

Providence and Romance

by Keith Malcomson

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Transcript

I want you to turn to Ruth chapter 3. We're going to continue with our series on providence in the book of Ruth. We've already seen that providence are God's hidden hand in the normal events of life, working way before events actually happen. That's providence.

And we're seeing in this entire story of providence, or sorry, of the book of Ruth, of relationship, of friendships, of real events, how God's hand was at work in it, in minute detail, in insignificant things. And yet the consequence we're going to be world effecting. Do you know when you can't see God's hand in things, it's a terrible thing.

And it's a remarkable thing that even in the bad things of life or when crisis comes, and yet by faith through your knowledge of the character of God, you can discern his hand and see his hand. It's an amazing thing. I wouldn't swap all the riches of this world for my knowledge of God and my knowledge of the character of God.

I will assure you to know God and to know his character and to know his ways. Do you not know that even most Christians don't know the ways of God? Remember what it says in our Bible that Moses, sorry, Israel knew the deeds of God. Moses knew the ways of God.

That's very different. And some Christians live, they just know if God does something for them, but they know very little of the character, the nature, the ways of God or why God operates in a certain way. And they're two different things.

Some people, some Christians live on the basis, if God answers my prayer, I know he's real. I know he's alive. What if you go into a season where no prayers seem to be answered? Do you know enough of the character of God to carry you through or does your life fall apart? We're coming to Ruth chapter three and part six here tonight.

Some years ago, oh no, some years ago, praise the Lord. But here, part six, and I have to deal with this because it is in the text. I don't want this to dominate and obscure the other truths, but it's so vital.

Part six, providence and romance, providence and romance. Reading from Ruth chapter three. Then Naomi, her mother-in-law said unto her, my daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor.

Wash out thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor. But make not thyself known unto the man until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be when he lieth down that thou mark the place where he shall lie.

And thou shall go in and uncover his feet, and lay thee down, and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, all that thou sayest unto me, I will do. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.

And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn. And she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid down. And it came to pass at midnight that the man was afraid, and turned himself.

And behold, a woman lay at his feet, and he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thy handmaid. Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman. And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter, for thou should more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning.

And so much as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich, and now my daughter, fear not, I will do to thee as thou requirest. For all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman, howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well, let him do the kinsman's part.

But if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth. Lie down until the morning. And she lay at his feet until the morning, and she rose up before one could know another, and he said, Let it be known, not known that a woman came into the floor.

Also he said, Bring the veil that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her, and she went into the city. And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.

And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me, for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law. Then she said, Sit still, my daughter, until thou knowest the matter, how the matter will fall. For the man will not be in rest until he has finished the thing this day.

Let's pray together. Father, we do thank you for the guidance already, the encouragement, the clarity of this precious book. Father, showing that your hand is operating in things we can't even comprehend, or imagine, or perceive with the eye.

And Lord God, we do pray, O God, what blessings are ahead when we look back and see your hand in things that we are ignorant of, or blind of, or unbelieving, concerning. And yet we see that you're concerned with such people as us, that your eye is upon the sparrow. Lord God, that you're involved in the most mundane of things.

Lord God, to bring forth blessing and pleasure unto your saints, but also glory and praise and honor to your name, and the furtherance of the gospel to sinners, and Lord God, to all nations. Father, we pray that even as we gather tonight, that there might be a divine purpose, a plan in our gathering together. Lord God, that you reveal your will, your divinity, your sovereignty, your majesty, your power.

Lord God, reveal it, O God, even in the casual acquaintances we have together, or the simple conversations, or the simple, Lord God, interaction with one another. Lord God, we pray great consequences will come out of this in Jesus' mighty name. Bless your word to our hearts in Jesus' name.

Amen. I was thinking early this morning, and just when it hits you, how much Candice loved the word of God. As I considered the previous five weeks, I thought, how much she would love this.

What a thing to think about your wife, who's just gone into glory, that one of the marked things about her is how much she would have enjoyed the teaching of God's word, talking about it, pulling things out, getting feedback. I got more feedback from her than all of you put together. Do you realize that? I got more encouragement, more questions, more correction, or pointing out maybe something I'd missed, than from all of you and all of you online put together, literally.

As I sat there, I went, this was a woman who loved the things of God, and we enjoyed God. It's not tradition, it's not ritual, it's not trying to make much of these things, it's not reading the Bible out of Judy, it's not coming to church because you ought to be there. We literally, this was our life, and we enjoyed the things of God.

We enjoyed God, but his truth was a means of us fellowshiping together. That's why all through Ruth, we've seen corn and barley and cleaning and bringing in the harvest, all these things dominate, because you know what, where you get a true Christian romance and a true Christian relationship, the word of God is going to be fundamental, essential, and central in that, in a most remarkable way. As we begin to look at Hebrews again tonight, one of the old Puritan preachers from many centuries ago, he said, providence is like the Hebrew alphabet.

You've got to read it backwards, because the Hebrew language, you start at the opposite side of the page and read the opposite way than you and I do in the English language. And that's what providence, you don't read it forward, you don't look forward and go, aha, I see providence coming. You can't do that.

You've got to read it like the Hebrew alphabet, and afterwards you look back and go, it's a beautiful mosaic, and yet I didn't put it together. I couldn't see it. And so my message tonight, and this is a difficult chapter for many reasons, Ruth chapter three, it's not easy to deal with.

And yet I believe there's a fundamental issue here, providence and romance. I believe that God's hidden hand, sovereign, mighty, powerful, is actually involved with romance. Maybe you separate these two things and think romance is something different than spirituality.

I want to tell you, I've never believed that, I don't believe that, and I will not believe that. I actually believe that spirituality is integral to true romance. In fact, let me say, I don't believe that you can experience true romance if you're not spiritual.

If you're carnal, I guarantee you, blemish romance. You don't have romance. You don't understand romance because it takes a true spiritual person to understand romance.

But let me say the other as well. Don't think you can be so spiritual there's no room for romance, because you know what? A true spiritual person really understands romance. It works both ways in a very close-knit way.

Now this word romance, in case I get criticized for it, where does the word romance come from? If you go back about 1500 years, you're going to find that the word romance comes from the word Romans. That's where it originates and in the Latin language. Going back to about the 5th century, the word romance actually was used in connection with the Roman tongue or the Latin tongue.

And then a bit after that, over the next thousand years, it progressed. And what ended up happening was if you wrote something in the Latin language, it was called romance. That was romance.

Just writing in the Latin language was enough to call it romance. And then as the centuries passed by, stories began to be written in the Latin language and these stories predominated. They were always about a great night, a brave knight, who actually done some great deed to win the hand of some beautiful maiden.

