Socio-Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) – Inner Texture Analysis of Ruth as a Servant Leader

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Abstract

This study of the Book of Ruth focuses on the apparent love Ruth shared with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Or was it love or the social and cultural perspective of the age in which they lived? Was the author's intent to highlight the customs of Israel? How would the original audience relate to the content of the writing? And what was God's message to His people then and now? The writer of this paper intends to unravel and answer these questions using the Socio-Rhetorical Analysis – Inner Texture methodology as the primary resource for this study. The leadership theory applied to this research is the Servant Leadership Model. Was Ruth just a servant, or did she lead and honor God through leading as a servant of God and His people? The information gathered through the methodology reveals that Ruth was a servant leader. Ruth found her purpose in life by serving her mother-in-law's needs, with whom she shared not only the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, but they were simultaneously grieving for their deceased husbands. The Socio-Rhetorical Analysis in the book of Ruth unveils the plan of God's future generations through the servant leadership model ascribed to the life and adventures of Ruth.

Key Words: exegesis, hermeneutics, leadership, purpose, relationship, audience, author, time

Analysis of Ruth 1:6 through 2:1-12

One of the more fascinating historical books in the Bible is Ruth. The author of Ruth fleshed out two apparent storylines and merged them as one: the roots of the Davidic Kingship and his descendants in the form of the Son of Man in Jesus Christ. Gladson (2013) states the need to merge the partnership between the author, text, and reader, as Ruth is only one of two books named after women, and Ruth is the non-Israelite (p. 9). Ruth is not the central figure in the book, even though it bears her name; Naomi appears nineteen times, Boaz appears fourteen times, and Ruth appears ten times, with all other actors in the book having some relationship to Naomi, not Ruth (Gladson, 2013, p. 10). Amos & Manetsch (2020) espoused that the writer of Ruth presents the story in metaphoric terms; Through the author, God teaches the book's audience to live with patience because the Father has a plan to deliver His people out of their circumstances (p. 457). The historical perspective gleaned from Ruth shows how Gentiles and Jews find a joint path through the kindred relationship of Ruth married and producing offspring with Boaz; Ruth a Gentile, and Boaz, an Israelite (Amos & Manetsch, 2020, p. 457). God made provisions to redeem the natural descendants of Ruth as a central theme in the New Testament through her blood descendant, Jesus Christ. not Ruth (Gladson, 2013, p. 10). Amos & Manetsch (2020) espoused that the writer of Ruth presents the story in metaphoric terms; Through the author, God teaches the book's audience to live with patience because the Father has a plan to deliver His people out of their circumstances (p. 457). The historical perspective gleaned from Ruth shows how Gentiles and Jews find a joint path through the kindred relationship of Ruth married and producing offspring with Boaz; Ruth a Gentile and Boaz an Israelite (Amos & Manetsch, 2020, p. 457). God made provisions to redeem the natural descendants of Ruth as a central theme in the New Testament through her blood descendant Jesus Christ if you will.

The pericope for this discussion starts with Ruth 1:6. While residing in Moab, Naomi gets word that YHWH has visited His people. Therefore, Naomi decided to leave this place of despair in Moab, where she lost her sons and husband to premature deaths, to return to her homeland of Bethlehem. McKeown (2015) points out how the narrator in the pericope repeats certain words to bring attention to the significance of a moment or aspect of the overarching message.

Moab and what God has done in Bethlehem find repetition in this portion of the pericope. Hence, the author draws the audience's attention to the significance of both places in completing the story. Repetitions are critical to how the author wants to influence the reader or readers to understand the passage (Henson et al., 2020, p. 85). Michael (2015) suggests proficient persuasion controlled the pericope of Ruth 1:6-18. Naomi uses repetitive patterns to paint a picture of life to the point in the pericope for Oprah and Ruth by stressing what the future may hold if they traveled with Naomi back to her homeland of Bethlehem, where no husband or children awaited them (Michael, 2015). This subject will find further research and clarification as the Socio-Rhetorical Analysis develops later in this paper.

Naomi asks, entreats, or instructs her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and return to their families in the pericope on more than one occasion. One daughter-in-law leaves, Oprah, while Ruth is determined to stay with Naomi. Textual units appear in the pericope, for the themes are that Moab is the current situation; however, returning to Bethlehem may change the circumstance for the betterment of Naomi and, as the story unveils, for the advancement of Ruth. Henson (et al., 2020) posits that textual units assist the author in communicating the themes in the pericope (p. 85). When the author strives to impact the current or modern audience as the author influenced the original readers, the instrument utilized to accomplish the goal is dynamic equivalence (Anderson et al.,

2018). The progressive pattern identifies the connection between Moab and Bethlehem, despair, and hope, if you will.

