

Ruth Chooses To Stay With Naomi

Ruth 1:1-18

MEMORY VERSE

RUTH 1:16

“But Ruth said: ‘Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.’”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A few small magnets, several small items, some that will attach to a magnet and others that won't and a couple of trays.

Poster board pre-cut into heart or round shapes (enough for all of the children in your class), 6" long pieces of pre-cut 1/2" to 1" ribbon, yellow or pink construction paper and safety pins.

Enough gingerbread men cookies (store bought) and frosting for the number of children in your class.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Magnets

Put out one tray or several trays containing magnets and some things that are attracted to the magnets and some that aren't. Ask questions about the different items that are being attracted to the magnets. Explain how that the “attraction” of the magnet compares with loyalty. Loyalty will always “cling” to that which is good and right.

LESSON TIME!

As we begin the book of Ruth, we will see a striking contrast to the book of Judges, which we just finished, and yet we will see a close connection to it. The book of Judges gave us a dark picture of the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel, and the book of Ruth shows us that God has never left Himself without people who are faithful to Him.

The book is named for a Moabite woman who had married a Hebrew man living in Moab. Ruth and Esther are the only two books in the Bible named for women. Ruth was the great-great grandmother of King David, and is in the line of the Messiah.

No one knows for sure who wrote the book of Ruth. Jewish tradition attributes the book to Samuel. In this book we will discover many wonderful things about love, faithfulness and redemption. In the first chapter we especially learn about loyalty and how that **God wants us to be loyal.**

RUTH 1:1-5

Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.

Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.

Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.

Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

In verse 1, we see that the date of our story is in the days when the judges ruled. We also see that there was a famine in the land and a man named Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, went to the country of Moab and lived there. The fact that there was famine may have been God's judgment on His people and their sins.

They left their homeland and traveled about 50 miles east on the other side of the Dead Sea. Moab was probably not a wise place for Elimelech to take his family to because the Moabites were excluded from the congregation of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:3-6). These people were worshippers of the god Chemosh, a deity (idol) whose worship was similar to that of Baal. God wanted His people to keep away from the idols of the people living around them. But then as we will ultimately see in the story of Ruth that God does work all things together for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

Another interesting thing is that back in these days, people's names were very important. Elimelech's name means "my God is King." Naomi's name means "pleasant," Mahlon's name means "sick" and Chilion's name means "pining." We don't know how long they lived in Moab before Elimelech's death, but Naomi finds herself a widow, sorrowing in a foreign land with her two sons.

In verse 4, her sons marry Moabite women, Orpah, and Ruth. Remember the sons' names, "sick" and "pining"? We don't know how long they were married, but they did not have children and they ended up dying as well. Now Naomi was a woman with tremendous grief. Her husband and sons had died and she was a

stranger in a foreign land, far away from her home. There were no sons to carry on the family name. In those days widows had to rely on their family for support, but she had lost her two sons as well, her only means of support. So we find Naomi in our story as a woman who was left without much hope.

RUTH 1:6-10

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.

Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

"The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

After the death of her husband and two sons, Naomi decides to return to her homeland for she has heard that God had ended the famine and provided food for the people. She acknowledges that it is God who stopped the famine and she now wants to get back home.

Return is a very important word here. It's a wonderful example of repentance. Naomi reverses the direction that the family had

earlier taken. Often it is easy to want to run away from our problems and troubles, but when we run we usually end up in the wrong place, and the cost is far too great for us to bear. God would have taken care of the family through the famine, and Naomi lost everything but we see what a wonderful God we have. Even in those times that we may have made mistakes He does incredible things.

Naomi realized that the chances of Orpah and Ruth re-marrying in Israel would be very small, and she encourages them to go back to their mother's house. Naomi loved the girls and blessed them. She asked that God would give each of them a place of rest with another husband. They were good and kind to her and she extended kindness back to them. Naomi kissed them, intending the kisses to be farewells, but both the women said that they wanted to return with Naomi. **God wants us to be loyal.**

Loyalty Medal

Let your kids make a medal to show their intentions to be loyal. Cut heart shapes out of poster-board or cardboard. For older kids you may want to do a round shape. Cut a hole in the top and glue either pink or yellow construction paper over the medal (color depends on the shape you choose). Put a 6" long piece of 1/2" to 1" inch wide ribbon through the hole and safety-pin to their shirts.

