

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON EIGHTEEN: RUTH 1:16-17

"And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also if aught but death part thee and me."

Ruth's speech is one of the most beautiful in Scripture. It is a wonderful vow of love and commitment. Many couples have incorporated these words into their wedding ceremonies.

Three times Naomi counseled Ruth to return to her life in Moab. Finally, Ruth responded, "don't ask me to leave you." No amount of urging by Naomi would sway Ruth. She might as well stop asking. Ruth would not abandon Naomi.

Ruth continues, "don't ask me to turn back and stop following you." Orpah reversed direction and returned to her people. After ten years in Moab, Naomi reversed direction and was returning to her people in Israel. But Ruth had no intention of reversing direction. She was committed to the course ahead. She intended to follow Naomi all the way to Bethlehem.

Ruth promises, "wherever you go, I go." Naomi did not have to worry that she would ever be alone. Ruth would always be there to care for her.

Ruth further declares, "where you lodge, I lodge." A long journey requires periods of rest. Each night, for example, the traveler must break the journey and sleep. Ruth, though younger, would never go on ahead of Naomi. When Naomi needed to stop and get rest, Ruth would be with her. And when their destination was reached, anywhere Naomi chose to live Ruth would live there, too.

Ruth states, "your people shall be my people." She left behind the idolatrous Moabites and embraced the chosen people of God. Even if she was treated as a stranger or an outsider by the Hebrews, she would still identify with them.

Ruth vows, "your God shall be my God." It seems that she has already fulfilled this promise. Ruth had turned her back on the gods of Moab. She had adopted the God of Israel.

Ruth's plans are long term. At the end of a life, where she remained with Naomi whether traveling or at rest, Ruth says, "wherever you die I will die."

She further declares, "wherever you are buried I will be buried." Ruth completes her life of companionship by arranging to be buried beside her beloved mother-in-law.

Ruth makes her vow official by invoking the name of the Lord. She places herself under a curse if she fails to make good on her promises.

Ruth met the challenge of widowhood with love. She found purpose for her life in committing it to the service of another. She stopped focusing on herself and her sorrow. She stepped out of her comfort zone and moved forward into the unknown with faith in her God. Faith in God and love for others are great healing agents.

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Matthew 22:37-39