



STORY

7/31/06

Ruth (Ruth 1-4)

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Father in Heaven, when I consider how Naomi in her discouragement gave poor counsel, but later in faith gave good counsel to Ruth, I feel the responsibility of these students in my care. Do not let me become discouraged but rather strengthen my faith in Your forgiveness through Christ and in Your wise providence in my life. Give me wisdom to guide and encourage my students to follow You with trusting, faithful hearts throughout their lives. For though we do not understand all of Your plans, we trust that You, O Lord, direct our lives for the eternal blessing of many souls. With faith in You, O Father, Your Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, I pray, Amen

VOCABULARY

Chapter 1:

judges - civil and religious leaders whom God gave to Israel to lead them on His behalf once they were settled in the land of Canaan and before their first human king.

sojourn - live someplace temporarily. Another place is considered home.

(names:) *Elimelech* - "My God is King" *Naomi* - "Pleasant" or "Jehovah is pleased" *Mara* - "bitter"

Moab - the land of the descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. It was located immediately east of the Dead Sea. The people there were heathen but spoke a dialect of Hebrew.

Ephrathites - from the region of Bethlehem. (cf. Gen. 35:16, Mic. 5:2)

Chapter 2:

kinsman - Someone related by blood. Near kinsman - A closely related blood relative upon whom certain duties fell to preserve the land and birthright inheritance for a family if immediate heirs were not available.

glean - Reapers (people who harvested by hand) missed some of the harvest. God had told the Israelites not to go back to catch any missed grain but to let the poor and widows "glean" or pick up what was left behind.

sheaves - bound bundles of the stalks of grain stood upright to dry before the grain was separated from the stalks by threshing and winnowing.

ephah - a unit of measure equal to 7.5 gallons or enough to make about 20 loaves of bread.

Chapter 3:

winnowing and threshing - Threshing breaks the kernels of grain from the stalks as they are beaten or rubbed across the "threshing floor" or hard packed dirt or rock. Winnowing separated the grain from the straw and husks by means of throwing it in the air and letting the wind blow away the waste while the heavy grain fell to the ground.

Ruth

OT

Teacher's Notes

God's Hand in Our Lives

OUTER AIM

God blesses a faithful widow with a new family.

INNER AIM

God's actions with His faithful people produce many rich blessings.

BACKGROUND

According to verse 1, this story took place during the time of the judges. God tells us in Judges 17:6, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." The book of Judges showed God's faithfulness even when His people were unfaithful to Him. The book of Ruth shows that despite the wickedness around about, one non-Israelite and a few Israelites faithfully followed God's will and were richly blessed for it.

Setting the stage

Chapter 1

vs. 1 - 2: An Israelite family leaves their home because of famine in the land to live in the heathen country of Moab. The word "sojourn" in Hebrew implies they expected to return to Israel.

vs. 3 - 5: First Elimelech dies, leaving Naomi a widow. Her two sons marry Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Then over a span of 10 years, the two sons die, leaving all 3 women as widows.

A bittersweet homecoming

vs 6 - 7: Naomi hears that her homeland has been released from famine so she sets out with her 2 daughters-in-law to return to Bethlehem in Judah.

vs. 8 - 9: Naomi, is discouraged by her situation and doesn't know how she could support her daughters in law. So Naomi blessed them, Orpah and Ruth, and urged them to return to their parents' homes where they could be supported and more likely find new husbands. Naomi's blessing implies that Orpah and Ruth knew about the true God. But her urging them to return to their families who likely worshipped false gods, shows her own struggling faith in the true God.

vs 10: Both daughters said no, they would return with Naomi to Bethlehem to Naomi's people.

vs 11 - 13: Women generally depended on husbands to support them and marriage was considered much more desirable at that time than today. Naomi wouldn't be able to provide her daughters-in-law with husbands for support and the joys of marriage. Naomi felt sorry for her daughters in law because of how the Lord had treated her thus far.

vs 14 - 15: Orpah wept goodbye and returned to her parents' house and their gods. But Ruth clung to Naomi and didn't want to return. Naomi again urged "go back" with your sister-in-law.

vs 16 - 17: Ruth's selfless declaration of faithfulness to Naomi has often been used to exemplify the faithfulness needed between husband and wife. She is willing to accept whatever Naomi's circumstances would be and to worship Naomi's God so that they might be together until death parts them.

vs 18: Naomi accepts Ruth's determination to remain with her and stops arguing with her about it.

vs 19 - 22: When they arrive in Bethlehem together, Naomi expresses her discouragement to those who knew her by asking for a different name. Instead of Naomi which means "pleasant," she wished to be called Mara which means "bitter." "For the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me." Blinded by grief from her past, her faith is dim for the future.

