Leadership Characters in the Book of Ruth: A Narrative Analysis

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Abstract

This article delineates a groundwork for shaping Christian leadership characters by examining the book of Ruth, a narrative of cooperation. First, we introduce the general Biblical wisdom, guidance, and religious precepts on leadership characters from the Bible per se. Second, we depict a synopsis and connotation of the Ruth Narrative combined with the historical background of the late Judges time when Naomi, Elimelech, Ruth and Boaz lived and the social and religious background of Moab where the family of Elimelech dwelt in for ten years. Third, based on those background analyses, the main figures’ dialogues, and their actions, we illustrate their positive servant and mentor leadership characters that include a combination of their distinguished traits and cognitive attributes, as well as some weaknesses of Naomi and Elimelech. In a nutshell, Naomi’s leadership characters contain loyalty to God (2:19 – 20), discovering value within (3:1 – 4), and patience and endurance (3:10). Ruth’s leadership characters incorporate faithfulness and positive self-esteem (1:16 – 17), pioneer and daring (2:2), deference (2:10), obedience (3:5), and loving-kindness (3:10). Boaz’s leadership characters include respect (2:4), care (2:5), compassion (2:8 – 9, 11), empowerment (2:15 – 16), protecting the weak (3:10 – 15), responsibility (3:12), moral integrity and justness (3:13), carefulness (3:14), formation (4:1), unselfishness and cleverness (4:3 – 5), and partnering (4:9 – 10). While we criticize Elimelech’s risk seeking strategy to migrate their family to a pagan country (1:1 – 2) as a spiritual adventure.

Keywords

leadership characters; Bible; the Book of Ruth

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References


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This article addresses the methodological problems presented by the legal, literary and historical issues presented by the Book of Ruth. It argues for the prima. But the text is a literary narrative, which requires us to ask such questions as what the audience is assumed to know, about both background facts and legal practices, and about the knowledge and assumptions of the different characters at each stage in the plot. Moreover, we should not assume a purely passive audience, for whom knowledge is either transparent or non-existent.

Third, based on those background analyses, the main figures’ dialogues, and their actions, we illustrate their positive servant and mentor leadership characters that include a combination of their distinguished traits and cognitive attributes, as well as some weaknesses of Naomi and Elimelech. In a nutshell, Naomi’s leadership characters contain loyalty to God (2:19 – 20), discovering value within (3:1 – 4), and patience and endurance (3:18). Ruth’s positive self-esteem could also aspire her leadership, which manifests later in the narrative. Nowadays, modern studies have also demonstrated such a positive relationship between self-esteem and levels of leadership aspirations (e.g., Mason, Mason, and Mathews, 2016).