RUTH: GODLY COURTSHIP IN AN UNGODLY ERA
IV. Taking Godly Initiatives
(Ruth 1-4)

I. Introduction

A. We live in the latter days of Church History as seen in the exponential growth of sin in society. Thus, the concern can arise as to how godly believers might obtain godly marital partners in our era.

B. The courtship of godly Boaz and Ruth occurred in the apostate era of the Judges (Ruth 1:1), so we study the book of Ruth on godly courtship for our era, noting in this lesson the value of taking godly initiatives.

II. Taking Godly Initiatives, Ruth 1-4.

A. In courting, submission to God and to other people as the Lord directs is to be balanced by godly initiatives.

B. Both Boaz and Ruth exampled godly personal initiatives in their courtship experience (as follows):

1. Boaz exampled godly initiatives in his developing relationship with Ruth:
   a. Since Boaz was a kinsman to Elimelech, the deceased husband of the childless Naomi, Boaz knew by the Deuteronomy 25:5-10 requirement that he might be asked to act as a kinsman-redeemer for Naomi.
   b. Boaz also knew that as Naomi was likely beyond childbearing age, she might have her daughter-in-law Ruth whose late husband Mahlon was also Elimelech's childless son ask him to be her kinsman-redeemer.
   c. In addition, when Boaz learned that Ruth chose to glean in his field when she was unaware that it was his field, Boaz knew that God had led her to come under his protective care in a hazardous era and location in Israel for especially foreign women like Ruth, and that she might also be his future wife, Ruth 2:4-7.
   d. Therefore, Boaz took the initiative to protect and provide for Ruth and Naomi by directing Ruth to glean only in his fields, and there he provided her with ample grain for food and livelihood needs, Ruth 2:8-23.
   e. Ruth responded with humble gratitude to Boaz's initial effort to protect and provide for her (Ruth 2:8-13), so he took another initiative to add to his original provisions for her, since it appeared that the Lord might well be leading Ruth to be positively disposed to want become his future wife, cf. Ruth 2:14-17.
   f. When Ruth came to the threshing floor to ask Boaz to act as her kinsman-redeemer, he vowed in God's name to make sure that Ruth's request was fulfilled, either by the kinsman who was nearer than he was or by himself, Ruth 3:6-13. Boaz also gave Ruth about 60 pounds of threshed grain to take back to Naomi as proof to both women that he fully intended to fulfill his vow to Ruth on their behalf (Ruth 3:14; B. K. C., O. T., p. 425). Naomi thus assured Ruth that Boaz would settle the entire matter that day, Ruth 3:16-18.
   g. When the nearer kinsman gave Boaz the right to buy Elimelech's field and marry Ruth, Boaz took the initiative publicly to tell the town that he would do so, what was met with everyone's blessing, Ru. 4:1-12.
   h. Boaz then took the initiative to marry Ruth and by her to sire Obed, David's grandfather, Ruth 4:13-22.
2. Ruth exampled godly initiatives in her developing relationship with Boaz:
   a. Ruth declined Naomi's repeat efforts to direct her to return to her family and country of Moab by vowing in God's name that she would stay with Naomi and take Naomi's God as her Lord, Ruth 1:14-18.
   b. After they came to Bethlehem, Ruth took the initiative to get Naomi's permission to glean, Ruth 2:2.
   c. When Naomi urged Ruth to ask Boaz to be her kinsman-redeemer, Ruth agreed to do so, Ruth 3:1-7. As Ruth spoke with Boaz, she humbly twice called herself Boaz's handmaid, requesting (the verb ***wuperasta,*** "spread," though appearing to be a command in the KJV, is actually a jussive in form in the Hebrew text as a request for a future action [perfect with a waw consecutive following the imperfect with waw consecutive] from an inferior like Ruth to a superior like Boaz, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1198) him to spread his "skirt" over her as her kinsman-redeemer, Ruth 3:8-9 KJV. This practice in the East showed a man meant to protect a woman (J. F. & B., Com. on the Whole Bib., 1977, p. 204). However, the Hebrew word for "skirt" is ***kanap,*** what means either "skirt" or "wing," the same word Boaz used of God's wings in Ruth 2:12 in telling of Ruth's coming under God's protection (Ibid., p. 425; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 489). Ruth thus took the initiative to use Boaz's remark of her coming under God's wings as the basis for asking Boaz to act as God's agent in spreading his wing of marriage over her!

Lesson: Though Boaz was submissive to the Lord and Ruth was submissive to the Lord and to others as Scripture directed, both still took initiatives that aligned with God's will for the advance of their relationship in courting.

Application: May believers in the courting process not only submit to God and to other Biblical overseers but also take godly initiatives as the Lord provides them the opportunity.