

Bible Story 15: RUTH TAKING CARE OF HER MOTHER-IN-LAW NAOMI

SCRIPTURE: RUTH 1:1-11,14-19,22; 2:1-23; 4:13-17

MEMORY VERSE: “I LIFT UP MY EYES TO THE HILLS - WHERE DOES MY HELP COME FROM? MY HELP COMES FROM THE LORD, THE MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.” PSALM 121:1-2 NIV

BIBLE STORY:

During the time of the judges, there was a great famine in the land of Israel. (*Everyone was hungry.*) One of the Israelites, Elimelech, left Bethlehem and took with him his wife, Naomi, and their two sons to live in Moab, where there was food. Time passed, and Elimelech died. Naomi stayed in Moab, and her two sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Naomi lived there about ten years, and her two sons died, too.

Feeling very sad, Naomi decided to return to her land in Israel because the famine was over. She kissed her two daughters-in-law good-bye and told them not to go to the strange country with her, but stay in their homeland with their families. Orpah and Ruth cried, wanting to stay with Naomi, but she insisted that each one return to her mother's home. Finally Orpah kissed Naomi and left to go back to her home. Ruth stayed. Again Naomi insisted that she should go back, but Ruth responded,

“Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. 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 NIV).

Together Naomi and Ruth traveled to Bethlehem and arrived when it was time to harvest the barley. In order for them to eat, Ruth went to a field that was owned by Boaz. She walked after the harvesters, picking up

grain from stalks of barley that had been left behind. She did not know that Boaz was a relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech. When Boaz arrived at the field and saw Ruth, he asked his harvesters who she was. They explained that she was a foreigner from Moab. She had come with her mother-in-law Ruth, to take care of her. Boaz told his men not to harm her, but to leave extra barley stalks for her and allow her to drink their water. Boaz went to Ruth and told her always to come to his field where she would be protected. She humbly bowed to him and asked why he was doing this. He replied that he had heard how she had left her own family and country to come to a strange land to take care of her mother-in-law. Then he said,

“May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge”

(Ruth 2:12b NIV).

That evening Ruth returned home. Naomi was surprised on how much grain she had brought back. She heard how kind Boaz was to Ruth. With love, Ruth continued to take care of her mother-in-law.

Time passed and eventually Boaz married Ruth. God blessed their marriage, and they had a son, Obed, who would later become the grandfather of King David.

LIFE-LESSONS:

1. With much love, Ruth took care of Naomi, her mother-in-law. Lovingly help your family.
2. Boaz was kind to Ruth, a foreigner. Be kind and helpful to those who move into your community from other places in your country or world.
3. Ruth and Naomi passed through many difficulties, but God protected them. Trust God to help you whenever you move to a new place, make life changing adjustments and go through any other challenges or difficulties. God will sustain and help you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Elimelech, Naomi and their two sons leave Bethlehem and move to Moab? What happened to Naomi's family after living in Moab for ten years?
2. Who were Naomi's daughters-in-law?
3. What did Naomi tell Orpah and Ruth to do when she decided to return to her home in Bethlehem?
4. What did Orpah do? What did Ruth do? Do you think it was hard for Ruth to leave her parents and country and move to a strange, foreign land? Why? Why do you think she went with her mother-in-law Naomi?
5. Have you or someone you know ever moved from one country to another country or moved from one part of your country to another? Were did you/they move? Was it hard? Why?
6. When they arrived in Bethlehem, what did Ruth do to get food for them to eat? Who was Boaz? Did he help Ruth? How? Why?
7. How can you help a foreigner or new person that moves into your community, school and/or church?
8. As God had Boaz help Ruth, who are some people who can help you when you face changes and adaptations to a move or new phase in your life and any other challenges or difficulties?

SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS BIBLE STORY:

Choose activities that may be used in your specific situation. Consider the age and maturity of each person, locality where the story will be told (customs and traditions), and available resources, time and space.

PRESENTATION:

- Option 1: Find and cut out pictures of family members helping each other. Just before telling the story, show and talk about these pictures.
- Ask: *“What are some ways you help your parents? Brothers and sisters? Grandparents? Aunts and uncles? How do you feel after helping them? Why should we help our family?”*
- Option 2: If there is a person from another country in your group, let him/her tell about his/her country and show items from there.
- Explain to the group that the Bible story is about a woman called Ruth who helped take care of her mother-in-law Naomi. If you have a map, show the location of Bethlehem in Israel and where Moab is located. They were from different countries. Tell the story and apply the Life-Lessons.

GUEST SPEAKER:

- Have a local farmer come in his overalls and talk to the group about his farm. Let him bring produce from his farm and explain how each one was planted, cultivated, grown and harvested. If possible, let him bring a barley stalk and tell how it is produced. Afterwards spread a large blanket or sheet on the floor and have a picnic!

VISIT AND HELP AN ELDERLY PERSON:

- Option 1: Visit an elderly person in his/her home. Sing special music. Give a card, homemade cookies and/or a basket of fruit.
- Option 2: Help clean up the yard for some elderly people. Examples: rake leaves and put them in plastic sacks in the fall; shovel snow off walkways in the winter; sweep off the porch and plant some flowers during the spring and summertime.

MAKING COOKIES:

- Bring or bake cookies (or brownies, cake, etc.) and let the group decorate them. Also decorate small boxes or small sacks. Afterwards fill the boxes/sacks with cookies and give these to such people as friends, family members, the elderly, people in a hospital or children in an orphanage. Be sure to eat some of these cookies yourselves!

GAME: “HOT POTATO”

- Divide into two groups. Some distance ahead of each group put a marker (such as a stake in the ground, a chair or bucket). The first person in each group is given a potato, and either a broom, plastic bat or croquette stick. When the whistle blows, the first person in each group keeps tapping his potato towards the marker, around it and back. He quickly gives his potato and broom to the next one in line in his team. The first group that finishes, wins! Option: instead of a potato use an orange, small plastic ball, ping pong ball, golf ball or croquette ball. Replace potatoes as necessary.

TRIP TO A FARM:

- Visit a farm where the group can see fruit trees, gardens and crops growing. If possible, observe how barley wheat is planted and harvested. Enjoy a picnic together.

DAILY BIBLE READING - Ruth 1:1-11,14-19,22; 2:1-23; 4:13-17

1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH	6 TH	7 TH
Ruth 1:1-5	Ruth 1:6-11,14	Ruth 1:15-19,22	Ruth 2:1-7	Ruth 2:8-17	Ruth 2:18-23	Ruth 4:13-17