

Life of Ruth

Storyteller: *Hold the bundle on your lap, and look at it as you speak.* Once, a long time ago, there was a woman named Ruth, who lived in the land of Moab.

Before Israel was ruled by kings, Elimelech from the tribe of Ephrath lived in the town of Bethlehem. His wife was named Naomi, and their two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. But when their crops failed, they moved to the country of Moab. And while they were there, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi with only her two sons.

Later, Naomi's sons married Moabite women. One was named Orpah and the other Ruth. About ten years later, Mahlon and Chilion also died. Now Naomi had no husband or sons.

When Naomi heard that the Lord had given his people a good harvest, she and her two daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab and go to Judah. As they were on their way there, Naomi said to them, "Don't you want to go back home to your own mothers? You were kind to my husband and sons, and you have always been kind to me. I pray that the Lord will be just as kind to you. May he give each of you another husband and a home of your own."

Naomi kissed them. They cried and said, "We want to go with you and live among your people."

But she replied, "My daughters, why don't you return home? What good will it do you to go with me? Do you think I could have more sons for you to marry? You must go back home, because I am too old to marry again. Even if I got married tonight and later had more sons, would you wait for them to become old enough to marry? No, my daughters! Life is harder for me than it is for you, because the Lord has turned against me."

They cried again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth held on to her. Naomi then said to Ruth, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and to her gods! Why

Set the bundle down in front of you and unroll it a little, folding back the flap to see the coins. When Ruth was a young woman, she married a man from Israel. He had left Israel with his family: his father Elimelech, his mother Naomi, and his brother. In those days, when a man and a woman got married, the man would give money or gifts to the bride and her family. These coins remind us of the money and gifts that were given at Ruth's wedding.

Unroll the bundle further, to show the torn garment. Ruth and her husband were married for ten years. But then a terrible thing happened. Ruth's husband died. So did her father-in-law Elimelech, and her husband's brother, who was married to Orpah. These torn clothes remind us of Ruth's grief for her husband.

Unroll the bundle to show the map. Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said: "I am going home to Judah, in Israel, but you two should not come with me. You should stay here in your own country, and go back to your own mothers. You have been kind to me, and to my sons, and so God will be kind to you." But Ruth and Orpah refused to go.

Naomi said to them: "Go home! You are young, and can marry again. But I have no more children. The Lord has turned against me." Orpah listened to her mother in law, and went home. But Ruth, again, refused to go.

Naomi said. "Look! Your sister is going home to her own country and her own family. Go with her."

But Ruth said: "Don't tell me not to come with you. Where you

Story Materials

- Ruth Bundle
 - coins
 - torn garment
 - map
 - coffee beans
 - bundle of grain
 - water jug
 - sandal
 - baby Obed

Tray, basket or shallow open box to hold the story

don't you go with her?"

Ruth answered,

"Please don't tell me to leave you
and return home!

I will go where you go,
I will live where you live;

your people will be my people,
your God will be my God.

I will die where you die
and be buried beside you.

May the Lord punish me if we are ever
separated,
even by death!"

When Naomi saw that Ruth had made
up her mind to go with her, she stopped
urging her to go back.

They reached Bethlehem, and the whole
town was excited to see them. The
women who lived there asked, "Can this
really be Naomi?"

Then she told them, "Don't call me
Naomi any longer! Call me Mara,
because God has made my life bitter. I
had everything when I left, but the Lord
has brought me back with nothing. How
can you still call me Naomi, when God
has turned against me and made my life
so hard?"

The barley harvest was just beginning
when Naomi and Ruth, her Moabite
daughter-in-law, arrived in Bethlehem.

One day, Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me
see if I can find someone who will let
me pick up the grain left in the fields by
the harvest workers."

Naomi answered, "Go ahead, my
daughter." So right away, Ruth went out
to pick up grain in a field owned by
Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi's
husband Elimelech, as well as a rich and
important man.

When Boaz left Bethlehem and went out
to his field, he said to the harvest
workers, "The Lord bless you!"

They replied, "And may the Lord bless
you!"

Then Boaz asked the man in charge of
the harvest workers, "Who is that young
woman?"

go, I will go, and where you stay I will stay. I will be one of
your people, and worship your God."

So Ruth and Naomi went together, back to Naomi's home in
Judah. *Draw a line on the map, showing their journey.*

Unroll the bundle to show the coffee beans. These are coffee
beans. Have you ever had coffee? Coffee by itself has a very
bitter taste. Grief can be bitter too. When Naomi came back to
Bethlehem with Ruth, she was still grieving for her husband and
her sons. The women from her home town recognised her, and
said "Is this Naomi, come back to us?" But Naomi said, "Don't
call me that anymore. Call me Mara," which means bitterness,
"for the Lord has dealt bitterly with me." So Naomi and Ruth
lived together in Bethlehem, and Ruth took care of Naomi.

