

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# Gratefulness

***. . .Is accepting difficulties as part of  
God's loving provision***

*" . . . Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint  
when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he  
chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."*

*Hebrews 12:5-6*

## ***Living Lessons on Gratefulness . . .***

### ***FROM THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE***

God led Abraham to the land of Canaan and promised to give it to him and all his descendants. Following this, a famine broke out in the land. Instead of staying in the land and digging deeper wells, Abraham went down to Egypt and sowed the seeds of future destruction.

Many years later, one of Abraham's descendants remained in the Promised Land during a time of severe famine. This adversity turned out to be God's means of giving him and his descendants a priceless heritage.

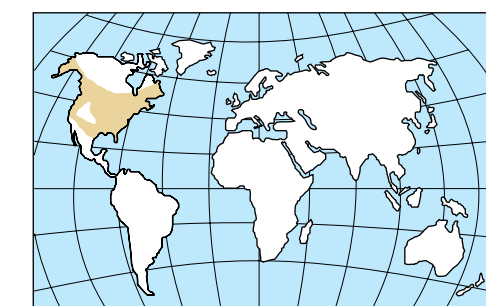
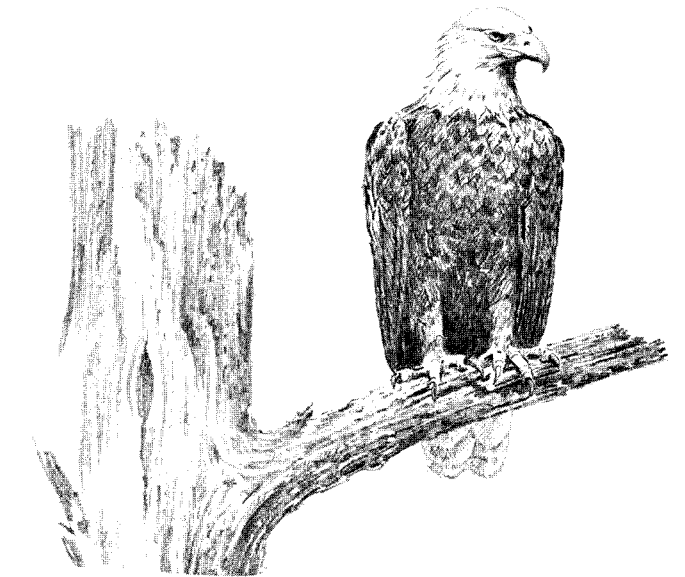


### ***ILLUSTRATED IN THE WORLD OF NATURE***

#### **BALD EAGLE** *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

The bald eagle is one of the largest and most handsome members of the raptor family. The term "bald" has nothing to do with any lack of feathers on its head. It is called "bald" because of the sharp pattern of its white head, dark body, and white tail.

Its broad, strong wings enable the eagle to carry objects which approach its own weight of approximately twelve pounds. As a symbol of strength and freedom, the bald eagle appears on money, flags, stamps, and buildings; and it was even the ancient hieroglyphic symbol which led to the modern letter *a*.



*The range and habitat of the bald eagle*



## ***How is the need to thank God for the disciplines of adversity illustrated in the world of nature?***

A magnificent eagle\* soared to the heights of a rocky crag and calmly turned to witness a spectacular sight in the wilderness below. A vast multitude of men, women, and children had entered his desolate domain.

High atop the mountain, a little eaglet cried out for food, and seemingly out of nowhere a nutritious meal appeared. Far below a similar cry went up for food, and out of the heavens God provided delicious manna.

When the thirsty people pleaded for water, God fulfilled their need in a miraculous way. A rock was struck and water gushed forth. As if to amplify this spiritual picture, the eagle provided a drink for its young one—the blood of a slain lamb.

After the people grew weary of manna, God provided an abundance of quail. Similarly, the eagle supplied the eaglet with fresh meat. Many times the eaglet's cries seemed to go unheeded. But high above, the alert eyes of the soaring parent carefully watched. Vital skills were being taught through the motivation of hunger.

