**Sermon Aesthetics or Elements**

***Below is a list of criteria that define a good sermon.***

Includes biblical text

Includes literary context, exegesis, or explanation of the biblical text or passage

Proclaims (*publicly* *announces*) the gospel (*teaching of Jesus*)

Connects God’s word to people’s lives

Is well organized and understandable

Engages the imaginations of the hearers

Is delivered well (with affect, passion, and integrity)\*

Orients hearers to life in God’s world

Teaches doctrine (scriptural teaching of theological truths) Leads to implication and application

Offers illustration in order to clarify

Includes argumentation or persuasion (pathos, ethos, and logos)

References

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**Example of a sermon with highlighted aesthetics or sermon elements**

# Sermon: Is Your Marriage Winning? – Ruth 3

by [**Andy Cook**](http://www.lifeway.com/Article/sermon-marriage-winning-ruth-3#author_bio_0)

**[Scriptures: Ruth 3:15-18](http://msb.to/HCSB=Ruth3:15" \o "Online Study Bible" \t "_blank)**

**Introduction**

There are those who believe television is a barometer of real life, but let's hope that's not true. In a very short period of time, we've gone from the nearly perfect Ward and June Cleaver to the nearly violent Archie and Edith Bunker, from the delightful Cliff and Claire Huckstable, to the horribly profane Ozzie Osborne family. And most telling of all, the longest-running family sitcom of television history is still running. If the television-mirrors-reality ideas are correct, The Simpson's cartoon could be a picture of family life today! Surely we've not gotten into that much trouble!

The late Wilt Chamberlain had great numbers as an NBA star, but the number he will probably be remembered for most is 20,000. That is how many women the never-married Chamberlain claimed in his autobiography to have slept with - 20,000!

What few may remember though, says columnist Clarence Page, is Chamberlain "went on to write that he would have traded all 20,000 for the one woman he wanted to stay with for keeps."

Wilt Chamberlain wasn't the only person in his generation looking for romance. According to Harlequin publishing house, which has been in the romance business for half a century, more than 180 million romance novels are purchased each year, with Harlequin itself selling, on average, five-and-a-half books per second. Ironically, a huge percentage of those books are in the hands of married women … who should be living their own version of a romantic tale already.

The Bible has some point-blank instructions to married couples, complete with some real-life examples. We're going to move in with Ruth and Boaz for a few minutes, and simply observe how their very successful marriage works.

**Scripture background**

Do you know the story of Ruth and Boaz? Their romance moved quickly from the dating stage into marriage. If you're not familiar with the story, Ruth is a young woman who's already known tough times. Her husband died, and she moved from Moab to Israel, from her country and culture to life in ancient Bethlehem. It's the same Bethlehem where Jesus was born, the same Bethlehem where King David was born.

Complicating matters for Ruth is her mother-in-law. Naomi's husband died first, and then two sons died, including Ruth's husband. Naomi's reaction culminated in a bitter season of depression, and it must have been very difficult for Ruth. Nevertheless, she went to work, hung in there with Naomi, and attracted the eye of Boaz. As she and Boaz see more and more of each other, Naomi encourages Ruth to press the issue, and Ruth, indeed, proposes to Boaz. He likes the idea, and we pick up the story with Boaz working hard to arrange this marriage. After a sleepless night when Ruth finds Boaz and - in their rather unfamiliar custom to us - pops the question, it's time to get on with a very important day. Boaz sends Ruth home to get some rest, but he won't send her home empty-handed. He dearly loves this girl.

We're going to stop here. The rest of the story involves a community discussion about Boaz wanting to marry Ruth, and then there's a conclusion that jumps ahead a year or so, when Naomi is rocking the child Ruth and Boaz have had together. That child, by the way, will be the grandfather of King David.

For us … let's stop and consider some highly relevant relationship issues in this passage.

**I. Build a winning relationship with your spouse's family**

Boaz sent Ruth away with a huge supply of barley, saying, "Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed." Why? Because Boaz realized, instinctively, that the relationship between Ruth and Naomi was a key part of his relationship with Ruth. He couldn't separate his relationship with Naomi from his relationship with Ruth anymore than you could say, "Well, I married him, but I didn't marry his mother." You can't exclude her father, or her brother, at the Christmas gathering. You can't hope the little sister who's a real family problem will just disappear one day. She won't disappear. She'll be there forever. And she'll affect your marriage relationship. You married a spouse … and you got the whole family.

I like to watch young people when it really hits them that if they marry the young man, the young woman, they're dating, they're going to wind up with the whole family! It's sometimes a shock to think of spending every Thanksgiving with the people around that particular table. And on top of all of that, that pretty young thing you're dating is going to grow up to look amazingly like her mother, or her dad. She might even act like her mother. He might grow up to be the spitting image of his father, both in action and in looks. His personality might eventually mirror his mom's … to a T.

