

Ruth Is Faithful

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Scene Summary

The play “Ruth Is Faithful” presents the lives of a family dislocated from their country during a famine...separated not only from their home but also from their loved ones...but finding an oasis of faithfulness in Ruth, a foreigner from Moab...then a story of romance and love...a transformation from bitterness into a life of joy.

Scripture

The teacher is encouraged to read the book of Ruth to the students prior to working with the script. A key passage is the words of Ruth to Naomi: “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. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.” (Ruth 1:16-17 NIV)

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Players

- **Narrator** – The play’s “catechist” or teacher should be a good reader with a clear voice.
- **Elimelech** – [E lim e leck] The husband of Naomi. He dies in Moab.
- **Naomi** – [Na o me] A mother figure shares the main story line with Ruth.
- **Ruth** – Naomi’s daughter-in-law, she is central figure in the story in the story along with Naomi.
- **Boaz** – [Bow as] The rich noble of Bethlehem who owns the field where Ruth picked to glean during harvest.
- **Chilion** – [Chill eon] The son of Naomi. He dies in Moab.
- **Mahlon** – [May lon] The son of Naomi. He dies in Moab.
- **Orpah** – [Ore pa] Naomi’s daughter-in-law. She is from Moab.
- **Kinsman-redeemer** – A man of Bethlehem who is the next of kin to Naomi’s husband.
- **Servants of Boaz** – These people are farmers who work for Boaz, harvesting the grain.

- **Town Elders** – These are the people Boaz calls to witness the transaction made between himself and the Kinsman-redeemer concerning Naomi and Ruth.

Special Props

- Normal items from the prop box such as cloaks, veils, robes and headdresses.
- Household items, such as a plastic dish, cups and tableware.
- A bag or pouch for carrying the household items.

Script – Ruth Is Faithful

[Opening scene is Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion walking across the stage. They are walking slowly because they are tired and thirsty.]

Narrator: In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and his two sons Mahlon and Kilion were traveling to the country of Moab.

Mahlon: But father, why did we have to leave our home in Bethlehem?

Elimelech: There wasn't anything to eat.

Naomi: [to her sons] We have heard that there is food in Moab.

Chilion: I am so tired and thirsty.

Naomi: It shouldn't be much further.

[They arrive at the other side of the stage and begin to arrange the chairs and table to form a home]

Narrator: They arrived in Moab and started a new home.

[They are busy working around the house. Then Elimelech walks off stage. There is a pause then Naomi and the two sons begin to cry.]

Narrator: Later, Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died.

[Ruth and Orpah enter on the opposite side of the stage making small talk to each other. Mahlon and Chilion go to meet them. They hold hands and bring them back to Naomi]

Narrator: The sons married women from Moab. One was named Orpah and the other was Ruth. They lived and worked in Moab about ten years.

[They are busy working around the house. Mahlon and Chilion walk off stage. There is a pause, then Naomi, Orpha and Ruth begin to weep and cry.]

Narrator: Both Mahlon and Chilion died.

Naomi: [crying] Why has this happened to me? First my husband dies and now my sons.

Orpah: I am so sad. What are we going to do?

Naomi: There is nothing left for me here in Moab. I have heard that there is food again in Bethlehem. I will return to my home.

Narrator: Naomi, Orpah and Ruth gather their belonging and begin to leave.

[They gather up their household things and put them in a bag. Then they walk slowly to the center stage]

Naomi: Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.

[They give each other a tearful hug]

Orpah: We will go back with you to your people.

Naomi: Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Return home my daughters. Start a new life. It is bitter for me, because the Lord's hand has gone out against me!

Narrator: At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth stayed with Naomi.

Naomi: Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.

Ruth: 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. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.

Narrator: When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem.

[They continue to the opposite side of the stage. This ends the first act of the play. The stage can then be reset to Bethlehem on stage left. The townspeople of Bethlehem have gathered. Naomi and Ruth enter from stage left and proceed to the center stage.]

Narrator: When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them.

Town Elder: Can this be Naomi?

Naomi: Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.

Narrator: So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

[They setup their “home” at a center stage table and are busy putting things in order.]

Ruth: [speaking to Naomi]: Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.

Naomi: Go ahead, my daughter.

[Naomi turns her back to the audience as Ruth goes out to stage right and begins picking up grain off of the floor.]

Narrator: So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

[Boaz comes into Bethlehem]

Narrator: [Pause] Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters.

Boaz: The LORD be with you!

Harvesters: The LORD bless you!

[Boaz looks across the stage at Ruth gathering grain]

Boaz: [to the foreman] Whose young woman is that?

