2:10-13)
5. Dependent on God (Proverbs 31:25b, 20 & Ruth 2:12)

6. A blessing to others, especially her family (Proverbs 31:28-29, 31 & Ruth 4:14-15)
7. Discreet/wise with men - doesn't give other men inappropriate attention nor is she **overtly** affectionate with her husband in public. (Proverbs 31:11-12, 23 & Ruth 3:6-13)
8. Dressed with care but not engulfed with vanity; she is dignified in her appearance with her character being the most radiant and noticeable aspect of all who look upon her (Proverbs 31:22, 25, 30 & Ruth 3:3)

*Sourced from the John MacArthur ESV Study Bible.

Section 3: Ruth in the Context of God's Redemptive Plan

The story of Ruth and Boaz is an amazing love story in short form, but what is truly remarkable is that it is the perfect depiction of God's redemptive plan in two ways:

1. She was a widow and a foreigner who, by God's orchestration, had her life redeemed and given purpose -- just as we were once foreigners and spiritual widows but now, by faith, we are the Bride of Christ, adopted into His heavenly family, given a portion of the inheritance to Israel's commonwealth (Ephesians 1-5)
2. She would be a monumental figure in the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ

Clarification for Common Misconceptions of The Book of Ruth*

- Ruth is an epic love story both in a humanistic sense and in the grand plan of God's redemption of humanity. We must also understand Ruth as a true historical account that is compatible with the accounts in The Book of Judges and of 1 and 2 Samuel.
- How could Ruth worship in the tabernacle in Shiloh (1 Samuel 4:4) if Deuteronomy 23:3 expressly forbids Moabites from entering the assembly for ten generations? The Jews entered the land 1405 BC. Since Ruth was not born until 1150 BC, she represented the 11th generation. Even if we were to take "ten generations" as an idiom meaning "forever" as Nehemiah 13:1 implies, we can still consider Ruth to be like the foreigner described in Isaiah 56:1-8 who joined themselves to The Lord (see Ruth 1:16).
- Was it immoral for Ruth and Boaz to spend the night together before marriage (Ruth 3:3-18)? It was a common ancient Middle Eastern practice for a woman to ask an eligible bachelor to take her as his wife, which was symbolized by throwing a garment over his intended (Ruth 3:9) just as God spread his garment over Israel (Ezekiel 16:8). Ruth honored her only surviving 'parent' and followed the instruction of her mother-in-law and slept at Boaz's feet; there was not even a hint of immoral behavior (Ruth 3:14). Boaz became God's answer to his own prayer for Ruth (Ruth 2:12).
- If Ruth and Boaz are essentially cousins, isn't that incest? Deuteronomy 25:5-6 could only involve the nearest relative who was eligible for marriage to a widow as qualified by other lawful stipulations. Ruth and Boaz were only cousins through Ruth's marriage to Boaz's actual cousin, Mahlon. By bloodline, they are very distant cousins removed by hundreds of years.
- Why was Ruth able to marry Mahlon (or Boaz for that matter) if marriage to a Moabite/Gentile was strictly forbidden by law? The people of different ethnicities that marriage was prohibited from were from people who were possessing land that Israel bordered (Exodus 34:16,

Deuteronomy 7:1-3, Joshua 23:12). This did not include Moab, despite great hostilities between the nations. Furthermore, Boaz married Ruth, a devout convert to the God of Israel (Ruth 1:16-17) not a pagan worshipper of Moab's false gods.

*Sourced from the John MacArthur ESV Study Bible.

Glimpse At Book of Ruth's Biblical Archaeology, Anthropology, Geography, Geneology

(You can download a picture of Ruth & Boaz's geneology chart that I created [here](#))

To understand the magnitude of Boaz's redemption of Ruth's honor and life, we should grasp how destitute her situation was. In that time and culture, women, especially widows and foreigners were quite near the bottom of the barrel of societal esteem and regard (with children and criminals being at the very bottom). Ruth was a woman, a widow, and she was a foreigner from a despised region called Moab.