When Boaz sent Ruth home, he sent her home with six measures of barley. It was a lot more than she needed, it was an overwhelming act of generosity, and a gift for Naomi as much as it was a gift for Ruth. Boaz was smart, very smart. He had already been doing stuff like this, making sure Ruth got a lot more of the harvest than she would have. That was his way of signaling to Naomi - I'll take you, and love you, if I can just get Ruth. He was nurturing a winning relationship with Ruth … and with Ruth's family.

I'm the father of three daughters. That means, once in a while, a young man shows up at our door. I always like the part where he butters me up. He'll tell me what a great preacher I am, or what a nice garage I have … that kind of thing. One young man recently came to our home, and when he came, he brought a bird house he'd made. It was pretty nice. And a few days later, he sent us a thank-you note for our hospitality. We'd fed him well, he said. … Boaz lives! The romance between our bird-house suitor and my daughter ended pretty quickly. She sent him packing - but we kept the bird house!

If you're going to make a mistake in this area, be sure you make it in being too generous, in being too loving. The benefits will pay off in enormous ways.

Someone is saying, "But I really don't like my mother-in-law. I really don't like my father-in-law. His sister is really more than I can take. Her brother is really not my favorite guy in the world."

I think, if Boaz was here, he'd look you in the eye, and say, "You think Naomi was loveable?" She had asked that her name be changed to "Bitter." She had stayed indoors and cried while Ruth worked. Can you imagine the first time polite Boaz makes a home visit? "Why Naomi, I like the way you've done this room in black. I've always thought the dark themes haven't been explored. And the care … why Naomi, that's a beautiful hearse you're driving!"

She was tough, and quite repulsive. But Boaz knew if he got Ruth, he got Naomi. And he was investing in Ruth by being generous to Naomi.

You'll not make a mistake by loving, by being generous. It doesn't mean you lower your standards, or even put your children at risk. A lot of influence comes through family, and if your children ever see something inappropriate at a family gathering, there should be a family talk on the way home from the gathering. You have a lot more influence on each other, and on your children, than anyone outside of your family. But one of the things your children should see is how you love people despite their differences in actions, or in values, when they're in the family.

Some day, your children will be in a position to choose whether or not to be generous to you. One day, they'll model your marriage in their marriage.

Do you remember the story of the couple that had to take in his father? The years had been tough on the dad, and his mind had softened, affecting his motor skills, and his social skills. More and more, it was getting harder to have a decent meal around the house. The old man was always spilling something, dropping something, making a mess, or even making people sick by his table habits.

"OK, that's enough!" said the old man's son one day. He built a feed trough for his father, and from that day on, he put his father in the corner, away from the table, and they let the old man eat the best he could. The couple reasoned that if the old man was going to eat like a pig, he needed to have a pig's trough, and that was that.

One day, though, the younger father noticed his own son banging away at some pieces of wood. "What are you doing, son?" the dad asked. "Why I'm building a feed trough for you, Dad, for when you get older and I have to feed you."

When meal time came that night, the old man was back at the table, and his son was helping him eat with dignity.

Showing a generous portion of love is never a bad idea. In marriage, showing love to the entire family is simply the only option. The only option. Your marriage relationship will benefit many times over if you'll simply be kind and loving to the in-law side of your family tree.

**II. Learn all you can about the opposite sex**

A few years ago, a popular book hit the shelves and all the talk shows. Men are from Mars, and Women are from Venus has an opening parable that illustrates the concept beautifully.

It seems there were men on the planet Mars, nothing but men, living in pretty good harmony. They were strong and handsome, attractive in their decisiveness. On Venus, however, there were women. Beautiful creatures, intriguing creatures, women who got along with each other and who enjoyed life immensely.

There came a day when circumstances brought the Martians and the Venetians to Earth. Immediately, the Martians were attracted to the Venetians, and the Venetians were attracted to the Martians. They couldn't stay apart. They loved being around each other.

One problem, however, almost ruined everything. The men spoke only Martian, and the women spoke only Venetian. They simply could not communicate. They tried to speak, tried to talk, but every time she said something, he couldn't comprehend it. He couldn't understand, so eventually, he quit listening. On the other side of the problem, the Venetians noted that Martians didn't talk much to start with, and when they did talk, it was very difficult to understand what the Martians were saying.

It was a massive problem.

The only thing that saved the day was when one Martian, and one Venetian, made their first attempts to learn the other language.

Naomi is the Venetian who'd been studying Martian.

Did you see what she said?

Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today." Ruth 3:18

How did Naomi know such a thing? Only one way. She'd been married to Elimelech, and she'd been working to understand what made men tick. She'd watched it from a distance, and she'd seen it up close. And she was reading Boaz like a book simply because she'd made the effort to learn how to read his book.

Have you made that effort?

Most married couples resist the reading lessons for several years. She'll eventually learn my language, he thinks. He'll eventually give up, and learn how to talk to me, she reasons. And they're both wrong!

If you're going to have a winning marriage relationship, you can't miss this point. You've got to learn how the opposite sex works. You might have to read some books, attend a marriage retreat, or visit with a marriage counselor. You might want to talk with older, successful couples about their marriage. You'll find they had to learn strange languages, too!

