

Be a Berean!

The Bereans...received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day.
(Acts 17:11)

[“Be a Berean” will regularly cover topics which arise during the “Acts 29” and “Lifted Up” Bible classes. Contact Franklyn Pfeil-- liftedup@lockportalliance.org --with questions or comments.]

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Handfuls--of purpose!

In some of the darkest days in the Bible, *in the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab* (Ruth 1:1).

One of this man's sons married a local girl named Ruth. When both the man and his sons died, Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, returned to Bethlehem when they heard that the famine in the land of Judah had ended.

There a wealthy man named Boaz falls in love (at first sight!) when he "happens" to see Ruth, *who went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters and, as it turned out, found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz* (Ruth 2:3).

In the book of Ruth, the Bible reader knows that Boaz told his workers to *let handfuls of grain fall on purpose* (2:16 KJV), so that Ruth will be able to gather enough to sustain her and Naomi. But Ruth does not know that Boaz is deliberately providing for her in this way, behind the scenes. She must have thought that the workers weren't harvesting very carefully!

This story illustrates a concept known as God's providence. The invisible, providing, protecting hand of the LORD is behind every word and circumstance in the book of Ruth.

Very often we, like Ruth in the fields, do not realize the provision God makes for us. We might attribute our circumstances to chance or happenstance, and fail to see the guiding and sustaining hand of God in our lives.

The conditions of Ruth's life--the hunger, untimely death, and poverty--made it particularly difficult for her to see that *all things work together for good to those who love God* (Romans 8:28).

Later, when Boaz and Ruth are married, Ruth's fallen estate is restored, and a family--life--is restored to that which was dead. Once she had been *in Adam* (represented in the story by her first husband.) Now she is joined to her Redeemer, Christ (represented by Boaz):

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22).

This was ever God's plan. Way back in Genesis, the angel of the Lord stopped the hand of Abraham as his knife was poised to slay Isaac, his son:

Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

*Abraham called the name of that place "**Jehovah-jireh**" (**The LORD Will Provide**)* (Genesis 22:13-14).

The LORD is not only the Provider--He's also the Provision, the Offering who stands in our place. The knife is forever stayed by His sacrifice.

In the book of Zechariah, God is standing in the shadows, in another thicket, keeping watch over His own:

I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees (Zec 1:8).

Jesus provides, guides, and sustains, even when we can't see how:

Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.
(Psalm 77:19)

How could Ruth know, when she "happened" upon Boaz' field, that **the handful of purpose would fall to us as well**--for from their marriage would proceed a great-grandson, King David. Out of David's line would come the Son of Man, Jesus Christ.

Out of that wheat field, out of that 'chance' meeting, came the *Bread of Life* (John 6:48), God's provision for our lives, now and forever:

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:23-24).

Because He loves us, God decreed that the wheat should fall for us, **on purpose**.

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It is our fervent hope that you will **Be a Berean** by attending one or more of these Bible classes this week!—

“Acts 29” Bible Class—Sunday at 9:45

“Relationships”—Sunday at 9:45

“Everyday Wisdom for the Average Joe”—Sunday at 9:45

“Alpha”—Wednesday at 6:00 p.m.

“Lifted Up” Continuous Bible Class—Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

“Beth Moore Bible Study”—Thursday at 7:00 p.m.