

Ruth 2

How many of you had a Rubik's Cube when you were younger? How many don't know what that is? How many of you were able to solve it...without cheating? I remember working on mine and starting to feel like I was getting the hang of it. I finally got one complete side done and felt so good about myself...until I started working on the next side. You know how it was. Every time you moved one piece it messed up the part you had done and you couldn't remember how you got it there. It was so frustrating!

So, at this point you had two choices. You could either keep working on it, getting more and more frustrated and never seeming to make any real progress or you could pitch the thing in the trash or at least a drawer and never try it again. All the while some nerd on YouTube is doing it one-handed and blind-folded in 26 seconds. It's one of those things that you know is possible but you just can't seem to figure it out.

Now, how many of you married men out there sometimes feel like you must have married a Rubik's Cube? You start to get the hang of her after a while and feel pretty good about yourself and then everything changes. It feels like every time you do something you mess something else up and then you can't remember how you did it right. It's so frustrating and now you have the same two choices to make. Do you keep blindly working at it getting more and more frustrated or do you just quit?

Well, just like you can go to certain websites and they will walk you through solving a Rubik's Cube by showing you how to do it, you can also go to the Owner's Manual, God's Word, to see what a woman needs in a husband. But just like those websites won't do it for you and you have to do the work and put some effort into it, the Bible won't do it for you either.

I've said before that if you didn't know that marriage was God's idea you would think it crazy that a man and a woman are supposed to marry and live together. We are so different and yet we know that it can be done. We see it all the time. We just have to figure it out. Thankfully, God has given us numerous examples of how to do it in the Bible. Today, I want us to look at one of the most beautiful love stories ever written.

Like so many stories in the Old Testament, there are some considerably different cultural issues to deal with in the story of Ruth and her kinsman-redeemer Boaz. The book of Ruth

is a short one – only 4 chapters – but we unfortunately don't have time to read the whole thing so I'll fill you in on some of the main points while you go ahead and turn to chapter 2.

The story of Ruth and Boaz begins when Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, return to Bethlehem from Moab where they had been living. Naomi's husband and both sons, one the husband of Ruth, had died, leaving the women penniless and without a male protector. Upon arriving in Bethlehem, Ruth goes to gather some grain in a field so they would have something to eat.

There was no Social Security or Welfare or anything like that. In those days, if you didn't work or have somebody to provide for you, you would starve. So, the first thing Ruth does is go grocery shopping. Let's read how she did that and what happened in **Ruth chapter 2:1-16**.

Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter."³ So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.⁴ Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The LORD be with you!" "The LORD bless you!" they answered.⁵ Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?"⁶ The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi."⁷ She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."⁸ So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me.⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."¹⁰ At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"¹¹ Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before.¹² May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."¹³ "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have

put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.”¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.” When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over.¹⁵ As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her.¹⁶ Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.”

I said earlier that there was no Welfare or anything like that but there was a law of the land that said a field owner could not harvest every square inch of his field. He had to leave the corners and anything that might fall so that those in need might be able to go behind and pick up some scraps. That is exactly what Ruth was doing and yet we see here that Boaz was doing more than just following the law when it came to her.

You really need to read the whole book to get the whole picture of what all Boaz does for Ruth. It is exactly what all of scripture teaches about how a man should treat a woman. But I was reminded of the verse that sums all of this up; a verse that is wonderfully illustrated by Boaz and by Isaac and by Abraham and by my dad and by so many of you married men here today. **Ephesians 5:25** says, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”* Repeat. Guys, do you know what a woman needs in a husband?

Oh, she may want a lot of things. She may want clothes and jewelry and a nice car and those are not bad for her to have. She may even say that all she needs is the basics, just food, clothes and shelter. But there may come a time when even those basic things are going to be too much for you to provide. The Bible, by the way, never says that those things are necessary. The Bible never says that what a woman needs in a husband is one who gives her stuff.

What a woman needs in a husband is one who loves her like Jesus loves the church. She needs a man who will model Jesus to her and to the family at all times; a man who will **MAKE THE CHOICE** to love her even when the world says it’s ok to divorce her; a man who will sacrifice himself and his career and his dreams and desires for the good of his wife, not necessarily giving in to her wishes but sacrificing his wishes for her good.

In **Matthew 26:39** Jesus is praying to the Father and says, *“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”* At this point Jesus didn’t want to sacrifice Himself for the good of the church. He didn’t feel like it. Nobody was forcing

Him and nobody could blame Him for not wanting to give His own perfect life for the sake of people who may or may not accept Him. But He made the choice to be obedient. He made the choice to love His bride, the church, and all people by sacrificing Himself for our sake.

