

Boaz: A Character Study

Getting to Know the Kinsman-Redeemer

As we work through the book of Ruth verse by verse, we won't always have time to pause on every detail of who Boaz was: his family background, his social standing, and everything Scripture and history tell us about the kind of man he was. This resource fills in that fuller picture, so you don't miss anything as the series continues. Read it alongside the sermons, whenever you like. It's meant to deepen what you're already hearing, not replace it.

Where Boaz Appears in Scripture

Boaz isn't a minor, one-book character. He shows up in several places across the Bible, which tells us the biblical writers considered him significant well beyond his own story:

- The book of Ruth, chapters 2 through 4, where we meet him directly.
- 1 Chronicles 2:11-12, in a genealogical record tracing the line of Judah down to King David.
- Matthew 1:5, in the opening genealogy of the Gospel of Matthew, tracing the line from Abraham to Jesus.
- Luke 3:32, in Luke's genealogy of Jesus, traced backward from Jesus to Adam.

In other words, Boaz isn't just a supporting character in a nice story about a foreign widow finding a home. He's a direct link in the ancestral line of King David, and ultimately of Jesus Christ himself.

What His Name Means

Boaz most likely means something like “in him is strength.” It's worth noting, purely as an interesting detail rather than a settled fact, that centuries later Solomon named one of the two great bronze pillars at the entrance of the Jerusalem Temple “Boaz” (1 Kings 7:21), alongside a second pillar named “Jachin,” meaning “he will establish.” Together the two names declared that God would establish His temple and His people in strength. Scholars don't know for certain whether Solomon's pillar was meant as a tribute to his ancestor Boaz specifically, or whether it simply reused a strong, well-known name for its meaning. Either way, it's a nice detail to know.

His Family Line: Salmon, Nahshon, and Possibly Rahab

According to 1 Chronicles 2:11-12, Boaz's father was a man named Salma (also spelled Salmon in other passages), and his grandfather was Nahshon.

Nahshon was far from an unknown figure. Numbers 1:7 and 2:3 identify him as the prince, or tribal leader, of the tribe of Judah during Israel's wilderness wanderings, one generation after the exodus from Egypt. He was also the brother of Elisheba, the wife of Aaron, Israel's first high priest (Exodus 6:23), which made his family one of the

most prominent in the nation. Jewish tradition even remembers Nahshon as the first Israelite to step into the Red Sea before it parted. Whatever the truth of that tradition, it tells you the kind of reputation his family carried. Boaz, in other words, came from real standing and a respected name.

Here's where it gets even more interesting, and where we need to be careful and honest about what we actually know. Matthew 1:5 states plainly: "Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab." That name, Rahab, is almost certainly meant to call to mind Rahab of Jericho, the Canaanite woman who hid the Israelite spies and was spared, along with her family, when the city fell (Joshua 2; Joshua 6:22-25). If that identification is correct, it means Boaz's own mother was a formerly pagan foreigner who was grafted into Israel by her faith in God, the very same kind of story Ruth herself will live out in the next generation.

There's an honest chronological wrinkle worth mentioning here rather than glossing over. If Rahab was present at the fall of Jericho, and Boaz's own story unfolds late in the period of the Judges (as covered in the series background material), that's a longer gap than a single generation would usually span. Because of this, many scholars believe biblical genealogies like this one sometimes skip generations, a common ancient practice, and that Rahab may be Boaz's grandmother or a more distant ancestress named specifically because of how significant her story was, rather than his immediate biological mother.

Either way, whether Rahab was his mother or a few generations further back in his family line, the point still stands: Boaz grew up in a family that had already experienced God's grace toward an outsider firsthand. That's worth sitting with as you watch how naturally and warmly Boaz extends that very same grace to Ruth, another outsider, in his own field. It may not have felt foreign to him at all. It may have felt like home.

His Standing in Bethlehem

By the time we meet him in Ruth 2:1, Boaz is described as “a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech” (NKJV). The Hebrew phrase behind “man of great wealth” is *gibbor chayil*, literally something like “a mighty man of substance.” It's the same phrase used elsewhere for military heroes, but here it points to wealth, standing, and capability.

