

## **Ruth Chose to Stay with Naomi Week 1**

Point to Emphasize: It is better to stay with God's people than to try to do things by ourselves.

Reference Reading: Ruth 1:1-18

Memory Verse: ...For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you dwell, I will dwell;  
and your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.  
(Ruth 1:16b)

### Story Sample

As we have gone through the book of Judges, we have heard stories about several people. We have heard about Judah, Deborah, Gideon and even Samson. But today we want to tell you a story about a woman during the time of judges. This woman's name is Ruth and she was not just any woman. She was a very special woman – do you know why? She was the great grandmother of King David, who was the ancestor of Jesus Christ.

Before we get to Ruth, we need to go back a little. Now, during the time of the judges, many things happened. And one thing that happened was that there was a famine. Can you tell me what a famine is? [*Let children answer*] That's right! There was no food – not for the animals and not for the people. It was a desperate time, with everyone worrying about where their next meal would come from. Can you imagine if you had a family to feed and there was no food to be had? What would you do? A lot of families had some big decisions to make.

The Bible tells about one man who had to make that decision. And that was Elimelech. He had a wife, Naomi, and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. They lived in Bethlehem in Judah, where the famine was. What would he do to feed his family? They were children of Israel, God's children, so do you think he trusted God to give him food for his family? Well, you would think he should. But he did not pray or talk to God about meeting his family's needs. He did what was right in his own eyes, what he thought would be the best thing to do. Elimelech packed up his family and set out for Moab. There was no famine there, so I'm sure he thought that would be the best place for his family to go. The only thing was, the Moabites were not children of God, and they had nothing to do with God, so it was not the best place to go. Even in God's law, a Moabite should not meet with God's people. Elimelech made a mistake in not talking to God about how to provide for his family. But they went to the land of Moab and remained there. And then Elimelech died, leaving his wife Naomi and his children in a foreign land without any other family. This was a sad situation!

Eventually, Naomi's sons married women from Moab. This was something God did not approve of – to marry a woman other than an Israelite. The best thing they could have done after the death of their father would have been to return to their home, Bethlehem, to be with the people of God. But instead they remained in a foreign land

and married foreign women. They had become a part of Moab, rather than remaining proper Israelites. One married a woman named Orpah and the other married a woman named Ruth. And they lived there for ten years. But guess what? Another sad situation! Naomi's sons both died! Poor Naomi! Not only had she lost her husband, but now she had lost her sons also. What a sad story this is! What would she do now?

It was hard to know what she should do next. But Naomi had heard something – she had heard that there was no longer a famine. God had visited His people in Judah and now they had food. This news had traveled all the way from Judah to Moab. This was a long way for news to travel, but it traveled all the way to Naomi.

When Naomi heard this good news, she rose up to return to her homeland. She started the trip with her two daughters-in-law. But she had a thought. Maybe the two women should stay behind, in their own country. So she told them to return to the homes they came from. She desired the best for them, speaking her desire that Jehovah would deal kindly with them and grant them rest in their own homes.

Orpah and Ruth wept when they heard this. They wanted to go with Naomi. They must have loved her. And she must have loved them also. They wept again; eventually Orpah returned to her parents' home. But Ruth still wanted to go with Naomi. She pleaded with Naomi to not make her leave. She told Naomi, "Wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you dwell, I will dwell; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die; and there will I be buried" (Ruth 1:16-17).

Now, doesn't this seem strange? Ruth was willing to leave her family, her friends, and the country she had grown up in just to be with Naomi. What a choice this was! She was willing to walk away from everything she was sure of and comfortable with! And even more than that, she was going to a place where she would probably not even be accepted. Remember, she was a Moabite, and Moabites were not accepted by the Israelites. But she made a choice. She chose to go to be with the people of God. *[Storyteller – insert your own personal story of when a friend invited you to go somewhere during the normal meeting time but you decided to go to the meeting. Emphasize that it is much better to stay with God's people where there is blessing.]*

Naomi could see how determined Ruth was. She was even willing to leave the gods of the Moabites to follow Jehovah! She must have heard a lot about God from her mother-in-law. Naomi probably talked about God and her homeland and God's people even while she had to be in Moab when her husband and sons were alive. Ruth must have believed that He was the true God. I think she made the right choice to go, don't you? She chose God! And God had something very special planned for Ruth in the Holy Land (Ruth 1:6, footnote 1) also. So Naomi agreed to let Ruth follow her to Bethlehem.