That's what a woman needs and I would argue that is the only thing she really needs because in that kind of love is everything that Boaz was and so much more. A woman doesn't need a man who tries to be comforting and protective and generous. She needs a man who acts like Jesus acts because all that is included in it. She may want a man who is tall, dark and handsome but what she needs is a man who looks like Jesus.

She needs a man who leads her to have a closer walk with Jesus; a man who leads her to church; leads her to tithe, do missions and act morally even when nobody else sees. She needs a man who says, *"Turn off that TV. We don't need to be watching that station or that show."* She doesn't need a man who looks like a body builder or acts like Fifty Shades of Filth in the bedroom. She needs a man who will lead her passionately in every aspect of life in a way that is honoring to her and ultimately to God.

Look **at verses 11-12 again of Ruth 2**. Boaz tells Ruth, *"¹² May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."* Boaz sees her value, and not only comments on it but Boaz is actually the answer to his own prayer. He protects her and takes care of her like Jesus takes care of His beloved.

In **Luke 13:34**, Jesus says, *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings."* **Psalm 91:4** says, *"He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart."* Men, that is what a woman needs in a husband. A godly husband will make the choice to protect his wife from anything that might harm her physically, emotionally or spiritually.

He will always make the choice to be faithful to her even if she is not faithful to him just like Christ is faithful even when His church is not. I have heard it said that marriage will teach you loyalty and patience and selflessness and lots of other things you *wouldn't need* if you *weren't married*. That may or may not be true but a woman needs a husband with those qualities and those are all qualities modeled by Jesus.

Now, ladies, you can have the perfect, most biblical and godly husband in the world but your marriage will not work if you don't do the other part that Paul talks about in **Ephesians 5**. He says in **verses 22-23**, *“²²Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”*

If you have never read that or heard that before then please wait to throw things at me until you have thought this through prayerfully. A woman is not second-best or inferior or less-than in any way. She wasn't in the case of Adam and Eve or Isaac and Rebekah or Ruth and Boaz or in your marriage. A man is not to rule over her or take advantage of her or take her for granted. That's the whole point of this message. A man is to love his wife like Jesus loves us.

I've been saying that a man will make the choice to love his wife. The kind of love that Jesus shows is agape love. Agape love is the kind of love that makes the choice to love. Jesus had a choice. He made the right choice at His own expense...and it hurt. But it was worth it.

Dr. M. Scott Peck said, *“True love is not a feeling by which we are overwhelmed. It is a committed, thoughtful decision.”* **James Packer** said, *“The Greek word agape (love) seems to have been virtually a Christian invention -- a new word for a new thing. Agape draws its meaning directly from the revelation of God in Christ. It is not a form of natural affection, however intense, but a **supernatural fruit of the Spirit** (Gal. 5:22). It is a matter of will rather than feeling. It is the basic element in Christ-likeness.”* Your Father Loves You, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.

This leads me right into a good way to close this message. I will close with this question. How do we do this? How can we love with the kind of love that Jesus showed? How can we possibly continue to make the choice, day after day and year after year to love someone who may or may not deserve it or even love us in the same way?

That last quote gives us the answer. It is a supernatural fruit of the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22** says that the first fruit of the Spirit is love. That kind of love can only manifest itself when the Spirit is living and working in that person's life.

Remember the Rubik's Cube? It is possible to not know what you are doing and to keep trying real hard and it is possible that you might solve that problem. It's the same with

marriage. Without the Spirit it is possible to survive a marriage until death do you part but the kind of sacrificial love that Jesus shows for His church and the kind of love that a woman needs in a husband can only be found in someone with a personal relationship with Jesus.

Music

Church membership might help a marriage. Being a good and moral person might help a man be who a woman wants. But only the agape love of God, given as a gift by His Spirit can make a man really be the husband a woman really needs. If you don't have that relationship; if you have never asked Him for forgiveness for your sin and then repented of that sin, and traded your guilt for peace and your shame for joy then do that today. Today is the day of salvation and today is the day for renewed marriages.

Invitation.

I understand if you might have a hard time taking marriage advice from me. Some people might think of it like getting shampoo advice from me. Hopefully it is obvious that everything I have said today, I have taken from the Bible. But indulge me just a second to tell you this just from me. Last June 22, was the 16th anniversary of my divorce being final. It's ironic how I couldn't remember anniversaries when I was married but now I can't forget them.

It was 16 years ago and I regret it every single day. I have told you before that it was not my idea. I didn't want it. I didn't file for it. But every single day I regret that it happened and I know that she does too. I regret that we didn't make the right choice. So, Todd's advice: do whatever it takes to continue to make the choice to love your spouse just as Jesus loves us. You won't regret it.