Bestowing Biblical Egalitarianism:

Naomi, Ruth, and the Young Women of Generation Z

ABSTRACT

Leading the next generation of women in leadership is imperative from a biblical standpoint. In this article, the transmission of how women’s leadership has been passed from one generation to another in the book of Ruth has been highlighted biblically. The characteristics of how the understanding of women’s ministry leadership as bestowed from Naomi to Ruth, one generational leader to another, is discussed. It is determined that Naomi not only bestowed her faith to Ruth, but also the leadership qualities of grit, assent, and confidence. Application will be made regarding how this biblical model can assist the church in bringing biblical egalitarianism to the next generations, including elements from current research.

SHORT ABSTRACT

Leading the next generation of young women in leadership is imperative from a biblical standpoint. In this article, the transmission of how women’s leadership was bestowed from Naomi to Ruth is discussed. Application will be made regarding how this biblical model can assist in bringing biblical egalitarianism to the next generations, including elements from current research.

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Mentoring for young women in ministry leadership by other women is imperative for biblical egalitarianism.[[1]](#endnote-1) While studies have been published regarding how to care for, disciple, and evangelize Generation Z, there is little more than anecdotal and individual stories which can help scholars and youth leaders know how to help girls learn to lead. The young women of Generation Z need to be guided in the biblical traits of leadership.

In the broad spectrum, complementarianism and egalitarianism have been facets of current and past understandings of women in the church. For complementarians there are those who would say that women cannot or should not lead anyone over the age of twelve or past high school. There are others who would say that women could lead a ministry or even a church under Christian male supervision. Egalitarians generally agree that women and men ought to lead based on spiritual gifts and the examples of and direction for women in leadership they see in scripture. While these are worthy and biblical theologies to contemplate and disseminate, they are not within the realm of this article. For those who agree that women (and men) should lead based on their giftings, a model needs to be built to guide girls into healthy and biblical leadership within the church.

There are many forms of leadership. Understandings such as traits, authoritative, servant, shared, and team leadership, as well as a host of other models are extensively documented and researched. It is not the aim of this paper to expound on types of leadership, but to start with the underlying understanding that influence of others is leadership and may or may not include a position or a role. Additionally, egalitarian leadership is more prone, based on gifting, to shared or distributed leadership. Egalitarianism generally eschews hierarchical types of leadership. Thus, *influence* as leadership runs parallel to egalitarian thought. This paper will speak in terms of influence more than position and sharing leadership more than other forms. Biblically, Jesus influenced others through his life and words. He also shared leadership with apostles such as Peter, Junia, and Paul (Matthew 16:18, Romans 16:7).

Literature, in general, is packed with scholarship regarding biblical understandings of both women and leadership, but is, overall, missing insight on how these fit meaningfully together for the coming generations of girls. Leading women can, like Naomi, display the character she embodied. In the biblical tradition of egalitarianism, Noami, Ruth, and eventually Boaz seem to have shared leadership, and the two widows influenced each other and Boaz. As will be documented, this model epitomizes egalitarianism being passed from an older to a younger woman.

LEADERSHIP AND GIRLHOOD IN RESEARCH

The literature surrounding youth, young women, and leadership of generation Z shows a growing concern for girls. However, sources do not provide models for young women to grow from girls to leaders or to be leaders as girls within the church. A decline in mental health today as well as a history of spotty models show a resource list that is devoid of what girls need to grow in biblical leadership within the church community as well as how mature female leaders can guide young women.

**Evidence of Leaderless Girlhood**

Some studies offer hints that girls need guidance to learn to lead. For instance, the need of the young (both boys and girls) to have a mentor or spiritual leader[[2]](#endnote-2) can be paired with Harris’ research-based understanding that many *grown* women lack support and mentorship.[[3]](#endnote-3) If women in the church are missing support and role models for leadership, girls likely need even more guidance in how to become those who influence others.

Anecdotally, Beth Moore[[4]](#endnote-4) and other well-known women have written about growing up in more fundamentalist or very conservative Christian homes which hailed an authoritarian, male-leadership centered, way of life.[[5]](#endnote-5) While these stories are not research based, there is a common theme of lack of support or ability to even ask for help during their childhoods. The lack of leadership they were given and the fact that they were not allowed to lead or have agency in their lives, or the lives of their families, as girls and as women was a common theme.

Providing a study on the themes of growing up in homes like these, Sheila Wray Gregoire[[6]](#endnote-6) offered evidence for how the maturation of girls in more authoritarian households caused them to more often join abusive marriages and have low self-esteem as adults.[[7]](#endnote-7) This is not good fodder for budding leaders. Gregoire also noted that offering girls the abilities to speak up, be respected, and live into their callings (such as leadership) are important for moms to offer their daughters. These excellent points allow parents to engage girls but do not offer ways for daughters to grow in influence in their faith communities. Some scholars[[8]](#endnote-8) agree with Powell that this lack of role modeling “happens with young women everywhere. For many, the experience strikes most painfully in their churches. Even when women’s leadership gifts are affirmed in theory, sometimes women are not free to exercise those gifts in practice.”[[9]](#endnote-9) Young women require mentors to become leaders.[[10]](#endnote-10) The kind of support, however, that girls need to grow into strong and faith-filled leaders has not been provided.

**Biblical and Historical Theology Regarding Women in Ministry Leadership**

The scriptural definitions of biblical womanhood have been written and rewritten.[[11]](#endnote-11) A faceted understanding from patriarchal to feminist (and even from misogynist to misandrist) is detailed through the literature, giving a strong understanding of the Bible’s possible intents and restrictions or freedoms. Additionally, Beth Alison Barr and Lee-Barnwell agree that women in history have often been self-supporting and leaders in their own right and that girls have needed these role models.[[12]](#endnote-12) On the other hand, there is evidence through history that boys have been more favored for jobs and inheritances which caused young men to be given more training in leadership than young women.[[13]](#endnote-13) Additionally, Gregory’s seminal work on the history of *Normal Women* includes many examples of women leading or not leading. Historically and biblically, there is agreement among egalitarians, and many complementarians, that women have been and should be leaders in the church and society – but how do we guide young women in this venture? Additionally, what are the tools that mature Christian female leaders need in order to influence girls in leadership?