## **Ruth Cared for Naomi and Boaz Cared for Ruth Week 2**

Point to Emphasize: We can choose to be responsible and hard workers, even more when we are caring for others.

Reference Reading: Ruth 1:18 – 2:20

Memory Verse: May Jehovah recompense your work, and may you have a full reward from Jehovah the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. (Ruth 2:12)

### Story Sample

#### ***Review Week 1***

When they arrived in Bethlehem, it caused a stir, because many still remembered Naomi, and asked if this was she. Naomi had been humbled, knowing that they should never have left Bethlehem in the first place. Even though she had lost her family, she knew now that God had brought her back.

So Naomi went back home, with her Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth. What would happen to them now that they had returned? Normally someone like Naomi would have returned to some immediate family like her own parents, but this was not her case. She was on her own to provide for herself and for Ruth.

When they returned to Bethlehem, it was the beginning of the barley harvest. Ruth volunteered to go glean in the fields. Does anyone know what it is to glean? This was an Old Testament regulation that provided for the poor, the sojourners, the orphans and the widows. During the harvest of the field the reapers were not allowed to go back in their steps so that there would always be some grain left behind for the poor (Dt. 24:19-21). The poor were then be allowed to enter the field after the hired reapers, so that they could gather and keep the gleanings. This was God's way of caring for these people, and it was their right to work in this way.

This was what Ruth was going to do in order to care for herself and her mother-in-law, Naomi. She claimed the right that was hers to glean in the fields. She took the responsibility to care for the older widow. She was right to honor this person who was older than she.

Now, Naomi had a relative, a relative of her husband Elimelech. His name was Boaz, and he was a man of great wealth, and a man who was for God. And it happened that it was in his field that Ruth was gleaning. Boaz came along beside the field and noticed Ruth gathering in the field. He asked his worker who she was, and the young man told Boaz that was Ruth, a Moabite, who had come with Naomi from Moab. And then this young man spoke well of Ruth. He told Boaz that she was a very hard worker, and that she had been working hard all day, and had taken very little rest. This man had noticed how diligent she was. So he gave a good report about her.

You know, it was very hard work to glean in the fields. The first picking of the crop was easier, but the gleaning was a lot harder. They would have to be ready early in the morning to enter the field as soon as they were allowed. Since they followed the reapers, they had to work under the heat of the sun bending, picking, standing, gathering all day long. This was hard work, and wearing on the body. When thirsty they would have to wait until they were near water to get a drink. And then Ruth would have to gather all the barley and carry it back to the city where they lived. And all this work was just enough to feed Ruth and Naomi. It was a hard job, but she was a hard worker.

Did you know that even today we have the practice of gleaning? There are some streets that have fields on either side of the road. They have vegetables and grains. The harvesters come through the fields and get most of the crop, but there are always rows at the edges of the fields that are too much work to pick. These are left. And after the harvesters are finished, anyone can pick whatever vegetable or grain that is still there.

Most people appreciate a hard worker. Have you ever had this happen at school? Your teacher gives a special word or reward to one of the children because she said they worked so hard on a project or a special assignment. And doesn't it make you feel really good when that child is you?! You feel good because you know you worked hard on that project, and you feel good because you know someone appreciated your hard work. *[Insert your own experience.]*

READ Ruth 2:11

*And Boaz answered and said to her, All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, as well as how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people whom you did not know before.*

Boaz appreciated that Ruth was such a hard worker. He appreciated the report he had heard about her, how she had taken such good care of Naomi, and how she had been willing to leave her family and home and come to a strange country. So he made sure she was taken care of as she worked. Ruth was so grateful. She felt unworthy to be treated so kindly. She was very humble, seeing herself as nothing more than a servant girl. She was just doing what needed to be done.

Not only did Boaz make sure she was taken care of, he also said something more to her, a word of blessing...

