

Courtship or Dating, Part 3: Parental Protection from the Dating Game (Ruth 2-3)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on January 24, 2010

www.goldcountrybaptist.org

We've been studying the book of Ruth on Sunday evenings and taking time to look at its principles in light of how men and women get together in modern times, and observing that many of the 20th century American patterns of recreational relationships are not only a far departure from the safeguards young people used to have in parents, community, and church, but many premarital practices of even Christian culture often depart from biblical principles. And though modern terminology we use may not be used in the Bible (even terms like relationship or more specific cultural terms like a suitor calling on a girl or courtship or dating or boyfriend or girlfriend or going out, etc.), and though a manual of methodology for meeting and marrying in detail isn't given in the Bible, we do have God's Word that is sufficient for all of life and godliness.

And though Scripture speaks to our life and culture, I want us to again start trying to put ourselves back in biblical life and culture. I have some visuals that I hope will help us have a picture of and better appreciation for the historical setting of Ruth and Boaz.

<[CLICK HERE](#) TO VIEW SLIDES ONLINE>

The book of Ruth is as much or more than any part of the OT, a drama, in several acts or scenes, a true story told through the skillful inspired writing of the narrator. Ultimately it paints a vivid picture of the drama of redemption and redemptive history. The Drama by [Sight & Sound Theater](#) of the book of Ruth paints a faithful and moving portrayal of this story.

The picture from Ruth 2 illustrates the unique plight of a young lady without the protection or provision of a man, which is where we left off with last time. The biblical concept of male headship is the loving leadership that protects; normally fathers, then husbands

Women's liberation as a movement largely has attempted to "free" women from all such authority as young adult daughters, to be independent feminists who don't need a man and are so much better off on their own. But actually biblical truth protects women and promotes godly femininity. God's truth is what truly sets free.

In the book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, the first chapter defines true biblical masculinity and femininity in a way that a friend here pointed out is so wonderfully shown in the story of Ruth and Boaz.

At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent [loving] responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships (Boaz models this)

At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships (Ruth does)

1 Cor. 11:3 (NASB95) *But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman ...*

Under the loving authority and headship of Christ, a woman is designed by God for the loving authority and headship of a Christ-like man. Last week we saw that the father is the authority and head of his household (his wife and his children), to exercise loving leadership in providing, protecting, and if and when he gives his daughter in marriage to a man, biblically what is taking place in the wedding ceremony is that mantle of headship (loving, leading, providing, protecting) is transferred from the girl's father to her now husband.

That's the normal biblical pattern (a beautiful pattern) but Ruth is in a unique situation as a widow, with no father or male in her life, but as she models and honors that abiding definition of femininity, and as she honors and loves the parent she does have (in Naomi), she is blessed, and it goes well with her, as Scripture promises, not because the exact midnight method on the threshing floor was or is how all should do it, but because she loved and honored authority.

Ephesians 6:2 *HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise),* ³ *SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.* ⁴ *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction [or nurture and admonition] of the Lord.*

Note that "Fathers" in particular are singled out for a primary role in the raising of children (the Bible doesn't define children by pure age but child suggests a stage of life while dependent upon parents financially, etc., v.1 says they are to obey; Col 3:20 "in all things")

God's Word recognizes there isn't always father in the picture or other ideals, but the principle should still be followed of honoring parental or other godly authorities that exist

- i. Illustrated in Ruth's situation (widow far away from home, former family background and upbringing was pagan, Moab known for Chemosh cult of child-sacrifice, etc.)
- ii. Illustrated in Ruth's loyal love (1:8 – Ruth 1 may be greatest OT example of it) and faithful submissive honoring attitude to Naomi who didn't always have an honorable attitude

Ruth 1:20 *She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara [bitter], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.* ²¹ *"I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"* ²² *So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law ...*

Ruth 2:2 *And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."*

2:11 *Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me ^{12 (NIV)} May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD...* (probably referencing the 5th commandment)

²² Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that **you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field.**” ²³ **So she stayed close by the maids** [notice how she repeatedly obeys and honors authority, and note the loving protection] ... **And she lived with her mother-in-law.**

3:6 *So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.*

¹⁶ *When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did it go, my daughter?”* [NIV says Ruth “told her everything ...”]

