

WHY DID RUTH GO TO BETHLEHEM?

This is a much-debated question.

First, eliminate reasons that did not influence her:

- 1 Food: There was no famine in Moab. Read Ruth 1:1-7
- 2 Husband: There was no prospect of a husband for her. Read Ruth 1:8-13

Second, look at what Ruth Says? Read Ruth 1:14-18

- 1 Friendship
- 2 God

Third, look at what kind of friend Naomi is. Read Ruth 1:19-2:3

- 1 Naomi saw only her own suffering
- 2 Naomi did not advise Ruth where to safely glean

Fourth, examine the labor Ruth had to do? Read Ruth 2:4-9

- 1 Ruth took the harder route and did not fear the labor.
- 2 Ruth did not seek the family plan.

Fifth, see how Boaz saw her decision? Read Ruth 2:10-16

- 1 Taking care of a mother-in-law she loved, not a friend.
- 2 Living in a land as a stranger.
- 3 Seeking refuge and consolation in God, which Boaz partially fulfills.

Sixth, see the danger Naomi did not protect Ruth from. Read Ruth 2:17-23

- 1 Didn't know where Ruth gleaned.
- 2 Didn't advise of relatives who would help.
- 3 Didn't look to God for care.
- 4 Didn't warn of people who would harm.

So why did Ruth go?

	Moab	Israel
Needs	Provided by family	Gained by hard work
Family	Whole family, husband's grave, sister-in-law	Depressed Mother-in-law
Friends	Friends and people she grew up with	Total stranger with uncertain reception
Marriage	Potential for remarriage	No marriage prospects
Difficulty	Easy, no trouble	Hard, dangerous trip
Comfort	People to comfort	Must provide comfort
Influences	Human urging	God's will

Ruth trusted in God and wanted to serve Him, and God wanted her to go.

We could stop here at seeing the beauty of God's sovereignty in Ruth's life. That would miss the hard part for us. Lets look at Ruth and ourselves in light of Luke 9:57-10:7.

- We are to follow without fear of earthly provision. Note this does not mean we should not work or plan, rather this should not be the goal and motivator of our life. Our goal must be to glorify God and enjoy Him. We can look at this as only food and clothing, but this also has to do with any desire we put above service to God: money, success, power, influence, marriage prospects, etc. How did Ruth do? How do you and I?

- God demands our service not our excuses. Note that bodies were buried immediately since there was no refrigeration or preservation and bodies begin stinking quickly. This man came to listen but did not want to act. He had a good sounding reason, devotion to family. Robertson suggests as in Tobit 4, the man's father was old and near death. The excuse is an indefinite one to avoid following God. Obedience to parents is based on obedience to God not the other way around. The man put devotion to parents above devotion to God. Did Ruth make excuses and put family above God? Do you and I?
- The last one asks the smallest time lapse. He asks what Elisha did. Some suggest that this implies putting ones affairs in order. Matthew Henry suggests this is to get approval. The key idea though is where is the heart and priorities. The man wanted to do this before serving God. The man did not ask to preach the kingdom to His parents. The man did not ask to bring his parents to Christ. The man held one area of His life from Christ. Did Ruth? Do you and I?
- Finally, we see what we are to do. We are to go into the harvest. The harvest is discipleship of others, but note that it is in context of "secular" work. We are to do all things to God's glory and then discipleship will naturally flow out. This is not something to avoid, or make excuses. We must go joyfully. We are to pray for the harvest. We are to pray specifically for the harvest, the workers, and individuals we are/would like to disciple. We are to labor in the harvest. The harvest is labor, it has its rewards, but it is work. We cannot get discouraged and we must train. We are to glory and trust in God. Did Ruth? Do you and I?