The Opening-Middle-Closing Patterns (OMC) in the pericope to this juncture lead the reader on a journey of discovery. From Moab, a place of despair, to Bethlehem, this place of promise, are themes enhancing the purpose the writer intended to convey to the original audience.

Henson (et al., 2020) posits that the OMC contributes to the story's overall plot (p. 92). Moab offered impairment to peace, and Bethlehem extends hope as they search for peace.

As the journey continues in Ruth 1:9, Naomi declares rest for Oprah and Ruth. The word rest used in the pericope occurs twenty times in the Old Testament and refers to setting up camp and describes the land God promised to His people in Deuteronomy 12:9, and means still waters as referred to in Psalm 23:2 (McKeown, 2015). Naomi emphasized to Oprah and Ruth that in Bethlehem, she could promise neither of them sons to marry or arrange marriages once they reached their destination (Ruth 1:9-12). In this portion of the pericope, the author calls for faith in God from Oprah and Ruth, because how is that different from their current situation? Naomi's attempt to discourage her daughters-in-law from traveling with her demonstrated unselfishness because Naomi understood the journey could present danger, loneliness, and uncertainty (McKeown, 2015). Naomi demonstrates leadership qualities on many fronts, such as the difficult decision to leave home to return to her native country.). Naomi demonstrates leadership qualities on many fronts, such as the difficult decision to leave home to return to her native country.

As the pericope continues in Ruth 1:14-18, Naomi has convinced Oprah to return to Moab, and the author never mentions Oprah again after this juncture in the story. One question that probably deserves some research is what would have been God's blessing for Oprah had she decided to take this

next step of faith with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and sister-in-law, Ruth. McKeown (2015) postulated that Ruth has no glaring advantage at this stage of sticking with the plan to travel with Naomi to make Bethlehem her new home. However, for the original and future audience, taking steps toward God requires some level of risk.One question that probably deserves some research is what would have been God's blessing for Oprah had she decided to take this next step of faith with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and sister-in-law, Ruth. McKeown (2015) postulated that Ruth has no glaring advantage at this stage of sticking with the plan to travel with Naomi to make Bethlehem her new home. However, for the original and future audience, taking steps toward God requires some level of risk.

Ruth declares that only death will separate her from Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17). The book of Ruth unveils God's legal promise to Abraham through the loyalty of a young woman from a Gentile nation (Blevins, 2016). The sovereignty of God is on full display in this portion of the pericope. Lau (et al., 2016) refers to this as never-ending kindness. Every text in the Bible discovers narrative qualities within a broader context, which is critical to understanding a specific passage (Lau et al., 2016, p. 2). Therefore, loyalty is a worthwhile theme or plot in the pericope for this study. the loyalty of a young woman from a Gentile nation (Blevins, 2016). The sovereignty of God is on full display in this portion of the pericope. Lau (et al., 2016) refers to this as never-ending kindness. Every text in the Bible discovers narrative qualities within a broader context which is critical to understanding a specific passage (Lau et al., 2016, p. 2). Therefore, loyalty is a worthwhile theme or plot in the pericope for this study.

In Ruth 1:19-22, Ruth and Naomi arrive in Bethlehem. However, the author considered describing the journey from Moab to Bethlehem unnecessary, for the writer mentions nothing concerning the trip in the pericope. McKeown (2015) believes that how they made it is unimportant, but feels the vital part is reaching the destination. Once they arrived in

Bethlehem, the town stirred with excitement. There was delighted recognition of Naomi by the women in Bethlehem, and it had been ten years since they had seen her (McKeown, 2015). The author gave a sense of relief in that neither Naomi nor Ruth knew what the response would be from the people of Naomi's native country after they undoubtedly heard of her hardships. Did Naomi see Ruth as a burden at this point instead of as the one God would use to meet their collective needs? Taute & Potgieter (2020) espoused that the story of Naomi speaks to God's goodness to women in the story of two widows finding provision from a place of hardship. Maybe Naomi felt a burden to take care of the young Ruth, but God took care of them both through the young woman Ruth. espoused that the story of Naomi speaks to God's goodness to women in the story of two widows finding provision from a place of hardship. Maybe Naomi felt a burden to take care of the young Ruth, but God takes care of them both through the young woman Ruth.