READ Ruth 2:12

*May Jehovah recompense your work, and may you have a full reward from Jehovah the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.*

Boaz knew that she had chosen God by coming to this land, and that Jehovah would surely bless her. Boaz was a very honorable man who responded to the good report about Ruth. He included her in the mealtime with the reapers, making sure that she had enough to eat, and even some extra. Then he instructed his young men to protect her as she worked, even allowing her to glean some of the standing grain. He also had the men break down some bundles that she could glean the best grain. He told them not to reproach her or rebuke her. He did the best he could to provide for this young woman.

## **Ruth Followed Naomi's Instructions Week 3**

Point to Emphasize: We should trust our parents and obey them for they know what's best for us.

Reference Reading: Ruth 2:21 – 3

Memory Verse: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (Eph. 6:1)

**Note to storyteller: *\*\*It must be noted that we do not intend to tell certain details of these stories to the children. We have chosen to highlight only certain aspects of the story. Please exercise care in your story telling. Do not bring in other parts that we have purposely omitted.***

Story Sample

### ***Review weeks 1 and 2***

When evening came, Ruth returned to the city to Naomi. Her mother-in-law was surprised at what she returned with – an ephah of barley! This was a lot! Naomi was surprised and curious. Where had Ruth gleaned and whom had she worked for? Naomi also agreed that this man who had paid so much attention to Ruth should be blessed by Jehovah.

Can you imagine how surprised she was when she found out that Ruth had been taken care of by Boaz, her own kinsman? Naomi knew that it was God who had seen them through all these things, and it was God who was so faithful to care for them.

Ruth also told Naomi that Boaz had told her she could continue to glean in his fields until the end of the harvest. Naomi told her that this was good. So Ruth stayed to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest, all the while living with her mother-in-law.

Naomi was very grateful for Jehovah's care for her and Ruth. Without Boaz's protection and special care, their getting enough food these days would be hard. Naomi was just like every mom. She was looking ahead, concerned for the welfare of her daughter-in-law. Would Ruth have to glean fields year after year? Would she always be in the good land among God's people as a widow and a sojourner who had to provide everything for herself and her mother-in-law? They both needed a place to live, clothes to wear, food to eat, dishes, furniture....so many things just to have a simple living. And because of her old age Naomi knew she could not be much help. It would all fall on Ruth. Yes, Naomi knew that Ruth was a hard worker and so willing to bear all these hardships but was that really how Jehovah would care for them? Naomi knew that it would be best if Ruth could be married to someone in her country. And who better than one of her kinsman and one who had already noticed how faithful Ruth was to her mother-in-law. Boaz was the perfect one! He was a kinsman and he had already seen what a fine

person Ruth was. But Naomi knew that Boaz would never think that Ruth would want him as a husband because Boaz was so much older than Ruth. Boaz would expect Ruth to be interested in marrying a young man, someone about her age. In this Naomi knew that she would have to help Boaz have another kind of thought.

Naomi came up with a plan. She told Ruth exactly what to do. And Ruth did exactly what she was told. She trusted her mother-in-law to take care of her. Sometimes we just need to trust the ones who are responsible for us, like our parents or teachers. They usually know what is best for us.

*[Insert a story about yourself as a child, how you did what you were told and how it worked out the best for you. For example, listening to your parents when they told you that you should do your homework rather than play. And because you did this you got the best grade in class.]*

So Ruth knew the best thing she could do was to obey. So she did EXACTLY what Naomi told her. She went to Boaz and had a conversation with him. She reminded him that he was a kinsman and it would be his duty as a kinsman to care for her. This was the custom of the time. He spoke well of her, speaking of her kindness and worthiness. He told her that the report among all his people was that she was a worthy woman.

Today it is easy to be well-known if you are a person with lots of money or a person who is famous for playing well at a sport, but what about Ruth? The whole town knew of her because she showed her appreciation for God and His people by choosing to follow Naomi to a land that was not her own and live among people who were strangers to her. She also decided that she would care and provide for her godly mother-in-law. What a way to be known! Wouldn't you like to be regarded for something so noble as this?

Well, Boaz told Ruth that he would be willing to take her, but there was a kinsman closer than he was, so he would need to be sure that the other relative was not willing to take her before he could marry her. Boaz was a very honorable person. He knew that the custom at that time was that the closest relative would marry a widow. So he wanted to be sure that he had the right to marry her before he did anything.