**The Mental Health of Girls and Genderless Youth Ministry**

There is growing research concerning the mental health of girls. Historically, one must look no further than *The Yellow Wallpaper[[14]](#endnote-14)* to see that acknowledging and affirming agency for women can cause better mental health. However, very little research was done before 1982 regarding girls’ mental health (though boys/men were studied earlier).[[15]](#endnote-15) Recently, findings have shown that girls are more depressed,[[16]](#endnote-16) use social media more, are less satisfied with themselves, have fewer close friends, and feel lonelier than boys.[[17]](#endnote-17) Kara Powell recaps her research, saying, “Across almost all measures of substance use, experiences of violence, mental health, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors, female students are faring more poorly than male students. These differences… are stark.”[[18]](#endnote-18) Young women also feel pressure to do well and succeed.[[19]](#endnote-19) While boys certainly struggle with some of their own challenges, it is clear that girls have a specific set of needs. Girls who want to be Christian leaders, then, likely also have these needs and ought to be mentored in how to work through or with these challenges.

There are many texts which help youth ministers engage or mentor young people in general, but they do not give particularities regarding girls. Works like *The Anxious Generation*, *Faith Beyond Youth Group, Growing With*, *Growing Young*, *The Grown-up’s Guide to Teenage Humans*, *Seen*, *The Spiritual Child*, *3 Big Questions that Change Every Teenager*, and most of the works by Barna about next generations expound on the necessity of mentoring. In *Faith Beyond Youth Group* and *Growing Young*, Powel hints at the importance of passing down leadership from one generation or one leader to the next.[[20]](#endnote-20) However, the need for girls to have specific help in their leadership growth is not addressed even though many girls are showing specific mental health issues related to confidence[[21]](#endnote-21) and are watching a fast growing mass of negative role models on social media, as noted above. None of the works give advice for helping girls who are or who want to be leaders, especially if they are in a church that is sexist or is covertly sexist.[[22]](#endnote-22) The literature also does not include advice to help girls navigate the societal sexism they may face outside of the church.

METHODOLOGY

In this biblically built model of how to bestow egalitarianism from women to girls, scripture was first consulted. Several leading women in scripture were considered as those who bestowed leadership to the next generations of females. Naomi, however, was chosen as an example with a more detailed and broad history compared with others. The leadership traits of Naomi were then exegeted and disseminated. Last, these traits were compared to leading research regarding generation Z’s needs and, when available, the needs of girls, in particular.

BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP OF GIRLS

Every child, and therefore every girl, needs help to grow.[[23]](#endnote-23) Girls need mentors who can move with them toward and in biblical leadership. To gain an understanding of the biblical principles for bestowing egalitarianism, Naomi is used as an exemplar regarding teaching younger women to lead, or influence, both men and women.[[24]](#endnote-24) While it is also important for men to bestow leadership to girls, like Mordecai perhaps did for Esther (Esther 2:10, 4:9-17), this article cannot expound on more than one example. Further research is needed to see how others passed egalitarianism from generation to generation in scripture.

Both Naomi and Ruth show a symbiotic leadership through their influence with one another and Boaz, causing an eventual result of progenital and *hesed* (loving) redemption. Through two widows in the book of Ruth, an ancient form of egalitarianism was moved from one generation to the next and back again. Application can be gained from them for women to bestow egalitarianism to the young women and girls of Generation Z.

Naomi had little positional authority within the narrative, but she certainly influenced Ruth as well as Boaz and, possibly, her neighbors. The following segments of this article seek to answer the question of how to lead girls gifted in leadership by beginning with scripture through comparing the attributes of Naomi and Ruth to the traits of the young women of Generation Z. Based on the life of Naomi, mentoring women can display motherly grit, matriarchal assent, and matriarchal confidence to the next generation.

NAOMI BUILDING LEADERSHIP IN RUTH

Naomi lived as an example and teacher for Ruth. She passed on the clear understanding that women, and their leadership of women and men, have always been a part of biblical faith. Naomi exemplified and taught motherly grit, and matriarchal assent and confidence for Ruth. In turn, the younger widow used these characteristics and skills in her own spiritual and community leadership. Both women, in the end, shared influence with each other, unknowingly saving the ancestry of Jesus (Mat. 1:5).[[25]](#endnote-25)

Regarding the two women, it is important to address some common interpretations of the historically scriptural book. Some would contend that Naomi was bitter and could not, therefore, be a leader. Others would say that it was Ruth and not Naomi who led. Many scholars assert that Ruth’s character was one of only submission. This article postulates that influence flowed from Naomi to Ruth and back again – including Boaz toward the end of the narrative.

A common interpretation of Naomi’s character is one of bitterness. However, while she lived out the female version of Job’s life, she did not appear to respond in the same way as Job (though it would have been reasonable if she had). While this matriarch displayed an understanding that God had treated her bitterly, she did not seem to take on the characteristics of bitterness herself. She said,

Call me no longer Naomi,

call me Mara (*Translated: Bitter*),

for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.

I went away full,

but the LORD has brought me back empty;

why call me Naomi

when the LORD has dealt harshly with me,

and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me (Ruth 1:20–21)?

Most of this lament is about God’s dealings, not with Naomi’s understanding of herself. While she called herself bitter, the rest of the book does not seem to flesh this out as she consistently hopes and strategizes with Ruth, as will be seen. In actuality, “Throughout her history, until the close of the narrative, Naomi’s name [meaning “pleasant”] is truly descriptive of her character.”[[26]](#endnote-26) This ability to accept a harsh life but continue to care for, help, and guide others, are leadership traits worth learning from and admiring in Naomi. Most leaders are called upon to lead even when they are feeling angry or bitter. Those who can allow God’s work instead of leaning into the harsh realities of life, are often hailed as the greatest leaders. Paul is often commended for this as he bore prison, beatings, and rejection and admitted that he felt pressured, anxious and possibly overworked but still chose to love and lead the church (2 Corinthians 11:24-29).

