

LET'S TALK SCRIPTURE

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# Ruth's Loyalty: True Commitment

*A Focused Study Guide*

THE STANDARD STUDY LESSON • RUTH 1:14-22

PREPARED BY

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# BIBLE STUDY LESSON: RUTH 1:14-22

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This focused study guide explores the profound transition of Naomi and Ruth from the desolate fields of Moab to the ripe harvests of Bethlehem, showcasing a timeless model of loyalty and faith.

## The Background of the Journey

The account opens during the dark days of the Judges, an era marked by widespread compromise and disobedience in Israel. When a severe famine struck Bethlehem—a name meaning the "House of Bread"—an Israelite named Elimelech chose to move his wife, Naomi, and their two sons down to the pagan land of Moab. Instead of finding security, the family suffered immense tragedy. Elimelech died, and his two sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth, before also passing away. Naomi was left completely destitute, an impoverished widow in a foreign country.

When word reached Naomi that Yahweh had restored food to Bethlehem, she chose to head home. Realizing the extreme social and financial barriers her daughters-in-law would face as foreign widows in Judah, she urged them to stay in Moab, find new husbands, and rebuild their lives within their familiar culture.

## The Separation and the Confession

In verse 14, we witness an emotional crossroads. Orpah chooses to accept Naomi's advice. She kisses her mother-in-law goodbye and returns to her people and her local gods. This was the rational, expected choice for survival. In deep contrast, the text records that "Ruth clung to her." The Hebrew term used here is *dabaq*, indicating an unbreakable, permanent bond. Ruth was choosing to stick with Naomi regardless of the personal cost.

When Naomi pushes her one last time to follow Orpah's example, Ruth delivers her historic confession: *"Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God."* This statement represents a complete transformation. Ruth willingly abandons her homeland, her national identity, and her native religion to embrace the community of Israel and submit entirely to the sovereignty of Yahweh.

### THE SOLEMN OATH

Ruth reinforces her commitment by swearing a formal oath using the personal covenant name of Israel's God: **Yahweh**. She declares that only physical death has the power to separate her from Naomi, completely placing her life under His divine protection.

## The Bitter Return to Bethlehem

Seeing Ruth's fixed determination, Naomi stops arguing, and the two women walk together to Bethlehem. Their arrival causes a massive stir among the local women, who ask in shock, "Is this Naomi?" The years of sorrow and poverty had visibly broken her appearance. Naomi replies, "*Do not call me Naomi [Pleasant]; call me Mara [Bitter], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.*"

Naomi uses the title ***El Shaddai*** (the Almighty), showing her absolute belief that God is in complete control of her life. In her deep pain, she laments that she left Bethlehem materially full but has returned completely empty. This contains a powerful irony: Naomi feels entirely empty, yet the deeply devoted Ruth is standing right next to her. In her grief, Naomi cannot yet see that through this faithful companion, God has already begun her restoration.

The chapter closes with a beautiful note of hope: they arrived in Bethlehem precisely at the start of the barley harvest. The long season of emptiness and famine was over, and the fields were ripe with food, signaling that the sovereign God was quietly preparing a future filled with redemption and joy.