One day the powerful eagle fluttered over its nest. It was time for the eaglet to venture into the desert sky. God gave a comparable signal to His fledgling nation. The cloudy pillar that had hovered over their place of worship moved forward, indicating that it was time to advance.

The protective parent pushed the young bird out of the nest, forcing the eaglet to use its own

wings. After a few desperate flaps, the eaglet faltered. Instantly the eagle swooped down alongside the young bird. The updraft, created by the eagle's wings, provided the necessary lift for the fledgling to maintain flight.

In the distance, the echoes of clashing swords and shouts of war could be heard as God led His nation through their first battle. Just as the eagle's wings aided its young, the uplifted hands of the nation's leader in a gesture of prayer turned the tide of battle and provided victory.

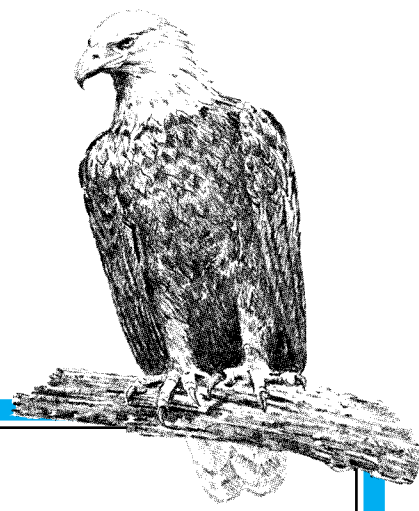
The harsh disciplines of wilderness training were as vital for the young nation of Israel as they were for the survival of the eaglet. Later God used the eagle to illustrate that important wilderness experience.

*"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the Lord alone did lead [His people through the wilderness] . . ." (Deuteronomy 32:11–12).*

\*The eagles in the near east provided rich imagery for Biblical truth; and although they were not of the bald eagle variety, they possess the same characteristics.







### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BALD EAGLE IN SCRIPTURE

Often God uses the majestic appearance and awesome skills of the eagle to symbolize important truths for His people.

God warns that a rebellious youth attracts destructive companions like carrion draws hungry eagles.

*"The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it" (Proverbs 30:17).*

God explains that a man who puts his trust in riches will see them "... fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Proverbs 23:5). The rich man's wealth will be dissipated when trouble comes just as the updrafts of a storm carry the eagle out of sight.

God warned His people on numerous occasions that if they persisted in evil, He would send armies against them that would be "... as swift as the eagle flieth..." (Deuteronomy 28:49).

The eagle's ability to overcome the law of gravity by stretching out its wings in flight is an important analogy of the Christian's ability to rise above the law of sin by entering into Christ's victory and by engrafting God's Word into his soul.

*"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).*

## CHARACTERISTICS AND PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THE BALD EAGLE

The eagle is designed to achieve its full potential through the disciplines that are required of it in adversity. Violent storms allow it to reach its highest flights. Scarcity of food forces it to develop its sharp eyesight, amazing speed, and accurate diving. Its lonely environment allows it to care for its mate and to skillfully train its young.

### HOW DOES A HIGHER NEST REQUIRE LESS EFFORT, RATHER THAN GREATER EFFORT?

The eagle usually chooses a high crevice or tree crotch on which to build its nest. This nest is no ordinary structure. Hundreds of sticks must be carried up to the nesting site.

Each year the nest is remodeled until it contains tens of thousands of sticks. Additional building material may include broom sticks, construction lumber, light bulbs, or pieces of cloth.

With a high nest the eagle gains greater protection for its young. A lofty nest also provides a better position from which to monitor its territory, and it is an energy-saving launching pad. By swooping down from a high nest the eagle attains speed and then climbs into the sky.

