

Naomi & Ruth

Materials

- 2 balloons

Introduction

Ruth and Naomi "Stick Together" Relay - Divide your children up into teams of two. Give each team a balloon. Tell your children that they have to get the balloon down to the other end of the room around a chair and back to the beginning of the line, but they can't use their hands, arms, mouths, or feet except to pick up and place the balloon at the beginning of the game. Tell your children they can decide where they want to place the balloon, but they must do it as a team and "Stick Together."

Story

Today we are in the book of Ruth. It is hard to find because it is one of the shortest books in the Bible! It's only four chapters or five pages long! Ruth is a story about a family, but with a twist. Let's think about all the different types of families of people we know. There's the storybook kind with a mom, a dad, two kids, and a dog, but that kind doesn't happen for everybody for many different reasons. So let's brainstorm what other families look like. What are some that you know?

Today we're going to hear about a family that is made up of a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. They are not related, technically. They are not much alike in where they come from, what religion they practice, or their ages, but they were both put in a difficult situation and created a family from it.

When this story happened, women were limited by the traditions of their time. Women worked a lot, but not usually in ways that allowed them to earn income. Naomi was a woman whose husband died, so she depended on her sons for support. Then the sons died, too. So not only was she without income, but so were her daughters-in-law, the wives of her sons. She couldn't support any of them, so she told her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to return to their mothers' homes. But something unexpected happened. Let's find out what!

Read Ruth 1:1-22.

Discuss:

- Would you have been like Orpah and gone home or like Ruth and stayed, and why?
- Naomi changed her name from the meaning "pleasant" to "bitter." Why do you think she did that? Did she have a right to feel bitter?
- Have you ever heard the saying, "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your relatives"? While that's right in one sense because you can't choose your parents and you usually don't get to choose your brothers or sisters, Ruth made a choice about whom her family would be. Why do you think she made the risky choice of her mother-in-law over her own family?
- Naomi touched on a tradition in Ruth 1:12-13 that most of us wouldn't know about now. When a man died before he had children, his brother had the responsibility to take his dead brother's wife as his own. If they could have a baby, it would be considered the child of the dead brother. This was important for several reasons. Can anyone guess what those reasons might be? (The woman would have a child to care for her in old age; the dead brother's family line would continue, so it would bring honor to his name.)
- If the brothers of the dead man were young, the widowed wife would have to wait for them to grow up. These things were part of the law found in the book of Deuteronomy. Help kids look up Deut. 25:5-6. The laws showed how important family was to these people. Do you think it is any different now?