Boaz was also part of the Ephrathite clan, the same prominent Bethlehem family line Elimelech belonged to (see Ruth 1:2). And in chapter 4, when Boaz goes to settle Ruth's future at the city gate, the town elders gather quickly and willingly to serve as witnesses at his request. That's not just about money. It shows a man with real, established credibility in his community.

What We Learn About His Character

- **Genuine piety, not performance.** His first line in the book is a blessing exchanged with his own field workers, “The LORD be with you” (Ruth 2:4), an apparently ordinary part of how he ran his household. In an era defined by “everyone did what was right in his own eyes,” that's worth noticing.
- **Generosity beyond what was required.** The gleaning law only required landowners to leave the edges and dropped grain (Leviticus 19:9-10). Boaz goes further, instructing his workers to deliberately let extra grain fall for Ruth (Ruth 2:15-16) and inviting her to eat at his own table (Ruth 2:14).
- **Practical protection.** He instructs his young men not to touch Ruth and gives her access to water they've drawn (Ruth 2:8-9), real, specific provision for a vulnerable foreign woman working alone in the fields.
- **Self-control and respect.** When Ruth approaches him at the threshing floor at night (Ruth 3:6-13), a genuinely vulnerable and easily misread situation for both of them, Boaz responds with restraint and honor rather than taking advantage of the moment.
- **Integrity in public.** Rather than settling Ruth's future quietly or privately, Boaz insists on handling everything properly and publicly at the city gate, in front of the elders and a nearer relative who has first legal right to act (Ruth 4:1-12). He does it the right way, even when a quieter shortcut was available to him.
- **Humility.** Boaz doesn't try to claim Ruth or the family land for himself outright. He openly acknowledges that another relative has a prior legal claim and gives that man the first opportunity to act (Ruth 4:4-6).

His Role as Kinsman-Redeemer

The Hebrew word behind “redeemer” here is *go'el*. Under the Law (Leviticus 25:25-55), a close relative had the right, and in some cases the responsibility, to “redeem” family land that had been sold off due to hardship, keeping it inside the family and tribe. This is a related but broader category than the narrower brother-only levirate marriage law covered elsewhere in this series (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Boaz was not Mahlon's brother, so he wasn't strictly obligated under that narrower law. As a *go'el*, though, he steps forward willingly to redeem both the family's land and Ruth's future together, combining and extending two related legal customs beyond what the strict letter of either law required of him.

His Age and Household

The text never states Boaz's exact age or whether he had been married before. What we can infer comes from his own words in Ruth 3:10, where he tells Ruth she has “shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.” That comment suggests Boaz considered himself notably older than the “young men” Ruth might otherwise have pursued. Most readers and commentators assume from this, and from the complete silence about a wife anywhere in the story, that Boaz was likely an older, unmarried man, possibly a widower. That's a reasonable inference, but it's worth holding loosely since Scripture never states it outright.

His Legacy

- He became the great-grandfather of King David (Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David).
- He's named directly in the genealogy of Jesus in both Matthew 1:5 and Luke 3:32.
- He's part of a striking pattern in Jesus' family line: several women with complicated or foreign backgrounds appear by name in Matthew's genealogy, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Boaz's own life quietly touches two of them, possibly descended from Rahab, and directly married to Ruth.

A Picture of Christ

Many read Boaz as one of the Old Testament's clearest pictures of what Jesus would later do for His people. A kinsman-redeemer had to meet three conditions: be a near relative, be willing to act, and be able to pay whatever the redemption cost. Boaz meets all three, and goes further than the law required of him, reaching out to rescue someone who had no claim on him except grace. That's exactly the shape of what Christ does for His people: near enough to us to redeem us (Hebrews 2:14-17), fully willing, and fully able to pay what redemption actually costs.

What We Can Learn From Boaz

- Real faith shows up in ordinary routines, not just big moments, the way Boaz blessed his workers as a simple daily habit.

- Generosity that only ever meets the minimum requirement isn't really generosity. Boaz consistently gave more than the law required.
- Integrity means doing things the right way even when a shortcut is available and no one would know the difference.
- Genuine kindness protects people in practical, specific ways, not just warm feelings or good intentions.
- Where we come from, including our own family's story of receiving grace, often shapes how freely we're willing to extend that same grace to someone else.

All Scripture references follow the New King James Version (NKJV) unless noted otherwise.