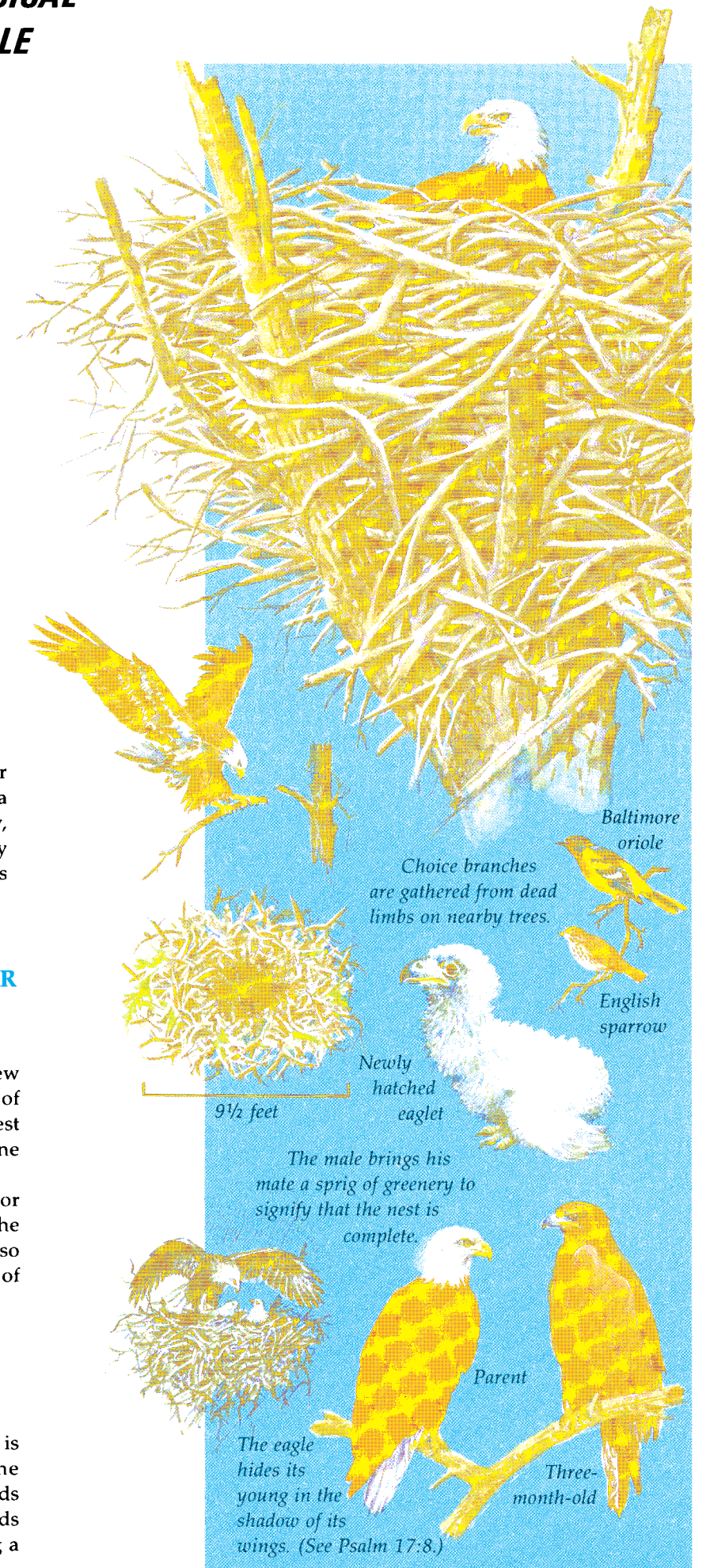
### HOW DOES THE EAGLE'S DESIRE FOR A CLEAN NEST PROVIDE SHELTER FOR OTHERS?

When the eagle's nest becomes too dirty, new sticks and grass are carried to it and piled on top of the old floor. This continual enlarging of the nest may cause it to reach twenty feet in depth and nine and one-half feet across.

