

Ruth and Naomi



Scripture Reference:

[Ruth 1:1-2:13](#)

Español 

Suggested Theme:

God wants His people to care for those in need. We should help people even if it requires sacrifice.

Memory Verse: “Help each other with your troubles. When you do this, you truly obey the law of Christ.” [Galatians 6:2, ICB](#)



Story Overview:

Naomi's husband and two sons died while they were all living in the foreign country of Moab. She told her two daughters-in-law to go back to their own parents. Naomi wanted to return to her relatives in her original homeland of Judah. One daughter-in-law did what Naomi said, but the other (Ruth) travelled with Naomi to take care of her. Ruth worked hard in the fields to support Naomi.

Background Study:

[Refer to information on the time of the judges.](#) A famine occurred in the land of Bethlehem “in the days when the judges ruled” ([Ruth 1:1, ICB](#)). The time of the Judges covered three hundred years.

To escape the famine, Elimelech moved his wife, Naomi, and two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, to the country of Moab, east of the Dead Sea. “Elimelech” means “my God is king”, and “Naomi” means “pleasant.” Perhaps their two boys were small and weak when they were babies, for they named one “Sickly” (Mahlon) and the other “Weakly” (Kilion).

The move was probably difficult because of the bitter strife between the Israelites and Moabites. The Moabites had never forgiven the Israelite tribes for coming through their area during Israel's pilgrimage to Canaan ([Numbers 22:1-8](#)). They were the descendants of Lot. They worshipped idols, not the Lord.

During the family's ten-year stay in Moab, Elimelech died. The two sons chose Moabite wives, Orpah and Ruth. Their marriages were short ([Ruth 1:3-5](#)), however, because both sons, Mahlon and Kilion, also died.

At this time, Naomi learned that the famine in Bethlehem was over, and she decided to return to her native land. As a widow with no

living children, she was destined to live in poverty. Orpah and Ruth prepared to go with her. However, she encouraged them to “go back, each of you, to your mother’s home.” Naomi must have known that they would have a better chance of remarrying in their own land ([Ruth 1:8-9](#)). Generally, marriages between Israelites and foreigners, including Moabites, were discouraged.

Orpah took Naomi’s advice and returned home. Ruth, however, demonstrated her devotion to Naomi in a beautiful declaration of love. “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” ([Ruth 1:16](#)). Ruth was risking her future to take care of her mother-in-law. This is an incredible kind of devotion. Ruth was giving up her family and customs. She was also leaving behind her false gods and choosing to follow the Lord.

Naomi and Ruth made quite an impression when they arrived in Bethlehem. Two women alone would have been noticeable especially since one of them was from Moab. Ruth requested that Naomi allow her to go and glean grain. Mosaic law decreed that the poor be allowed to follow the reapers and gather the grain that was left behind ([Leviticus. 19:9-10](#)). Ruth made quite an impression on the people of Bethlehem. She gained a reputation as a hard worker and one who was devoted to taking care of her mother-in-law ([Ruth 2:5-7, 11-12](#)).

Ruth worked in the fields of a man named Boaz. Boaz was so impressed with how Ruth took care of Naomi that he offered Ruth the same protection that he gave to members of his own household. A young foreign woman who was all alone would have been vulnerable to harm from field labourers. Boaz told his workers to watch after her. He also told Ruth to come and drink water with his servants during break time. This allowed Ruth to work without worrying about being mistreated.

In [Ruth 1:22](#), we read that Boaz was harvesting barley. Barley was not as sought after as wheat, but it was used for cooking and to feed animals. Many products today are derived from barley, including malt and yeast.



Way to Introduce the Story:

Before the teaching session, write the names of various groups of people on the chalkboard/whiteboard: sick, poor, homeless, widows, orphans, mentally ill, physically handicapped, lonely, separated from families, etc. Help the children brainstorm the needs that each of these groups might have. Then, discuss how these needs can be met. Talk about the time, money, etc. involved.

“In today’s story, we are going to learn about a young woman who helped her mother-in-law. It was not easy to help but she did it anyway.”

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The Story:

A man named Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, lived in the city of Bethlehem in the land of Judah. They had two sons named Mahlon and Kilion. This family liked living in Bethlehem because all of their friends and relatives lived there, too. Elimelech’s family and friends all worshipped God.

Once, a bad thing happened in Bethlehem. Rains stopped coming, and crops stopped growing. Soon, there was not even enough food for everyone to eat. Elimelech and Naomi decided to take their two sons and move to another country. They travelled to Moab. The people of Moab did not worship the Lord. They worshipped other gods. This was the land where Mahlon and Kilion grew up.

As time passed, Elimelech died. Naomi’s two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, married girls from Moab. They were not married for very long when another bad thing happened. Mahlon and Kilion died! Naomi and her two daughters-in-law must have been so unhappy. Now, there were no men in their family.

Naomi heard that the famine in Judah was over. She decided that she would go back to her home of Bethlehem. Both of Naomi’s daughters-in-law wanted to go to Bethlehem with her. They packed their things and started on the journey with her. Naomi knew it would be hard for the girls, Orpah and Ruth, to live in another country. Naomi loved the girls. She wanted them to stay with her, but more than that, she wanted them to be happy. She told them to go back to Moab and live with their families and friends. They were young. Maybe they would find new husbands.

