

Introduction

1. An old saying says **Where God guides, He provides; where He leads, He meets needs.**¹ (**Show**)
 - a. All God's people said? Amen! Note how balanced this truth is. There's a promise isn't there?
 - b. God has the resources to provide & meet needs our as Philippians 4:19 affirms.
 - i. In the early days of Dallas Seminary the school was short \$10,000.00. Huge amount then.
 - ii. Prayer called. Renowned pastor Harry Ironside prayed, **Lord, you own cattle on 1000 hills.**
 - iii. **Please sell some of those cattle to help us meet this need.** ☺ We know God can do that!
 - iv. By the way, days earlier a man sold some cattle & put a check in mail for \$10,000.00!²
 - c. That's God's providence. But there's a condition right? He must be guiding/must be leading.
 - d. God's provision cannot be presumed upon if we are not following His leading.
2. Today we are going to examine this condition for God's provision in Ruth 3. Open to v. 1.
 - a. Rarely is the theme of a passage found in the opening verse. But here it is. **Provision.**
 - b. Theme = **God provides when we meet His conditions.** 4 conditions. Today = first one.

I. God Expects Us to Plan in His Will, vv. 1-5.

A. Ruth's 3 Needs.

1. Ruth had 3 needs = critical needs that must be resolved if she & family are to survive.
 - a. Needed food because she's poor & had no effective means of getting a job. Chp. 2.
 - b. Needed safety because unsafe widow living in violent times w/o father/husband. Chp.2.
 - c. Needs husband to provide future family to work their lands & keep fr perpetual poverty.
2. This was truly a need for Ruth – a necessity if they were going to survive w/o selling all.

B. Naomi's Plan.

1. Looks like scheme to attract husband. Gussied up. Actually plan to accomplish God's will.
2. We often make two errors. We think all planning is result of human wisdom & is unspiritual.
 - a. So set no goals/plans. Opposite error is think our planning/wisdom can do it w/o God.
 - b. So no prayer/dependence on H.S. But the truth is a balance.
 - c. Absolutely we must depend upon H.S; must pray. Read Ruth 1:9. Now compare 3:1.³
3. This = other side of the truth; once we know the will of God, God expects us plan to do it.
4. Job of all leaders is to discern the will of God and start planning toward it.
5. The opposite of leading = doing nothing. Good leaders pray, discern will of God, make plan.
6. Naomi's now lost her bitterness. She's back to trusting God & believing in His goodness.
7. Now she is planning in His will because she believes He will provide. What a plan?!⁴
 - a. V. 1 = a statement of the problem; V. 2 = a summary of the facts
 - b. V. 3 = detailed prescription of the procedure. This is Leadership 101!

C. How We Know What God's Plan Is?

- a. There are three questions every human plan must ask to know if it's in God's will.
- b. Great danger is substituting our plan for God's plan. Questions come right fr. text.
- c. We don't have to make them up or contrive them. Here they are.

¹ <http://www.countryoaks.org/wisdom/great-quotes/>. Accessed 3/1/15.

² *Today in the Word*, 1/1990, p. 36. Galaxie Software. (2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.

³ NIV text note = Hebrew *find rest* (see Ruth 1:9)

⁴ Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth* (Vol. 6, p. 680). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

1. What does Scripture say?

- a. This is so important. If it is not according to Scripture, it is not God's plan.
- b. Clear answer to Naomi's rhetorical question would've been ***Of course!***
 - i. God had promised His people abundant descendants thru Abraham, Gen. 12:1-3.
 - ii. Hope of every Jewish woman was that God would so bless her.
 - iii. In Jewish culture was job of parents to arrange for marriage to perpetuate family line.
- c. But of course, we have a complication. Ruth was a childless widow & Moabite at that.
- d. This is where Naomi's knowledge of Scripture becomes very remarkable.
 - i. When she says Boaz is a kinsman she is thinking of Leviticus 25:23-25.
 - ii. In chp. 4:3 Naomi is in the situation of having to sell her land & lose inheritance.
 - iii. So the Bible says she can call on a kinsman to redeem her property.
 - iv. But there is more. She also understands Deuteronomy 25:5-9.
 - v. This = levirate marriage where birth of 1st son carries on family of deceased.
 - vi. This would also provide future security for the widow who would have a husband.
 - vii. While Boaz is not a brother, as a relative he may perform levirate marriage if chooses.
- e. Naomi is not scheming. She's acting on the authority of Scripture. God is in this.
- f. ***We never work for our good when we set aside Scripture. We need to be governed by God's own Word, because it is the expression of His character, which is the greatest and ultimate reality.***⁵