Naomi set an example of leadership in the first part of the book that bears her daughter-in-law’s name. Since Ruth was from Moab, it is likely that Naomi would have (perhaps along with Noami’s husband and sons) taught her daughter-in-law about Judaism. While Ruth probably started learning as a young married woman, she could have been in her early to late twenties by the end of the book.[[27]](#endnote-27) She was the younger learner, and Naomi the matriarchal leader and teacher as will be discussed below. Additionally, the women (Ruth 4:15),[[28]](#endnote-28) elders, and others (Ruth 4:11-12) in the book attributed the success of the story to Ruth’s life and discussed Naomi’s influential character. Some say that it was Ruth, rather than Naomi, who led through the book. However, it must be conceded that Ruth must have learned this leadership and the distinct characteristics of Jewish faith from someone before she displayed them herself.

Since many would contend that Ruth had a character of conceding to others[[29]](#endnote-29) while being very bold, the question must be asked: to whom was Ruth yielding? In James’ work *The Gospel of Ruth* the question of the young widow’s submissive and bold character was discussed noting that many have had difficulty reconciling Ruth’s concessions or submission with her boldness. This question is answered by understanding that being guided by another does not preclude boldness and, in fact, is a characteristic of boldness in scripture.[[30]](#endnote-30) Christians often hail the bold obedience of people like Abraham, Rebekah, or Rahab. Additionally, it is possible to boldly lead on one hand and submit to others on the other – sharing leadership. Many contemporary leaders submit to a board or elders but also lead organizations or churches. Scripturally, this is seen in people like Barak who submitted to Deborah but also led an army (Judges 4-5).

**Motherly Grit (Ruth 1)**

In the first chapter of Ruth, Naomi had already worked through a significant amount of change – she encountered a drought, moved to a new country, lost her husband, her sons were married, she gained two daughters-in-law, and her sons died.[[31]](#endnote-31) She remained the sole survivor and inheritor of her homeland and faith.[[32]](#endnote-32) The courage and grit it would have taken to live as a bereft widow in a foreign country must have been incredible, especially since laws regarding women and widows outside of Israel were often harsher than those God had given to his people.[[33]](#endnote-33) Choosing to continue to follow God and even return, nearly empty, to the people of God, shows a gritty character.

Through Naomi, Ruth likely learned the laws and customs, as well as the faith, of the Israelite people. By the sixteenth verse of the first chapter, Ruth has already come to love Naomi enough to trust her and follow her God. Developing trust across cultures, countries, and customs is a strong and challenging leadership characteristic to practice. It is probable that if Naomi had not been a leading presence for Ruth in these cross-cultural leadership traits, the young woman may not have chosen to travel with her mother-in-law to a new country. Even in the first verses of the book, Naomi had already used her influence to spiritually lead Ruth through her character, determination, and teaching (Ruth 1:16).[[34]](#endnote-34) Henry contended that Naomi “had been very kind and obliging to [Ruth and Orpah] and had won their love.”[[35]](#endnote-35) Because of this, it seems, Ruth was willing to become a caretaker of Naomi in a tandem friendship of provision and wisdom, as will be seen in the rest of the book.

Naomi began a faithful journey back to the Promised Land with her daughters-in-law.[[36]](#endnote-36) While Orpah returned to Moab, Ruth chose another hard path. The young widow changed her religion to Judaism and traced Naomi’s path back to Judah with her. Through the action of agreeing to bring Ruth with her, Naomi showed sacrifice. It would have been much easier for the older woman to care for herself rather than one more mouth to feed. As Carolyn James wrote in *Finding God in the Margins*, Naomi’s “decision to emancipate [Orpah and Ruth was] the first sacrificial act of compassion in the story.”[[37]](#endnote-37) Sacrifice is part of the grit of biblical leadership[[38]](#endnote-38) and is shown throughout scripture with Christ as the superlative example.

It is possible that Ruth learned this level of grit and determination from others in her life, but it seems most logical that she acquired these leadership qualities from Naomi. Naomi’s motherly grit was revealed in Ruth as this element of leadership was passed from one generation to the next. By her matriarchal example of living through pain, hardship, loss, and survival, Naomi influenced Ruth. As Henry wrote, “From Naomi’s character [Ruth] concludes certainly that the great nation was a wise and an understanding people.”[[39]](#endnote-39) Ruth was taught through Naomi’s character. These are the same qualities which Ruth would have needed to use on the journey to Naomi’s home, as well as to survive as a widowed Moabite in Judah.

Matriarchal Assent (Ruth 2)

As soon as they arrived in Israel, Ruth asked her mother-in-law if she could begin providing for their small, all female, widowed family. In her wisdom, Naomi gave Ruth permission to become the sole provider for their current household (Ruth 2:2).[[40]](#endnote-40) In doing this, Naomi showed the discernment to assent to a promising idea – one about which she taught Ruth (Ruth 1:13).[[41]](#endnote-41) In other words, while Naomi did not have the idea to glean, she did offer assent, or her permission and agreement, to the activity. Assent can be seen as a form of leadership that helps others to lead through the positive affirmation and the sanction of their ideas or actions by their leaders. Gleaning sheaves was a part of Jewish law and pertained particularly to those who were not Jewish, such as a Moabite (Lev. 23:22). Thus, Ruth was in an excellent position to learn and enact this law and care for Naomi.[[42]](#endnote-42) Additionally, when Ruth came back with a generous portion of food, “Naomi recognized in this the providential arrangement of God. And it is precisely this that gave courage to Ruth to claim […] the second right to which she is entitled”[[43]](#endnote-43) – that of marriage.