So in the morning, Boaz went to the city to seek out the kinsman, and Ruth returned to Naomi and told her everything that had happened. She returned with six measures of barley for Naomi, for Boaz had told Ruth she should not return empty-handed. Boaz was really a kind person, wasn't he? He was always taking care of the needs of Ruth and Naomi.

When she heard Ruth's report, Naomi told Ruth to wait. She knew that Boaz would not rest until this matter was resolved. So Ruth did just that – she waited. What do you think will happen with Ruth next? Well, we'll just have to WAIT and see! It's not so easy to wait, is it?

## **Boaz Took Responsibility for Ruth Week 4**

Point to Emphasize: It is noble to take care of others by bearing the responsibility for them.

Reference Reading: Ruth 4:1-22

Memory Verse: As for God, His way is perfect;... (2 Samuel 22:31a)

Story Sample

### ***Review weeks 1-3 (5 min)***

So while Naomi and Ruth were waiting, what do you think Boaz was doing? Well, he had gone to the gate of the city to do business. And he did this according to the custom of the people and the law of God.

Now who can tell me what a custom is? *[Let children try to answer first.]* Let's look in the dictionary and see what it says. It says, "A tradition in a culture or society." It also says, "Something that you do regularly." So, different nations can have different customs, different cultures can have different customs, and even from family to family we can have different customs. Customs are the way we do things. For example . . . *[Give some examples of customs from your personal national culture or from your family.]*

So the custom in Bethlehem was to go to the gate of the city to do business. And Boaz did according to the custom. He gathered ten of the elders of the city to be with him. Now, we know that Boaz was a wealthy landowner and an honorable and good man. Why did he need to go to anyone? Don't you think he could do the right thing just on his own? Yes, maybe he could have. But Boaz was a person who did things the right way, and the right way was to do this with the help of the elders of the city.

Perhaps we have been raised to be independent. Although this is necessary, we should not think we don't need help from others. This isn't the best way to be. If we don't go to others for help, sometimes we make the wrong choices, even though we think we are so right. It's good to get the advice of others, especially from those who are older and wiser than we. *[Storyteller should give some examples of checking with someone older before taking an action.]*

So Boaz was wise to follow the custom. He didn't act independently. He went to the elders and included them in this transaction. When his kinsman came by, they all sat down and began to talk.

In the book of Leviticus in the Bible, it says that if someone is poor and must sell their land, the closest kinsman or relative should be the first to buy the land, so that it stays in the family. Well, Naomi was poor, and she needed to sell a parcel of land, so this kinsman that Boaz was speaking to was the first relative in line to be qualified to buy the

parcel. In the presence of the elders, Boaz told the man that he could redeem the land, but if he did not want to, then Boaz would be the next in line to redeem the land. And at first the kinsman said yes.

But then Boaz went on to explain what it would involve for this relative to buy this parcel. He told him that he would also be required to take Ruth as his wife. In the book of Deuteronomy, it was written that if a woman was a widow, the nearest kinsman should marry her so that the children would belong to the same family line. This was more responsibility than this man wanted so he backed away from his original decision. He wanted the land, but he did not want to take responsibility for Naomi and Ruth. Extra land would make him richer, but he did not want to have to take care of two more people. He told Boaz that he should redeem the land instead.

So the elders and people there were witnesses to this. Before these men, Boaz purchased from Naomi all that belonged to her husband Elimelech and his sons. Boaz was willing to take the responsibility for his relatives because he followed God's Word. He was not interested in getting more land so that he could be richer. He was interested in caring for the people, his relatives. From this we see that Boaz was a noble man. So this meant that he also received Ruth to be his wife.

And the Lord honored this marriage. He blessed it by giving them a baby boy. This was a wonderful birth. Finally, Naomi was given a kinsman from Ruth, the daughter-in-law who had loved her and had stood beside her as she returned to her homeland, God's land. And Naomi became the nurse to the baby. And the baby's name was Obed. This was the best family, don't you think? We have the grandma Naomi who returned to God's people, and the father Boaz who was an honorable man of God, and the mother Ruth who left all to be with God's people. What a great family for Obed!

And do you know, the story doesn't end here. Obed eventually became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David the king. And did you know that David was the ancestor of Jesus? So God was planning the best family to eventually bring in Jesus. God always has the perfect way. The story of Ruth is a wonderful story of God's care!