

Characterization in the Bible

Ruth

How we engage the Bible

- Completed a study on how to read, study and understand the Bible
- So much of our faith is tied to, rooted in, dependent upon our relationship with Scripture and our understanding of scripture
- There is tremendous pressure on the work of studying the sacred text

2018 – Characters and Characterization

- One of the most inviting and engaging ways to delve into scripture is through characters and characterization
- We identify with and respond to characters in the Bible
- With what they do and who they are
- Peter, Mary, Moses, Jezebel

- Depending on who they are, we ascribe characteristics to them, that may or may not be supported by the text

- The Bible's stories use characters and characterization
- Characters – the people in the stories
- Characterization – the way the character is depicted and portrayed

- The Bible is not neutral in its telling of a story
- Much of what we have to learn from scripture is not in the “what” but in the “how.”
- The way the Bible introduces someone is very important

- David (I Samuel 16)
- Deborah (Judges 4:1-5)
- Joseph (Genesis 37:2)
- Joseph (Matthew 1:18)
- Esther (Esther 2:5 ff)
- Job (Job 1:1)

Characters and Characterization in Ruth

- Who are the characters?
- How are they introduced?
- What do their introductions tell us:
 - about the context
 - about the themes
 - about the theology

Ruth Chapter 1

- Arc of the narrative –what happens?
- Components of the chapter – can we divide the chapter into sections?
- Where do we begin?

Introductions

- Order of introductions
- Who is introduced?
- How are they introduced?
- Why does it matter?

- Israelites

- Moabites

- Deuteronomy 23:3-6

- Numbers 22-24

- Genesis 19:30-38

■ Who is Ruth?

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- Character introductions tell us about the characters, their characterization, and the culture of the story and or storytellers
- What do we learn about the characters in Ruth?
 - Who gets introduced first and how?

Review of Ruth Chapter 1

- Characters introduced in terms of:
 - Location
 - People: tribe, kinship groups
 - Family Status
 - Name

- Israelites

- Moabites

 - Deuteronomy 23:3-6

 - Numbers 22-24

 - Genesis 19:30-38

What do we know about Ruth from Chapter 1?

- Moabite
- Moabite Widow
- Moabite Widow who wouldn't return home and,
- Was committed to Naomi and her people and her God

What we learn about identity in chapter 1?

- We are identified by external markers, i.e., gender, nationality, family status, etc.
- We are more than those identity markers
- In this story, what Ruth does in chapter 1 begins a shift in the narrative.

Ruth's vow

■ Ruth 1:16-17

– Location

– Home

– People

– God

– Burial Ground

Performative Language

- When you say it, it happens
- Wedding vows
- Ruth is bound to Naomi

Chapter 2

■ Homework Review

- What happens?
- Who is introduced?
- How are the characters introduced?

Gleaning

- A practice during harvest
- Different harvest periods
- First period, barley harvest, Mid-March to April
- Followed by wheat, cereal, grapes, summer fruit, olives and then latter harvest periods

- Leviticus 19: 9-10, 23: 22
- Deuteronomy 24: 19-21
- On what basis does Ruth glean?
- What about Deuteronomy 23:3-4?

Who is Ruth?

- What do we learn about Ruth's identity in chapter 2?
- Is this information based on external markers or on her behavior?

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- Characters – the people in the stories
- Characterization – the way the character is depicted and portrayed

Review of Ruth Chapter 1

- Characters introduced in terms of:
 - Location
 - People: tribe, kinship groups
 - Family Status
 - Name

What happened in chapter 2?

Review of Ruth Chapter 2

- Characters introduced in terms of:
 - Location (familial and spatial)
 - Familial language is used in peculiar places
 - Familial language raises questions about family and family status (performative speech?)
 - Ruth's behavior causes her to be seen as more than a Moabite

Conflicting Commandments

- Deuteronomy 24: 19-21
- Leviticus 19: 9-10, 23:22

- When Boaz calls Ruth “daughter” he changes the narrative
- When Boaz calls Ruth “daughter” he introduces a different set of values

Chapter 3

- What happens?
- What is the structure of what happens?
- And...

Who is going down to the
threshing floor?

Ruth 3: 4

The Story in Structure

Ruth 3:1-5

- Ruth and Naomi must survive
- 2 women make a plan involving
- 1 man +
- Darkness, drunkenness and deception

The Story in Structure

Ruth 3:1-5

- Ruth and Naomi must survive
- 2 women make a plan involving
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Genesis 19:30-38

- Lot's daughters must survive
- 2 women make a plan involving
- 1 man +
- Darkness, drunkenness and deception

How do we make family?

Chapter 4

- Birth
- Marriage
- Adoption

Who is Ruth?

And what does her character
teach us about God?