

Ruth Outline

Introduction: Ruth is one of those fascinating little books that pops up in the Bible now and again that throw us for a loop. Two things stand out: the book is written about and written from the perspective of women; the book highlights the faith of an outsider to Israel.

The centrality of women is a welcome relief from the majority of Biblical history that often reads as a sometimes monotonous story of warriors and an endless succession of kings. In Ruth women take center stage. Having become stranger in a strange land Naomi, a Jewish woman, becomes widowed at the very start of the book. Worse, Naomi's two sons also die, leaving her with only two Moabite daughters-in-law. Though an extremely unpromising start, the story then takes off as Ruth, one of Naomi's daughters-in-law refuses to stay behind in Moab as Naomi plans to head back to Judah. The book of Ruth turns into a kind of ancient Thelma and Louise at this point, as an indigent Naomi and Ruth journey cross country trying to make their way together in a land hostile to women and to foreigners.

Just as important as representing the voice of women, the book of Ruth represents the voice of those outside the circle of Israel. Ruth is a critical reminder to religious people forever tempted to only care for and value people who believe and look the same. Not only do Naomi and Ruth make their way in Judah, but Ruth, the ultimate outsider, becomes the mother of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David, the ultimate insider.

Chapter 1: Set up; Naomi moving back and Ruth clinging to her

Chapter 2: Ruth gleaning in Boaz' field; Boaz takes notice

Chapter 3: Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor

Chapter 4: Boaz marries Ruth; Ruth gives birth to Obed, the father of Jesse

Stories to know: Ruth's speech to Naomi (1:6-18); Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor (3:1-18); Ruth as the great, great, great grandmother of David (Chapter 4:13-17)