

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 will not 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 are not. 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!

The book of Ruth dates to the time when the Judges ruled Israel. As we begin the book of Ruth, we see a striking contrast to the book of Judges, the book we just finished. 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. No one knows for sure who wrote the book of Ruth. Jewish tradition attributes the book to Samuel.

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

Back in those days, people's names were very important. The name of Ruth's husband, Elimelech, means "my God is King." Naomi's name means "pleasant." The name of Naomi's son, Mahlon, means "sick" and the name of her other son, Chilion, means "pining."

This book contains many valuable lessons on loyalty, love, and redemption. In the first chapter, we see loyalty demonstrated. **God is pleased when we show loyalty.**

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.

Seeking to escape the famine, a man named Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left their homeland and traveled about 50 miles east on the other side of the Dead Sea to Moab.

Moab was probably not a wise place for Elimelech to take his family, since 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's desire was that his people remain free from the influences of pagan worship that surrounded them. Though Moab was not a desirable place for God's children, God's hand remained on His children and circumstances ultimately worked together for good (Romans 8:28).

We do not 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 names of the sons, “sick” and “pining”? We do not know how long they were married, but they also died, having no children. Naomi experienced 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, nor was there family remaining to support her. (In those days widows relied on their family for support.) Naomi, it seemed was a woman 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.

Return is an important word here. Naomi reverses the direction that the family had earlier taken. Perhaps, leaving the Promised Land to seek help in Moab was not God's will. During her stay in Moab, Naomi lost everything. Yet, God can even turn our mistakes around to work together for His good purposes.

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.

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 speaks of 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 any more 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. God had a plan for Naomi, though she could not see it at the time. May we never allow our puzzling circumstances to cause us to become bitter. Even if we have made mistakes, when we turn to God, His hand will be upon us for good.

Orpah does return to Moab and we do not hear anything else about her. Ruth, however, 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.

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—in a beautiful expression of love and commitment—settles 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.

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. Even though Naomi did all she could to discourage Ruth, Ruth was determined to stay with Naomi, no matter what the cost. She was willing to go wherever Naomi went, into a country she had never seen before. She was willing to live wherever Naomi lived—even if there would be no roof over her head—and embrace a people she did not know, "Your people shall be my people,..." And, more importantly, Ruth decided to embrace the God of Israel whom Naomi served—"Your God shall be my God." Ruth must have seen God working in Naomi's life and been attracted to the

faith she displayed. May our genuine faith demonstrated in our daily lives attract others to the God we serve.

May we as Ruth take the Lord for our own God; and then, embrace His people as our people—under all conditions: rich or poor, famous or despised.

Ruth continued her expression of commitment, calling for judgment from God if she were to break her commitment of loyalty to Naomi. With that kind of argument, Naomi finally stops trying to discourage Ruth from going with her. How blessed Naomi was to have “Ruth” desiring to be by her side.

Ruth was characterized by loyalty. Loyalty means hanging in there with people no matter what—through good times and bad times. A loyal person is a faithful person—one you can count on, one who is true to their promises and commitments. God has demonstrated His faithfulness and commitment to us in His rich promises. Have you memorized Hebrews 13:5: “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”?

May loyalty be demonstrated in our lives--first to God and then to our family and friends. **God is pleased when we show loyalty**

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.