2. What do God's authorities say?

- a. God has established a principle that He leads thru the authorities He has set up.
 - i. In country = rulers; in home = parents; in church = pastors & elders.
 - ii. Leaders who abuse their authority should be resisted and even disobeyed, Acts 4:19.
 - iii. But leaders who are following God's will are to be respected & honored, 1Pet. 5:5.
 - iv. God blesses when we respect and submit to godly leadership. ***Gives grace.***
- b. Fascinating to examine the conversation between Naomi & Ruth.
 - i. Naomi as the older, mother-in-law is the authority in the home. Speaks 55 words.
 - ii. Ruth = younger, daughter-in-law under Naomi's leadership. Speaks 4 Hebrew words.
 - iii. ***All*** = first in the Hebrew sentence indicating she will follow counsel to the letter.⁶
 - iv. This has been Ruth's attitude everywhere we look, see 2:2-3.
 - v. Naomi is a godly authority, counseling according to Scripture, so Ruth obeys.
- c. When I married Ellen I was 32-yrs-old. I didn't need at that age to get permission.
 - i. But she was living at home underneath the leadership of her parents.
 - ii. I respected her father as a godly, upright Christian man. Wanted be on good terms.
 - iii. So I asked his permission. Was working as custodian in church bathroom.
 - iv. Not a very good place to ask for hand in marriage. So we stepped outside.
 - v. He said I could marry her under one condition. ***What's that? Never send her back.***
 - vi. ***Mr. Wheeler, that's one condition I intend to keep.*** What if he said no?
 - vii. I would've proceeded very cautiously & likely waited to work out the problem.

⁵ Jackman, D., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1991). *Judges, Ruth* (Vol. 7, p. 338). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc.

⁶ Biblical Studies Press. (2006). *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible.*

- viii. If a man like him said **No**, that would've been something serious to consider.
 - d. Over the years I've seen many people get in serious trouble because ignored this.
 - i. Seen teenagers rebel against parents & make huge mistakes harming their lives.
 - ii. Seen young people marry the wrong person and live in a very difficult marriage.
 - iii. Know employees who mouthed off about the company and lost their jobs.
 - iv. Seen pastors who would not respect others elders and divided the church.
 - v. Seen church members who disrupted a church because opposed good leaders.
 - e. Ruth is a grown woman capable of own decisions, yet respects proper authority.
3. **What do godly believers say?**
- a. **He will tell you what to do**, v. 4. She puts Ruth's future into his hands. Why?
 - i. Boaz is a godly man. Naomi has confidence that He will recognize God's will.
 - ii. **I will do for you all you ask**, v. 11 = 5 words, identical to Ruth except for 1 word.
 - b. But there is something more here. God communicates His will to other believers.
 - c. Look at Titus 2:1-6. One of the reasons God gives older believers is to train us.
 - d. Godly believers have wisdom & insight that God can use to direct us.
 - e. Boaz was clearly a godly, older man, v. 10. If God was in this he would see it.
 - f. When I was preparing to go to seminary I was fearful could not afford my 1st choice.
 - i. My Father told me he would help me financially. I also worked all 5-yrs.
 - ii. I met a godly pastor who said strongly, **Go, God will provide.**
 - iii. An older couple & older woman sent me checks every month for spending money.
 - g. With those people advising me, God's will was very clear.
 - h. How do we know if our plans are God's plans? Do these three line up? →
 - i. Scripture
 - ii. God's Authorities
 - iii. Godly Believers
 - iv. Circumstances Fall in Line (last)