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Sunday School Lesson

TOPIC:

“Ruth and Naomi”

Ruth 1:1-18

VERSE DISCOVERY: Ruth 1:1-18 (KJV, Public Domain)

Prepare

- Write on the board the word DECISIONS in acrostic form. Ask students for some examples of good decisions that we can connect to the letters in this word. Briefly discuss the important of good decisions and how it can impact our lives. Use this as a lead in for the lesson of Ruth and her decision to stay loyal and committed to Naomi and God.
- In the same acrostic form noted above, another take on the lesson or lead in to the lesson can focus on FRIENDS or FAMILY. Use either word to ask students for ideas on these subjects that we can connect to the letters of these words. Briefly discuss family or friends, and what it means to be FAITHFUL to both (which, by the way, can be another word to use in acrostic form for this lesson).

Explore – Full Lesson Available on pages 5-11

Decisions. Decisions. Decisions. One theme this lesson, written from my take on it, really hones in on is that our decisions matter. It is also the theme of a previous article I wrote concerning Ruth. Below is a portion of it, for the full article, click on the website and follow the link.

“There was a decision that had to be made that day. Both Ruth and Orpah would have to choose what path in life they would follow.

What would it have been like to stand there that day and to make that decision? Those times were not favorable toward women who were all alone. Should they stay or should they go?

Walking into the unknown toward Bethlehem with Naomi, Ruth chose to go. Orpah chose to return back home to her people. There she would hope to find some semblance of normalcy and stability. Ruth, as the Bible says, clung to Naomi and refused to be parted from this woman who has meant so much to her.

That day Ruth walked away from everything familiar with no promise for better. Ruth turned her back on her own family to love and support this woman who is not even of her own flesh and blood. Ruth chose a path most would not want to travel. Hers was a

path of self-sacrifice. Lest one take her story too lightly, they should consider her life in comparison with ours today.

Before I go anywhere, I plan ahead in great detail to be sure I lack nothing when I arrive. Ruth had no such pleasure. Not only was she not guaranteed any provisions of life, but would they even accept her in Bethlehem. Surely by now, they knew that Naomi's sons married Moabite women. How would she be treated? People would rejoice at the return of Naomi, but what of her? In that place, are there those who would take advantage of her? If any of those questions ever arose, they were not spoken for fear of thwarting the opportunity to follow Naomi. Her only concern was for that very woman, not herself.

In every part of her journey, Ruth stepped into the unknown. In her travels with Naomi, in her arrival in Bethlehem, her work at gleaning the fields to try and support Naomi, and in her marriage to Boaz. Everything was new to her and everything was strange. But, everything she did, she did for the love and care of Naomi.

What would it have been like to give up so much; to show so much love to make such a decision? If we knew all the particulars of a woman in her situation in that day, we would see that hers was a decision of pure love.

She knew everything she was leaving behind. She didn't know anything about where she was headed. But, declaring God as her own, her mind was made up and her heart was fixed. Onward she walked the journey where life would lead her because of that decision made that day.

In the end, God greatly blessed her life and the sacrifices she made on behalf of another. So much so, that she ended up giving birth to Obed who is the grandfather of King David, the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It started out with a decision. Not knowing what we were stepping into, would we have been able to make that decision? What would it have been like to be Ruth of the Bible?

Ruth teaches us our decisions matter!" (©WordForLifeSays/What Would it Have Been Like? – "To Be Ruth of the Bible")

The walk of faith continues to pull us all out of our comfort zones into the unknown with God. Yet, with God, can we really consider it to be unknown. We know that He is faithful and right in everything He does, and that alone should encourage us to make the faithful decision Ruth made and continue with Him all the way. Keep in mind, the decisions we make today can have far more reaching impact in our lives than just this day.