- In Genesis 19, Abraham's nephew, Lot, and Lot's incestuous relations with his two daughters brought about two distinct ethnicities hostile towards Israelites. The descendents that Lot created with the eldest daughter became the Moabites and with the other daughter's descendents the Ammonites whose territories take up two regions East of the Jordan River. Moab is now modern-day Jordan and Ammon sits along parts of Jordan and Iraq today.
- For 18 years Moab oppressed Israel during the time of The Book of Judges.
- During the time of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, Moabite women deliberately seduced Israelite men then coerced them to participate in sacrifices to their false gods (see Numbers 25). The Moabite king, Balak, hired the pagan sorcerer Balaam to curse Israel.
 - These aspects of Moabite history are important to grasp how deep the hostility against Israel goes and what exactly is redeemed when Israelite Boaz steps in as Ruth's Kinsman Redeemer (more about that a little further in this study)

Naomi and Her Relationship with Ruth

Naomi, an Israelite and widow of Elimelech, had two sons, Mahlon and Chilion who married Moabite women: Orpah and Ruth. When both Mahlon and Chilion died, it was more than losing their loved ones for Naomi, Orpah and Ruth. Their financial security, societal rights, and protection was completely lost. This was a hopeless situation during a hopeless time of widespread famine throughout the land of Judah that started during the time of Judges (1370 to 1105 BC; Ruth was born in 1150 BC). The future was bleak for these three women. Little to nothing is known about Naomi's other daughter-in-law, Orpah, except that she wept alongside Ruth at the thought of leaving her mother-in-law to return to Moab and the Moabite way of life (which included worshipping a false god that required child sacrifice - see 2 Kings 3:27) but Orpah eventually did. However, Ruth committed herself to staying by Naomi's side and continue worshipping The God of Israel despite Naomi urging otherwise so that Ruth could have some semblance of hope for a better life.

- Slight detour: If we look at Ruth 4:2-3 we see that Naomi's husband Elimelech was both a prominent man and a godly man. His name means "my God is King". This suggests the severity of the famine in Israel that they would live in Moab. Israel was both physically and spiritually

desolate in those times. In Ruth 1:6-7 due to the desire to return to her homeland and receiving news that "The Lord visited His people and given them food" (in other words He blessed Israel with rain for the crops to break the famine), Naomi journeyed back to Israel from Moab with her two daughters-in-law. All the while, Naomi tried to urge them to go back to Moab. She was adamant because Orpah and Ruth, being Moabites, would have a near impossible time trying to get remarried to an Israelite and Naomi, being old, a widow, with no sons, had no way to provide for them.

It may not have been the most evangelical approach, but Naomi loved her daughter-in-law, wanting what she thought was best for her. We could also consider the likelihood that Naomi was testing Ruth, hoping to get a genuine profession of faith in The One True God. It would not have been right for Naomi to take a young widow into the land of Israel to care for an older widow if there was no real commitment to Israel's God -- that would have been the proverbial icing on the cake. Naomi's circumstances greatly affected her outlook -- so much that when Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem Naomi (meaning "pleasant") asked to be called "Mara" (bitter), not that she had become a bitter woman, but she was suggesting that God providentially handed her a bitter cup in life (think of Job and how he lamented on the bitterness of his hardships yet still had faith in his God). Naomi acted from her natural humanness. She assumed that her current hardships and the fact her husband and sons were buried in a land whose inhabitants worshipped a pagan god, were a punishment from God's hand (Ruth 1:13). She could not see the bigger picture of what God was doing in His plan of redemption. God's sovereign purposes cannot be thwarted nonetheless. Ruth's conversion to The God of Israel was genuine as we can see in her sweet expression of loyalty to her mother-in-law and acceptance of God's will (see below). It is fitting that the name Ruth means "friendship" in ancient Hebrew. It also helps to know that the events in The Book of Ruth covers about 12 years according to verses 1:1-18 which shows Ruth lived 10 years in Moab (and several months in Boaz's field in verses 1:19-2:23 then about a year in Bethlehem in verses 3:1-18). That is a long time for Ruth's attachment to Naomi to grow.

