

Lesson 11:

Ruth

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:

Book of Ruth

MEMORY WORK:

Joshua 1:9

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

I can be loyal (faithful) to my friends, to my family, and to God.

LESSON STARTS HERE

INTRODUCTION:

Review last week's lesson

Sometimes we have to make hard choices/decisions. [Let children tell you some decisions they, or possibly their parents, have had to make (e.g., whether to take a new job that will make the family move; whether to be nice to someone who no one else likes; etc.)] In today's lesson, we are going to talk about a woman who lived during the time of the judges and made a tough choice to follow God, and God blessed her.

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. The book of Ruth is a story about love, respect, and commitment. It tells the story of:
 - A young woman's love, respect, and loyalty for her mother-in-law [define mother-in-law for younger children].
 - An older woman's love for her children and their spouses.
 - A man's love and respect for a young woman.
 - A young woman who was an ancestor of the Messiah.

HISTORICAL NOTE: It was a custom of the Jews to read the book of Ruth during the Feast of Weeks (also called the Feast of Wheat and was later called Pentecost). The story itself takes place "in the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1), but we don't know which judge. The book may have been written during David's reign, but the author is not known.

2. An Israelite man named Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion, moved from Canaan to Moab to find food because of a severe famine in their homeland. God had commanded the Jews not to mix with the Moabites and people of the land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 23:3; Nehemiah 13:1; cf. Nehemiah 13:23; Ezra 9:1&ff.; Deuteronomy 7:3-4). [Abraham went to live in Egypt during a famine (Genesis 12:10ff.), and it was a terrible mistake.]

NOTE: Elimelech means “God is my king”; **Naomi** means “pleasantness”; **Mahlon** means “sickly”; **Chilion** means “pining.”

3. We are not told how long they stayed in Moab, but it was long enough for Mahlon and Chilion to come of age and to marry. Living in a foreign country, among idol-worshiping people, the sons married Moabite women. [Remember Lot’s decision to move to Sodom and Gomorrah; his two daughters married there with disastrous results.]
4. As the family continued to live in Moab, tragedy struck. First, Elimelech died; then the two sons died. Three women were left alone with no family to take care of them or protect them. Naomi decided to return to Canaan. Ruth and Orpah, her daughters-in-law, started to go with her, but Naomi told them they should go back to their own families. Orpah did, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi alone. Ruth was willing to leave everything behind because of her love for her mother-in-law. (Read together Ruth 1:16-17.)
5. Two women alone, with little or no money, traveled back to Bethlehem, where Naomi and Elimelech had married and had their children years earlier. When Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, the other older women recognized Naomi, but apparently were surprised at how Naomi had changed in appearance. They talked among themselves about her, and probably about the foreign girl she had brought home with her. Naomi told them not to call her Naomi any more, but to call her “Mara,” which means “bitter,” because of the heartache she had endured.
6. With her sweet spirit, and her commitment and love, Ruth gradually helped Naomi leave that bitterness behind. She willingly went to work to help take care of Naomi, even though she was not Ruth’s blood mother.
7. God commanded that the Israelites not gather every bit of harvest when reaping their fields. They were to leave the leftovers for the poor and the strangers to be able to gather (Leviticus 19:9-10). Ruth was among those who gathered what harvesters (gleaners) left behind in the fields, and she happened to do so in the fields of Boaz, Naomi’s late husband’s relative.
8. Boaz was impressed with Ruth for helping to take care of Naomi, and encouraged her to stay in his fields to gather grain, and to drink from the water that his servants had drawn. He also made sure that none of the young men would bother her and told them to let her get more than even the leftovers.
9. Ruth brought home barley to Naomi that night and told her what happened. Naomi encouraged her to continue to go back only to Boaz’s land each day throughout the harvest time.
10. One of the laws of the Old Testament said that the closest male relative (kinsman) could buy back (redeem) an estate that had been sold due to poverty so that the land would not be lost to the family (Leviticus 25:23-28). Naomi had sold her husband’s land due to poverty (Ruth 4:3). Also, the relative was expected to marry the widow of the kinsman who died, if he was able, and have children with her in order to allow the man who died to have an heir and a continued name in Israel (Deuteronomy 25:5-10; cf. Genesis 38:8-9). These laws were designed by God to provide some protection for Israelite women and children, as well as to keep the inheritances of the Promised Land in the correct families and tribes.
11. Knowing about these laws, Naomi encouraged Ruth to work in the fields of Boaz. The man who was the next of kin did not want to redeem Naomi’s land or take responsibility for Ruth and Naomi. So Boaz stepped in.

HISTORICAL NOTE: The custom of giving one's sandal (as in Ruth 4:7-8) was a way of sealing an agreement. Read Deuteronomy 25:5-9.

12. Boaz and Ruth married and had a son named Obed who would be the grandfather of David. After Obed was born, the women in the town told Naomi that Ruth was a “daughter-in-law who loves you and is better to you than seven sons.” Because of Ruth’s loyalty to and love for Naomi, she gained a new homeland, a new husband, a son, and the favor of the great God of Israel. The book of Ruth begins with great sorrow and hardship; it ends with great joy and hope.
13. Loyalty means being faithful to one’s country, to one’s husband or wife, to your church, or more importantly, to God. It means standing by someone/helping someone when he/she is having a hard time—or when everyone else has turned away from him/her. (Other words to use to describe loyalty: dedicated, devoted, faithful, steadfast, and trustworthy. Discuss this as is appropriate for your individual class.)

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL VISUALS (note disclaimers):

- Betty Lukens’ felt pieces
- ABeka Flash-a-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book;)
- Free Bible Images – Saved on flash drive. Can be presented on classroom tv. Script included in lesson file. This lesson is very lengthy in this format so it may not keep the attention of four year olds. The lesson has three files: 11A, 11B, and 11C in the Visuals Folder
- Props for gathering wheat. Wheat bundles can be made by shredding tan paper or cutting up brown paper sacks. Then gather them into bundles and tie with a string. This could be a craft activity or students could act out gathering wheat. Be sure to leave out some paper for the leftovers that Ruth would have gleaned.



SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS:

SUNDAY

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

- Let the children act out the story.
- Help each child make a Ruth puppet from a paper sack. Write the memory verse on the back of the puppet. (“Ruth Puppet Cutouts” in black and white and in color provided in activity sheets)
- Basket of grain craft. Refer to the picture below.



WEDNESDAY NIGHT

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Review Sunday's lesson. briefly ([See Review Questions](#) for example questions.)

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

- Color, cut, & sequence – Templates and answer sheet are in the lesson file. Let the children color the scenes from the story of Ruth. Then let them cut out the pictures and paste them in order.

Review Questions

1. Why did Elimelech, Naomi, and their family move from Canaan (Bethlehem) to Moab?
 - a. There was a severe famine in Canaan.
2. What were the names of Naomi's two sons?
 - a. Mahlon and Chilion
3. What were the names of the Moabite women that Mahlon and Chilion married?
 - a. Ruth and Orpah
4. Why did Naomi want to go back to Canaan?
 - a. Her husband and her two sons died, and she had no way to provide for herself.
5. Who went with Naomi back to Canaan?
 - a. Ruth
6. What name did Naomi want to be called when she arrived back in the land of Canaan, and what does it mean?
 - a. Mara = bitter
7. How did Ruth take care of Naomi in Canaan?
 - a. She gathered food for her from Boaz's fields.
8. Who eventually married Ruth?
 - a. Boaz
9. What was the name of Ruth and Boaz's son?
 - a. Obed

