

# Lesson (Ruth 1:6-18) Bitterness, Loyalty, and Family Drama in the Story of Ruth

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Sometimes Biblical stories just get a bad rap...young and old alike want to hit the snooze button just looking at the Word of God. Yet there are so many amazing stories, more thrilling than an action movie and more dramatic than the steamiest soap opera. All of these stories also happen to encompass amazing lessons and truths of God. This lesson covers insightful highlights included in the book of Ruth. This first lesson covers the “part one” of the story, opening up what becomes an amazing romance.



**Lesson focus:** God wants us to be loyal and faithful to our friends and family; even when things seem challenging, He will work things out for good.

**Passage:** Ruth 1-2, Ruth 1:6-18

## Focus Verses:

16 But Ruth replied, “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. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” -Ruth 1:16-17

**Target Audience:** Pre-k through sixth grade (adaptable)

**Materials Needed:** Noodles (uncooked), beads, yarn/string, hay/straw, peanuts

Don’t miss our Ruth and Naomi Coloring Page. and the Story of Ruth teaching video.

**Series:** This lesson has a follow-up lesson by the same author – Helping Others from Ruth 2-4

**Lesson Opening: Gleaning Game...**have a relay to practice “gleaning” like Ruth did. Can you separate it? Prepare containers of hay, scattered throughout with peanut shells and/or peanuts (use a different item if allergies are a concern). Allow students to pair up or team up, and race to locate the nuts within the hay. Have stickers or small treats for winners (but make sure everyone gets a chance to win...). Explain that today’s story will feature an old practice called “gleaning,” which means picking up bits of wheat and hay after other people have harvested. Another element of what students just did was trying to separate things that might be tough to get apart. Today we will also be talking about things that stick together without separating. When it comes to friends and families, God wants us to stick more closely than hay to peanut shells!

### **Bible Lesson:**

Use your best judgment as to the approach of this lesson. More than likely, you can read through the whole first chapters with the students. For especially young or wiggly-prone crowds, it may be better to summarize, story book, or even act out the action. This lesson will cover the first portion of the book, leaving off at the meeting of Boaz. Set the stage by explaining to students the excitement of the story, and the significance of its echoing into the life of Christ and salvation representations. Describe (and/or read) the first part of the story.

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man’s name was Elimelek, his wife’s name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. 3 Now Elimelek, Naomi’s husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. –Ruth 1:1-5

So, we start with a family: husband, wife, and two sons. Note where they are from...who else in the Bible do we know that was born in Bethlehem??? (Hint: Nativity story!!!) This family was forced to flee to a foreign land, like refugees. Shortly after that, though, the patriarch died. The sons, however, marries Moabite women (foreigners)...but then they died as well. Mention that in Bible times, being a single woman was just not what people did. Widows especially were out of luck because the man was normally the provider of the family. There are lots of instructions about caring for widows in the Bible, because they were at serious disadvantage. Since Naomi was now all alone, she decided to move back home. She knew that her daughters-in-law could still find husbands and re-marry, so she released them from responsibility to her:

When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. 9 May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.” Ruth 1:6-9

After some resistance, Orpah finally agreed and left. However, Ruth was determined to stick with her Mother in Law. She refused to leave her side, and in so doing took a great step of faith and courage. By accepting Naomi, she was agreeing to follow her culture and God. She was at risk of not ever getting married or having society standing again. But she was faithful to Naomi.

But Ruth replied, “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. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. –Ruth 1:16-18

The women returned, where townspeople looked rather strangely at Ruth and recalled the family who left, now shrunk. Ruth decided to help provide, and she went to glean at a field. In those days, farmers were not supposed to pick up every bit of wheat when they harvested crops. That way, widows or people who needed help could come and sift out the extra pieces of grain so that they could have food (like we sifted the straw and nuts). As it turned out, the field that Ruth found to glean in belonged to someone who was related to Elimilek (Naomi’s late husband). His name was Boaz, and when he saw Ruth he was quite intrigued. He encouraged her to keep gleaning in his field, since she was from another country and might not be accepted too widely elsewhere. We can assume that either Ruth was quite pretty or Boaz had heard her tale...maybe some of both:

So Boaz said to Ruth, “My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. <sup>9</sup> Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.”

<sup>10</sup> At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, “Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?”

<sup>11</sup> Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. <sup>12</sup> 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 2:8-12

So Ruth gleaned in the field of Boaz, and Naomi was quite pleased when she heard about it. She told Ruth who Boaz was, and knew they would be cared for.

“The Lord bless him!” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers.” –Ruth 2:20

Family ties were important in that time. If someone was in trouble and needed help, family members had obligation to take care of them, even if they were not related by blood and even if they had never met the other person. The “redeemer” aspect meant that Boaz was saving Ruth and Naomi, literally taking their shattered lives and helping to put them back together. So since Ruth showed faithfulness to God and her family, and wouldn’t leave Naomi, God took care of them. But what happened with her and Boaz?? Well, tune in next time to find out!

**Craft:**

Make a necklace (or hanging decoration) to remember family and friends in our lives. Have students select a bead or a noodle for each person in their families. Provide string and help (if necessary) to thread the beads and noodles on. Encourage them to use these to pray for loved ones, and to stick to them like a string to a noodle!

**Close** with prayer and gratitude for special people in our lives. Ask God for faithfulness and quality relationships with others. If desired, allow students to take some souvenir hay to remember the story, as well.



***God Is Faithful***



Mandy Groce '13



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