Boaz's introduction to the story takes place in the pericope of Ruth 2:1-3. Boaz's name means "In him is strength," and Solomon named a pillar in the temple after Boaz, as he is considered one of the most decorated ancestors in the history of Israel (McKeown, 2015). After introducing the audience to Boaz, the story returns to Naomi and Ruth in Ruth 2:1. Ruth leads the charge to take care of herself and her mother-in-law by going into the fields of Boaz during the harvest season. The Argumentative Pattern of redemption emerges in the Ruth 2 pericope. The author is attempting to provide the reason for the outcome (Henson et al., 2020, p. 93) in the story of Ruth, and that belief involves the redemptive tale of two widows by a kinsman redeemer.in the story of Ruth, and that belief involves the redemptive tale of two widows by a kinsmen redeemer.

The kinsmen-redeemer, Boaz, makes an appearance at the harvest in Ruth 2:4-7 and greets the workers in the harvest with the "Lord be with you," and in-kind the workers say, "The Lord bless you (Ruth 2:4). In Moab, not much in the way of honoring God is manifest in the text by the author, but when he

introduces the reader to Boaz in the pericope, the honor of God is apparent. McKeown (2015) posits that the author uses the progressive chiasm pattern in Boaz's greetings to the harvest workers. Henson et al. (2020) postulate that chiasm utilizes various themes in bringing a resolution to the overarching theme (p. 89). Linafelt (2010) espoused that those little explicit descriptions of the qualities of the character in Ruth are a general narrative in the biblical text. Hence, textual analysis, hermeneutics, and exegesis are necessary for interpreting the author's original intent.

The first conversation between Boaz and Ruth takes place in the pericope of Ruth 2:8-13. Boaz's response to Ruth is respect, generosity, and favor, even though she is a stranger from a foreign land. According to McKeown (2015), when Boaz refers to Ruth as "my daughter" in 2:8, it demonstrates that she is welcome in the house of Boaz. In the following pericope of Ruth 2:14-17, Boaz's entire display of generosity extends to Ruth. McKeown (2015) discusses how in Jewish tradition, when a host provides food, it is well presented if the guest has leftovers to take home with them, insofar as there was enough food to feed everyone, then some, highlighted in 2 Kings 4:44 and John 6:12-13. Ruth took the leftovers to Naomi, which in turn represented a part of Boaz's generosity as a kinsman-redeemer. a part of Boaz's generosity as a kinsmen-redeemer.

Exegeting The Ruth Pericope

When reading any text, particularly a biblical one, the reader needs to consider resources and methodology to utilize when interpreting the author's original intent in the passage. DeSilva (2018) postulated that every paragraph in the Bible is a unique portion of the larger context and was written to be interpreted as part of the larger text (p. 197). To fully grasp and understand the Bible, one must interpret the meaning of the text within the larger context, then apply it to one's life (Duval & Hays, 2012, p. 116). BERMAN (2007) espoused that when Boaz commanded his servants to leave sheaves of wheat for Ruth and Naomi, he

was invoking the law in Deuteronomy 24:19, leaving sheaves for the less fortunate (p. 31). De Villiers (2019) postulated that the author of a text hopes to communicate something in their choices of linguistics and arrangement of words and content. De Villiers (2019) continued with the idea that in the ancient stulated the author of a text hope to communicate something in their choices of linguistics and arrangement of words and content. De Villiers (2019) continued with the idea that in the ancient

world, culture determined values, ways of conducting oneself, and rules that governed society; however, Ruth and Boaz had the faith to transcend social norms by acting ethically. Women from Moab were considered loose and immoral, according to McKeown (2015). Therefore, Boaz and Ruth worked in such a way as to please the God of Israel.