One way a daughter can honor her mom is telling her everything, her relationships, feelings, etc. Ruth didn’t tell Naomi, “It’s none of your business, hey, respect my privacy!” Be open, be honest, be honoring of parental authorities, and God says it’ll go well w/ you.

iii. Illustrated in Boaz honoring Naomi as Ruth’s only remaining parental authority (3:15-18)

Boaz wasn’t just courting the daughter; he was courting the future in-laws, too. A godly man should wisely note Boaz’s example:

3:17 *She [Ruth] said, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” Then she said, “Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.”*

Naomi knew the character of Boaz because he had demonstrated it (an issue that gives parents much angst when they aren’t getting to know the one interested in their child because she and/or he are not honoring parents but are making their own privacy paramount instead of parental blessing). Notice here mutual respect shown by a parent to a man interested in their daughter when he honors and respects their authority. This is such a key principle in God’s Word.

One week ago Sat., an article came out in NY Times (1/16/10) on a 15-year-old named Tess Chapin who illustrates the opposite of the concept of loving and honoring authority we see in this book. Tess violated her 11:30 pm curfew, coming home after midnight and having drunk alcohol, and her parents grounded her for 5 weeks, meaning “no parties for Tess, no sleepovers, no Sweet 16s, no hanging out at a friend’s, and certainly no hanging out at a party where there is no parent present and possibly alcohol served” but apparently she wasn’t grounded from Internet networking, and she quickly started what the NY Times called in their article title:

A Facebook Movement, Against Mom and Dad

... This is teenage rebellion, electronic style — peaceful, organized and, apparently, contagious [over 1,000 friends from multiple high schools quickly became supporters, protesting her parents] ... So basically, Tess explains on her group page, she made an honest late-night mistake. Her parents flipped, and they grounded her for five weeks — “thats my childhood right there,” she wrote. “please join so I can convince them to unground me. please please please.” ... Tess said that she recognized only about 35 percent of the names. “Have never met u but I pledge to make a statement so I hope this works,” wrote a young [man] in a typical sentiment of support displayed on the Facebook group’s wall ... one agreed with Tess that “parents can be stupid.”¹

[But of course, kids can't be? Why wasn't she grounded from Internet? Too inhumane?] The same week another story came out about a 4-year old boy who rebelled against his pre-kindergarten class rules about hair and rather than the parents teaching the little rebel to honor authority, they are leading the charge in protesting the school board to let the 4-year old disobey the rules (who's the head of that household?)

That type of attitude may get you a lot of media attention and it may go well for you as far as Facebook friend numbers, but God says it won't go well with you in life and you won't enjoy long life

iv. Instructed in Scripture (Eph. 6:3; Prov. 1:8, 6:20, 1 Sam. 15:23)

Both fathers and mothers have authority over both sons and daughters, and remember: loving authority is for a kid's protection

Proverbs 1:8 ⁸ **Hear** [i.e., hear and obey], *my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching;* ⁹ *Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck.* ¹⁰ *My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent ...*

6:20 *My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;* ²¹ *Bind them continually on your heart; Tie them around your neck.* ²² *When you walk about, they will guide you; When you sleep, they will watch over you; And when you awake, they will talk to you.* ²³ *For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life* ²⁴ *To keep you from the evil woman...*

Listen, any young person hearing this message, God has ordained parents for your protection, not to ruin your life but to keep *you* from ruining your life with the wrong kind of relationship. And women need godly protection and covering not because there's something wrong with women so much as there's something wrong with men, and good men know it and will seek to protect women and children from bad men. That's what godly men do.