And so this began to be called romance. There was no sexual immorality. There was no abuse.

There was no bullying. There was a beautiful story about heroism and bravery and chivalry. And this marked romance.

Do you know today what we have even in the secular world? At least in the past, the secular world understood something about romance and chivalry. Let down your hair and all the other secular stories. There was something of a story in it, but not today.

Do you know what you have on today's media in the 21st century? Abuse, cursing, immorality, no commitment, no loyalty, no bravery. A man is no longer a man. A woman is no longer a woman.

We've destroyed the whole thing. But I want to tell you still in the church of Jesus Christ, there is romance, real romance. And beyond any physical relationship, there is the romance of the gospel.

One called the Lord Jesus Christ came, laid aside his divinity, didn't put it aside. He clothed it with his humanity. He was divine every step of the way.

And you know what he'd done? He came and died for sinners on the cross. That is true romance. And I believe those that are impacted by the gospel, born again by the gospel, can understand romance.

Because if you don't understand the gospel, your view of love is twisted. Your view of feelings or emotions or attraction, you're a product of the 21st century. You are so messed up by the ideology of this world.

You don't even have the ability to clearly think. But I want to tell you, spirituality does go together with romance in the most marvelous way. And so we're coming here just to our message, Providence and Romance, which dominates Ruth chapter 3. It says in Ruth chapter 2 in verse 23, the very last verse of what we dealt with last week.

So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto them the barley harvest and a wheat harvest and dwelt with her mother-in-law. You remember what was covered in chapter 2 one day. Chapter 1 is 10 years.

Chapter 2 is dominated by a short, hard working day. With just one day, everything gets changed in Providence. But notice at the end of chapter 2, after that unique day where for the very first time Boaz's eyes falls upon Ruth and he goes, wow.

And on that same day where Ruth suddenly becomes aware of this man Boaz caring for, loving for, providing for, protecting her. And you've got this meeting. Do you know what happens between that point and chapter 3? It's a period of about several weeks at least, maybe two months, or some other undefined period of time.

It's harvest time. It's the barley harvest. It is the wheat harvest.

And during this unique short period of time of about several weeks or two months, it brings us right to chapter 3. And it's very important to understand that. What we saw in chapter 2, this unique meeting, providential meeting of two people, of their hearts being slowly initially turned towards each other. You need to begin to realize that was only the beginning.

And every single day, they're in the same work environment. They see each other every single day. They're aware of each other.

They may even talk together every single day for the next several weeks. And then we are brought to Ruth chapter 3, verse 1. I've got about six points here. Listen to the first point.

The search for a restful home. The search for a restful home. Look at verse 1 with me.

Then Naomi, her mother, Ruth's mother-in-law said unto her, my daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And then she begins talking about Boaz. This is my first point. The search for a restful home.

It's been several weeks. Naomi, this mature lady, is looking in on this young couple. They're not dating.

They're not going out for walks alone. They're not meeting up for meals. They're in a work environment.

And here's this mother-in-law looking in on this situation. Remember several weeks before, she begins to put the pieces together. Boaz is a kinsman redeemer.

God has brought us back. Here is Ruth happening to find this field. All of this providential working is coming together.

And she watches this every single day for at least several weeks. Every day she's watching this situation. Ruth coming in from work.

Ruth going out to work. Ruth coming in. Well, what did he say today? What we is doing today? And all of this chat comes out.

Do you know what you have here? This woman, Naomi, approaches and initiates something between these two people. You know what? She's been prayerful. She's wise.

She's mature. And she begins to initiate a conversation with young Ruth. Do you know what? She cares about her.

Listen to what it says here. My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee? Notice here she's not being a matchmaker. She's not being a busybody.

She's not sticking her nose in where it's not wanted, not desired, and where scripture forbids her. You know what she's doing? She is watching this providential situation working in two lives. And she's

convinced she can see providence at work at these two young lives.

They've never been alone. They're not having dates. They're not carrying on.

None of that. But she actually believes providence is working at these two lives. Do you realize before romance, I mean spiritual godly romance ever happens, that God's providence is actually working in those situations? Naomi here takes the initiative.

Several weeks and they haven't moved forward. Two months and nothing has come out of this. Here they are in the same environment.

Both initially were utterly awestruck with each other, but nothing is happening. And here's Naomi begins to take the initiative and to ask and have a conversation with Ruth saying, shall I not seek rest for thee? Remember when this word rest was used before? In chapter two of Ruth, do you remember how speaking to the two ladies as she said, look, I can't look after you. Go back.

Listen to what she actually says there. Sorry, it's in chapter one, verse six. Let me say that again.

And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, go return each to her mother's house and the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant you and notice what she's praying for these two girls. Go back to Moab.

You need to go find your own home, your own husband. And she says, go back and may the Lord bless you. So it was a real spiritual desire that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband.

So what is this rest? It's talking about a home, a husband, a dwelling place. So that was always her desire for these two girls is a actual resting place, a place of hope, a place that is secure. That's what a resting place is.

She's talking about a home, a marriage, a place where you're secure or you're looked after. And so here in Ruth chapter three and verse one, you have Naomi beginning to speak to Ruth and saying, do you want me to begin acting? Notice she's not manipulating. She's not intruding.

She's not controlling. She's not playing silly games. You know what she's doing? She's actually asking with great respect.

She says, look, do you want me to begin working on this for you? There's a mature lady. And in those days, it was the mother took a prime position in caring, looking, searching, watching, and advising. Do you know what we've lost from the church of our generation is older women.

Isn't that right? You know, for years I preached on this and eventually I got one to stand by my side and grow up into this. I used to preach about the need of godly ladies, mature ladies, wise ladies who can actually speak to the younger ladies. It's been lost from the church.

And here's a older mature lady who begins caring about this younger one and says, look, something isn't happening here. And she begins talking to her. You know, older ladies, you ought to talk to the younger ladies.

I'm not talking about intruding, or busybody, or planting thoughts. And older men, you ought to be talking to the younger guys. I'm not talking about intruding.

I'm saying stay out of people's lives. But you know what? When you watch, when you're prayerful, when you're maturing, God, there comes a time uniquely, you're not doing this often, in fact, very infrequently, where you approach and you say, have you considered? Do you not see God's hand in this? Or what is God doing with your heart? Or what is going on here? Have you had any thoughts? Do you realize how important a question can be in providence where someone asks you not only for romance or relationships, but about ministry, or calling, or a job, or moving, or some aspect in your life where someone older comes and just asks a question. It's not out of the blue.

You know what it is? It's providence. God uses mature people and around you to begin working in your life. And so we see Naomi taking the initiative.

She's not a busybody. She's not playing silly games of romance. She is a godly lady who simply cares for her daughter-in-law.

