

July 11, 2021

# Listening to the Stories

Ruth 2:4-16

I'm not sure what the weather is like where you are, but in Nashville, it is HOT. High temperatures are in the 90s, and the humidity makes it feel as if we're in a steam room. I was working in the yard the other day, pouring sweat, feeling dizzy, when I turned to my husband and said, "I'm going inside, and I'm not coming out until October." I meant it as a joke, but I do indeed have that luxury if I want. I can go into my dry, air-conditioned house, get a tall glass of ice water, and laze on the sofa. I can work from my home office, and I can run errands in an air-conditioned car, but not everyone in my city is so fortunate.

The story of Ruth and Boaz makes me think of those experiencing homelessness. Ruth gleaned grain behind the harvesters, collecting scraps to survive. Many people experiencing homelessness live on the fringes of society. Many don't have access to running water, let alone a cool place to sleep or rest. " 'Water, shade, and refuge from the heat can be difficult to come by for someone without a home. When the humidity is high, sweat does not evaporate rapidly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly. This can easily lead to heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke, which can be deadly,' said Mike Tatar, director of case management services for the [Nashville Rescue] Mission."<sup>1</sup>

The mission isn't asking for anything extravagant. They desperately need water, something I think many of us take for granted. It makes me think of Ruth gleaning the fields and Boaz's kindness to her. It cost him nothing for Ruth to take the leftover grain from his fields, but he had no idea where that simple act of kindness would lead. As the student book author writes, "Boaz learned of her story; and in that, there was a response of mercy and exception to the rule. And ultimately, this union created the path for the birth of David and eventually for the family of Jesus, both of whom are descendants of Ruth and Boaz."<sup>2</sup>

1. Think of those experiencing homelessness in your community. What difficulties are they facing this time of year?
2. In what ways do you and your church help those who are vulnerable in your community?
3. Take a cue from Boaz this week. How can you help someone in need?

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<sup>1</sup>From [facebook.com/nashvillerescuemission/posts/10159475926007889](https://www.facebook.com/nashvillerescuemission/posts/10159475926007889).

<sup>2</sup>From *Adult Bible Studies*, Summer 2021, by Michelle Morris (Cokesbury, 2021); page 64.