If you want to enjoy life and for it to go well with you, then obey and love and honor God through your parents and authorities. Before you say "what right do my parents have to interfere in my life" or "what do they know," before you justify stubborn rebellion read 1 Sam. 15:23 (NKJV) *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you ...*

v. Implications from Scripture:

1. Single moms may be recognized as heads of households
2. Moms and other family members may be involved [in the premarital relationship] (Gen. 21:20-21, 24:28-32)

In Gen 21:20, the mother gets a wife for her son in the absence of the father. In Genesis 24, the brother of the young lady is very involved in the unique premarital process of Rebekah (cf. Ethan). In Esther 2, her relative Mordecai is very involved in her life and pre-marriage and post-marriage counsel, in the absence of parents.

3. Godly believers and leaders in the church should be involved prior to marriage as well as after (Lk 1:39-56; Titus 2:2-8; 1 Pet. 5:5, Heb. 10:24-25, 13:7, 17)

Mary the pregnant virgin at that critical time in her life goes to visit Elizabeth and spends 3 months with her before marrying Joseph, a beautiful example of a Titus 2 relationship of the vital role an older woman can play in the life of a young bride (NIV):

⁴ *Then they [the older women] can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands*

1 Peter 5:5 (NKJV) *Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud...*

Hebrews 10:24 (NASB95) *and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*

13:7 *Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith ... ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

Rick Holland writes: ‘One of the most neglected sources of wisdom in the Christian life is church leaders. Pastors, elders, deacons, and other leaders should be intricately involved in any budding relationship. This is especially important if the parents are deceased, far away, or out of the picture for other reasons. It is a curious fact that more is said in the [N.T.] about the role of church leaders in our lives than even the role of our parents (see Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus; Hebrews 13). Only a fool would disregard this arm of God’s authority ... the book of Proverbs exhorts us to listen to wise counsel around us (see 12:15; 15:22; 19:20-21; 27:9). The insights and observations of mature Christian friends should add yet another layer of accountability in relational decisions ... And the counsel of other mature believers can also be used by God to put the relationship under the microscope ... [a couple] should move forward in the relationship only after they have exhausted the confirmation possible from their parents, pastors, and friends.’²

I can’t emphasize enough how important this is to do *early* in any potential relationship, ideally starting with the young gal’s father. There’s a number of Scriptures in last week’s handout which I would encourage you to study beyond what we cover here.

The father of the unmarried daughter should be sought out and submitted to (Gen. 24:15-28), considering her wishes (v. 57-58), dad should get to know a young man first (Ex. 2:16-21) ...

Exodus 2:16 *Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. ¹⁷ Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock. ¹⁸ When they came to Reuel their father, he said, “Why have you come back so soon today?”*

¹⁹ So they said, “An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock.” ²⁰ He said to his daughters, “Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? **Invite him to have something to eat.**” ²¹ Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and **he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses.**

The father should set parameters with the interested young man for their relationship

Gen 29:9b ... Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess. ¹⁰ When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the flock of Laban his mother’s brother. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept. ¹² Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah’s son, and she ran and told her father. ¹³ So when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister’s son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things. ¹⁴ Laban said to him, “Surely you are my bone and my flesh.” **And he stayed with him a month ...** ¹⁸ Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” ¹⁹ Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; **stay with me.**” ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

34:11 Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, “If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me. ¹² “Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage.”

Dowries of ancient Israel may not be required in our culture today but dads should be required to be involved and dads have every right to set parameters for their children’s relationships, especially to protect daughters

The father should be honored during relationship before and after marriage (Ex 4:18-20, 18:7-27)

Jethro and Moses are a great example of son-in-law relationships

18:7 Then Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. ⁸ Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel’s sake, all the hardship that had befallen them on the journey, and how the LORD had delivered them. ⁹ Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians. ... ¹⁴ Now when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?” ¹⁵ Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God. ¹⁶ “When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws.” ¹⁷ Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ “You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. ¹⁹ “Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you

... ²⁴ So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said ... ²⁷ Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.