Unroll the bundle to the grain. This is a stalk of oats. Farmers
grow grain like this in their fields, and harvest it to make food.
When Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, the harvest was
just beginning. Ruth said, "let me go out to the fields where
they are harvesting, and gather up the bits of grain that are left
behind, that no one wants. That will give us something to eat."
So Ruth went out into a field that belonged to a man named
Boaz, and picked up the leftover grain that nobody wanted.

When Boaz saw her in his field he asked "who is this woman?"
His workers said, "That is the moabite woman who came back
from Moab with Naomi."

Unroll the bundle to the water jug. This is a water jug. This one
is small, but it reminds us of the large jugs that would be filled
for the workers in the fields. When he had heard who she was,
Boaz went to Ruth and said. "Stay here in this field, with my
workers. Eat lunch with them. And if you get thirsty you can
drink the water from my water jugs."

Ruth said "Why are you going out of your way for me, when
you do not know me?"

Boaz said "May God bless you, because you have taken care of
your mother-in-law Naomi, even though it meant leaving your
own family behind, and coming to live among strangers." So
Ruth stayed in Boaz' fields, and brought the grain she had
gathered home to Naomi.

The man answered, “She is the one who came back from Moab with Naomi. She asked if she could pick up grain left by the harvest workers, and she has been working all morning without a moment’s rest.”

Boaz went over to Ruth and said, “I think it would be best for you not to pick up grain in anyone else’s field. Stay here with the women and follow along behind them, as they gather up what the men have cut. I have warned the men not to bother you, and whenever you are thirsty, you can drink from the water jars they have filled.”

Ruth bowed down to the ground and said, “You know I come from another country. Why are you so good to me?”

Boaz answered, “I’ve heard how you’ve helped your mother-in-law ever since your husband died. You even left your own father and mother to come and live in a foreign land among people you don’t know. I pray that the Lord God of Israel will reward you for what you have done. And now that you have come to him for protection, I pray that he will bless you.”

Ruth replied, “Sir, it’s good of you to speak kindly to me and make me feel so welcome. I’m not even one of your servants.”

At mealtime Boaz said to Ruth, “Come, eat with us. Have some bread and dip it in the sauce.” Right away she sat down with the workers, and Boaz handed her some roasted grain. Ruth ate all she wanted and had some left over.

When Ruth got up to start picking up grain, Boaz told his men, “Don’t stop her, even if she picks up grain from where it is stacked. Be sure to pull out some stalks of grain from the bundles and leave them on the ground for her. And don’t speak harshly to her!”

Ruth worked in the field until evening. Then after she had pounded the grain off the stalks, she had a large basket full of grain. She took the grain to town and showed Naomi how much she had picked up. Ruth also gave her the food left over from her lunch.

Naomi said, “Where did you work

Unroll the bundle to the perfume. When Ruth told Naomi what had happened, Naomi blessed Boaz, and said “This man is a relative of my husband, Elimelech. It is his responsibility to look after us. If he marries you, you will have someone to take care of you.” *Uncap the perfume bottle and smell it. Then hold it out for the children to smell.*

Naomi told Ruth to put on her best clothes and perfume, and go to Boaz the next night. When Boaz saw her he was surprised and said “Who are you?”

She answered, “I am Ruth, and I have come to ask you to marry me, because you are Naomi's closest relative.”

Boaz was impressed again with Ruth's loyalty to Naomi, saying “You could have tried to marry a young man, but instead you are making sure that Naomi's family takes care of her.”

Unroll the bundle to the packet of barley. Untie it as you speak. Boaz sent Ruth away with six measures of barley wrapped up in her shawl, to show Naomi that he would look after his family. But he said “I am not your closest relative. There is one man closer to you than I am. If he is willing to take care of you and Naomi, then I will let him. But if not, I will look after you.”

Unroll the bundle to the Sandal. The next day, Boaz went to the man who was a closer relative of Naomi than he was. He said, “Naomi, who was married to Elimelech, has come back to Israel with her daughter-in-law, Ruth. If you want, you can have Elimelech's property, but only if you will take care of his family, and marry Ruth, so that her children will have their inheritance.”

But the man said, “I cannot marry Ruth, and look after her and her mother. I have my own family, and my own property to look after.” He took off his sandal and gave it to Boaz, to show that he was not going to act as Naomi's closest relative. So Boaz went back to Ruth, and told her everything that had happened.