"...For where you go I will go... Your people shall be my people, and your God my God... May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." (Ruth 1:16-17)

The Kinsman Redeemer

A simple search on my internet browser showed this American-English definition for "Redeemed":

- To free from captivity by payment of a ransom.
- To extricate from or help overcome something detrimental
 - extricate = free a person from constraint
- compensate for the bad aspects of something
- gain or regain possession of something in exchange of payment or voucher

So a redeemer would be a person who propitiates all of those things. I like all of the above definitions, as they are all true of Boaz's redemption of Ruth, and ultimately and more magnificently, Christ's redemption of us. But if we are going to be faithful to Scripture and understand it as closely to how God intends to be understood, we need to put the word *Redeemer*

in its proper cultural and historical context. In the Bible, whenever a redeemer is referred to the Hebrew word used is *Goel* which translates to "kinsman redeemer".

What does the Hebrew word *Goel* mean?

It is a person who, as closest kin of someone, is charged with the duty of restoring the rights of another and avenging their wrongs, usually with blood, such as in the case of avenging the murder of a family member.

Let's look in The Book of Numbers to get foundational knowledge for what exactly is a Kinsman Redeemer (*Goel*). According to Numbers 18:23, the Levites were not to inherit any land in Canaan. As a solution, the Levites were allowed to live and graze their animals in 48 cities spread out through ancient Israel, designated by Moses. They dwelled in these cities not as a special allotment, but with other tribes given the same deal (if you're curious, Joshua 21:1-42 gives a list of these 48 cities).

"But the Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the people of Israel they shall have no inheritance." (Numbers 18:23)

"The Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying 'command the people of Israel to give to the Levites some of the inheritance of their possession as cities for them to dwell in. And you shall give to the Levites pasturelands around the cities...'" (Numbers 35:1-3)

Of the 48 Levitical city allotments, 6 cities were legally established as havens for any person who was, in a fair and just trial, convicted of accidental manslaughter to flee to for the remainder of their life or until the high priest dies (which signals a new era so the "manslayer", as they are referred to in Scripture, has a clean slate under the law). This saves them from the *Goel* as you'll see in verse 6 and verse 25 of Numbers below.

"The cities that you give to the Levites shall be 'the six cities of refuge, where you shall permit the manslayer to flee, and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities.'" (Numbers 35:6)

Contemplate or Discuss:

Prayerfully think about on your own or discuss with your group, how a manslayer convicted in a "fair and just trial" but receiving the mercy of being "saved from the *Goel*"(Kinsman Redeemer) reflects The Gospel and Jesus Christ?

Guidance for Leaders:

If you need a little help to guide the discussion, try this: God is a fair and impartial Judge as it says in 1 Peter 1:17. God is also Holy, set apart, and God alone is Holy. 1 Samuel 2:2 says, "There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God". Because He alone is Holy (note the capital "H") he may choose to tolerate evil but evil

cannot dwell with Him. "You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell" (Psalm 5:4). Though now, because we are in Christ, our sin nature does not rule us, Jesus does via The Holy Spirit. We remain wicked creatures because the sin nature we inherited from Adam and Eve remains in us until our glorification in Heaven. Paul writes much about this in Romans. Some other places in the Bible that supports this doctrine of total depravity:

Ecclesiastes 7:20, "Surely there is not a **righteous** man on earth who does good and never sins." (this is referring to believers)

1 John 1:8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Because of who God is (Holy), and because of who we are (wicked), He is **just** to leave us to our path to hell to pay for our rebellion towards God. We are like the manslayer that Numbers 35 describes. Jesus is the *Goel* (Kinsman Redeemer), selected by The Father to carry out Judgement on the wicked, the "manslayer" and He would be just to do so. But, out of God's amazing grace and great mercy, we have been given the unmerited gift of, not only a safe haven to remain (God our refuge; in Jesus we remain), but a clean slate because of the supreme and ultimate high priest (see Hebrews), Jesus Christ who died to give us that new life.

Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Isaiah 33:22 sums this all up, "For the Lord is our *judge*; the Lord is our *lawgiver*; the Lord is our *king*; he will save us." Christ is our judge, the one who gives us commands, our king. And by His Grace He is also our redeemer. All the commands we fall short of, Jesus has already paid the price for to save us from condemnation and we did nothing nor could we ever do anything to deserve that great mercy.