Exegeting ancient texts like Ruth is vital to correctly interpreting God's message through a human author. Chan & Venter (2010) posited that an interpretive method of midrash provided social relevance to any ancient text. They determined that community interest, inherent meaning, surrounding background, and personal purpose are vital when exegeting text like Ruth, and the midrash method provides interpretive relevance. Roded (2015) espoused that those traditional commentators who stretched the original text to incorporate gender correlation to fit their own time, with opposing stances eclipsing the holy text, wrote from an ancient Jewish and Muslim perspective concerning women in religious texts and context. Therefore, students of the Bible should take the approach that Paul shared with Timothy to study the Word of God for themselves (2 Tim. 2:15). interpretive relevance. Roded (2015) espoused those traditional commentators who stretched the original text to incorporate gender correlation to fit their own time, with opposing stances eclipsing the holy text. Roded (2015) wrote from an ancient Jewish and Muslim perspective concerning women in religious text and context. Therefore,

students of the Bible should take the approach that Paul shared with Timothy to study the Word of God for himself (2 Tim. 2:15).

Ruth conjures up many interpretations, and the feminist movement deserves some mention in this paper. Blotz (2005) mentions that Ruth prominently features two women, Naomi and Ruth, who exemplify strength, character, and control of their situation and destiny. Blotz continues with the idea that Naomi and Ruth seek to solve their problems to overcome their tribulations eventually. Newhauser (1998) summons the relevance of Ruth as the great-grandmother of King David, and the Messiah descends from his family lineage. Hence, Ruth is a relevant text for modern-day readers. his family lineage. Hence, Ruth is a relevant text for modern-day readers.

Hermeneutics in Ruth

The book of Ruth's characters' experience warrants further investigation in interpreting the author's message in the pericope. Bauckham (1997) posited embracing the female actor's perspective and physical experience insofar as the book of Ruth adopts the overall feminine perspective. Notwithstanding, each is influenced by different cultural aspects, with Ruth hailing from Moab and Naomi from Israel. Bauckham (1997) posited another relevant point in interpreting the original meaning by stating that when Ruth decided to follow Naomi, her Moabite cultural perspective faded into the background. Sort of like in modern times, when someone moves to a foreign country, they begin to assume the cultural identity of the adopted nation., when someone moves to a foreign country, they begin to assume the cultural identity of the adopted nation.

There are layers to the understanding of context within a text. Marriage and wedding ceremonies in the United States are different from Aboriginal Tribes in Australia. For instance, in the time of Ruth, a wife accepted through the marriage nuptials love for in-laws and adopted her husband's cultural identity,

making his people her people (Odo, 2021). The type of devotion and love demonstrated in the in-law paradigm between the actors in Ruth is rare in modern society (Odo, 2021). Another layer to peel back is in chapter one, where the three main characters or actors are three females. The pericope, in this instance, reveals conversations or interactions of persuasion. The three women, Naomi, Ruth, and Oprah, are attempting to coerce each other into the next move in life after each has lost their husbands (Michael, 2015). Grätz (2007) describes the book of Ruth as the counter-story to societal norms of the time and the book that corrected the imagery of the Moabite women (p. 277). Construction of the narrative in Ruths cultural identity, and making his people her people (Odo, 2021). The type of devotion and love demonstrated in the in-law paradigm between the actors in Ruth is rare in modern society (Odo, 2021). Another layer to peel back is in chapter one, where the three main characters or actors are three females. The pericope, in this instance, reveals conversations or interactions of persuasion. The three women, Naomi, Ruth, and Oprah, are attempting to coerce each other into the next move in life after each has lost their husbands (Michael, 2015). Grätz (2007) describes the book of Ruth as the counter-story to societal norms of the time and the book that corrected the imagery of the Moabite women (p. 277). Construction of the narrative in Ruth gives insight into the author's message to the ancient audience.

Leadership Theory in the Ruth Pericope – Servant Leadership

As discovered in Ruth's analysis of the pericopes under review, Naomi and Boaz find more mentions than Ruth. However, Ruth’s sacrifice for the betterment of her mother-in-law demonstrates leadership qualities worth delving into for this study. According to Northouse (2019), servant leaders are heedful of the affairs of their constituents (p. 227). One might argue that Naomi is leading Ruth, who she is, but Ruth is leading and creating a path of prosperity for Naomi in her humble way. Northouse (2019) calls this the leader-member

exchange theory of the leadership construct (p. 139). However, servant leadership theory best describes Ruth's impact on this study's author's story.y.