While Naomi was a leading matriarch, Ruth was also doing some of the leadership by seeing their need and making a way to provide for it. In this, she followed Naomi’s example of leadership, who returned to her homeland to make a way for herself and Ruth. Naomi not only planned to return to Israel at just the right time (Ruth 1:22), but also knew that this timing would give them food, according to her knowledge of the law (Ruth 1:13, Lev. 23:22). Naomi’s leading wisdom showed the way, which her daughter-in-law followed and then put into practice through providing food. Thus, she carried on the example of leadership that the older woman had portrayed. In turn, Noami also responded to Ruth’s influence and provided the young widow the culturally needed protection of a family later in the story (Ruth 3:1). Leadership was shared between the two in sharing wisdom and providing for their family.

Naomi also called Ruth her “daughter” in response to Ruth’s question about gleaning (Ruth 2:2, also 1:11, 12, 13; 2:2, 8, 22; 3:1, 16, 18).[[44]](#endnote-44) The older woman was familial in her guidance. Rather than building dominant leadership, Naomi produced an interpersonal type of leadership – influence. Throughout the book, Naomi was level-headed, thoughtful, and wise while giving excellent advice. She lived with courage and gentleness for Ruth and Boaz despite her understanding of God’s bitter hand in her life.[[45]](#endnote-45) Interestingly, she did not choose to take advantage of her wealthy relatives or ask for a place to stay with any family when she arrived.[[46]](#endnote-46) Her independence displayed grit. Then, both women lived on their own and made provision for themselves through both culturally approved and, later, very bold and non-culturally approved actions.

It could be argued that Naomi only went back to Israel because there was food there. This is possible; however, it seems unlikely. If she had returned home to seek food, shelter, or progeny, she should have sought out the nearest male or levirate relative as soon as she returned. This would have offered the family all that was needed. Instead, she set up a home with Ruth apart from her extended family (Ruth 2:23). In this, she showed her independence and Ruth responded by becoming the caregiver in their symbiotic leadership relationship. In other words, “Ruth’s assertiveness—her devotion to Naomi [and] her independence in seeking out sustenance for herself and her mother-in-law […] discloses a female character of exceptional autonomy and character.”[[47]](#endnote-47) This independent character of leadership was passed down from one woman (Naomi) to the next (Ruth).

Naomi had also led in provision through teaching when she told her daughters-in-law to return to their families (Ruth 1:6-15).[[48]](#endnote-48) Noami gave Ruth and Orpah the best path – to go home – rather than choosing to ask them to come with her for company. The older woman believed there would be no life for them if they came with her and that she would not be able to provide for them: “Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? …for I am too old to have a husband” (Ru 1:11–12). Naomi not only showed Ruth how to lead but spoke words of wisdom that could be followed when providing for their family. The younger widow then learned and returned the leadership by asking to and becoming the breadwinner (Ruth 2:2). Egalitarian leadership does not adhere to only hierarchical modes, but allows for the young and old, men and women, diverse ethnicities, etc. to lead each other through their gifts (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Matriarchal Confidence (Ruth 3)

Chapter three of the book of Ruth introduces even more leadership from Naomi. The matriarch clearly saw that there was an opportunity for Ruth to become married and for their family to be provided for beyond the fickle gathering of various leftover crops. She imposed and taught Ruth an action that, in Bible times and today, would have been extremely bold, to say the least.[[49]](#endnote-49) Naomi led by teaching Ruth how to propose marriage to Boaz.[[50]](#endnote-50)

While many cite Boaz as the leader throughout the book of Ruth, until this chapter, he had little agency other than having allowed Ruth to glean more, eat, and drink. Since he did so because of her care for her mother-in-law, it is plausible that he may have had a standard way of doing this for others who were caring for loved ones. He does not seem to take the lead in the relationships. Naomi, instead, led in providing a match for their provision and to extend the *women’s* heritage, working within the cultural system. The ancestry, of course, included Ruth in Jesus’ lineage (Mat. 1:5). Naomi’s leading actions did not just assure a *man’s* progeny but that of two widows. Naomi, not Boaz, led the family toward their part in the history of salvation by developing a strategy and teaching Naomi how to enact it.[[51]](#endnote-51)

Naomi suggested a bold plan with her knowledge of the law and customs, giving Ruth specific instructions.[[52]](#endnote-52) It was Naomi who shrewdly interpreted the kinsman-redeemer law. She was also the one who sought cultural security for Ruth (Ruth 3:1-5). It is probable, with her knowledge of Israelite ways, that the older widow knew the other kinsman was not able or willing to take on their small family. Naomi could have easily discovered that other male kin were not in a position to provide levirate marriage based on family size, types of progeny, and marital status. Naomi was the bestower of a kind of confidence that allowed Ruth to boldly sleep at the feet of Boaz on the threshing floor.[[53]](#endnote-53) The incredulity of this action meant that it could have caused Ruth to become the wife of Boaz. In contrast, it could have caused the young widow to become notorious throughout the community for what would have probably been considered lewd behavior.[[54]](#endnote-54) This may have been especially true since there was a closer kinsman redeemer to Ruth than Boaz who held the right to marry her first and who could have seen this act as a way to steal his own levirate rights. This kinsman could have also easily accused Ruth of promiscuity. Instead, Noami had done her research and knew who could have been a true kinsman redeemer.

Naomi’s leadership was also risky because Ruth was a Moabite. These tribespeople were not meant to marry into the tribes of Israel (Deut. 23:4). Thus, introducing this unique marriage was courageous and dangerous. Whereas other marriages to Moabites noted in the Old Testament ended in disaster (Gen. 19:31; Num. 22-24, 25:1), Naomi was betting on her teaching and example as a godly leader to have developed in Ruth the kind of woman who would not guide Boaz into another religion but, instead, lead in championing Judaism.[[55]](#endnote-55) Naomi already knew of the faithfulness of Ruth because she had taught and exemplified it, even through tragedy. The fact that Naomi and Ruth, together, led Boaz toward scriptural levirate marriage, shows that Naomi’s skilled and spiritual leadership had rubbed off on Ruth. Naomi passed down her own leadership to the next generation.