God illustrates in The book of Ruth several beautiful themes of His redemptive plan:

- We have a God whose love and redemption plan extends to Gentiles (Ruth 2:12)
- In Ruth 4:1-12, Boaz becoming Ruth's kinsman redeemer foreshadows all nations will have a Kinsman Redeemer in the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.
- David's anointing (and therefore Jesus Christ's blood-right) to the throne of Israel is traced back to Judah (Ruth 4:18-22, Genesis 49:8-12).
- Ruth demonstrates that women are not lesser-than but are co-heirs with men of God's salvation and grace (see Galatians 3:28)
- Ruth personifies the description of the *eshet chayil*, fueled by God's grace and propelled by His mercy
- Ruth describes God's sovereignty (Ruth 1:6, 4:13) and providential care (Ruth 2:3) of seemingly insignificant people that later proved to be crucial to accomplishing God's will.
- Ruth joins Tamar (Genesis 38), Rahab (Joshua 2), and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12), who were all considered to be scandalous women in various ways, in the genealogy of the messianic line (Ruth 4:17, 22, and Matthew 1:5)

Contemplate or Discuss:

The above is not an exhaustive list, so here is a challenge to you: contemplate on your own or discuss amongst your group other ways The book of Ruth reveals the beauty and power of God's redemptive plan, both in this account and for mankind. In what ways do you see Christ in The Book of Ruth?

Conclusion:

What God chose to put in The Bible serves the purpose of edifying us and reveals Himself and His redemptive plan. We should be careful not to become legalists and works-oriented as we realize the beautiful truths of Proverbs 31 and The Book of Ruth. When studying what it means to be an *eshet chayil* it is easy to get caught up with striving to be this 'ideal woman'. Yet we each have varying life situations which may not allow us to satisfy everything described in Proverbs 31:10-31 and we ought to give grace to ourselves for that and trust in God's sovereignty over our lives - not that we become passive, but that we rest in His authority and provision. We are to be diligent in the areas where He has ordained us to have the ability to be proactive, exercising godly and practical wisdom through it all. We also have to remember, hard to think of as it is, that Ruth was a fallen sinner just like us. We will never know, this side of Heaven, what Ruth was like day to day. We will never know what her thoughts were moment by moment. Keep in mind Ruth's husband Boaz. His mother was Rahab who was acknowledged in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 for her remarkable faith (I will do a study guide on women of faith which will include her). Before her amazing act of faith she was a prostitute living in a region where lying was a way of life. Perhaps she had residual tendencies to lie even after her conversion. I haven't found evidence of this; it's just my opinion. My point is that there are plenty of examples of notable people in The Bible who were still evidently sinful by nature while still professing faith in the One True God. Ruth's descendent David, Moses, the Apostle Peter, the Apostle Paul, and others were all examples of human greatness yet not without their areas of sin and failures. Rahab and Ruth are no different, just because we did not read about their sin, after professing their faith, in the Bible. The only spotless person who ever walked the earth is Jesus Christ, fully man and also fully God. If we internalize the ideal of the *eshet chayil* as a means to near perfection or to being some kind of Christian super woman then we set ourselves up for disappointment and exhaustion. How is our heart oriented? Are we putting our faith and desires in our abilities or even in our good intentions above all? Or are we orienting our whole heart towards Christ, the magnificence of who He is, what He has done on The Cross, who we are in Him because of that finished work, and laying all our concerns, desires, and intentions at His feet? Are we marveling at His grace truly? Is His grace truly sufficient in our hearts or is our striving to be an *eshet chayil* eclipsing that grace in our lives? We ought to take what we've learned about the *eshet chayil* as a checks and balances guide for where we are at in our affection for and conformity to Christ. He is, through the Holy Spirit indwelling us, the only means of empowerment to grow as an *eshet chayil*, and it is initiated and sustained only by His grace alone according to His purposes and for His glory. All of the traits of the *eshet chayil* is ultimately a fraction of a fraction of the qualities our Lord Jesus Christ supremely embodies and is fully set apart in essence: holy, noble, valorous, righteous, trustworthy, humble, loving, wise, and the greatest blessing -- devoted to the point of drinking The Father's full cup of wrath on our behalf and dying a brutal bodily death then resurrected in victory over the devil, sin, and death itself.

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