Unroll the bundle to show the last item, the baby. Boaz and Ruth married, and Ruth had a baby: a little boy. Naomi took care of him. When the women of the town saw this, they praised God, and told Naomi, “Your daughter in law loves you more than seven sons. She has given you a child to take away your

today? Whose field was it? God bless the man who treated you so well!” Then Ruth told her that she had worked in the field of a man named Boaz.

“The Lord bless Boaz!” Naomi replied. “He has shown that he is still loyal to the living and to the dead. Boaz is a close relative, one of those who is supposed to look after us.”

Ruth told her, “Boaz even said I could stay in the field with his workers until they had finished gathering all his grain.”

Naomi replied, “My daughter, it’s good that you can pick up grain alongside the women who work in his field. Who knows what might happen to you in someone else’s field!” And so, Ruth stayed close to the women, while picking up grain in his field.

Ruth worked in the fields until the barley and wheat were harvested. And all this time she lived with Naomi.

One day, Naomi said to Ruth: “It’s time I found you a husband, who will give you a home and take care of you.

“You have been picking up grain alongside the women who work for Boaz, and you know he is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be threshing the grain. Now take a bath and put on some perfume, then dress in your best clothes. Go where he is working, but don’t let him see you until he has finished eating and drinking. Watch where he goes to spend the night, then when he is asleep, lift the cover and lie down at his feet. He will tell you what to do.”

Ruth answered, “I’ll do whatever you say.” She went out to the place where Boaz was working and did what Naomi had told her.

After Boaz finished eating and drinking and was feeling happy, he went over and fell asleep near the pile of grain. Ruth slipped over quietly. She lifted the cover and lay down near his feet.

In the middle of the night, Boaz suddenly woke up and was shocked to see a woman lying at his feet. “Who are you?” he asked.

“Sir, I am Ruth,” she answered, “and

bitterness.” They named the boy Obed. He was the grandfather of King David, who was a man after God's own heart.

Roll the bundle back up, and put your hand on it. Ruth's life is an important story: we know God better because of it. Jesus told us that we can find God in any person's story. You have a story, too.

you are the relative who is supposed to take care of me. So spread the edge of your cover over me.”

Boaz replied: “The Lord bless you! This shows how truly loyal you are to your family. You could have looked for a younger man, either rich or poor, but you didn’t. Don’t worry, I’ll do what you have asked. You are respected by everyone in town.

It’s true that I am one of the relatives who is supposed to take care of you, but there is someone who is an even closer relative. Stay here until morning, then I will find out if he is willing to look after you. If he isn’t, I promise by the living God to do it myself. Now go back to sleep until morning.

Ruth lay down again, but she got up before daylight, because Boaz did not want anyone to know she had been there. Then he told her to spread out her cape. And he filled it with a lot of grain and placed it on her shoulder.

When Ruth got back to town, Naomi asked her what had happened, and Ruth told her everything. She also said, “Boaz gave me this grain, because he didn’t want me to come back without something for you.”

Naomi replied, “Just be patient and don’t worry about what will happen. He won’t rest until everything is settled today!”

In the meanwhile, Boaz had gone to the meeting place at the town gate and was sitting there when the other close relative came by. So Boaz invited him to come over and sit down, and he did. Then Boaz got ten of the town leaders and also asked them to sit down. After they had sat down, he said to the man:

Naomi has come back from Moab and is selling the land that belonged to her husband Elimelech. I am telling you about this, since you are his closest relative and

have the right to buy the property. If you want it, you can buy it now. These ten men and the others standing here can be witnesses. But if you don’t want the property, let me know, because I am next in line.” The man replied, “I will buy it!”

“If you do buy it from Naomi,” Boaz told him, “you must also marry Ruth. Then if you have a son by her, the property will stay in the family of Ruth’s first husband.”

The man answered, “If that’s the case, I don’t want to buy it! That would make problems with the property I already own. You may buy it yourself, because I cannot.”

To make a sale legal in those days, one person would take off a sandal and give it to the other. So after the man had agreed to let Boaz buy the property, he took off one of his sandals and handed it to Boaz.

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Boaz married Ruth, and the Lord blessed her with a son. After his birth, the women said to Naomi:

Praise the Lord! Today he has given you a grandson to take care of you. We pray that the boy will grow up to be famous everywhere in Israel. He will make you happy and take care of you in your old age, because he is the son of your daughter-in-law. And she loves you more than seven sons of your own would love you.

Naomi loved the boy and took good care of him. The neighborhood women named him Obed, but they called him “Naomi’s Boy.”

When Obed grew up he had a son named Jesse, who later became the father of King David. Here is a list of the ancestors of David: Jesse, Obed, Boaz, Salmon, Nahshon, Amminadab, Ram, Hezron, and Perez.