In the past 10 years or so, I've given hundreds of personality profiles to couples wanting to get married, or couples already married. We've done this on a lot of our marriage retreats. I've not kept a record, but the results are like this. In more than 90 percent of the personality profiles that have come back to us, the couples who take these things prove to have dramatically opposite personalities. More than 90 percent. He's quiet, she's talkative. She makes decisions easily, he does not. She's a servant, he's a people person. He's a details man, she's a woman with dreams and creative ideas. It's like the old saying says: "Opposites attract."

Now here's what I've learned about all these opposites. The couples who concentrate on the differences, trying to get the other party to change, trying to get the other party to concede, will suffer greatly. Things just go downhill rapidly.

A successful marriage hinges on a new attitude about differences. Successful couples look at those differences and say, "Hey, isn't that great! We're different. It'll never be boring around here. And when we work as a team, we've always got a strong point out there. I'll do the ideas, you do the details. I'll mingle with people, you make the decision. As a team, we can't be beat." Now that couple will do just fine. But that couple is composed of two people who committed to learning about each other.

Side Show is an unusual musical based on the true story of the Hilton twins. They were Siamese twins who rose from exploited poverty as a sideshow attraction to become a singing and dancing vaudeville act in the 1930s and, later, stars of a couple of B-grade films.

One unusual element of this play is that the two lead actresses must play their parts "joined at the hip." It doesn't matter how good their individual talents are if they can't work together, and if they can't do it convincingly. The success of the show depends on the success of their partnership. If one of them decides to go solo, the show is over! They're only in business as long as they stick together.

That is a good picture of marriage. Once the commitment is made, husband and wife are, as it were, "joined at the hip." They succeed or fail together. Other people don't generally think of one without thinking of the other. Wherever life's drama takes them, their success lies in doing it together.

**III. Marriage is a 100-100 proposition**

Some people talk about marriage as a "50-50" proposition. If you'll just meet your spouse halfway, says this logic, you'll be successful. The Bible, however, teaches that marriage is a "100-100" proposition. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ," says Ephesians 5:21.You can't leave half the journey undone. Sometimes, you've got to go every inch of every frustrating and exhausting mile to make a marriage work.

Boaz was willing to pay the price, to take the risk, to give Ruth 100 percent. His reward? Ruth gave him 100 percent. I'm telling you … if you ever get a 100-percent commitment from a spouse, you'll never want to settle for anything else.

You'll find joy, purpose, fulfillment. Ruth and Boaz had a son. They found joy as a couple, as parents, and as two adults watching Naomi rebound from her depression. A good marriage is filled with 100-percent commitment. Nothing less.

Maybe that's what bothers me so much about couples living together. They're skipping out on the commitment. They're sharing the same bed, the same house, the same bills. But they're not sharing the same commitment, and any one who thinks that doesn't matter is just fooling themselves.

The statistics are alarming. A recent US News and World Report article says that more than half of today's newlyweds live together before tying the knot, compared to 10 percent in 1965. "Living in sin," as it used to be called, was illegal in every state of the union before 1970.

What's so bad about that? Only this:

Research has found that unmarried cohabitors have more cheating done by both partners, experience more domestic violence and more cases of depression. They also have a much higher divorce rate. And I hate to be so plain about this, but a shocking study for many people came out in 2001 that said the best sex belongs to married couples, not to those who are "footloose and fancy free." It was a British study, and two-thirds of the married women surveyed were very satisfied with their sexual lives, while only 13 percent of the living-together women were! Two-thirds to barely one in nine!

And by the way, the married women were a lot more likely to think their husbands had a gorgeous body … some 93 percent thinking he was doing just fine. I like that!

If the trend of our society urges young adults to live together as an experiment, buck the trend. It's directly opposed to God's plan, and it's a recipe for disaster. Don't go there. If you're there now, have a conversation this afternoon and talk about commitment. God Himself may have brought you here this morning just to present that challenge to you.

Do you want a successful relationship, a championship relationship inside marriage? Your foundation had better be laid with commitment. A 100-100 commitment, and not one point less.

**Conclusion**

Boaz was a kinsmen-redeemer. He would protect. He would provide. He would devote his life to taking care of Ruth, and Naomi. He would do the same for his son. He would be a generational leader for the grandchildren. Ruth was discovering that when she made a commitment to God first, God would overwhelm her with the commitment He could make for her. God himself would be her redeemer.

Did you know that the Bible speaks of God as your Redeemer? Some 17 times after the book of Ruth, the prophets, the Psalmist, and even Job, use this title to describe God. God loves you so much, he'll protect you, provide for you, overwhelm you with generosity, and take care of every practical need that you have.

Maybe your marriage needs a redeemer. Maybe your relationship with a friend, or a family member, needs a redeemer. The truth is, everyone needs a redeemer, and his name is Jesus.

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<http://www.lifeway.com/Article/sermon-marriage-winning-ruth-3>

\*I did not list this element because it mostly pertains to the oral or verbal delivery of the sermon. Since I didn’t hear or view the delivery, I cannot support that the minister fulfilled this aesthetic