Ruth meets a kind, God-fearing relative

Chapter 2

vs 1: Boaz is introduced as a wealthy relative of Naomi's husband.

vs 2: God through the civil laws which He set up for Israel had provided a way for the widows, orphans and poor to be fed. They were allowed to go into the fields, vineyards, and olive groves at harvest and gather whatever was left by the reapers. Ruth asked Naomi's permission to make use of that provision on their behalf.

vs 3: Ruth went to the fields and "happened to come," by God's subtle direction, to the field of Boaz, the kinsman.

vs 4 - 7: When Boaz came to oversee the harvest, the greetings he exchanged with his servants that showed that they worshipped the Lord. Boaz noticed Ruth and asked his servant who she was. The servant gave a good report identifying Ruth to Boaz.

vss 8 - 9: Boaz asks Ruth to continue gleaning in his fields and extends to Ruth protection and special favor.

vs 10: Ruth, in the customary sign of great respect in that time and country, bowed to Boaz wondering why he would treat a foreigner so well.

vs 11 - 12: Boaz explains that he respects her faithfulness to Naomi in leaving all to remain with Naomi. He prays that the Lord in whom she now trusts for refuge would bless her well. (cf. the refuge of wings illustration in the following: Ruth 3:9, Deut. 32:10-12; Exod. 25:20; Ps. 91:4ff.)

vs 13: Ruth expresses her humble appreciation and hope for his continued favor, though she recognizes that she is not even one of his servants.

vs 14 - 18: Boaz continues to show extra favor to Ruth with an invitation to eat with the workers and with special instructions to let her gather extra grain. Ruth in turn saved some of her lunch for Naomi and worked hard to glean and prepare the unusually favorable amount of grain she collected and brought back to Naomi.

vs 19 - 23: Naomi, upon hearing the good report about Boaz from Ruth, began to see again the Lord's blessings upon them. Naomi then encouraged Ruth to make use of the opportunity for protection and extra care that the Lord provided. And Ruth faithfully did what Naomi (and God) wanted. This continued for a few months, from about the time of Passover through Pentecost.

Naomi and Ruth seek a God-pleasing solution

Chapter 3

vs 1 - 4: Naomi proposed that Ruth make good use of the special laws God had provided to keep land within the family line of inheritance. {God's civil law [Leviticus 25:23-28] said that near kinsmen had to buy back land that their poor kinsmen had sold in order to make sure that every family maintained an inheritance within the Promised Land. But, if later a male heir came of age, the land would be returned to the male heir and the kinsman would lose the redemption price of the land. This was one of the ways that God sustained the family line for the Promised Savior.} Perhaps Boaz would serve as a "kinsman-redeemer" who would pay a good price for Naomi's (and Elimelech's inherited) land. And if, Boaz should choose to marry Ruth and they had a boy, then their heir would receive the land back that had been Elimelech's. So, Naomi instructed Ruth to look her most attractive and visit Boaz in the night when he was feeling good after a hard day's work and a good supper. Then Ruth should propose marriage to him and suggest he perform the duties of the kinsman-redeemer.

vs 5 - 9: Ruth agrees and does what Naomi tells her to do. She even uses Boaz's own words to propose to him. (cf. 2:12)

vs 10 - 13: Boaz is happy to accept the proposal of marriage but realizes that a nearer kinsman may wish to buy the land first. But if the other does not, Boaz also swears to buy the land for Naomi. They spend the rest of the night together virtuously.

vs 14 - 18: In the morning they discretely part as Boaz sends Ruth home with a large gift to Naomi. And so Ruth and Naomi wait at home for Boaz to follow through with the plan.

God through Boaz arranges a happy ending

Chapter 4

vs 1 - 8: True to Naomi's expectation, Boaz carries through the plan, carefully showing the nearer kinsman how it would be more advantageous to let Boaz perform the duties of kinsman redeemer since Boaz was going to marry Ruth and their heir would receive the property back. This would cost the nearer kinsman the redemptive price of the land and so diminish his own children's heritage. (cf. The Peoples' Bible - Judges Ruth pp253-254.) The nearer kinsman agrees to let Boaz redeem the property.

vs 9 - 10: Boaz reviews before his witnesses the entire transaction so that all would know and accept the legal standing of the arrangements.

vs 11 - 12: The witnesses in turn accept their duties as witnesses and then congratulate Boaz, giving him their blessings on his marriage to Ruth. Rachel and Leah are the two wives of Jacob from whose 12 sons the 12 tribes of Israel were started. Ephrathah is the region of Bethlehem, their home city. Perez was one of Boaz' ancestors who played a key role in the history of their tribe of Judah.

vs. 13: The Lord did indeed bless Boaz and Ruth with at least one son.