Through Naomi’s tutelage, Ruth enacted a bold and risky plan. In fact, it seems that because Naomi taught Ruth about risk and boldness as a leader, Ruth, in turn, taught Boaz the same. Boaz finally figured out the law and got the gumption to follow it after both women led him to it. Some might say that Boaz chose not to lead in this instance because he knew he was not the rightful kinsman redeemer. However, if Boaz knew this status, Naomi and Ruth probably also knew. It was the two women who chose courageously work around the law, risking their reputation and possibly their lives (Deuteronomy 22:21).

As James wrote, “there’s simply no getting around the fact that Ruth is the initiator and Boaz is the responder.”[[56]](#endnote-56) Through Naomi’s passing on of her leadership skills and abilities, Ruth became a leader in this risqué narrative and helped Boaz to see what the future should hold.[[57]](#endnote-57) Then Boaz worked on behalf of Ruth and Noami to bring about the transfer of Naomi’s land and Ruth’s marriage, though Brown would say that it was Naomi who engineered the negotiations not the kinsman.[[58]](#endnote-58) The matriarchal leadership characteristic of delightfully audacious confidence was passed from one generation of women to the next. Even Boaz had no qualms about calling the land, which would have naturally belonged to Elimelech, Naomi’s possession.[[59]](#endnote-59) Naomi was a leading matriarch, holding land and sacrificing it for her loved ones.

The courage of these two women showed the kind of leadership that those in strong positions of power must display – making and standing by a bold choice that could end in success or disaster. Naomi passed on her confidence through shrewd instruction and, very likely, faith in a God she thought had “left her out to dry.” The older woman led both Ruth and Boaz in these acts, and this allowed the younger widow to see her example of boldness in guiding women and men. In turn, Ruth advanced Naomi’s plan and drew the matter toward a conclusion by asking Boaz to “spread [his] cloak over your servant” (Ruth 3:9).

Ruth: More than Seven Sons (Ruth 4)

In the end, both Naomi and Ruth received commendations and blessings by the leading women and men of their Judean community. First, the elders of the community blessed Ruth, asking that she become a builder of the house of Israel like Rachel, Leah, and Tamar (Ruth 4:11-12). These were other matriarchal leaders who were mentioned, rather than patriarchs, to show excellent, community building leadership by women.[[60]](#endnote-60) As Lee wrote regarding Boaz’s meeting at the town gate, “Bethlehem’s court of justice cannot but acknowledge the critical agency and partnership of women in the founding of its dynasty”[[61]](#endnote-61) where Ruth and Boaz acted as co-leaders in *hesed*.[[62]](#endnote-62) In any case, it is the former matriarchs in Israel who were given as examples *to Ruth*. Even the men (and other Israelites at the town gate) are passing on spiritual leadership of all from *women* to *women*!

Not only were leadership characteristics and skills given to Ruth by Naomi, but a heritage of faith. In this way, Naomi was a *spiritual* leader to Ruth as well. She taught Ruth about the biblical law of levirate marriage (Ruth 2:20-3:2) as well as God’s providence (Ruth 1:9) and will (Ruth 1:13). Beyond being an example of godly leadership, she also instructed Ruth and, therefore, Boaz about wise living. Ruth practiced, and Boaz responded to, Naomi’s guidance. In the person of Naomi, the spiritual leadership of women was bestowed to the next generation.

The responses of the townswomen after the marriage of Ruth and Boaz, however, are even more astounding than those at the gate. They blessed Naomi more than her daughter-in-law,[[63]](#endnote-63) but also gave credit to Ruth. Naomi, not just Ruth, became a part of the motherhood of Obed (Ruth 4:14-16). The women of the community exulted that *because* Ruth loved Naomi and was worth more than seven sons, the son of Ruth would become a person who restored life and nourished Noami as she grew older (Ruth 4:15). In other words, *since* Ruth was a leader (better than the perfect number of sons), Naomi would be blessed.[[64]](#endnote-64) Or, because Naomi taught Ruth to be a leader, Naomi would be blessed.

The phrase “worth more than seven sons” allows the reader to understand the place of Ruth in the life of Naomi toward the end of the book (Ruth 4:15). The townswomen are seeing the leadership of Ruth, commending it, and therefore, moving the leadership of women from one generation to the next. In fact,

The women suggest that the relationship between Ruth and Naomi is not maintained for the sake of patriarchy but reflects the interdependence of the women themselves. This is emphasized first in the praise of Ruth by the women’s chorus in 4:15 and its pronouncement to Naomi that Ruth’s love ‘is better for you than seven sons’.[[65]](#endnote-65)

Since sons were often the ones to carry on the family name, the astute reader could assume that this position of leadership was also attributed to Ruth (rather than Obed).[[66]](#endnote-66) In fact, when comparing Ruth to her husband, Efthimiadis wrote in an article that “It may not be mere coincidence that Boaz is placed seventh in the genealogical table at the conclusion of this book (4:18-22) for Ruth has indeed proven herself to be his better by far.”[[67]](#endnote-67) Instead of Boaz or Obed becoming the progenitors, Ruth took this place in the family and community.

Naomi passed on her leadership as a woman to another woman, Ruth. Naomi bestowed leadership character, skills, and spiritual guidance to Ruth who became a leader in her town and marriage through her replacement of sons and her building of Israel. While egalitarianism is clearly a modern term, the side of egalitarianism that treats women as leaders has been moved from one generation of women to the next and back again in the lives of Naomi and Ruth. Among others in scriptures, Elizabeth, Huldah, Lois, and Eunice also practiced this bestowment of women’s leadership of all from one generation to the next. Scripture gives clear examples for the women of today to pass on their own leadership of women and men to the next generations of women.