The leader-constituent relationship has a foundation in achieving common or shared goals. Lu (2017) calls the narrative in the book of Ruth cooperation. Lu (2017) continued with the idea that positive servant and mentor traits describe the book's characters, pointing the reader toward the weaknesses of Naomi and Elimelech. Throughout the book of Ruth, Ruth desires to serve. Servant leadership starts with the innate feeling to suit the needs of others above all else (Northouse, 2019, p. 228). Heyler & Martin (2018) espoused that servant leadership theory is unique compared with other leadership theories. Servant leadership's cornerstone is the singular aspiration to serve and develop others to serve as well (Heyler & Martin, 2018). Ruth has inspired countless generations of Believers in Christ to act with integrity and Godly character.

A key component of servant leadership is stewardship. The steward will place a higher value on cooperation than on self-interest, with the principal aim to ensure the organization's success over self-interest (Heyler & Martin, 2018). Ruth was willing to place the needs of Naomi above her aspirations of finding a husband and bearing children for her heritage. The servant-leader model represented in the book of Ruth hearkens to the issues of corporate greed in modern times. According to Parris & Peachey (2013), the study of servant leadership resonates with scholars and practitioners as a response to selfishness and greed in the C-Suite in the twenty-first century. Ruth ultimately prospered from a servant role to be one of the more honored Biblical women characters in Scripture. Heyler & Martin, 2018). Ruth was willing to place the needs of Naomi above her aspirations of finding a husband and bearing children for her heritage. The servant-leader model represented in the book of Ruth hearkens to the issues of corporate greed in modern times. According to Parris & Peachey (2013), the study of servant leadership resonates with scholars and

practitioners as a response to selfishness and greed in the C-Suite in the twenty-first century. Ruth ultimately prospered from a servant role to be one of the more honored Biblical women characters in Scripture.

The Ruth pericope under review experiences the ebb and flow of the leader-follower construct. Davis (2017) postulated that the follower-leader connection or association is conjointly prominent in having the follower in an active role in the relationship. Ruth had the personality to succeed in her historical position. Engstrom (1976) espoused the importance of the essence of the leader by stating that the leader must have faith in God, in other people, and themselves (p. 83). Ruth chose to serve the God of Israel instead of the gods of Moab; she exhibited trust in Naomi by following her to an unknown land, and she believed in herself to provide for her mother-in-law.

For some, the servant leadership theory in Ruth may not fit the book's overall theme. However, according to Davis (2017), servant leadership is a follower-focused leadership theory that deserves more research. Ruth followed the instructions and lessons of Naomi, which led to Ruth becoming a matriarch in her family. Ruth demonstrated honesty, which is a critical component to modeling the way for others, according to Kouzes & Posner (2017, p. 32).

Keeping with the theme of modeling the way, Ruth modeled the way of hard work and determination as she worked in the fields to provide sustenance for herself and Naomi.

Leadership theory entails various components, and this next section considers some of those variables. According to Kouzes & Posner (2010), the most foundational validation of leadership is making a difference (p. 1). Successful leaders believe they can and will make a difference in the lives of their constituents. Ruth went to work in the fields, knowing she could make a difference in bettering the circumstances she and Naomi faced (Ruth 2:2). According to Kouzes & Posner (2010, p. 15),

credibility is critical to the bedrock of leadership. Trustworthiness is built by specific characteristics that people believe in and follow (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 15). Ruth demonstrated ethical behavior in the sight of Boaz, thus establishing credibility (Ruth 2:8). Most individuals commit to something that presents a value proposition (Ruth 1:16-17). Most people will not commit to something that is not salient to them, and whatever is essential to an individual will drive commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 31). Ruth must have hoped for long-term success in making a move to an unfamiliar place, thus leaving the impression that she had a vision for the future. Leaders are concerned about what tomorrow will be like for those who inherit it (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 46). The story of Ruth speaks to this visionary as she becomes the wife of the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz, which launches the lineage of the greatest king in Israel's history, David. Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 31). Ruth must have hoped for long-term success in making a move to an unfamiliar place, thus leaving the impression that she had a vision for the future. Leaders are concerned about what tomorrow will be like for those who inherit it (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 46). The story of Ruth speaks to this visionary as she becomes the wife of the kinsmen-redeemer, Boaz, which launches the lineage of the greatest king in Israel's history, David.

Ruth could not succeed on her own. The author of Ruth speaks about the coaching Ruth received from Naomi so that she may gain recognition and garner help from Boaz. The fifth truth about leadership is that leaders cannot lead alone because leaders are here to serve; leadership is about the leader-constituent relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 61). Ruth and Naomi had a symbiotic connection where they led and served each other's interests (Ruth 3:1-4).Ruth and Naomi had a symbiotic connection where they led and served each other's interests (Ruth 3:1-4).