Activities

- Ruth clung to Naomi out of love, loyalty, and commitment. This is a good time to take inventory of our own relationships. Are there areas that we need to strengthen? What can we personally do to make these Ruth-like characteristics more active in our own life? Using the **Adult Journal Page**, jot down some ideas you may have. For the **Kid's Journal Page**, younger students can write some ways they can show love and kindness to those around them. **Blank Journal Pages** are provided on site to bring out any portion of the lesson that interests you.
- Younger students can draw a picture of **Ruth and Naomi** walking together toward Bethlehem in the **Draw the Scene** section found on site.
- Students can make a **Friendship Necklace**. Using yarn or string of any type, students can make two necklaces, stringing it through with beads and/or other materials. For the centerpiece of the necklace, have students make a heart with a simple message on it such as: "I Love U" or "Together 4 Ever." Cut the heart down the middle and punch holes on both sides of the heart. Now, you have one to side to attach to your own necklace and another one to attach to the friend/family one you made.
- Alternate activity sheets such as **Word Search and more**, can be found on site for those just wanting to work with printed materials.

Review

- Commit to memory the base verse from the lesson: ***"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:" Ruth 1:16.***
- Fill out the review sheet provided (page 12)
- Do an online search of any Bible review game to help drive home the point of the lesson.

Life

Actions speak louder than words. Ruth's story was a great example of that. Sometimes in the busyness of life we overlook or take for granted the people in our own life, when in fact, they are some of God's greatest blessings to us. We may not overlook or take others for granted on purpose, but we can, on purpose, take time this week to build those relationships. Make it a point to do little, unexpected kind things to *show* people how much you care.

TOPIC:

“Ruth and Naomi”

Ruth 1:1-18

VERSE DISCOVERY: Ruth 1:1-18 (KJV, Public Domain)

Few relationships in life are stronger than a mother and her child. A mother would rarely have to think twice before making a sacrifice that would better the life of a child. So, too, would a child be more than willing to go out on a limb to care for and love on their mother.

Their relationship has been bound together from the womb to the point that love and sacrifice spoken between the two is not a foreign language.

But what is this familial attachment didn't come from womb binding? People, every day and all over the world, make the heart decision to love another as their own. They willingly step into that vacant position of another's life to fill it with the love and support the other so desperately needs.

The story of Ruth and Naomi is such a relationship. When she has nothing to gain and everything to lose, Ruth turned her back on everything comfortable and familiar and walked into a life unknown because she had connected herself and committed herself to love and care for a mother who was not her own.

All decisions have an end result and little did she know it at the time, but the decision that Ruth made on that day would bless her life greatly.

ELIMELECH'S DECISION

Ruth 1:1-5 “Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and

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continued there. **And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.**”

The time of the “**judges**” start when Joshua, Moses’ successor, passes off the scene and continues to the time of Samuel who became the last judge of the people. This time period is filled with a lot of ups and downs involving Israel’s history. The downs came by way of the heart of a people that constantly strayed from the will of God (Judges 2:10-12). People refused to be governed by what was holy and right and decided they would all live according to their own ways and what they thought was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25).

The ups they experienced as a people came when, despite their sinfulness, God raised judges to deliver them out of their circumstances (Judges 2:16).

Storylines like these show mankind’s pull away from the will of God. But with God being the Author of all, the hardest storylines can have the sweetest of endings, as the story of Ruth will prove.

One hard part of the storyline is dealing with life-changing circumstances. A “**famine**” was in the land and caused one man, one family, to make the hard choice to leave everything behind and go where there is the possibility of something better. One must believe that’s what drove “**Elimelech**” to uproot his family and to plant them in a strange land such as “**Moab.**”

The desperation they were facing must have been strong because the children of Israel and the people of Moab don’t exactly have a cordial background toward one another. Earlier in their history, when the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness from their exodus out of Egypt, they were not well-received by the Moabites. At one point, there was even an attempt at cursing them (Deuteronomy 23:3-6; compare Numbers 22-24).

Leaving their home, Elimelech and his family settled in this new place “**about ten years.**” During that time, Elimelech died (vs.3), leaving Naomi alone with her two sons “**Mahlon and Chilion.**”

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How Elimelech died is not recorded, but what is noted that the two sons of Naomi married women of Moab by the names of “**Orpah and Ruth,**” which was also a direct violation of the Law (Deuteronomy 23:3). Time passed, and the sons of “**Naomi**” also died (vs. 5) and now this family has dwindled down to three lowly widows.