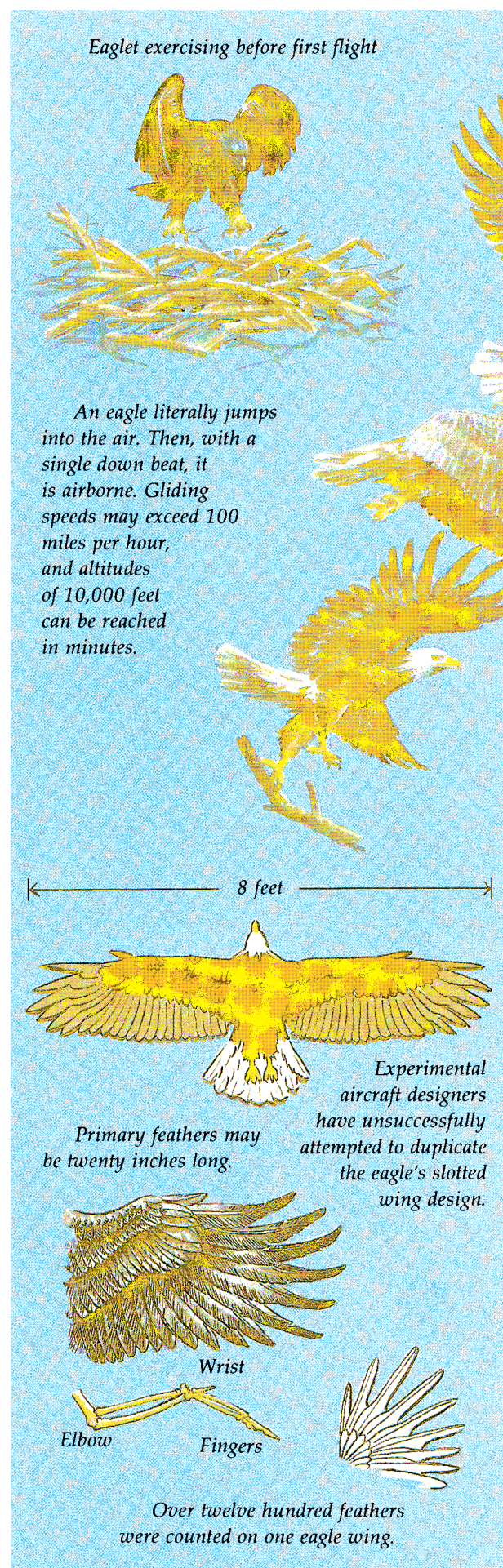
The result is that shelter is often provided for other birds such as the Baltimore oriole and the English sparrow. Occasionally a porcupine may also join the group by building a den in the lower part of the nest.

### WHY DOES THE EAGLE COVER ITS YOUNG WITH ITS WINGS?

Because of the height of an eagle's nest there is usually no shade to protect the young from the intense heat of the sun. Therefore the parent spreads its huge wings over the young eaglets. It also spreads its wings over its young like an umbrella during a driving rainstorm.







### HOW ARE NESTING RANGES DIFFERENT FROM HUNTING RANGES?

Eagles are very alert to the boundaries of their territories. A nesting range of fifty to one hundred acres will be vigorously defended against all who enter it. Aerial battles are common along these lines.

Hunting ranges, however, extend far beyond the nesting territory of the eagle. These hunting ranges are shared peacefully even though they overlap.

### HOW DO DISCIPLINES IN THE NEST PREPARE THE EAGLET FOR SUCCESSFUL FLIGHT?

While the eaglet is still in the nest, it begins hopping from rim to rim. Later it stretches its wings and flaps them awkwardly. Finally the hopping turns to jumping. Some jumps are as high as fifteen feet above the nest. The result of all this preparation is that the eaglet's first flight is almost always successful and may extend for a mile or more.

### HOW IS HUNGER USED TO MOTIVATE EAGLETS TO FLY?

Most eaglets voluntarily fly from the nest between their tenth and fifteenth week. However, if a reluctant eaglet decides to stay in the nest, its parents may withhold food. Rather than bringing dinner to the nest, the parents leave it on a nearby limb. Eventually hunger motivates the eaglet to take its first flight.