On the medal write "LOYAL TO JESUS CHRIST." Explain to the children that God rewards those who are faithful and loyal to Him. We will learn about all of the wonderful things that God did in Ruth's life because of her loyalty to Naomi and God.

RUTH 1:11-15

But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

"Turn back, my daughters, go; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons,

"would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"

Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

Three times Naomi insists to the women that they return to Moab. In their culture it was very difficult when a woman was unmarried or widowed. She did not have much security. Naomi talks about a Jewish custom in which a brother was responsible to marry his dead brother's wife in order to have a son and keep the brother's name and inheritance going. In her situation it could not work because she had no more sons, and she was too old to have anymore children.

Naomi felt her situation was a result of God's affliction yet she still had a strong faith in the Lord knowing that He was still involved in her life. How often do we see our troubles as Naomi did and allow ourselves to get bitter? Yet God had a plan for her, as He always does for us.

Orpah does return to Moab and we do not hear anything else about her. Ruth however does something very unexpected. Instead of

going back to Moab, she clung to Naomi choosing to follow and serve her widowed mother-in-law rather than seeking a husband. Naomi pleads with Ruth to go back to her people. She speaks of Orpah's going, realizing that as she left and went back to her people, she also went back to her false gods. **God wants us to be loyal.**

RUTH 1:16-18

But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God.

Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me."

When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.

Ruth puts an end to the discussion by an awesome profession of her desire never to leave or forsake Naomi, or to return to her own country or people again. This is one of the most beautiful and precious expressions of love and commitment we can ever read. She wants nothing to stop her love and affection towards her mother in law.

She is very determined to stay with Naomi, no matter what the cost. She will go wherever Naomi goes – into a country she has never seen before, among a people she knows not. She will live wherever Naomi lives, even if there is no roof over her head, she will go. Naomi's people will be her people. "Your people shall be mine to associate with, to live with, and to be concerned for."

Like Abraham, Ruth decided to leave her family's idolatrous land to go to the land of promise. Abraham had a promise, Ruth did not. In fact Naomi did everything she could to discourage Ruth. **God wants us to be loyal.**

Then Ruth tells Naomi something very special, "Your God shall be my God." Ruth decides to not only leave her people behind, but to embrace the God of Israel whom Naomi served. She must have seen God working in Naomi's life and the faith that Naomi had and it attracted Ruth to follow after Naomi's God.

What a goal for us to have as we share the love of Jesus with others. That other people would look at our lives and our trust in Jesus and say, "I want what you have, I want to know your God." This result is never accomplished by what we say, but how we live. She refused the false gods of Moab and chose the living God of Israel. She determined to trust and serve the Lord and in everything to be ruled by Him and Him alone. She also would stay with Naomi to death.

Ruth then called for judgment from God if she were to break her commitment of her loyalty to Naomi. With that kind of argument, Naomi finally stops trying to discourage Ruth from going with her. Wouldn't your heart be so blessed to have a "Ruth" desiring to be at your side? **God wants us to be loyal.**

Here we see a beautiful picture of conversion. We must take the Lord for our own God. Then we must take His people for our people in all conditions; rich or poor, famous or despised, for they are His people. We must be willing to go through what they go through. We submit ourselves, take up our cross and go where God will have us go. We must choose to continue and to persevere. Though Ruth knew she would stay with Naomi until death parted them, we can realize that death itself shall not separate us from our Lord.

This is just the beginning of a wonderful story of love and devotion. As the story continues in upcoming lessons we will see how much God himself loves each of us, and what can happen to a life that gives up its gods and idols and instead chooses to follow the true and living God. **God wants us to be loyal.**

How we need to learn from the life of Ruth that we do need to be loyal. We need to be loyal first of all to the Lord and then we need to also be loyal to our family and friends. Loyalty means hanging in there with people no matter what. Making sure that we can be counted on in good times and bad and not let others down who are counting on us to keep our word and do what we say we will do. Jesus is loyal to us, so we need to be loyal to Him and others.

Sticking Together

Use little gingerbread men cookies and store-bought frosting.

Give each child two cookies to represent Ruth and Naomi. Go around and put a dab of frosting on the back of one of the cookies, ask them to stick them together...like Ruth stuck with Naomi.

Next they can eat the gingerbread men sandwiches.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to be loyal in our relationship with the Lord and with one another. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.