

RUTH GOES WITH NAOMI

Scripture: Ruth 1

Materials Needed:

2 Baskets: one for Naomi and one for Ruth. Put bread rolls (either loose or wrapped) into the baskets.

Wordstrips for Memory Verse

Memory Verse: Matthew 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

Objectives: As a result of this lesson, I want my students

To Know—When Naomi had lost her husband and sons after 10 years in Moab and was going to return to Bethlehem, Ruth abandoned a secure and easy future and chose instead to cling to Naomi's God, even when it appeared there was nothing in it for her.

To Realize—those who truly desire to follow God will cling to Him even when it appears there is nothing in it for them.

To Respond by—clinging to God no matter what, willingly letting go of what appears to be a secure and easy future.

Setting up the Story:

Start with a basket full of Bread. Explain that in the Bible there was a little town and the name of the town meant "House of Bread." That town was BETH-LEHEM! Isn't it wonderful to have enough food to eat?! To have wonderful bread and not be hungry! That was what the name of the town of Bethlehem meant! But there was a time when it wasn't full of bread. There was a time when there was a famine in the land—and that meant there wasn't going to be any food.

God had told His people in the law He gave Moses, that when He sent famine, it was because they had turned to idols. He wanted them to recognize what they had done and turn BACK to Him, and then He would send rain. But there was a man named Elimelech, and he had a wife named Naomi and two sons. He decided that in order to protect his family, he was going to take them to a country not far away. But it was not a country that served God. They worshipped idols there. Do you think that was a very good way to protect his family? (put your arm around the basket of bread as if you are trying to hoard it and protect it.)

Where should Elimelech have gone? He should have gone to God! But he took his family to the country of Moab, with all their false gods.

Telling the story:

- I. Naomi Goes Back to Bethlehem
 - A. She had moved to Moab
 - 1. famine in Bethlehem
 - 2. husband dies
 - B. She had lost everything
 - 1. sons grow and marry
 - 2. sons die
 - 3. ten years later...
 - C. She hears of food in Bethlehem
 - D. Orpah and Ruth decide to go with her

II. Ruth Abandons a Secure Future in Moab

- A. Naomi tells the girls to go home
 - 1. Nothing for them in Bethlehem
 - 2. Remarry in Moab
 - 3. No more sons
- B. Orpah leaves crying

- C. Ruth clings to Naomi
Read 1:16 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

As you tell the story:

Show pictures to illustrate who is who in the family. The boys became men and it was time for them to get married! They both married Moabite women. But then Naomi’s husband, Elimelech died! (take out some of the bread from the basket). Who would take care of her?! (her sons) And after they had been in Moab for 10 years, her two sons died, too. (take out all the bread in her basket). Naomi felt EMPTY! What could she do?! One day she hears: “there is food in Bethlehem...”

What did Ruth have in Moab? (Show Ruth’s full basket) Secure—family, culture, friends, possibility of remarrying, someone to take care of her. If Ruth stayed in Moab, it looked like she would have everything she needed to take care of her. She could remarry and be taken care of!

What did Ruth have in Bethlehem? Would have to work—be a beggar! poverty, dangerous being a woman without a husband, taking care of Naomi, no husband/children. (as you

1. where you go=I will go
2. where you lodge= I will lodge
3. your people = my people
4. your God = my God
5. where you die = I will die

- III. Naomi Returns with Nothing
- A. Townspeople amazed at return
 - B. Naomi: “call me Mara.”
“I’m empty.”

say each thing, take out bread from Ruth’s basket to show that it looked like if Ruth went with Naomi, and started worshipping HER GOD, that there wasn’t going to be ANYTHING for her!

Look what she says!
Ruth is willing to give up everything else, to stay with Naomi and care for her! And it looks like she is going to be empty. But who has been providing bread in Bethlehem? GOD! Does God see that Ruth is giving up everything in order to come to where He is? Who do you think is going to look after Ruth the Moabitess?!

The day comes when Ruth and Naomi come back to Bethlehem! (hold up the two empty baskets!)

Read 1:21

“I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?”

Concluding the Story:

Naomi was looking at her empty basket...no husband to take care of her. No sons to work and protect her. She was old and would have to be a beggar. But now she was with relatives. What had Ruth given up?! And Ruth had given all of that up and was willing to follow Naomi’s GOD and even be a beggar in a foreign country. Who was the one that should have been complaining at how hard her life was? But Ruth wasn’t complaining! Ruth loved Naomi and had come to Bethlehem, the “house of bread” and do you think God is going to take care of her?! We will have to find out the rest of the story!

(Note: if you are teaching the whole book of Ruth in one setting, storytell the rest of how God provides work, Boaz’s generosity, a husband, a child...as each one is told, put wordstrips with each word back into the basket to show how God had filled up Ruth’s empty basket with more than she could imagine!)

RUTH GOES WITH NAOMI HELPS FOR THE TEACHER

Personal Application Questions:

1. What have you left that seemed 'secure' in order to follow God?
2. In what ways are you clinging to God now, no matter what the future holds?
3. What is God's promise to you for your choices?

Application Questions to Think Through for your Students:

1. What things do your students want to 'guarantee' will be in their future?
2. What might keep them from clinging to God?

Memory Verse:

Matthew 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

Make wordstrips for the main things mentioned in the verse:

- "houses"
- "or brothers"
- "or sisters"
- "or father"
- "or mother"
- "or children"
- "or fields"

Write the whole verse on the board. Shuffle the wordstrips and hand out to random students. Then have all students stand along one wall. As you say the verse together, everyone takes a big step forward (toward the opposite wall) EXCEPT the person holding that wordstrip. Example: "And everyone who has left houses..." (the person holding "houses" stays glued in place and everyone else takes a step forward) "or brothers" (the person holding "brothers" stays glued in place and everyone else takes a step forward) "or sisters" (the person holding "sisters" stays glued in place and everyone else takes a step forward) etc.

Post-Lesson Activity:

Sing song "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus."

Make a "basket" with two pieces of paper. Write the words from the memory verse and put them into the basket "houses" "brothers" "sisters"...

It seems like when we follow Jesus that our baskets will be empty, like Ruth gave up everything to follow the One True God! But what does Jesus promise? God will give back those things even more!