Do you know what? She's watched this for two months. She's watched these two people in the same environment, in and out, talking, hearing conversations, and she can discern the hand of providence. Do you know we've seen this at times? The first night Hannah ever walked into this church, so thought, oh no, she's one of those charismatics that we've had to deal with so many times.

Another one, and he's there trying to speak to her when all around there's a consciousness, not with everyone, but generally going, that's Sue's wife. It took him just a little bit to catch on this. Nobody talked to him.

Nobody said anything. People are just watching with an awareness and praying into this. God had brought someone at the right time providentially, and it was so evidently the Lord.

No matchmaking, no interfering, no busybodying, but God had prepared two people. It's remarkable when you see this that God's hand can be upon these things. And so Naomi, she's asking permission.

She's also very open and honest, and she's talking about this. Some things need to be talked about in the body of Christ and the church by close friends, our older believers, our family members. And again, older parents, you may take your head in your hands if you approach your kids to talk about this, so you better be very wise and led of the Spirit of God.

You don't want to do this unless you're led of the Spirit of God. But surely we should be raising children where we can talk about these things openly, honestly, clearly, caringly. How can we raise up kids that we don't even talk about these things? We send them to school and they'll be told about kissing another girl or kissing another boy or playing together.

You know what I mean? And how is it we don't even have the ability to talk to our children about the most important things in life? Do you know when I was 13 years old, I made the decisions of how I was going to treat my wife when I finally met her. 13 years old, I knew what my marriage was going to be like. I was very boyish, very immature, not much intelligence, but I had enough spirituality to say, I know what my marriage is going to be.

Here you have this older lady approaching with practical needs and situations. Ruth, I see your situation. You're engrossed in work.

You're working hard. You're serving hard. You're very discreet.

You're not playing games. You're not flirting with the guys. None of this is there with Ruth.

No game playing, no dressing in a way to draw attention. She's a hard, diligent worker. And here is Naomi saying, I know what your needs are.

You've had a rough journey. I see that. I saw you lose your husband and you've made a long journey from Moab.

She could also judge character. She's looking at Boaz and she's looking at Ruth. Here Naomi can judge and discern character.

I would not want it in my conscience, two people coming together who should not be together. That scares the living daylights out of me. But do you know what? You had this mature woman watching this saying these two people are matched.

These two people are compatible. They're not arguing. They're not debating.

They're not tearing the through it out of each other. And you know what? You ought to seriously ask questions when that happens. But there was something common here and she's looking in on this.

Neither was there presumption or trying to make a move without the personal will, desire of that person. Never infringe on someone's choice. Never do that.

And so you have here, Naomi wasn't doing this every day. I hate it. And please do not do it in this church where someone walks in or you see two people sit and you begin to make comments.

I don't like that. Okay. That's very dangerous and you need to stay away from it.

And believe me, it's rarely a man that does it. You need to be very, very careful because you could get yourself in hot water. You need to be prayerful.

If you're not praying into a thing and usually if you make a comment like that, you are not praying at home. You are not praying for that couple. You might gossip.

You might be nosy. It might be many things. But you need to get on your knees and pray because the consequence of a wrong marriage is disaster and the consequence of a real marriage is wonderful blessing.

My second point, a modest plan by a mature woman. See, she's already said in verse 1, don't you want me to help you find rest that all may be well with you? Have you not noticed that she's Boaz? Nothing sinful in saying that. But look at verse 2. Behold, he winnoweth poorly tonight in the threshing floor.

Here is a mature, godly, spiritual woman who knows the character of God. And notice, this is a woman, she's never getting married again. She has no other children.

She's not going to have any other children. Just two months ago, her heart is broken. She comes back to Bethlehem.

She is utterly discouraged. She is afflicted by the hand of God. She's lost her two sons, her husband, and she comes back empty.

Her dreams have been shattered. Her nice lifestyle has been destroyed by death. And here she is, she comes back and she says, I am bitter.

Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara. I am utterly, utterly bitter in life.

I'll never be happy again. Here she is several weeks later, from that first day in chapter 2, and she begins to think of providence, and she's prayerful, and she's watching this. Do you realize watching providence at work in two lives begins to change her whole view of life? She begins to think of the God of providence and how God could be working in this.

And yes, her son died, widowing Ruth, but now she begins to see something happening. She is discerning the God of providence. What a remarkable thing this lady has gone through.

And so in verse 2, she says to Ruth, Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor. Why is tonight such an important time? Why tonight? Why not yesterday or the week before? Why is it tonight? She is putting a plan into action, making a suggestion. Why tonight? Do you know why? Because it's the end of harvest.

This is the end of harvest tonight. Do you know that Ruth won't be going out into the harvest fields tomorrow? She won't be doing that, or next week. The harvest has already come in.

The task is over. A change of season is coming. What's been happening for months now is going to end tonight.

And you know what? Naomi is sharp. She says, something has to happen at this point. And once you say, Boaz, I know where he is tonight.

I know what's going to happen because it happens every single year. This godly man is going to be at the threshing floor. And you know, Ruth, I'm thinking about you.

Why don't you go down to the threshing floor? Now notice this. The threshing floor is very symbolic, and it is very, very important. The threshing floor was a place of separation.

This is where you brought the barley in. This is where you brought the wheat. And you're going to start a process of separation.

Seeing this, when you've got two people with romantic feelings and providence is bringing them together, do you realize God will bring you to the threshing floor? That's a very safe place to come in God's dealings. Do you know what the threshing floor was? It was a high place, a large open area where they brought the harvest in, and it had to be high up where the wind could blow upon this harvest. And they began to work on this harvest, and that's what Boaz and his men were going to do.

The threshing floor was used to separate grain from the chaff at harvest time. And what you began to do, what the barley had was a hard shell around it. You had to get inside that.

You had to do something with the entire harvest to separate the barley from this hard chaff or shell around it, and there had to be a separation here. I believe this is so, so important. And what they've done on the threshing floor, they either battered it or had an animal with a wooden tray to batter and smash the harvest and to begin to separate this.

After it was crushed and separated, what they began to do was winnow it, and they would throw it up. The light chaff would blow away. And those, they'd done it in the evening.

Do you know why they winnowed in the evening? Because with the heat of the sun, there was no breeze during the day. But as soon as you got to the end of sunlight, a breeze began to blow in. And so here on the threshing floor, you've got Boaz winnowing the wheat.

He would throw it up. The wind would blow. The chaff is gone.

What are you left with? You're left with that core seed. You can now make bread. And this man of God, he is winnowing out the wheat.

It's the end of harvest time. There is coming a separation between what is not good, what is not profitable, what is not useful to eat, and not which is absolutely vital to the making of bread. This is all that's going on.

