

Ruth 1



Starter question

What is the longest journey you have ever been on?

Pray

Our Father, please help us to listen to you as we hear this story about your people, that we would grow in our faith in you. Amen

Watch

There is a video of Helen Heywood reading a child-friendly retelling of this story available on the Thetford Team Ministry website (www.thetfordteamministry.org.uk) which you can watch (or read the version below if you prefer).



Read

1 ¹⁻² Long ago the judges^[a] ruled Israel. During their rule, there was a time in the land when there was not enough food to eat. A man named Elimelech left Bethlehem in Judah and moved to the country of Moab. He took his wife and his two sons with him. His wife was named Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlon and Kilion. These people were from the Ephrathah district around Bethlehem in Judah. The family traveled to Moab and lived there.

³ Later, Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died. So only Naomi and her two sons were left. ⁴ These sons married women from Moab. The name of one wife was Orpah. The name of the other wife was Ruth. Naomi and her sons lived in Moab about ten years. ⁵ Then Mahlon and Kilion also died. So Naomi was left alone without her husband or her two sons.

⁶ While Naomi was in Moab, she heard that the Lord had taken care of his people. He had given food to them in Judah. So Naomi got ready to leave Moab and go back home. The wives of Naomi's sons also got ready to go with her. ⁷ So they left the place where they had lived. And they started back on the way to the land of Judah. ⁸ But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back home. Each of you go to your own mother's house. You have been very kind to me and to my sons who are now dead. I hope the Lord will also be kind

to you in the same way. ⁹ I hope the Lord will give you another home and a new husband.”

Then Naomi kissed the women. And they began to cry out loud. ¹⁰ Her daughters-in-law said to her, “No. We will go with you to your people.”

¹¹ But Naomi said, “My daughters, go back to your own homes. Why do you want to go with me? I cannot give birth to more sons to give you new husbands. ¹² So go back to your own homes. I am too old to have another husband. But even if I had another husband tonight and if I had more sons, it wouldn’t help! ¹³ Would you wait until the babies were grown into men? Would you live for so many years without husbands? Don’t do this thing. My life is much too sad for you to share. This is because the Lord is against me!”

¹⁴ The women cried together again. Then Orpah kissed Naomi good-bye, but Ruth held on to her.

¹⁵ Naomi said, “Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her own people and her own gods. Go back with her.”

¹⁶ But Ruth said, “Don’t ask me to leave you! Don’t beg me not to follow you! Every place you go, I will go. Every place you live, I will live. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. ¹⁷ And where you die, I will die. And there I will be buried. I ask the Lord to punish me terribly if I do not keep this promise: Only death will separate us.”

¹⁸ Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her. So Naomi stopped arguing with her. ¹⁹ Naomi and Ruth went on until they came to the town of Bethlehem. When the two women entered Bethlehem, all the people became very excited. The women of the town said, “Is this Naomi?”

²⁰ But Naomi told the people, “Don’t call me Naomi.^[b] Call me Mara,^[c] because God All-Powerful has made my life very sad. ²¹ When I left, I had all I wanted. But now, the Lord has brought me home with nothing. So why should you call me Naomi when the Lord has spoken against me? God All-Powerful has given me much trouble.”

²² So Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth, the woman from Moab, came back from Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Footnotes:

- a. 1:1-2 **judges** They were not judges in courts of law, but leaders of the people in times of emergency.

- b. 1:20 **Naomi** This name means “happy” or “pleasant.”
- c. 1:20 **Mara** This name means “bitter” or “sad.”

International Children’s Bible (ICB)

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Background

This is a true story about some of God’s people who lived about 3000 years ago. Bethlehem was a town in the land which God had given his people; the people who lived in Moab were God’s enemies.

? Questions

- 1) Why does Elimelech leave Bethlehem and go to Moab? (verse 1)
- 2) Why does Naomi return to Bethlehem? (verse 6)
- 3) Why does Ruth go with Naomi? (verse 4, verses 16-18)
- 4) What was Ruth leaving behind? (verses 8-9, verse 15)
- 5) What would Ruth have instead of these things? (verse 16)

Elimelech and his family chose to leave God’s place when there was not enough food there. They hoped that things would be better in Moab, even though that meant living among God’s enemies. But Elimelech and his sons sadly died there. His wife, Naomi, decided to return home where God had provided food for his people. Her daughter-in-law, Ruth, wanted to go with Naomi as well: she had decided to follow the true God, even though it meant leaving behind her home and family. But she would belong to God’s family now, and have his care and protection.

Pray

Dear God, thank you that you provide for your people, and that you give us a new family to belong to when we trust in you. Please help us to keep trusting you and following you even when things are difficult. Amen.

Suggested activities

Choose one or two of these which suit your family.

Game: Follow my Leader - think about Ruth following Naomi to somewhere she didn't know

Craft: draw happy and sad faces on paper plates and then watch or read the story again, thinking about whether the people are happy or sad, and why

Craft: make a friendship bracelet for another member of our church family

Craft: colour in the picture of Ruth and Naomi below

Puzzle: complete the cryptogram below

CRYPTOGRAM (Ruth 1 v 16)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
22	14	19	17	24	20	12	6	21	10	7	4	23	16	3	9	26	2	25	8	11	15	5	18	1	13

____ _ . _____ _____ _____ , _____ _____ _____

24 15 24 2 1 9 4 22 19 24 1 3 11 12 3 21 5 21 4 4

____ _ . _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ , _____

12 3 24 15 24 2 1 9 4 22 19 24 1 3 11 4 21 15 24

____ _ _____ _____ _____ . _____ _____ _____ _____

21 5 21 4 4 4 21 15 24 1 3 11 2 9 24 3 9 4 24

____ _ _____ _____ _____ . _____ _____ _____

5 21 4 4 14 24 23 1 9 24 3 9 4 24 1 3 11 2

____ _ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ . _____

12 3 17 5 21 4 4 14 24 23 1 12 3 17

Directions:

This puzzle is called a Cryptogram. At the top there is a KEY that lists all the letters from A to Z with a box below. Each of the letters has a corresponding number.

The bottom part contains a secret phrase. Each of the blanks has a number underneath it. Fill in the letters that correspond to the numbers below the blanks to solve the phrase.

Ruth and Naomi



Every place you go, I will go. Every place you live, I will live.
Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God.

Ruth 1v16