WOMEN BUILDING LEADERSHIP IN YOUNG WOMEN

Naomi’s example is challenging to follow since she experienced difficult and painful losses and change. Certainly, however, a woman may not need to experience the same types of difficult circumstances to pass on similar characteristics. However, many would argue that women in ministry leadership often experience high levels of change and loss. Therefore, they are expertly positioned to pass egalitarianism from mature women to young women. Following the example of Naomi, experienced women should exemplify and teach the principles that will bolster the next generation of female leaders – the young women and girls of Generation Z.

Grit for the Next Generations of Women

Grit is a needed characteristic for young women who choose to be leaders in what is often described as a “man’s world.” It is almost impossible for women in ministry leadership not to have the kind of courage, resolve, and strength of character that define grit, though this sometimes moves (understandably) toward bitterness or complacency instead. Like Naomi, female leaders must show this characteristic to young women and teach them to understand and use it, even when they are living the short end of the proverbial stick.

The young women of generation Z (who are now around age 12 through age 29) have a need to see and be taught the characteristic of grit by older generations. They need to know that it is possible to thrive in life and in ministry through building courage and determination. The youth of Gen. Z have felt loneliness and anxiety in higher degrees than many previous generations (other than Millennials).[[68]](#endnote-68) Many have had doubts about their religion, and half of these experience long periods of uncertainty in their faith.[[69]](#endnote-69) Additionally, young people in this age range cite instances of trauma and, according to Barna Group, about 8 in every 10 have experienced some type of trauma,[[70]](#endnote-70) particularly girls growing up in purity culture.[[71]](#endnote-71) Moreover, Pew reported that “about seven-in-ten Americans think young adults today have a harder time than their parents’ generation when it comes to saving for the future (72%), paying for college (71%) and buying a home (70%).”[[72]](#endnote-72)

While grace and self-care are important principles for the next generation of women, choosing to move forward with grit is also needed. Young women need older women to display Naomi’s characteristics of determination and courage as they work through and experience the spectrum of mental health. Becoming like Naomi would mean displaying grit through church and life traumas. Of course, grit does not mean a woman should remain in a dangerous or hopeless situation, but, like Naomi she must show the agency to move into new and healthy places even if that means leading through her own doubt or even misunderstandings of God.

Young women also face issues that young men do not. They must live with a pay gap even though more of the women than the men of Gen Z are attending college.[[73]](#endnote-73) This is true for women leaders across the board, but certainly for women in ministry as well.[[74]](#endnote-74) Showing the same grit that Naomi exemplified might mean shrewdly working for what is needed in unexpected ways. It also means teaching, step by step, the next generations to do the same. Naomi did not only tell Ruth to go to the threshing floor, she also gave specific instructions.

Also, like in the biblical era, these movements often depend on men like Boaz. Mature women leaders must also be looking for male advocates that will help them become biblical matriarchs in business, ministry, and family. Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz received God’s blessing to become the leaders of the next generations because of Naomi’s shrewd and leading grit. This also means that there must be men who are willing to live behind the scenes until needed, allowing women to teach and exemplify leadership for other young women and men. Boaz barely has any agency in the book of Ruth, but when he is given agency, he uses it to follow and enhance the leadership of the two strong women.

Assent for the Next Generations of Women

In today’s world, we often think of assent as a negative behavior or a characteristic that is not a part of leadership. However, Naomi’s use of assent was affirmational of her protégé. Her assent encouraged and affirmed the next generation in leadership. The older widow recognized that, as the leader, she needed to have the courage and humility to assent to Ruth’s query.

Young women in generation Z are longing for this kind of nod of positivity and probably need it more than other generations. While Gen. Z is less engaged in church, they are very spiritual. About 65% of this generation says they are Christian.[[75]](#endnote-75) They also practice prayer, art, and presence in nature as transcendent activities.[[76]](#endnote-76) According to Barna, Gen. Z also looks towards *themselves* to grow spiritually rather than a pastor.[[77]](#endnote-77) This may mean that young people today need the assent of older generations to search spiritually. In addition, they are looking for relationships more than preaching,[[78]](#endnote-78) perhaps needing older generations to affirm them through setting an example, rather than only reciting beliefs. Gen Z also cares about “racial injustice, human trafficking, global climate change and mental health issues.”[[79]](#endnote-79) Young women may also need older generations to listen to them and affirm the actions they want to take regarding peace and equity in the church and nations.

Rather than only showing or teaching the way, older women must choose to be like Naomi in giving assent to ideas from young women, so they can take their place as leaders. This may often mean giving up positions of leadership that mature women have always wanted to allow younger generations of women to grow strong in their leadership abilities. Naomi recognized that Ruth would be better suited, as a young woman, to glean, propose to Boaz, get married, and have a child.[[80]](#endnote-80) The women of today must recognize when it is better for the young to lead. Additionally, experienced females must choose to listen to the issues and understandings teenaged girls have so that the next generation can address, and lead in, the matters that are important in their (and our) world.

Confidence for the Next Generations of Women

Girls often start to lose their confidence at around age twelve, according to the authors of *The Confidence Code for Girls*.[[81]](#endnote-81) Teaching and showing bold, confident, and audacious Christian leadership by women is imperative. In general, this younger age group does not often think of themselves as confident,[[82]](#endnote-82) whereas “young men in the U.S. are more likely than young women to feel optimism, satisfaction with their choices, security in who they are and an ability to accomplish their goals.”[[83]](#endnote-83)

Sadly a 2023 study by ROX reported that out of over 10,000 girls in the United States a little over half of those in grades 5-12 do not think they are intelligent enough to get the job they are dreaming about as adults. In the same study, ROX wrote that “over half of girls said they are afraid to be a leader because they don’t want others to think they are bossy, compared with 1/3rd of girls in 2017.” Additionally, while in 2017, 86% of 5th grade girls “described themselves as confident” only 68% in the year 2023 described themselves in this way.[[84]](#endnote-84) The numbers are not getting better. Young women need the examples of confident and experienced women.