### HOW DO STORMS BENEFIT THE EAGLE?

The eagle's main feathers, called primaries, are tapered at the ends, forming slots which serve as shock absorbers. The primaries also increase the wings' efficiency by reducing drag. When storms approach, strong thermal updrafts, together with this wing construction, allow the eagle to fly much higher than it would during normal weather conditions.

The eagle's deep yellow eyes are set far apart on each side of its head, giving it 35 to 50 degrees of binocular vision. This gives the eagle the depth perception which it needs to judge distances. Diving at over 100 miles per hour, the eagle must know exactly when to pull out of a dive, or it would crash into the ground.

### HOW MUCH WEIGHT CAN AN EAGLE CARRY IN FLIGHT?

An eagle is able to carry objects which approach its own body weight. Since an eagle may weigh up to twelve pounds, it can pick up a wide variety of objects. Eagles have been known to transport small lambs several miles.

### HOW CAN A FISH DROWN AN EAGLE?

Muscles in the eagle's legs are able to tighten the eagle's talons into a viselike grip. The three forward toes close against the fourth. At the end of each toe is a needle-sharp claw over an inch and a half long that can penetrate even the thickest hide.

Occasionally, the eagle's grip becomes so tight that it can only be released when upward pressure is applied to the legs. If an eagle attacks a fish which is too large for it to carry and it cannot release its grip, it must either drag the fish to shore or drown.

### WHAT IS IMPLIED BY SAYING THAT A PERSON HAS "AN EAGLE EYE"?

An eagle has eyes that are larger and six times sharper than those of a person. While a person may have difficulty seeing a quarter at thirty-five yards, an eagle can spot one at over 200 yards.

Fish and rabbits can be seen from over a mile away. Since the eye is so large, its movement within the eagle's small skull is quite limited. To compensate for this, the eagle must constantly turn its head in order to see in different directions.

### HOW DOES AN EAGLE KEEP AN ACCURATE RECORD OF WHAT IT HAS EATEN?

Indigestible material that does not pass through the eagle's digestive system is pressed into small pellets, called "castings," that are regurgitated every few days. Studies of these castings have given an accurate record of the eagle's diet.

Ninety per cent or more of its diet has been found to be fish. Only ten per cent included small mammals and birds. While reports of eagles killing geese, lambs, and even sea otters are true, they are exceptions unless food is scarce.







## HOW DOES HIGHER FLIGHT DECREASE IRRITATIONS FOR THE EAGLE?

In spite of an eagle's size and awesome strength it is often harassed by smaller birds, such as crows, hawks, king birds, and even gnat catchers. This harassment has been observed to drive the great eagle to the ground. However, by catching a thermal updraft and soaring to higher altitudes the eagle leaves behind all of these irritations.

## HOW DO EAGLES LITERALLY FALL IN LOVE?

During the mating season a spectacular midair ceremony will take place. A female will carry a stick high up into the air and drop it near a prospective male. If interested, his response to her gesture will be to swoop down, catch the stick, and return it to her. This dropping and retrieving of the stick may be repeated many times.

To complete their mating ceremony, both eagles will soar to a great height, lock their talons together, draw in their wings, and begin tumbling to the earth together. Just before hitting the ground they unlock their talons, stretch out their wings, and return to the heights.

## HOW DO EAGLETS ESTABLISH A PECKING ORDER IN THE NEST?

The first eaglet to hatch is given a head start in size and strength. By the time the second or third eaglet joins the feeding, a very clear and respected pecking order has been established.

## HOW DO EAGLES "CARRY" THEIR YOUNG ON THEIR WINGS?

In speaking of His protective care over the nation of Israel God states, "... I bare you on eagles' wings..." (Exodus 19:4).

The Hebrew word for "bare" is *nacah*, and its primary root means "to lift." This is exactly what the parent eagle does to assist its young in flight. As it flies alongside the eaglet, whirlpools of air formed by its primary feathers provide the eaglet with additional lift.

## Trapped by Deception

Eagle feathers were prized by Indians, but the capture of a live eagle was the ultimate hunting trophy. A pit, large enough for a sitting man, was dug and covered with sticks and grass. Food was offered daily until the normally cautious eagle would carelessly land on the trap.