Fathers should be wise and biblical (Judges 21, Gen. 31:5-7) [negative examples of ungodly unwise dads; the husband-wife relationship does supersede others, Gen 2:24, but until married, the father is a daughter's covenant head. After marriage a wise couple is wise to seek advice from godly believers or in-laws, but they no longer must obey parents, only honor them]

Numbers 30:3 *Also if a woman makes a vow to the LORD, and binds herself by an obligation **in her father's house in her youth,** ⁴ and her father hears her vow and her obligation by which she has bound herself, and her father says nothing to her, then all her vows shall stand and every obligation by which she has bound herself shall stand. ⁵ "But **if her father should forbid her on the day he hears of it, none of her vows or her obligations by which she has bound herself shall stand;** and the LORD will forgive her because her father had forbidden her. [same wording repeated for husbands in v. 6-8] ... ¹⁶ These are the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses, as **between a man and his wife, and as between a father and his daughter, while she is in her youth in her father's house.***

Doug Wilson points out the clear connection between the headship authority and veto power of a father and husband in God's Law, and argues 'if such authority rests with the father or the husband concerning a vow made *to the Lord*, how much more does it apply to other issues? And how much more will it apply to such things as a commitment a daughter might make to an interested suitor? A vow a woman makes the Lord would be the most solemn and weighty of all vows. If her father or husband can set this kind of vow aside, then he certainly has authority to set aside other lesser vows ... in Scripture, sons *leave* home, daughters are *given*. This is the scriptural pattern. A son leaves in order to take a wife, and establish a new home. A daughter is given to a young man who is establishing such a home ... She remains under the authority of her father – even if she is physically away from home – and then when she is given in marriage, she comes under the authority of her husband. This is the normal scriptural pattern ... The authority of a father therefore clearly extends to a daughter's romantic interests.'³

*Exodus 22:16 If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her to be his wife. ¹⁷ **If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins.***

'The father of the daughter [decides to give or not give a daughter in marriage] – not the daughter, not the seducer, not true love, not Hollywood decides. Mundane old Dad makes the decision. Now obviously the daughter had seen something in this young man. But the father may not have seen it, or perhaps he did see it, but had a different opinion of it ... Now if the father has the authority to say *no* when there is an *existing* sexual relationship, then how much more does the father have the authority to say *no* when there is nothing more than mild emotional or sexual interest? If he may say *no* when a couple have gone ten miles down the road, then how much more may he say *no* if they have gone fifty yards? ... The idea that a young girl could say, "I'm eighteen and I can do what I want" would have been alien to the biblical way of thinking. In other words, the father has *legitimate* biblical authority ... With recreational dating, the authority of the father is treated as a vestige of another era, or as a joke.

The task before us here is consequently for fathers to begin thinking of themselves in a biblical way. The disrespect that children have for their fathers in this area is really just an echo of the disrespect fathers have of their own office ... With recreational dating, some degree of sexual activity is expected so long as they don't "go all the way," and those responsible for holding the line are the couple themselves – which usually means that the woman is the one who bears the brunt of the responsibility ... With recreational dating, the privacy of the couple is paramount.’⁴

But with Christian courtship (or dating biblically or whatever you want to call it), the purity of a couple is paramount. We'll look at that subject more next week Lord-willing, which is one of the most beautiful themes in Scripture from the very beginning of the Bible to the very end of the Bible, the glory of a father presenting a pure bride (the heavenly eternal reality we are to reflect here on earth).

¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/16/nyregion/16bigcity.html>

² Rick Holland, "The Guided Path," in *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*, edited by Alex Chediak, p. 99-101.

³ Douglas Wilson, *Her Hand in Marriage: Biblical Courtship in the Modern World*, p. 21-22.

⁴ Wilson, 29-32.