Add to these statistics the #ChurchToo and #SilenceisnnotSpiritual movements and a wave of disheartening and confidence breaking ideology is crashing down the women and girls of the church. This takes its toll on young and mature women, keeping them from being bold, audacious, confident individuals who speak up, speak out, and make change in the church and their communities. Naomi took such despair and worked it into fodder for moving the leadership of women from one generation to the next. Even in the story of Ruth’s gleaning adventures, the sin of mistreatment of women was uncovered (Ruth 2:9). Naomi did not allow this sin to get in the way of building the next generations. She did not condone it, and she did not live it, but she certainly did not stop making a way through the impossible either.

Older generations of women must heed the call to build their own confidence and then show and teach this to the young women of Gen. Z. This may mean being every bit as audacious in faith and leadership as Naomi was with Ruth and Boaz. It will mean strongly engaging in positive leadership, like Naomi did in passing down confidence, instead of allowing bitterness to get in the way. Rather than allowing the bitterness that she believed God caused in her life to change her, Naomi moved forward with powerful grit, gracious assent, and bold confidence. Therefore, she developed a daughter who was a better leader and provider for her family and community than the cultural proverb of “seven sons” (Ruth 4:15).

CONCLUSION

Like Naomi, the women of today must be ready to show and teach the coming generations of women and girls how to lead as Christians in the church, in the world, and in their families. This familial example shows Naomi crossing cultures, gender barriers, law, relationships, and trauma, to give Ruth an inheritance as a spiritual and community leader and as a person of faith. Women must not make excuses about challenges (though therapy and caring for oneself are always important) but choose to meet them with a compassionate and caring God as they bestow grit, assent, and confidence to Generation Z’s women in ministry leadership. Ruth was better than a “quiverfull” of arrows (Ps. 127:3-5). Our gifted young women can be the same.

1. Of course, men can pass on egalitarianism and women can pass egalitarianism to young men. However, this article focusses on the life of two women and the heritage women have of bestowing leadership to younger women. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Lisa J. Miller, *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving* (St. Martin's Publishing Group, 2015), 87. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Barna Group and Kate Harris, *Wonder Women (Frames Series): Navigating the Challenges of Motherhood, Career, and Identity* (Zondervan, 2023), 31. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. B. Moore, *All My Knotted-Up Life: A Memoir* (Tyndale Momentum, 2023). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. C. Brown and B. Tchividjian, *Baptistland: A Memoir of Abuse, Betrayal, and Transformation* (Lake Drive Books, 2024).

   J. Duggar, C. Borlase, and D. Dillard, *Counting the Cost* (Gallery Books, 2023).

   S. Harris, *The Woman They Wanted: Shattering the Illusion of the Good Christian Wife* (Broadleaf Books, 2023).

   Linda Kay Klein, *Pure: Inside the Religious Movement That Shamed a Generation of Young Women and How We Broke Free* (Touchstone, 2018), Introduction.

   T. Levings, *A Well-Trained Wife: My Escape from Christian Patriarchy* (St. Martin’s Press, 2024).

   Z. C. Wagner, *Non-Toxic Masculinity: Recovering Healthy Male Sexuality* (IVP, 2023).

   C. West, *Rift: A Memoir of Breaking Away from Christian Patriarchy* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2024). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Damour also offers excellent advice to parents: Lisa Damour, *Untangled: Guiding Teenage Girls Through the Seven Transitions into Adulthood* (PenguinRandomhouse.com, February 9, 2016), <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/246248/untangled-by-lisa-damour-phd/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Sheila Wray Gregoire, Rebecca Gregoire Lindenbach, and Joanna Sawatsky, *She Deserves Better: Raising Girls to Resist Toxic Teachings on Sex, Self, and Speaking Up* (Baker Publishing Group, 2023), 24.

   Klein, *Pure*, Introduction. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ginny Olson, *Teenage Girls: Exploring Issues Adolescent Girls Face and Strategies to Help Them* (Zondervan, 2020), 232 & 242.

   Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (Penguin Publishing Group, 2022), 157. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Powell, *Faith Beyond Youth* Group, 89. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Kara Powell, Jen Bradbury, and Brad M. Griffin, *Faith Beyond Youth Group: Five Ways to Form Character and Cultivate Lifelong Discipleship* (Baker Publishing Group, 2023), 89. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Books such as *Women in Ministry: Four Views* (Clouse), *Neither Complementarian Nor Egalitarian* (Lee-Barnwell), and *The Making of Biblical Womanhood* (Barr) note the biblical and historical elements and progress of the movements. A comprehensive list is not the purpose of this essay as the differences between the many views is not the focus of this paper. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. L Michelle Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate* (Baker Publishing Group, 2023), 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Beth Allison Barr, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth* (Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 34. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (AmazonClassics Edition, 2018). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Olson, *Teenage Girls*, 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Will Hutcherson and Chinwé Williams, *Seen: Despair and Anxiety in Kids and Teenagers and the Power of Connection* (Parent Cue, 2023), 85. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*, ch. 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Powell, *Faith Beyond Youth Group*, 37. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Hutcherson, *Seen: Despair and Anxiety*, 85. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Baker Publishing Group, 2023), ch. 2.

    Powell, *Faith Beyond Youth Group*, ch. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. National Inventors Hall of Fame, “The Importance of Maintaining Girls’ Confidence in STEM,” NIHF, April 3, 2018, <https://www.invent.org/blog/diversity/maintaining-girls-confidence-stem#:~:text=Many%20Girls%20Begin%20to%20Lose%20Confidence%20Beginning%20at%20Age%2012&#38;text=Between%20ages%208%20and%2014,percent%20%E2%80%94%20a%2046%20percent%20drop>.