When the eagle had become accustomed to his daily feeding, a brave would enter the pit during the night and wait for the eagle's return. Slipping his hands between the branches that covered the pit, the brave would grab the eagle's feet and tie them tightly with a leather thong.

## How are the benefits of thanking God for the discipline of adversity illustrated in Scripture?

David testified that during all his years he had never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

Which one of David's forefathers demonstrated this truth by remaining in the Promised Land during a famine while many of his relatives fled to a neighboring country?

(Pause for a response—see page 17.)

It was time for God's judgment to fall upon the nation. Prosperity had caused the people to become sensual and self-sufficient. Every man did what was right in his own eyes.

God's hand of discipline affected the crops, resulting in a severe famine. Soon family after family abandoned the homeland, failing to grasp the real meaning of the scorched soil and withered crops.

When the relatives of one Godly man decided to leave the country, he determined to remain in Israel and trust God for his needs.

During the next ten years, he diligently cared for his land. Each fall this hardworking farmer gathered in his precious crop and thanked God for it, whether it was sparse or abundant. He also allowed the poor to share in whatever yield his fields produced. God began to bless his spirit of generosity.

With the increased income from more successful harvests, he was able to purchase surrounding fields. Soon he had become greatly respected and admired as a prosperous, yet generous landowner.

One day he greeted the workers in one of his fields. They cheerfully replied, "The Lord bless you." It was then that this Godly man noticed a young woman gleanng barley. He was immediately attracted by special character qualities that he saw in her.

When he asked his foreman about the young woman, the foreman confirmed his impressions. After briefly talking with her, the wealthy landowner marveled at how she further demonstrated the qualities that had first drawn him to her. He realized that both of them had experienced adversity and had learned how to praise God through it.

She had been through deep sorrows. Her husband and several of her relatives had died. She was without financial resources, but had learned to trust God for her daily needs.

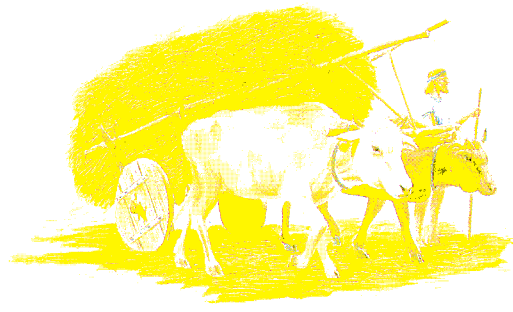
She responded with deep gratefulness to every kindness that was shown to her. When this generous landowner gave her the freedom to glean among the sheaves and quench her thirst with his water, she humbly knelt and sincerely thanked him.

Because they both thanked the Lord for the discipline of adversity, God brought Boaz and Ruth together in marriage, and a son was born named Obed. Obed later had a son named Jesse who grew up to have a son named David.

