

*A Romance Story*  
a meditation based on  
Ruth 3

His name was Doug Herman. He married his high school love, Evon, in 1981. They were not only in love with each other; they were in love with the Lord himself. You will also remember how tragedy came to this couple. It was because of a blood transfusion Evon needed following labour for their first-born, a son, Joshua, born in 1985. Evon became infected with the dreaded virus known as "HIV." You will remember also how in a two month period tragedy after tragedy after disaster occurred to Doug. He wrote in his journal: "I had had enough. God was supposed to be my refuge and hiding place!" ("Faith Quake," by E. Michael & Sharon Rusten).

The tragedy that most deeply impacted Doug was that the love of his life, the woman he "fell" in love with (as we say), was dying. She was still so young. We can understand why it hurt so much for this man. Romance is a very personal, very intimate, a very tender issue of the heart. There's another Old Testament book called "The Song of Songs." The beloved, expresses the romance like this. *"Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love"* (Song of Songs 2:3-4).

Do you remember the song based on those verses? It was a campfire song for me, a song about the love Jesus has for his people. Yet originally the words were not about Jesus. Originally the words were about the beloved and her lover.

In many ways this book we've been reading and reflecting on, "Ruth," is a romance story. It's a "girl meets boy" story where the "girl" (Ruth) falls in love with the boy (Boaz). We come upon an intimate scene here. There is "a marked sense of mystery, secrecy, privacy." It is so secret, so private, that the writer avoids naming them, preferring instead to simply call them "*the man*" and "*the woman*," spoken this way four times (vss 8, 14, 16, 18). It's like he's stating, "This is highly private, personal, intimate, not meant for other eyes to see!" (Edward F. Campbell). Ruth comes to Boaz at night, and leaves before the light of dawn so no one will recognize her. She does something to him that is very personal, very tender. She does it at the command of Naomi. She "pretties herself up," including making herself smell nice. What she does, under the cover of darkness, hidden from everyone else's sight, is basically ask Boaz to marry her. *In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet. "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer"* (Ruth 3:8-9).

Ruth has fallen in love with Boaz! Will Boaz return her love? She has taken a risk by lying near him there, at his feet. Will he take the risk and marry her? This story, however, is not just a romance story between a man and a woman. This story is a picture of the story of the whole Bible!

God loves us in a way far better than Ruth loved Boaz. God loves us in a way that is truly stunning. He is passionate about us, his people. This is the story of the Bible. One of my favorite descriptions of this is found in another little book in the Old Testament. The prophet was named Zephaniah. Hear what he wrote: *On that day they will say to Jerusalem (symbolic of God's people), "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. The LORD your God is with you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing"* (Zeph 3:16-17). Tender, loving, romance, from God to us!