And you are going to begin to come together in the providence of God. But it took a modest woman to set about a plan and to begin to make suggestions. These were not man-made rules that she was talking about.

This is a woman that's saturated with Scripture. Her heart is filled with the Word of God. She knows the culture.

She knows the types, the shadows, the commands. All of this is motivating this woman of God. And you know what? This plan that Naomi begins to hatch, it's not interference.

It's not game playing. It's not dangerous. It's modest.

It's moral. It's biblical. And it's also symbolic.

And Christ is revealed in all of this. You know where Christ gets his church? At the threshing floor. Do you know what? Right across our world now, God is bringing his bride, his church, to the threshing floor.

And you know what the threshing floor is? It is the beating out of the barley and the wheat between what is real and what is true, what is false, what is of man and what is of God. And see the preaching of this Aaron generation. I believe the wind is beginning to blow and that Christ himself is bringing the bride to the threshing floor.

And that's going to be the place where you discover the real bride of Christ. It's going to be in the threshing floor of the division of everything. You know, we've got so many churches, they are a corruption.

The real is preached and the false is preached. Compromise is preached and strong meat is preached. You get it all there.

But there's got to be a place of separation. It's a process of beating, crushing, revealing, cleansing, and purging. And that's where Boaz is.

You know, girls, if you're ever looking for a guy, make sure you find them on the threshing floor, beating out the word of God, finding the truth of God, looking for sound doctrine. You know what? If I was a girl, I'd be saying, show me a man standing on the threshing floor that's looking for truth and reality and purity and holiness and the truth of God's word. That is a good mark to look for.

This was a biblical teaching that she was starting to put into place of God's provision, a kinsman redeemer. You see Boaz is a kinsman redeemer. And Ruth is saying, biblically, this is a biblical teaching.

Boaz lines up with scripture as the right person for Ruth. And it's going to affect our entire family, even those who have died. And she begins to put this plan into operation.

What else does she say? Look at verse three. She was saying, don't just turn up like you have done every single day for weeks. Do you know, biblically, there's nothing wrong with a lady looking nice, dressing proper, and presenting herself? If you dress like a flirt, there's a problem.

If you dress tightly, there is a problem. If you dress like a harlot, do you know who dresses like a harlot? A harlot dresses like a harlot. And we live in a generation where all morals have been lost.

No mystery is found amongst the women of our generation. There's nothing special, nothing secret, nothing awe-inspiring. Do you know a woman who is of a different kind, an immoral woman, if you think you can trust her, you're a very foolish person.

You can tell someone by their dress. You see, I believe if your heart is right, you would be convicted over the way you dress. Dress reveals a lot about your attitude, everything.

If you're a guy walking about with no t-shirt on down Limerick High Street, it reveals everything about you. It's embarrassing. I get embarrassed.

The person doesn't get embarrassed. Do you know when a little girl wears tight clothes? It's embarrassing. A guy who's right looks the opposite way.

It's a bit hard not to notice, but you go, man, you need to be taught how to dress properly. Your parents didn't care about you. They really didn't, because they know what that will do, and yet they don't care.

And so you have Naomi's center, wash thyself therefore. I'm telling you, this is an important night on the threshing floor of what God is going to do. And so bath yourself, wash yourself.

Oh, that the church again bathed itself and washed itself correctly. You know why? You're getting ready for your buahs, the Lord Jesus Christ. You're going to meet him on the threshing floor.

You need to wash yourself with the water of the word of God. I believe this girl Ruth was very aware. You're presenting yourself.

You're getting yourself ready. You're going to bath yourself. When you're working in the harvest field, you're going to smell.

You're going to sweat. Your clothes are going to be degenerate. And here's Naomi saying, bath yourself.

Second of all, anoint yourself. You know what this oil was? It was like perfume as well. They used oils, and those oils had fragrance, medicinal uses for the hot sun.

They're also refreshing. You need to freshen yourself up. Ladies, can I say something? With this whole realm, there's nothing wrong with looking nice, smelling nice, presenting yourselves right.

That isn't unspiritual. To try and make yourself not look beautiful is strange, okay? That isn't normal. Isn't there something innately in a lady that wants to look right and dress right and present herself right? Do

you realize that's not unbiblical? You find it throughout scripture that it actually is a very correct thing, a very normal thing.

Notice here, Ruth isn't going to dress the way she went to work in the barley fields cleaning. She puts on a different raiment, a different garment. The church of our generation does need to prepare itself.

Some years ago, a lady walked into our church, a visitor from another nation, a godly girl, a spiritual girl, a girl who loved Jesus and loved the word of God. Suddenly, one of the young guys in the midst, we were meeting in the house at the time, this young guy, he never once wore a shirt ever and he didn't afterwards. On that Sunday, I walked in and I thought it was just me noticing, kind of said, did you see how he was dressing? I said, I did.

Did you smell him? Yes. Who couldn't smell him? He didn't smell like that before or after. I tell you, not once, one other time.

In fact, he would argue and say, I don't think you need to wear a shirt to church. You didn't think of that Sunday. I tell you, you broke all of your regulations.

And in the church, I might've imagined it, but I saw him in the hallway looking at himself in the mirror, fixing his very short hair that didn't have anything out of place anyway. See that guy, he ended up in the world, by the way, because he couldn't wait for a spiritual girl. She walked out, couldn't wait.

Do you know here, you've got Naomi preparing this young lady. Listen to me, young lady. There is a way.

You need to prepare yourself. You're not going there to work. You're actually looking for the Lord to work in this situation.

I believe that God is providentially working in this. Do you know it's okay to have certain relationships? Ruth didn't talk to anyone else like this. Naomi didn't talk to anyone else like this.

It's okay to have certain friendships and relationships where you can talk very honestly and openly about these things. They're not easy things to talk about. It's hard to find the will of God.

You can't afford to make mistakes and you need someone that you can spiritually talk through these very real and hard issues. It says in verse three, and get thee down to the floor and make not thyself known unto the man until he shall have done eating and drinking. What a wise woman.

Do you know you guys wait until they finish eating and drinking. This entire chapter is filled with just basic wisdom. Do you know what's missing in our day? Basic wisdom is greatly lacking in most lives.

You don't think, you don't consider, you're not wise. You say things to your husband, you shouldn't do that. You should wait.

You say things to your wife, you ought to wait. You ought to pray about that. In fellowship or with a girlfriend and a boyfriend, you think you can just say anything.

You really think that. You think that person has some sort of debt to you. They belong to the Lord.

You need to be very, very careful. And in the church, you don't have a right to say anything to anyone. And I don't have the right to say anything to you.

I'm extremely careful of the things I say. There's got to be a great carefulness in our midst. Wait until he eats and drinks.

Wait until Keith gets his cup of tea after service before you offload a load of things on him. Just use a bit of wisdom. Let me go to the bathroom before you engage me in a conversation.

This is just a basic way of life. You know, Scripture is so practical and real and all that it deals with. In verse 4, and it shall be when he hath laid down that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie down.

And thou shalt go in and uncover his feet and lay thee down and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. This is a part of Jewish culture. Do not repeat this.

Don't try to put this into place or think this is okay for you to do. There was a culture, a way of operating that isn't functioning in our society. That's why we don't have biblical betrothments.

Some people in the church, they build a lot on betrothments. It doesn't exist in the church. They want to penalize you for a custom 2,000 years old.

No one operates in betrothments, but they want to implement it in a way that hurts people right across the church. Do you realize Naomi had watched Boaz? Ruth had watched Boaz. He was a man of character known in his entire community.

He was a man of godly character. He had protected Ruth. He had guarded her.

He gave her great wisdom. He was a moral man. He was an older man.

You know, they say maybe he was about 45, maybe she was 25. She's younger, he's older. And yet there's a great care and a great concern here.

But you know what Naomi could say to Ruth, you need to do this because she knew the godly character. I would not put a young lady in this situation if it wasn't a Boaz. Some people criticize her and this was a dangerous thing she done.

I disagree. You need to be careful of making man-made rules in the church for the 21st century. Because we know what people are prone to, because we know society, we actually begin to create extra biblical regulations to protect us.

Be very careful. Do you know what, you must not go beyond scripture. If the Bible tells us to do it, let's do it.

But for you to build in things that are not there, let me give you an example. When I was 21 years old, I built the principle into my life. I didn't want to be alone with a single female.

If I got in a car, there's going to be someone else in that car. I was very discreet. I didn't go in a room alone.

You better be careful of making a biblical dogma that you put on everyone in every situation whenever you can't find a scripture for it. It's good to have wisdom, have principles, but you need to be very careful and we as a church need to be very careful that we don't create man-made things that actually aren't there. Look at this godly man.

She had watched him for two months. He did not move immediately on Ruth and yet the first day, didn't he notice her? He said, who's this? He immediately caught a look of her and said, I want to know who she is, who she belongs to. And yet he doesn't move quickly, immediately, selfishly or emotionally.

Here he is two months later, nothing has happened. He's never had a conversation with her. He's never gone for a walk with her.

He's not alone with her. He's carrying on working. And Naomi's going, what is happening here? And she said unto her, all that thou sayest, I will do.

Ruth is going, you know what? I'm listening to you. I've watched you, Naomi. You're a wise, godly, mature lady.

You've got a lot of experience. You got me to Bethlehem. You've given me so much wisdom over the years.

You know what I'm going to, we need a younger generation that listens to people who know. Don't listen to the wrong person. When I was 18 years old and in the army, I had an American insurance man, born again, a lovely guy, a friend, much older than me.

And he'd come in and he was going to have a Naomi conversation, but he didn't have Naomi's wisdom or maturity. And he loved the things of God, but he just wasn't wise. And he sat down and he said, have you seen such and such a person in our Bible studies? And I said, yes, I have.

And he said, so what do you think? And I said, yes, she's very nice. I thought the world of her. And he says, well, don't you think you should claim her? He said, if you like her, just claim her.

And he said, you do like her? Yes, she's a nice girl. Just claim her for yourself in Jesus' name. I laughed.

And then I thought, I haven't done nothing of the sort. You know what? I don't want her if God doesn't want to give her. I wouldn't want to claim her.

You know what? I like the girl. I'm attracted to the girl, but I don't want anyone who God doesn't give me. And you know what? That's the carefulness of all this with providence.

Just because there's feelings or thoughts or you look or you like, doesn't mean you touch. You know what? Providence may cut in. You know that girl? I loved her.

She became like a sister to me. But providence separated. We would never have a relationship like that.

Yet she was one of my best friends. I loved her with all my heart. But we began to look after each other and protect each other.

You know what? With a godly man, you can trust him in a situation. Ruth, you need to go down there at midnight on the threshing floor and you need to uncover his feet. This was a tradition.

It was going to be symbolic. It was going to mean something. Third of all, the bold approach by a virtuous lady.

Here you have Ruth, who for two months hasn't been like this. She's not a flirt. She's not dropping hints.

She's not pursuing him. In fact, Naomi's looking and going, man, what are these two doing? Nothing's happening here. I'm watching.

They definitely both like each other. They enjoy talking together. They care about each other.

But there's nothing else. And that's what Naomi is praying into. But look on this singular day on the threshing floor.

You've got Ruth making a bold approach that was totally out of character. She's careful. She's not catching the eye of guys.

She's not lingering around. She doesn't do that. But on this day, because godly advice, providential instruction comes, she's going to get up and boldly go down to that floor.

And yet she's a virtuous lady. She's very self-effacing. She's very careful.

She would never put herself in that situation. But it's right at this time. Look at verse 6. And she went down onto the floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.

And when Boaz had eaten and drunken, and his heart was merry, and his heart, he's just eaten and drunk, and his heart is merry. Some people, when they read the Bible, go, ha ha, that means he was happy drunk. He was getting merry from alcohol.

Who says that? Oh, but it must mean if he is getting merry, it means he was drinking alcohol. It's obvious, is it? Look at the little book of Ruth. It's very interesting.

Remember in chapter 2, it says when they're all working out there, all the workers, and they were all a thirst, Boaz says unto her, go to the vessels, and the young men, what they have drawn out, drink of it. You drink freely. They're drinking water.

All of his workmen, he provided water for them. Then a little bit later in chapter 2 and 14, and Boaz said unto her at mealtime, come thou hither and eat the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. It's sour wine.

It's not alcoholic. There's no fermentation in it whatsoever. So here you have that already.

Do you know what this phrase that his heart was happy means? This is what it means in the Hebrew, that it might be well with thee. Here their heart is. They've eaten, they're drunk, they've laid down, and their hearts are going, everything is well, everything is good.

It is not a statement talking about drunkenness. And so they lay down, and look where he lies. He lay down at the end of the heap of corn.

You better find your man at the end of the heap of corn. You know someone, a Christian guy who stays near the word of God is a very safe guy to be around. He's got godly character.

He's working hard. He loves the word of God. He's threshing the wheat.

You need to learn to discern in the church of God. You know, I know someone very, very well. And many years ago, there was a guy started to pay attention to her.

And you know, the church leaders, it was a sizable church. They knew he had an anger problem, a serious anger problem, a serious immoral problem, serious problems. The leadership knew it because they're counseled him, but they never told her.

They just said, it's a demon, but he's a good Christian. Don't worry about it. And they never warned, they never protected.

That's the sort of hour we're in, in this generation. I want to tell you, I would be warning that girl, and I'd be saying, be very careful. You don't want to go into a situation that you're going to regret for the rest of your life.

And so, he is lying down by the corn, and she came softly and uncovered his feet and laid down. She lies down there very softly, discreetly. It's dark.

You know, she got dressed in that large new mantle, that garment. Do you know that Naomi says, make sure they don't recognize who you are until the time. That means she wasn't dressing provocatively to draw attention.

No, he actually couldn't identify her with her mantle, her veil, her gown. He would not have said, that's Ruth. He would not have done it.

And here she comes that night, both of them are dressed, both of them are lying down in the middle of this harvest, and he's guarding it at night. It's very important, they've threshed the wheat. Now they need to guard it from the enemy.

And she lies down at his feet. Some think that the advice of Naomi was wrong. I don't believe so.

I believe it was biblical, symbolic. It carried a doctrinal message concerning what Scripture says. You know what it says in the New Testament? Now concerning the things whereof I wrote on to you, it is not good for a man to touch a woman.

Paul the apostle wrote that. It's not good for a man to touch a woman. Next verse, nevertheless to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

The word to touch here means to touch, to set on fire. It's talking about touching a member of the opposite sex who isn't your husband, who isn't your wife, to stir up feelings in a way that you ought not to. You should never, unless you're married, you should never touch the opposite sex in a way that stirs up strong feelings.

You should never do that. Do you know why? There's not one guy I know strong enough to cut a line on that, or a girl to cut a line on that. God has made us in a certain way to stir up feelings leads in a certain direction.

You may have strong convictions. I tell you, if you begin to push, you'll always push it a little further every single time. It's a dangerous thing to begin to play with, and yet it is God given, God made, God ordained, and it is good, but within certain strict boundaries.

Do you know what? She was not touching him in the middle of the night to stir up any feelings. There's nothing immoral here. It is a beautiful picture of two people being drawn together by the hand of God.

Verse 8, It came to pass at midnight that the man of God was afraid and turned himself. He startled right in the middle of the night. She's sleeping at his feet, and he gets startled.

Wouldn't you? And as he turned, behold, a woman lay at his feet, and he said, Who art thou? It's pitch black. It's dark. He doesn't know who this is.

Who are you? And she answered, I am Ruth, thine handmaid. Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman. She has not been throwing herself at Boaz.

She's not been blinking her eyelids at him on whatever other strategy may come into that. She's not trying to draw attention, but do you know what? She wants to reveal to him exactly her desires. Some people say this was a proposal to marriage.

I don't think she was that bold. Do you know what she's doing? Everything's in place. It's obvious that he's attracted to her.

It's obvious that he's very caring of her. He calls her my daughter. What a respectful way to speak.

Do you know what? A guy ought to talk to his girl respectfully. I don't care if you're married 50 years. You ought to be speaking with utter respect to the girl that you love.

I never treated Candice any other way than treating her with utter respect in how I spoke to her. If ever I broke that, I apologised. If I didn't apologise, she told me, and then I apologised.

There's a right place for that. I can tell you, I dropped a comment. You come to me and say, Keith, you said this.

I said, I'm so sorry. I would never want to do that. Please forgive me.

Here you have on this floor, they begin to speak and have a conversation in the middle of the night and says, I'm Ruthvine Handmaid. I'm a servant. I love to serve the body of Christ.

I'm not into feminism. I'm not demanding my rights. You know, people, they've got a chip on their shoulder when they're always trying to make themselves, they don't want to call themselves a servant or a handmaid.

You've really got something to work through, you know. I've got no, I'll tell you, I need to be the greatest servant in this church. I don't have a position or a title or a ministry, and then I treat people in a certain way.

I am a servant to every single member. I would want you to follow my example, because I tell you, we're not going to have a good church if you treat people with respect the way I endeavor and desire to do that. I want to serve you.

And here she is, she's coming, approaching him, not trying to get the upper hand. She says, I am your handmaid. Then she makes known her desire.

Spread therefore thy skirt over thy handmaid. Do you know what this is showing? She's saying, you are my kinsman. She tells him, you're my kinsman.

She says, I know that you're in the right position to do the will of God. And she says, look, I'm available. Why hadn't he spoken to her? Why hadn't he approached her? Why hadn't he done anything to this point? I believe it's here in the text.

In Ezekiel chapter 16 and 8, it talks about God marrying his people, preparing them. Listen to what it says. It says, I spread my skirt over thee.

I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee. Do you realize that spreading your skirt over someone is to say, I'm bringing you into covenant, into a covenant of marriage. When she says to him, will you throw your skirt over me, your blanket over me, your wings over me? You know what she's saying? She says, I want to come into a covenant with you.

I know your eye is upon me. You've been very gracious, very good. You're my kinsman redeemer.

You know that. Naomi knows that. I know that.

You know that Ruth wasn't just after marriage. Some people are just after marriage. She wasn't.

She could have married one of the young guys. There was a whole bunch of them working in the field. She could have had any one of them.

She could have married someone who wasn't a kinsman redeemer. She could have married someone who didn't have the biblical qualifications, but then she wouldn't be concerned about the dead or the inheritance or the teaching of scripture. She could have just said, I want a guy, a young guy, and I'm working with them all.

Man, look how many there is. No, there's only one there and he's a kinsman redeemer. He can even impact my dead husband.

He can actually redeem our inheritance. He can affect Naomi in a very real way. So she was after more than merely marriage.

She says, I want to come into a marriage covenant. You know, it's a good thing when a lady draws a line with a guy and says, I don't want to be alone with you. We're not going to cuddle.

We're not going to be intimate. You're not going to cross any boundaries. I want to know this as a covenant of marriage.

You know what? I believe that Dayton, the whole Dayton system, even in today's church, and I know we don't have it here and you haven't seen it, but I've seen it growing up right across the church. I went to one of the biggest churches in Northern Ireland, a big evangelical Pentecostal church. I went to one of their youth meetings.

It was meant to be a spiritual meeting. And you know what? After one experience of one of their meetings, I says, I will never, ever go to one of their youth meetings again. It was an utter Dayton fact.

I'd only walked in the door first time. Who are you? There's young girls here. I didn't come here for young girls.

I came here for the word of God. I didn't come here to date. I didn't come here to see what the talent was like.

I didn't do that. I'm here for the Lord Jesus Christ. I know I'm strange.

I know maybe all your young men in this church aren't like that, but I'm not interested in your girls. I certainly wouldn't turn up for that. Do you know what? What a disaster when the church moves direction.

You've got a lady here who says, I want you to understand I'm interested in entering into a covenant, a marriage, a permanent relationship between you and I. I just want you to know this. She wasn't just a young girl throwing herself. You know, she's a widow.

She's lost her husband. She's been through heartbreaking trials. She's a hard worker.

She's bringing in harvest. She's a remarkable lady. So this isn't a light girl.

She is lying on the threshing floor, sleeping. This is a whole biblical scenario and saying, I want you to bring me into this covenant. Fourth of all, a measured response by a great man.

How is he going to respond to this? Why didn't he pursue her when the first day his eyes fell upon her? He's attracted. Maybe he even fell in love with her. I don't know, but he's certainly interested.

Why did he not do this? He knows he's a kinsman redeemer. Why didn't he begin taking walks with her or try to feel out the ground or find out what she was thinking? Why didn't he do this, this great man? Notice this now, the measured response by a great man. And he said, blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter.

Out of respect for thou showed more kindness. Remember the word kindness means loyalty, graciousness, goodness. And here he is saying about her, you're showing loyalty.

Guys, you want a loyal girl. You don't want someone who's going to break the marriage covenant. If that person isn't loyal before marriage, do you honestly think they're going to change through marriage and become a loyal person or faithful or upright? You better look for certain qualities before.

This is what true romance says. Romance looks for character. Romance looks at attitude towards the word of God.

Romance looks at the person sitting in church. Oh, they only turn up every other Sunday. You never know where they are, but they love God.

Really? You actually think that? No way. You're allowed to judge these things. You're allowed to ask questions and you better ask questions before it's too late.

Before you ever go into a covenant of marriage, you want to be very clear the hand of providence is upon us. Attraction isn't enough. Do you know, I got attracted to girls I never would have dreamed of marrying.

I look, I thought, I felt and said, not a chance in a million. You know what? I don't care. Feelings can be deceitful.

You could fall in love with five people. You don't marry any of them. You need to be careful about releasing emotion, feelings, and your heart.

You better be prayerful, careful of releasing your heart to everyone. Do you know what dating is? It's practice for divorce. See that, what the habit of churches in our generation, you get teenagers in churches, just like I said with that big church.

And you're going through, well, I'm going to date this guy. Actually, I have to go through 10 guys to find out the one I'm going to marry. And this is in churches, born again churches.

The pastors don't deal with it. The parents don't know any better. And this becomes a culture within the church.

You shop around. Then you've got a youth group in the church where they're all doing this and they've all, all they're caught up in is these feelings, silly kids playing silly games. Then they grow up into their twenties and you get a girl with her heart broken.

You know, before I met Candice, you know what? She started praying to the Lord. She'd had two casual encounters with guys, born again guys. And she said, Lord, I don't want someone just to date me.

I want someone to marry me. No wonder she was so touched when I didn't show any sign of affection to her. But the first thing I'd done was to propose to her.

Her heart had been broken. A girl's emotions get played with. That is not good.

You need to be so, so careful. And here you have Boaz responding to this girl and said, you know what? You're very kind. You're not following the young man, whether poor or rich.

He was an older guy and all of this God was working within it. He then goes on, calls her his daughter again. Fear not.

I will do the all that thou requireth. For the city of my people does know that thou art a virtuous woman. Remember that word virtuous.

When we taught on the virtuous woman, I said, Ruth is the only female in the entire Bible specifically named called virtuous. We read about the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31. Mentioned again in the Psalms.

This virtuous woman is the woman that you ought to desire to be and a guy ought to desire to marry. A virtuous woman, the scripture says that. What is a virtuous woman? A woman of strength or ability.

The Hebrew word means she is well qualified or she has wealth or resources or she's got force. The word actually means like a powerful army. Have you ever met a girl like that? And you go, I will never cross her.

She's gracious. She's kind. She's nice.

She's godly. But if you go in a certain direction, you'll be sorry for the day that you actually crossed her. There is a quality of excellence in a virtuous woman.

And what we find in the Bible is Ruth is the only woman specifically called a virtuous woman. If you want to understand a virtuous woman, usually we think of a married woman. We think of Proverbs 31 with all of these unique qualities.

But listen for a second. Ruth was a Moabitess, a foreigner. She was widowed.

Widowed without children. She was neither a wife nor a mother, yet she was virtuous and the whole community could see it. She had no husband.

She had no home. She had no money. She was in a condition of poverty.

Her hands were rough from working every single day, but she's a virtuous woman. She's gleaned the leftovers of other people's. She's on the lowest rung, but she's a virtuous woman.

Do you know why? She lived with courage. She had spiritual, moral strength. She was doing what was right towards her mother-in-law and in life in general and in the workplace.

She had a fighting spirit within her. She was discreet. She was careful.

All of these things, that's who Ruth was. She was a young lady in her twenties, and yet everyone around her said, she is a virtuous woman. And here's Boaz saying, I know everyone's saying it.

You are actually a virtuous lady. And he says, you know what? I would like to be your kinsman redeemer, but there's a problem. This shows the virtue he has.

He's walking according to scripture. He says, I'm very glad you're here. I'm glad to hear what you're saying, but there's actually a problem.

I believe this is why he hasn't proposed to her yet or moved upon her. You know why? There's an actual problem. He knew the law of a kinsman redeemer.

He knew that they are related. He knew what the Bible said. So why didn't he redeem her? Why didn't he propose to her? If he's attracted to her, if he likes being with her, if they enjoy talking, why didn't they do something? You know why? As soon as he found out that she was related and that he could be a kinsman redeemer and that he liked her very much, you know what? He was worried.

You know what he was worried about? There's a kinsman closer to her. And you know what? If he suddenly began to operate as a kinsman redeemer, it opens the whole thing up and he's got to go to this other kinsman redeemer because he is closer to her than him. So you've got a guy for two months, he's in a dilemma here.

You know what his dilemma is? If I start approaching this legally, properly to care for her, it's going to initiate a knowledge that this other guy has a responsibility and I don't want that. He actually got himself stuck in a situation because if he starts the process, this other guy gets first call. And he's going, I'm attracted to her.

I believe God's providence is here, but there's a big dilemma. If I start this, it could trigger off this other guy falling in love with her, marrying her, and I'm going to watch this. That's it.

It's going to devastate me. Do you see the dilemma in a real man of God who's praying, waiting, looking, and then suddenly this night, I believe he is hesitant. I believe the providence of God is working in Naomi to say, this is the night you need to initiate something.

There is a man of God who is worried, praying, watching, waiting, and he's holding back. And you've got a Ruth walking straight into the threshing floor and discreetly, carefully, morally, making known that she'd be quite happy if he becomes her kinsman redeemer. This is a biblical thing that he would take on the

responsibility.

And so he tells her, there's another one. And you know what, tomorrow I'm going to act on this immediately. I'm not going to delay any longer.

Tomorrow I'm going to the town council. I'm going to speak to this guy. And if he's going to marry you, fair enough.

But if not, I'm going to marry you. We're going to deal with this next week. What happens? Because you know what? I believe people are so determined.

They give no space to providence. What if God doesn't want you to have that girl? What if God doesn't want you to have that guy? What if God saved you from an awful lot of terrible heartache by you being single here tonight? I don't like being widowed. I don't like to lose my wife.

It's one of the hardest fights I've ever had to fight in my entire Christian life. I don't like it. But I'm telling you, you don't realize what God is preserving you from and protecting you from, whether you're widowed or single or married.

You know, to be married has advantages. So does being single. Until 34 years old, I enjoyed being single.

I mean, I really enjoyed my freedom. I used to argue with people. I believe the single life is better than the married life.

Oh yes, I would like someone, but I believe it's better. Then I got married and of course I had to get in trouble. I said, I now believe the married life.

I could say both. I believe the single life is best and the married life. And Paul the Apostle says, you're too wise to follow me and stay single.

But here's the whole dilemma. Let me finish with this. Patience with providence.

What do you do in the midst of these scenarios? See, with love, romance, relationships, it's not easy. You can run away with circumstance and feelings and thoughts and desires, but where's providence? You could have all those things and it's not God's will and God's hand of providence isn't within it. So the sixth and last point, patience with providence.

Why not look for providence to work in your circumstance? Verse 14, and she lay at his feet until the morning. And she rose up before one could know another while it was still dark. And he said, let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.

He's not being deceitful. They're not being deceitful. You know why? Naomi knew she's there that night and she's waiting.

And they're going to tell Naomi everything that next morning. So it's not deception. It's not lies.

It's actually wisdom. Give no appearance of evil. And so he says, look, just you slip out under the darkness.

You just go back home. Don't tell anyone about tonight. Let's just work this out.

You know what? He knew he was going to have patience. He wanted to be with her. He wanted to marry her, but he had to be so careful.

He had to wait and be sure he followed protocol. There was an order. There was a way of operating.

You know, people ruled by feelings always make disasters. I'm going to get, I'm going to have, I'll maneuver things. And guys can be as bad as girls, believe me.

They can get what they want and they could destroy it. You know what? With everything, I want to be sure. Lord, this is what I think.

This is what I believe. I believe there's your will for a job or for a wife or for a husband. But you know what? If it's not your will, please do not let me go that direction.

I thank God for the relationships. God stopped me going into it. I wanted to go into it.

Do you know that there's been girls I wanted to marry and the hand of providence stopped it. I am so wonderfully glad for that, but it was providence. You don't realize what you've been saved from and you may not understand it.

You may not like it. You might kick against it and you don't realize God has protected you, not just once, maybe many times, and you would be in a very different situation and you get sad. Better to be sad than to be driven mad and demented or destroyed by a certain situation.

And so he said, it's time to get up. Don't tell anyone. And he says, give me your veil, bring your veil that's upon you and put it here and I'm going to fill it with six measures of barley.

Do you know how much six measures of barley was? That's about two ephith. That's twice of what she would glean in a day. And he poured all of this barley into this garment that she was wearing.

That shows that she wasn't a flaunt and that she wasn't dressing provocatively. It was a hefty garment that she'd had on and he poured all of this stuff in and then said, you know what? I don't want you to go back empty to your mother-in-law, Naomi. Remember how she'd come back to Bethlehem empty.

It's not going to be empty anymore. Do you realize that this pursuit to the threshing floor is going to bring you to Boaz and to the Lord Jesus Christ? And so she journeyed back home and when she came to her mother-in-law she said, who art thou my daughter? Second time she's got asked, who art thou? And she told her all about what the man had done to her and she said, these six measures of barley gave he to me. For he said unto me, go not empty unto thy mother-in-law.

Then said she, sit still my daughter until thou know how the matter will fall. For the man will not be in rest until he has finished the thing this day. Do you know Naomi was saying, I've done my part.

Ruth could say, I've done my part. Boaz is in the process of doing his part. All of them are waiting right on this particular morning and Naomi is going, what's going to happen now? And Ruth, I can tell you is praying because she goes, I want Boaz, not this stranger.

I don't even know who he is and yet he could have legal rights and biblical rights and my whole life could change ending up with this stranger. And here's Boaz going, I don't want to lose her but things are at work here that are beyond our control. And since you know what it is, it's patience with providence that when

you've done the will of God and you've carried out responsibility, I am not of those that say providence God will just bring it.

Now you better dress right. Do you hear me? Well I'm just trusting providence God will bring the right. Maybe there's a particular night you just need to wash yourself, perfume yourself.

I know it sounds very carnal but I'm telling you there's nothing carnal about this. I do not believe in Christians that do not do anything and say, get me married if you can, get me saved if you can, get me a job if you can. You'll be sitting there a long time.

You know what, you're lazy. That's what you are. And yet this entire chapter shows, you know sometimes when you're reticent you're going to have to be bold.

And sometimes where you've been wrestling for two months trying to find the will of God and going, I can't move here. Suddenly a night comes, something happens and you go, I've got to act right now and before the day's over I'm going to get an answer. Boaz didn't do anything.

Now all day he's going to assert this and he will not go to bed that night until this is settled and he knows the will of God. Saints of God, you've got to be decisive in the will of God. Some of you may be asking, well what about the call of God? I'm going to sit here until God calls me to evangelize.

You're going to sit until you die. I tell you cobwebs are going to grow over your eyebrows and you're saying I'm waiting for a flash of lightning or something else. You need to go serve God.

You need to stand up and say, I'm going out onto the high street to preach the gospel and then I'm going to look for God to move in a sovereign way. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you God for your grace and your mercy and your providence.

Lord God, we're asking God that you guard us and protect us, guard our minds and our emotions and the direction of our lives. Lord God, thank you that you do have a plan for each one of our lives. Father, we're praying that with your church again, that you restore your church, that you revive your church.

Lord God, we're not looking to live by feelings or thoughts or desires or emotions, but we are looking for the hand of providence that guards us, that protects us, that stops us, O God, making, Lord God, dangerous decisions. But O God, we're looking to be led of you. Lord God, we believe that you're a God that works in situations, that opens up doors, that blesses, that wants to do good.

And Lord God, we are asking even tonight, Lord God, work in each one of our lives that your name might be glorified and praised tonight in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

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