

A Mother-Daughter Covenant

Key Verse: “*Ruth said, Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.*”

—**Ruth 1:16,**
English Standard Version

Selected Scripture:
Ruth 1:1-18

ALTHOUGH RUTH IS ONE

of the great women of the Bible, she was not an Israelite by birth, but a Moabitess. During a time of famine in Judah, a Bethlehemite named Elimelech took his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, to Moab to live. However, the move did not produce the prosperity for which he had hoped. Not very long after their move, Elimelech died leaving Naomi and her two sons. In the course of time, the sons married Moabite women—Orpah and Ruth. The family lived in Moab about ten years until both

young men also perished.

The three widows, Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth had a very important decision to make. Receiving news that food was again available in Israel, Naomi determined to go home. However, she encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to their people. Despite much hugging and weeping, Orpah took Naomi’s advice, but Ruth clung to her.

Turning to Ruth, Naomi said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after

your sister-in-law.” (Ruth 1:15, *ESV*) Ruth answered with the beautiful words of our Key Verse, then added, “Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”—vs. 17, *ESV*

Ruth’s loving declaration has echoed in the hearts of God’s people throughout the ages. It is a poignant covenant of personal obligation and serves as a model of commitment. “I will go where you go. I will live where you live.” We see a parallel in the Gospel after Jesus’ shocking statements to the multitudes that, in order to have life, they must eat his flesh and drink his blood. Many of his disciples ceased from following the Master, so Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”—John 6:53-68, *ESV*

These expressions of loyalty from Ruth and Peter resonate deeply with us. Would we consider for a moment going back to the pursuit of other gods such as riches, comforts, fame, or pleasure? Certainly not! We will stay with the Master all the days of our lives. Where else would we go? He has the words of eternal life. He is the bread from heaven that satisfies us as nothing else can. We would starve spiritually if we parted from him. Perhaps the same recognition filled Ruth’s heart. From Naomi she learned about the God of Israel, “The LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” (Exod. 34:6, *ESV*) This knowledge created a bond that was more precious to Ruth than anything this world had to offer. How fitting this was, for the name Naomi means “my delight.”

The psalmist encapsulated the spirit of Ruth’s loyalty to God, “Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.”—Ps. 37:4-6, *ESV* ■