What’s a girl to do? A question we may flippantly toss about in our day during times of frustration, but it was a real question, following real circumstances, that must be answered if there were any hope of a brighter future coming from this dismal past.

NAOMI’S DECISION

Ruth 1:6-13 “Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother’s house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.”

So, what’s a girl to do? Naomi, taking inventory of all that transpired and where she is in life, made the decision that now it was time to return to her own homeland “**from the country of Moab**” where they have been dwelling these past ten years. They came to this land during the desperation of a famine, but while in this land she lost even more. It was time to pick up the pieces and move on.

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How she heard it, we don't know, but Naomi got wind **“that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.”** Although famine was often used as judgment from God, we are not sure if that's the reasoning behind the famine that drove Elimelech to leave. But, one thing is for sure, it was God who is credited with giving the people bread again. God **“visited”** His people. God ended the famine. God provided their now plentiful supply.

Therefore, Naomi **“arose with her daughters in law”** to head back home. Perhaps there she can find solace among her own people. Perhaps there help for the hopelessness she faced can be found. Perhaps there this worst-case scenario can have a happy ending.

Please Note: Let God in on your story. Let God in your decisions. Elimelech left his homeland because he thought Moab could answer his woes and provide more. Naomi left Moab to go back home for the same reasons. How much could this story have been impacted further if they looked to God first before making any moves? Thankfully, God is Sovereign, and through His providence, He redeems this story to bring about the most beautiful and timely end that glorifies Him alone.

Rising with her daughters in law to begin her journey, Naomi, thinking about not only her future but the future of these two women she has come to love as her own, suddenly realizes it's not best for them to follow her into a future unknown. What positive reception would she receive, if any, after being gone so long, let alone, how would these Moabite women be received? What of the perilous journey? Surely, it's not best to have three unguarded women traveling alone. Even after considering all of that, what kind of future would they really have if they followed Naomi?

“Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house.” She gave them a lifeline. She gave them free course to go back home. She released them from any obligation they may have felt tied them to this dear woman. **“Each”** one had a choice. **“Each”** one had the option to move on. **“Each”** one, I'm sure she felt a motherly concern for and was seeking their best outcome with this announcement. They were still young and had many years ahead that could be filled with so much more than what Naomi could offer. Therefore, she spoke, **“The LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.”**

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Through all of the loss and uncertainty, they have stood by Naomi's side. In the camaraderie of widowhood, they have shared in the pain and concern for one another, but now it is time to move on. Staying as things are now will help none of them, so Naomi spoke again, "**The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband.**" A future with her remains in the unknown, but if these daughters would go back to their own land and find "**husbands**" there they could have "**rest**" and the security they so needed in those days. For this reason, she urges them away because she genuinely loves them.

So much so, at the announcement of her decision, "**she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.**" This expression shows that their love for one another is as real as if they had come from her own womb. Although Naomi's suggestion of this separation was for their good, it was still heart-wrenching and they "**wept**" because that's what you do when something is hurting you like it was hurting these women. To lose so much in such a short amount of time, and now this. Their sorrow was overwhelming.

Overwhelming or not, the women couldn't fathom doing anything but staying with Naomi until the end. They said, "**Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.**" They just were not ready to let of this dear woman so easily. Originally, they both claimed they would give up everything to follow her. Originally, they were both unwavering in each of their personal commitments to their mother-in-law, but Naomi stepped in and explained in further detail how that decision could affect their future happiness and well-being.

She, herself, is well-advanced in years. She has no husband of her own any longer. She has no more "**sons**". She has nothing to offer these women. No one to step in place for her. No one to fill the void her sons left in these widowed women (see Deuteronomy 25:5). As far as she could see, the only way for them to have a happy ending to this sad story was to go back home.

Even if she were to marry tonight and have sons, would it seem reasonable or fair to ask these women to wait until they are of age? "**Would ye tarry for them till they were grown?**" she asked. Would you refrain yourselves from having the love and security of a husband now, and for all those years?

That was a heavy burden to bear, especially for women in that day. Without a husband or older children to care for them, times were very hard. For these women, with so much

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possibility ahead, