



The Nourishing Vocation Project Engaging the Living Word

[Ruth 1:15-18](#)

What is this particular text?

- Story
 - Story of companionship
 - Chosen family
- Promise
- Accompaniment

How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Introduction to the book of Ruth
 - Sets up Ruth's story
 - Shows Ruth's strength and persistence
- A pivotal moment where one must decide what to do after loss
- A new beginning

How can this text function in the church today?

- Where is God calling us to go?
- How does loss affect our actions?
- Who do we follow?
- How can the church accompany people?

What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- Fills me with a sense of awe that Ruth was willing to give up everything to go with her sister-in-law
- Makes me wish for someone to care for me as deeply as Ruth cared for Naomi
- Feelings of relief for Naomi as she no longer has to be alone
- Makes me wonder what I would chose to do if I was in Ruth's situation

What do you have to say to the text?

- Ruth was taking a big risk by following Naomi.
 - Leaving behind family and country
- Ruth is following her "chosen family" and it is powerful to name and chose them.

What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- Acceptance of messiness and uncertainty that may come from following Naomi
 - ...and trust that it will be okay.
- Trust in times of uncertainty

What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- We are not meant to do ministry alone.
 - We will encounter others in our work and can accomplish more together.
 - Sometimes, this involves new partnerships that may seem risky.
 - Many congregations have decided to combine into one parish in order to use resources wisely and expand their ministry.
- Sometimes, taking a risk is necessary.
 - We were constantly trying new things during the pandemic and could not see the outcome.
 - Taking a risk can be vital for flourishing
 - Church is being called to new ways of being in community
- Communities are forging new paths and transforming into supportive groups that uplift one another:
 - Young Adults, particularly when they have not found a place in the institutional church
 - LGBTQIA+ community
 - BIPOC siblings
 - Those disenfranchised with institutional religion
- Crises of our current time
 - Rejection that people from the LGBTQIA+ community often encounter from their biological families
 - Leads to finding “chosen family”
 - Accepting support in times of grief or struggle
 - Mental health is being discussed more and people find strength and solidarity with others that are suffering
 - Global pandemic and its effects
 - We took risks and made choices to form community when we were being pulled into isolation
 - And found hope and companionship from unlikely people

What do you see within yourself?

- Times when God has called me to leave everything behind
- Times when there was fear of the unknown
- Times when I walked with someone or someone walked with me

What is the context – textual and historical?

- Follows Elimelech and his journey to Moab
- Follows history from the Moabites
- Follows Naomi
- Follows Ruth
- A storyline of grief and loss
 - Naomi lost her husband and sons.
 - Ruth lost her husband.

What questions does this text raise for you?

- What motivated Ruth?
- What convinced Naomi to “say no more” and let Ruth accompany her?
- What hesitations did Ruth and Naomi have, if any?
- Did they hesitate at all?
- What was the most difficult for them to leave behind?

- What will others think?

What words/themes seem of particular import?

- Where you go, I will go
- Your people shall be my people
- Following
- Dedication
- Risking everything for someone you care about

What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?

- We do not have to go through things alone.
 - God sets us free to journey into new places that may bring forth new promises, hopes, and lives
 - And through it all, God is also with us every step of the way.
- God will bring people into our life who will love and support us.
 - And sometimes it may be people we do not expect
- God forms relationships despite grief and loss
- Leaving behind an old life and forging a new path with people that you chose

What is the as-over-againstness of this text?

- Ruth and Naomi are leaving a lot behind and may have to face the consequences of that
 - Leaving and moving into uncertainty
- It is a big choice to accept the companionship of another. For it to work out, both Ruth and Naomi have to be willing to walk with one another.

Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?

- God creates new things out of brokenness and despair.
- God brings people into our lives who provide hope and support.
- God goes with us into the unknown.

What have others said about this text?

- [“To read the book of Ruth as Naomi’s story](#) is to read a story of grace that holds space for grief and doubt without condemnation, that doesn’t try to “fix” it. When we see grief and anger—particularly when that anger is directed towards God—we “cling” (Hebrew dabaq; 1:14) to the “you’ll be fine” and the “things will get better soon” dismissals. We try to extinguish the fiery rage of anger that grief brings—eager to put out the flames of the “unfairness” of it all. Naomi’s story doesn’t stifle the flame; it accepts the grief, the anger, the complaint. Naomi’s story holds those feelings even as it moves forward.” Megan Fullerton Strollo, Assistant Professor of Biblical Languages, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, VA
- [“Like us, Naomi is an integrated being](#), and like us her story is shaped by all the stories that intersect with it. Reading this book again, it seems pretty clear to me that Ruth and Naomi’s destinies are bound together. We cannot fully understand one without considering the other.” The Ballad of Ruth and Naomi by Leigh Finnegan
- [“It’s important to incorporate a queer reading of the Book of Ruth](#) because examples of relationships like Naomi and Ruth’s are so rare. It’s a powerfully feminist story that involves both a decision absent of men, and then kindness from a man because of the love between two women.” Wherever You Go, I Go: Queerness in the Book of Ruth by Elana Spivack

- [“The biblical tradition regarding the Moabites](#) prepares us as readers to question Elimelech and Naomi’s choice of refuge, and to anticipate that they will encounter hostility from the Moabites. The focus of the text, however, is on this family’s survival.” by Elna K. Solvang, Professor of Religion, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN.

What will I teach or proclaim?

- Ruth left everything behind to follow Naomi. God sometimes calls us to do that too, but God does not abandon us in the process.
- We will experience loss and grief, but we do not have to go through it alone.
- God works through people in our lives that accompany us through the hard times.
- We are sent by God to accompany people as well.
- And God will be with it through it all.
- There will be uncertainty, but we accompany others to discern and work through it together.
- We are called to new adventures, with the hope and promise that God will be with us along the way.