    ROX, “The Girls’ Index,” Ruling Our eXperiences (ROX), 2023, <https://www.rulingourexperiences.com/research>. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. According to Gregoire there are many churches that embolden sexism in their attenders and leaders. Gregoire, *She Deserves Better*, 77. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Boys need help to grow as well, but this article is focused on girls. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. While men should pass on egalitarianism and women should pass it on to other women *and* men, this article focusses on women bestowing leadership of women and men to younger women. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. James, *The Gospel of Ruth*, 79.

    Carolyn Custis James, *Finding God in the Margins: The Book of Ruth* (Lexham Press, 2019), 81. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Ruth* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew, vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. All scripture in this article is taken from the New Revised Standard Bible. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Carolyn Custis James, *The Gospel of Ruth: Loving God Enough to Break the Rules* (Zondervan Academic, 2014), 159. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. James, *The Gospel of Ruth*, 160–61. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. John W. Reed, “Ruth,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 419. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. James, *Finding God in the Margins*, 26. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Robert L. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 96–97. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 20. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 373. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 373. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. James, *Finding God in the Margins*, 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. James, *The Gospel of Ruth*, 160. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 374. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Reed, “Ruth,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 421. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Ruth*, 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Reed, “Ruth,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 423. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 37. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Mark Allan Powell, “Daughter,” in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (Revised and Updated), ed. Mark Allan Powell (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 176. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. It is possible that God is choosing to deal with some past sin in regard to Naomi or that Naomi is attributing systemic sin to God, as many humans do. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 375. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. “The Time of Her Life: Ruth and Naomi,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues* 30 (Spring-Fall 2016): 7–23, https://doi.org/10.2979/nashim.30.1.01. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. “The Time of Her Life: Ruth and Naomi,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues* 30 (Spring-Fall 2016): 7–23, https://doi.org/10.2979/nashim.30.1.01. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 684–686. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 377. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. James, *The Gospel of Ruth*, 162.

    Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 377. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Reed, “Ruth,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 420. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. “And in Chapter 3, in following Naomi’s advice about approaching Boaz on the threshing floor, she seems to have fully accepted Naomi’s way of thinking about a woman’s dependence upon male prerogative” in “The Time of Her Life: Ruth and Naomi,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues* 30 (Spring-Fall 2016): 7–23, https://doi.org/10.2979/nashim.30.1.01. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, 196. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Ikenna L. Umeanolue, “Religious Differences and Intermarriage in Ruth: Lessons for Nigerian Christians,” *African Journals Online* (2022): 317–318, https://www.africanjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA10318471\_379. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. James, *The Gospel of Ruth*, 176. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Eunny P. Lee, “Ruth,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, and Sharon H. Ringe, Revised and Updated (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 148.

    Stephen E. Fowl, “Ruth,” in *Judges & Ruth*, ed. R. R. Reno, *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 245. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 175. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. James, *The Gospel of Ruth*, 180. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 722. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Lee, “Ruth,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 148. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. James, *The Gospel of Ruth*, 187. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 380.

    Reed, “Ruth,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 427–428. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Lee, “Ruth,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 149. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. “The Time of Her Life: Ruth and Naomi,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues* 30 (Spring-Fall 2016): 7–23, https://doi.org/10.2979/nashim.30.1.01, 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Tamara Joy Knudson, *She is Worth More to You Than Seven Sons: Oaths, Vows, and the Representation of Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible* (University of St. Andrews, 2022), 73, <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/27441/Thesis-Tamara-Knudson-complete-version.pdf?sequence=4>. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. H. Efthimiadis, “Woman to Womyn: Countering Patriarchal Stereotypes in the Book of Ruth,” *Journal for Semitics* 7, no. 1 (1995): 57–78, <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA10318471_379>. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Barna Group and Aspen Group, “Making Space from Generation to Generation,” *Barna.gloo.us*, November 27, 2023, <https://barna.gloo.us/briefing/making-space-generations>. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Barna Group, “What Do We Do with Doubt?” *Barna.gloo.us*, February 28, 2023, <https://barna.gloo.us/articles/spiritually-open-issue-1>. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
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71. Klein, *Pure*, Introduction. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
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73. Rakesh Kochhar, “The Enduring Grip of the Gender Pay Gap,” *Pew Research Center*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/03/01/the-enduring-grip-of-the-gender-pay-gap/#progress-in-closing-the-gender-pay-gap-has-slowed-despite-gains-in-women-s-education>. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Kristin Knudson, “Women, Clergypersons of Color Earn Less,” *ResourceUMC*, November 1, 2011, <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/partners/gcsrw/home/content/women-clergypersons-of-color-earn-less#:~:text=U.S.%20clergywomen%20in%20The%20United,15%25%20less%20than%20white%20clergy>.

    Beth Allison Barr, “Why Do We Devalue Women’s Work in Christian Institutions?” *Beth Allison Barr*, October 19, 2023, <https://bethallisonbarr.substack.com/p/why-do-we-devalue-womens-work-in>. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Barna. (2023, January 23). *Gen Z in the United States: A Local Snapshot*. Barna.gloo.us. https://barna.gloo.us/reports/open-generation-us-local-snapshot [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. Springtide. (2024, August 5). *An inside look at gen Z’s spiritual practices* . Springtide Research Institute. https://springtideresearch.org/post/religion-and-spirituality/an-inside-look-at-gen-zs-spiritual-practices [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
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79. Barna, “Making Space from Generation to Generation,” https://barna.gloo.us/briefing/making-space-generations. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
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81. National Inventors Hall of Fame, “The Importance of Maintaining Girls’ Confidence in STEM,” *NIHF*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.invent.org/blog/diversity/maintaining-girls-confidence-stem#:~:text=Many%20Girls%20Begin%20to%20Lose%20Confidence%20Beginning%20at%20Age%2012&#38;text=Between%20ages%208%20and%2014,percent%20%E2%80%94%20a%2046%20percent%20drop>. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
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    Bottom of Form [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
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