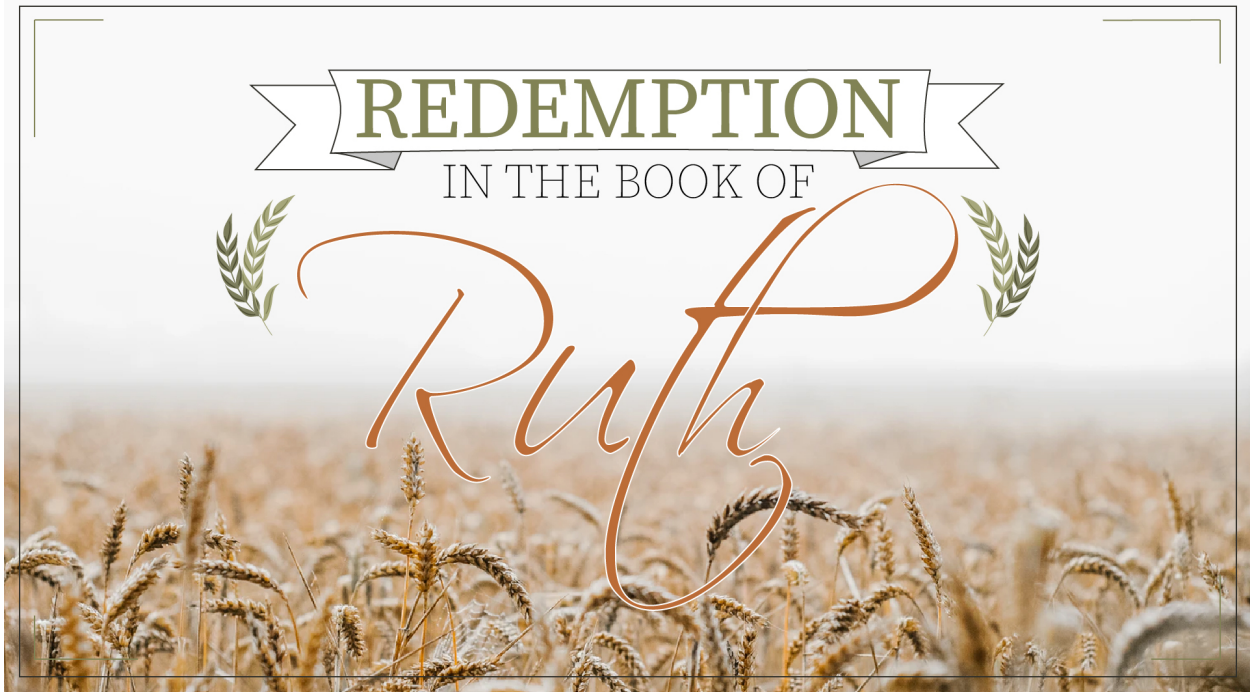


REDEMPTION IN THE BOOK OF RUTH



Chapter One

A Note to the Parents/Teachers

Ruth is often told as a side story of friendship or finding love... but it is so much more! Read the entire book (only 4 chapters) on your own and look for the redemptive storyline that points to Jesus! Ruth, after all, was a direct ancestor of both King David and King Jesus. She was also a poor, widow, immigrant. Yet, her faith and loyalty allowed her to partner with God to bring redemption to her, her family, community, and even beyond.

- **Big Idea:** Life is hard sometimes. But God is always committed to us.

Starter

- **Game:** Play 'Follow the Leader'. Today we're going to talk about loyalty and sticking with someone through tough times.
- **Question:** Have you ever had something that starts off sour, then becomes sweet? Like Sour Patch Kids? Or lemons turned into lemonade? Today we'll hear a story of a woman who felt the opposite - her life started pleasant, but turned bitter. But God was at work to turn it sweet again!

Sing Together

Never Let Go Of Me - https://youtu.be/WJgIPk_NkZY

Story

After God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt and brought them into the land He promised them, but before they had King Saul or King David or any other king, everyone did what they thought was right in their own mind... and most of what everyone did was actually very bad! So, God would have to discipline His people. Sometimes this meant other nations came in and attacked. Other times it meant God caused a famine. He wanted His people to turn back to Him and trust Him as their true King.

During a famine when there was no food in Bethlehem, there was a man named Elimelech, which means 'God is King' (which is funny considering Israel was mostly ignoring God and not living like He was their king). He moved his wife and two sons to Moab, outside of Israel, where there was food. Unfortunately, he died there. His wife, Naomi, whose name means 'pleasant', was left with her two sons. They married women from Moab, but before they had children they also died. Now Naomi was left with only her two daughters-in-law.

One day Naomi heard God had provided food again in Bethlehem so she decided to go back home. She told her sons wives, Orpah and Ruth, they should go back home to their mothers. You see, in that time, it was hard to be a woman. You didn't have much opportunity to make money for yourself, so you depended on your father when you were young, then a husband to provide for you, and as you grew older, you would depend on sons. Naomi lost all of that. She didn't want Orpah and Ruth to be in the same position. Not only had they lost their husbands, they would also be foreigners in Bethlehem. And Israelites did not like Moabites very much.

Orpah was sad, but she agreed that was best and went home. Ruth, however, would not leave Naomi. She said, "Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, I will live. Your God will be my God, and your people will be my people." Ruth was willing to endure a hard life in order to be loyal to Naomi. Not only that, she had learned of the God of Israel, the true God, from Naomi's family and she committed to Him! The phrase she used actually mirrored the promise God gave to His people when He rescued them out of Egypt: "I will live among you and I will be your God and you will be my people."

When they got to Bethlehem, Naomi said she didn't want to be called 'pleasant' anymore. She said to call her Mara, which means 'bitter', because that's what her life felt like. She didn't know yet how God was still at work and would make things pleasant for His people once again.

[Dialogue Questions - you may use some or all]

- When things were hard in Bethlehem, Elimelech moved away. When Orpah knew things would be hard for her in Bethlehem, she went back home. Ruth showed loyalty and trust by committing to stay by Naomi and to trust in her God. When things get tough, how can we continue to stay close to God and trust Him?
- How does Ruth remind us of God's loyal faithfulness to His people? Think about her promise to Naomi and how it matches God's promise to Israel. How does Ruth remind us of Jesus?
- God said, "I will live among you and I will be your God and you will be my people". How is Jesus the fulfillment of this promise?

Breakout Time

- **Prayer:**

God, we confess that when things are hard in life we often want to run or turn to other things to help us. Help us, instead, to trust in You. Because of Jesus, You are our God and we are Your people! Amen.

- **Craft:**

Using the sheet attached, ask the kids which tree looks like it's alive. Talk about how sometimes trees can look dead in certain seasons, but there is still life happening inside! Have them draw leaves and fruit on the empty branches to make it match the other tree. They can also write down on each fruit a prayer for how they want God to work in their lives.

- **BLESS Activity:**

For kids to do during the week

Because this Story is true, we want to be faithful to live in it. We ask the Spirit to help us to *Bless, Listen, Eat, Speak*, and *Sabbath* (rest & celebrate) in ways that tell the good news of God's Story.

This week, focus on the **Eat** rhythm. Naomi's family was searching for food that would satisfy them. Ask your family who you can share a meal with this week as a way to show them the God who provides.

Other Resources

- **Bible Project:**

Watch this video overview of the book of Ruth: <https://youtu.be/0h1eoBeR4Jk>