vs 14 - 17a: The women of the town who witnessed Naomi's sorrow when she came to the city, rejoiced with her, praising the Lord who had provided a grandson for her in her old age through Ruth. They hoped that as Naomi cared for the child, both of them would be blessed by it. Surprising to us, but part of their culture, the neighbor women named the baby Obed.

vs 17b - 21: These final verses with their genealogy carry an important gospel message. They show that God included gentiles into the line of David, the great king of Israel, and ultimately the blood line of

Jesus our Savior. For Jesus would also be a Savior for Gentiles as well as for the faithful of Israel. The genealogy is not complete here but it highlights main characters in the line from Judah's son Perez (seven centuries before). Amminadab was the father-in-law of Aaron, Moses' brother and the high priest during the wilderness wanderings. Nahshon was the leader of the tribe of Judah during the wilderness wanderings. Salmon married Rahab, the gentile woman from Jericho who helped Israel when they began taking Canaan. And, Jesse and David we know well from events that follow in 1 Samuel 16 and into history.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Father in Heaven, we know Your love for us because You sent your Son, Jesus, to be the Savior, not only of the Jews but also for us who are not Jews. You know how best to direct our lives for our own good and the eternal good of others. We pray that You would give us trusting and faithful hearts to follow Your direction throughout our life. Encourage us when we are tempted to discouragement. Strengthen us when we feel weary. Make our words and actions a blessing to others that through us others may also share in the blessings that You richly provide us. We ask this, trusting that You will receive our prayer because of Jesus who redeemed us. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Briefly review previous story as time allows. If it is about one of the judges of Israel, see the background notes for ideas how to make links to the new story. Tell the story: Teachers, be encouraged to tell the story in your own words while remaining faithful to the scriptural account. The older children should be encouraged to read this aloud from the Bible since it is a suspenseful, engaging story. Time will likely permit only one reading of the story so make some applications along the way while still completing the story.

Note: to shorten the story, one series omits the details of the following verses: 1:11-13, 18; 2:14, 18, 21, 22; 3:4,5, 7, 8, 9a, 10, 11, 13-15, 17-18, 4:1-5 (summarized),7-12, 14-16, 18-22

Discuss the lesson: While reviewing the major events of the lesson, discuss the possible applications to the students' lives. Ask questions that make them think about the lesson and show that they understand the it.

APPLICATIONS

1. Naomi began this lesson discouraged and grieving because of the loss of her husband and sons. She didn't see what good God would have in store for her. But as God through Boaz's faithful service to God and Ruth provided for her, she found cause for rejoicing. And through the previous losses for Naomi, God was able to bring a Gentile women to faith and into the line of the Savior, proclaiming God's mercy for Gentiles as well. Sometimes in life, even God's people will experience loss and struggle to see hope for good to come out of it. But God carefully works in the lives of individuals to carry out wonderful plans for the eternal good of many souls.

2. Ruth came from a family that did not believe in God, she lived part of her adult life in a country that worshipped false gods, and moved to a country where many formerly faithful people had turned from the true God. Yet through the influence of her husband and his family, God brought her to faith in Him as her Lord and Savior. God gave her the strength then to trust in Him despite many outward influences to turn away from Him. She faithfully followed God while she steadfastly remained with Naomi, as God wished according to the 4th commandment. She walked by faith and turned her back on what at the time seemed better prospects of her parents' home. (When might we need to turn our back on

seemingly better opportunities that take us farther from God?) She walked by faith to serve Naomi, despite Naomi's initial attempts to dissuade her. (Sometimes people resist our attempts to do what God says is right.) She walked by faith as she set out to provide for Naomi in the God-pleasing, God-given work of gleaning (Many times walking by faith requires hard work and patient dedication..) And she walked by faith into the arms of faithful Boaz, not knowing if she might be rejected by him, trusting God that Boaz would do what was best. And God blessed her in ways she probably had never imagined. For her honor and respect to Naomi as well as her faithfulness and trust in God, Ruth received the blessing promised in the 4th commandment, as well as the other blessings of faith in the promised Savior. So, though walking by faith may mean sacrifices, meeting with resistance, requiring hard work and dedication, and asking you to risk yourself for the sake of God's will, God will work through your faith-walk to bless you and others.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Isaiah 26:3 - You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

Psalms 17:8 - Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings,

Middle any of the above and...

Revelation 2:10 - "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Upper any of the above and...

Luke 18:29-30 - So (Jesus) said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."

Ruth 1:16-17 - 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."

HYMN CHOICES

What God Ordains is Always Good.- TLH #521

My God, My Father, Make Me Strong. - TLH #424

O Perfect Love - TLH #623

O Happy Home Where Thou art Loved Most Dearly - TLH #626