There must have been an incredible level of confidence felt between Ruth and Naomi. High levels of trust outperform low

levels of trust when gauging organizational success (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 75). The characters in Ruth demonstrate guardianship towards one another. Trust governs trustworthiness, the ability to complete tasks, creates harmony, innovation and performance, identity, and everything else that matters to the leader-constituent relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 76). The challenge facing Ruth and Naomi may escape the average reader of Scripture. However, it probably did not escape the original audience of Ruth. Kouzes & Posner (2010) posited that outstanding leadership takes place in the ordeals of life that create significant trials and tribulations (p. 91). The study of leadership reveals that leaders and followers discover success through circumstances of unpredictability, destitution, disturbance, transformation, changeover, redemption, new beginnings, among other challenges (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 93). With a number of these descriptive words on full display in the pericope of Ruth, such as Ruth changing her name to Mara, which means God has dealt bitterly with me (Ruth 1:20).

Leaders lead from the front, center, and rear. However, leading by example is crucial in comparison to where one leads. Leading by example is not anything new; as a matter of fact, it's an accepted rule of thumb worldwide (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 109). Ruth led by example, keeping herself as a chase woman with no money and few options for taking care of herself and her mother-in-law (Ruth 2:10). Ruth learned how to live in this new land from Naomi. In the end, Naomi's advice extended to Ruth led to favor with and marriage to Boaz. Kouzes & Posner (2010) postulated that the most exemplary leaders are the prime mentees (p. 119). Ruth is an excellent example of a servant leader because she was a great adapter and learner.

Conclusion

The Socio-Rhetorical Analysis in the book of Ruth unveils the plan of God's future generations through the servant leadership model ascribed to the life and adventures of Ruth. Ruth is not the central figure in the book, even though it bears her name; Naomi appears nineteen times, Boaz appears fourteen times, and Ruth appears ten times, with all other actors in the book having some relationship to Naomi, not Ruth (Gladson, 2013, p. 10). Naomi uses repetitive patterns to paint a picture of life to the point in the pericope for Oprah and Ruth by stressing what the future may hold if they traveled with Naomi back to her homeland of Bethlehem, where no husband or children awaited them (Michael, 2015). The Opening-Middle-Closing Patterns (OMC) in the pericope to this juncture lead the reader on a journey of discovery. From Moab, a place of despair, to Bethlehem, this place of promise, are themes enhancing the purpose the writer intended to convey to the original audience. Henson (et al., 2020) posits that the OMC contributes to the story's overall plot (p. 92). Moab offered impairment to peace, and Bethlehem extends hope as they search for peace. The Opening-Middle-Closing Patterns (OMC) in the pericope to this juncture lead the reader on a journey of discovery. From Moab, a place of despair, to Bethlehem, this place of the promise are themes enhancing the purpose the writer intended to convey to the original audience. Henson (et al., 2020) posits that the OMC contributes to the story's overall plot (p. 92). Moab offered impairment to peace, and Bethlehem extends hope as they search for peace.

God’s redemptive promise reveals itself through the life and relationship of Ruth and Boaz. The book of Ruth unveils God’s legal promise to Abraham through the loyalty of a young woman from a Gentile nation (Blevins, 2016). The sovereignty of God is on full display in this portion of the pericope. Lau (et al., 2016) refers to this as never-ending kindness. To fully grasp and understand the Bible, one must interpret the meaning of the text within the larger context, then apply it to one’s life (Duval

& Hays, 2012, p. 116). Blotz (2005) mentions that Ruth prominently features two women, Naomi and Ruth, who exemplify strength, character, and control of their own situation and destiny. Blotz continues with the idea that Naomi and Ruth seek to solve their problems to overcome their tribulations eventually.

Leaders are concerned about what tomorrow will be like for those who inherit it (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 46). The story of Ruth speaks to this visionary as she becomes the wife of the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz, which launches the lineage of the greatest king in Israel's history, David. The characters in Ruth demonstrate guardianship towards one another. Trust governs trustworthiness, the ability to complete tasks, creates harmony, innovation and performance, identity, and everything else that matters to the leader-constituent relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 76). The book of Ruth and the characters of her story exemplify servant leadership for an ancient audience with relevant messaging for modern audiences.

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