Foreman: She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi. She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters. She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.

[Boaz goes over to Ruth]

Boaz: [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 my servant girls. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.

Ruth: [bowed to Boaz] Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me--a foreigner?

Boaz: 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. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, richly reward you.

Ruth: May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord. You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant--though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls.

[The harvesters begin to gather around a table to eat a meal. Boaz goes back across the stage to join them.]

Narrator: At mealtime, Ruth was invited to join them.

Boaz: Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.

Narrator: When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over.

[Ruth leaves the table and begins working again in the field.]

Boaz: [to the harvesters] Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her.

Narrator: So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered. She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

[This concludes the second act of the play. The stage is clear except for Naomi and Ruth's home at the right center. Ruth goes back to Naomi and sits down at the table and shows her the large bowl of grain. The other side of the stage will be used for Boaz's threshing floor.]

Naomi: Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!

Narrator: Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working.

Ruth: The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz.

Naomi: The LORD bless him! He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead. That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers.

Ruth: He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.'"

Naomi: It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else's field you might be harmed.

Narrator: So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Naomi: My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.

Ruth: I will do whatever you say.

Narrator: So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

[Naomi turns with her back to the audience. Ruth begins to straighten her dress and hair. Then leaves the stage. The harvesters come back on stage with Boaz. They are eating at a table.]

Narrator: When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet.

Boaz: Who are you?

Ruth: I am your servant Ruth. Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.

Boaz: The LORD bless you, my daughter. This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character. Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.

Narrator: So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized.

Boaz: Don't let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor. Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.

Narrator: When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and put it on her. Then he went back to town and Ruth came to her mother-in-law.

[Ruth goes back to Naomi with her load of grain]

Naomi: How did it go, my daughter?

Narrator: She told her everything Boaz had done for her.

Ruth: He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'

Naomi: Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.

Narrator: Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along Boaz asked him to sit down also.

Boaz: Come over here, my friend, and sit down.

Narrator: Boaz went and found ten of the elders of the town. They all sat down together.

Boaz: [to the kinsman-redeemer] Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line."

Kinsman-redeemer: I will redeem it.

Boaz: On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.

Kinsman-redeemer: [shaking his head] Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.

Narrator: Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.

Kinsman-redeemer: [taking off his shoe and giving it to Boaz] Buy it yourself.

Boaz: [to all the people] Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!"

Town Elders: We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel.

Narrator: So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Later, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

The End

Supplemental Information

There was a welfare system instituted by God through Moses for the poor in the land of Israel. “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.” (Lev 23:22 NIV) The story of Ruth illustrates these laws in action as Ruth is allowed to glean after the harvesters. “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit.” (Lev 25:35-37 NIV) “There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.” (Deu 15:11 NIV)

A Good Name

It is one thing to have a good name, but a different matter altogether to have a life corresponding to that name. Elimelech’s name implies “God is King”, and expressive name given him by godly parents when the nation followed the Lord. But Elimelech belied the name he bore, for had he truly believed that God was King, he would have stayed in Bethlehem in spite of the prevailing famine.

But one might argue that it was a wise thing to do to leave a famine stricken land for another land where there was plenty of food for his family. Surely that was a journey any father would undertake to have his dear ones from starvation. But Elimelech was a Jew and as such had the promise, “In the days of famine ye shall be satisfied.” Had he firmly believed in the sovereignty of God, Elimelech would have remained in Bethlehem, knowing that being in need can never throttle God. Had he not declared that bread and water for His own would be sure? Alas, however, Elimelech did not live up to his wonderful name! In going down to Moab, he stepped out of the will of God, who had forbidden His people to have any association with the Moabites. In Moab, Elimelech and his two sons found graves. Yet God overruled such a wrong move, for as the result of it, Ruth the Moabitess returned to Bethlehem with Naomi, who was to become the ancestress of our blessed Lord.

From All the Men of the Bible by Herbert Lockyer

Reflection questions

- Why did Elimelech and Naomi leave Bethlehem?
- Where did they go to live?
- What happened to Elimelech?
- Naomi’s two sons married two women from Moab. What were their names?
- Why did Naomi want to return to Bethlehem?
- Who stayed behind in Moab?
- Who went with Naomi?

- How did Ruth get grain so that they could make bread?
- Who owned the field where Ruth went to gather grain?
- What did Boaz say to Ruth when he first saw her in the field?
- What did Naomi tell Ruth to do at the end of the harvest?
- What did Boaz do when he learned it was Ruth lying at his feet?
- Who did Boaz take to be his wife?
- What was the name of their first child?