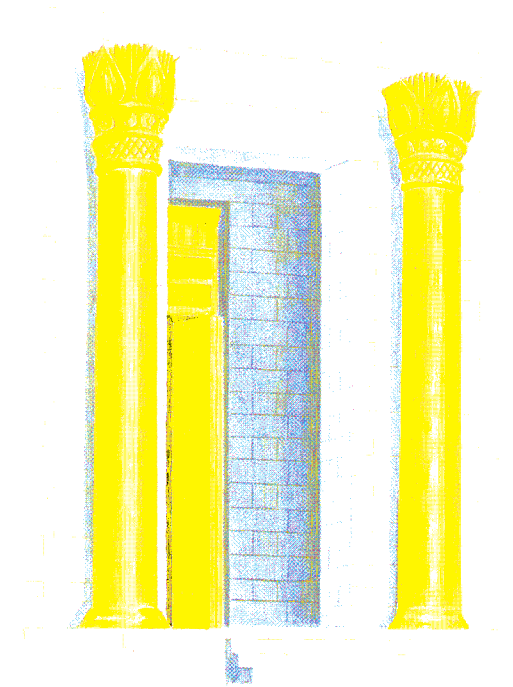
From Ruth 1-4



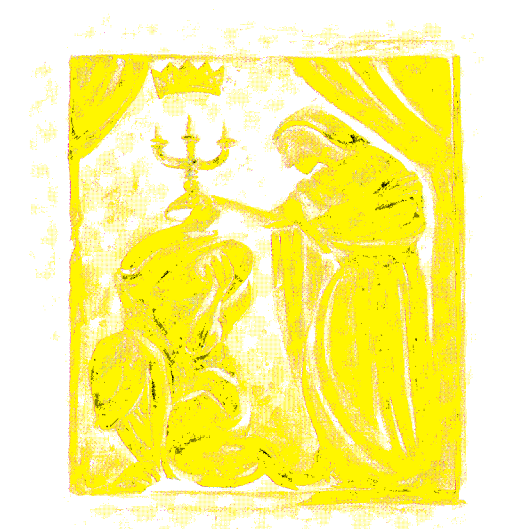




**God's Law made provision for the poor.** Farmers could not pick up grain that fell from wagons. The poor could also glean in the fields during harvest.



**The bronze pillar** that Solomon placed in front of the temple, on the northside, was named after his great-great-grandfather, Boaz. The pillars were beautifully adorned with capitals and lily-work.



**Loosing the Shoe**  
Boaz had to loose the shoe of a near kinsman who refused to marry Ruth and raise up a name to her dead husband.

## BOAZ, A MAN WHO LOVED THE LAW AND VIEWED ADVERSITY FROM A HIGHER PERSPECTIVE

Boaz lived in a period of the history of Israel which was characterized by anarchy and confusion. It was the time after Joshua and before Samuel, an era when "... every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). (See also Ruth 1:1.) When famine struck and depleted the food supply, many of the people left for more fertile lands. Some may have gone to Egypt, where the Nile River irrigated the land except in the most extreme droughts. Others, like Boaz's near relative, Elimelech, went to the land of Moab. But Boaz chose to remain in Israel.

### A HIGHER PERSPECTIVE ON THE FAMINE

Boaz was familiar with God's Word given to Moses. He did not regard this famine as an accident of nature. The Law listed famine as a punishment for disobedience to God's commands. (See Leviticus 26:19-20; Deuteronomy 28:23.) But the Godly knew that even in famine the Lord would preserve them. (See Job 5:20; Psalm 33:19; 37:19.) After the rains returned, Boaz is pictured as prospering. His relative, Elimelech, who had fled to Moab, lost his wealth, sons, and life. Only Elimelech's wife, Naomi, returned with her daughter-in-law, Ruth. They entered the land in abject poverty.

### A HIGHER PERSPECTIVE ON THE POOR

Boaz could have looked down on the poor family of his faithless relative. He could have scorned Ruth because of her Moabite ancestry. But Boaz viewed the adversity of this family from a perspective different than most. He saw the poverty of Naomi and Ruth as an opportunity to offer assistance, not as an excuse to justify neglect. When he noticed Ruth gathering leftover grain in his fields, he was kind to her, fed her, provided for her protection, and even supplied her with extra grain.

### A HIGHER PERSPECTIVE ON THE LAW'S INTENT

Naomi was encouraged by Boaz's sensitivity to their situation and to the spirit of the Mosaic Law. The Law urged kindness to the stranger and the widow. (See Deuteronomy 24:19-21.) The same Law provided for the redemption of the dead man's house. The possessions of a deceased man were to be redeemed, or bought back, by a near relative. His posterity was to be redeemed by his brother. (See Deuteronomy 25:5-6.) Naomi believed that Boaz would respond to the spirit of these laws as well. She directed Ruth to ask Boaz to be her kinsman-redeemer.