Orpah decided to go back to her family. She was very sad to leave Naomi.

But Ruth said, “I want to go with you Naomi. I love you and I want to take care of you. Who will look after you if I go back home? Don’t ask me to leave you! Don’t beg me not to follow you! Every place you go, I will go. Every place you live, I will live. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God.”

Naomi knew that Ruth’s mind was made up. She allowed Ruth to go with her to Bethlehem. When the women arrived in Bethlehem, Naomi saw all of her old friends. She told them about the sad things that had happened in her family and then introduced them to Ruth.

“Ruth is my daughter-in-law. I told Ruth she should have stayed in Moab but Ruth wants to take care of me. She is a good girl. She grew up in Moab where they worship false gods but now Ruth wants to worship the Lord with us.”

There were many barley fields in Bethlehem. After the men cut and bundled the barley stalks, some stalks were always left behind. Picking up the leftover barley stalks was called “gleaning.” Ruth asked Naomi if she could go and work in the grain fields. She could bring home the grain, and they could grind it to make flour. That way, Naomi and Ruth would have enough to eat.

Everyone liked Ruth. She worked very hard to take care of Naomi. Every day, she went into the grain fields to glean grain. She was a very hard worker.

One day, the owner of the field came to check on his workers. He noticed Ruth picking up the grain.

“Who is this woman?” Boaz asked his workers.

“That is Naomi’s daughter-in-law from Moab. She works very hard to take care of Naomi,” the workers answered.

Boaz talked to Ruth. He told her that he was very happy to hear how she took care of Naomi. Boaz told Ruth that she was always welcome to work in his field. He told Ruth that she could take her breaks and drink with his workers when she got thirsty.

Every day, Ruth came home with lots of grain for Naomi. Naomi was very happy that Ruth took good care of her, and Ruth was happy, too. She knew she had done the right thing by choosing to help Naomi.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Ruth \(part 1 above\) Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#)

[Ruth \(part 2 above\): Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#)

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child’s spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

REVIEW:

1. Why did Elimelech and Naomi take their two sons and move away from Bethlehem? (Famine)
2. What country did they move to? (Moab)
3. After Elimelech and his two sons died, what did Naomi decide to do? (Move back to Bethlehem)
4. What did Naomi’s two daughters-in-law do when Naomi left? (Orpah stayed in Moab, but Ruth went to Bethlehem with Naomi)

5. What job did Ruth do in Bethlehem? (She gathered grain in the fields)
6. Who owned the field where Ruth worked? (Boaz)
7. Why did Boaz give Ruth protection while she worked and let her take her breaks and drink water with his servants? (Boaz admired how she took care of Naomi and had left her homeland and false gods to do so)
8. What did you learn about God from this story?

REFLECTION:

1. What part of this story do you find most interesting?
2. If you could ask God a question about this story, what would you ask Him?
3. Why do you think Ruth chose to stay with Naomi and abandon her false gods?
4. How big do you imagine the field in which Ruth gleaned was?
5. How do you think it felt or sounded when people gleaned and harvested the fields of barley?
6. How do you think Naomi felt when Ruth told her she wanted to stay with her instead of going home?
7. How do you think Ruth felt when she first arrived in Bethlehem? What about a few months later?
8. When have you helped someone who needed something? It could be giving food, a hug, clothes, shoes, money, etc.
9. Why does God love it when we help other people?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [Books of the Old Testament Song](#)
- [Love is Something If You Give It Away Song](#)
- [Rejoice in the Lord Always Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

ACTIVITIES:

- If you know anyone involved in benevolent work, invite them to join your gathering today and explain their work.
- Tour the church's food pantry and clothing room.
- Arrange for your group to do a caring deed, such as helping an older person weed their garden, washing someone's car, or collecting food for the pantry.
- Look up Moab and Bethlehem in a Bible Atlas.
- Bring barley grain to show the children. You can buy barley whole grain bread if you cannot obtain it.
- Collect a few products containing barley (or products made from barley) and let the children taste them. This could include malt or malt-flavoured food, marmite, yeast, and cereals.
- Scriptures for further discussion: [Proverbs 14:21](#); [Acts 20:35](#); [1 Corinthians 12:26](#); [James 1:27](#); [1 John 3:17-18](#).



- Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

CRAFTS:

- Create a miniature model of the story of Ruth. This scene could be placed inside a box, such as a shoebox, that is turned on its side. You and the children could add items that relate to the story. There are two different lessons on this website concerning Ruth. If taught in sequence, items could be added to the model as you cover the story.
 - [Ruth and Naomi](#): These might include figures of Naomi’s family, Ruth, grain, travel items or a bible map showing Bethlehem and Moab.
 - [Ruth and Boaz](#): Add a blanket, wedding items and a baby doll.



- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).
- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page with text \(Ministry Spark\)](#)
- [Craft: Cute activity and craft using shredded paper and shredded wheat \(Bible class creations\)](#)
- [Craft: Ruth puppet from toilet paper roll \(DLTK\)](#)
- [Worksheets: A number of Old Testament worksheets. Scroll down to Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.” \(Hub pages\)](#)
- [Other: Pre-school lesson plan with crafts \(Ministry to Children\)](#)
- [Other: A number of story and craft ideas \(DLTK\)](#)

Note: Also see the [Ruth and Boaz Story](#) on this site. Some of these resources relate to both stories.

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/ruth/>
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