Boaz could not grant Ruth's request immediately because there was a closer relative who had to be offered the right of first refusal. But Boaz was impressed with Ruth's fidelity to her mother-in-law and also to the God of Israel. He quickly approached the nearer relative and informed him of his right to redeem the land of Elimelech. The near relative agreed. But when Boaz stated that he would also have "... to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance" (Ruth 4:5), he refused. The nearer relative gave his legal rights to Boaz.

Boaz married Ruth, and they had a son named Obed. All were blessed. Ruth entered the Godly house of Boaz, her redeemer. Naomi became part of the house of Obed, her redeemer. (See Ruth 4:14.) Boaz became the great-grandfather of David from whose seed came our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. (See Ruth 4:21-22; Matthew 1.)

## CHARACTER SKETCH OF BOAZ

### WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF BOAZ'S PROSPERITY?

Boaz was a beneficiary of the sure promise of God given to the nation of Israel. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

A careful examination of Boaz's dealings with Naomi and Ruth reveals that he was very familiar with God's Law. But Boaz did not obey only the letter of the Law. He went beyond the letter and obeyed from his heart the spirit of the Law.

For example, the Law provided for the poor by commanding farmers not to harvest the corners of their fields clean and not to gather up grain dropped by the reapers. (See Leviticus 19:9.) Boaz went beyond this duty for Ruth and actually ordered his workers to leave whole handfuls of grain for her to find. (See Ruth 2:16.)

If a man died, the Law provided for the redemption of his property and posterity by urging his brother to marry the widow. Their firstborn son would then bear the name of the deceased. (See Deuteronomy 25:5-6.) Boaz could have refused to marry Ruth according to the letter of the Law because he was not Elimelech's brother. But the intention of the Law—to help a man's widow—was clear, and he consented to marry her.

Boaz knew the Law of God. He meditated on the meaning of that Law and sought to obey it according to its full intent. As a result, he prospered according to the promise.

### HOW DID BOAZ VIEW NAOMI AND RUTH'S ADVERSITY?

Boaz viewed these pathetically poor women returning from Moab through eyes of mercy and love. Others viewed them with apathy, contempt, and superstition. For example, Naomi's family was indifferent to her need for food. (See Ruth 2:18.)

Superstition may have been a factor in the nearer relative's unwillingness to marry Ruth. He explained his refusal, "... Lest I mar mine own inheritance..." (Ruth 4:6). Because the men in Elimelech's family had died, Ruth and Naomi were considered "bad luck." The nearer kinsman did not want his family to die as they had.

Another example of this occurred when Judah did not want his son, Shelah, to marry Tamar. (See Genesis 38.) Boaz, on the other hand, helped his family members, and treated them with dignity. He saw the hand of God in the lives of these women and sought to cooperate in God's perfect will for them.

### IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD REWARD BOAZ FOR HIS KINDNESS?

The Lord rewarded him with a good name. He received the blessing of the city elders. (See Ruth 4:11-12.) He was blessed by finding and marrying a virtuous woman. "... For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil" (Proverbs 31:10-11). He also was blessed with a Godly seed. "... And Boaz begat Obed, And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David" (Ruth 4:21-22). (See also Proverbs 17:6.)

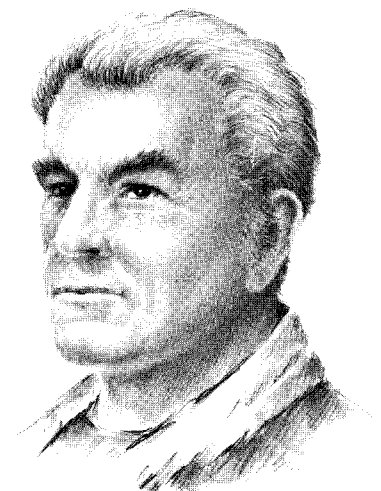


RUTH  
rūth

**The beautiful romance of Boaz and Ruth** is set against the background of apostasy in the nation and adversity in Ruth's family.

#### The Meaning of Names:

Ruth, "friend"  
Chilion (Ruth's husband who died in Moab), "pining, sickly"  
Mahlon (Ruth's brother-in-law who also died), "puny"



BOAZ  
bō-az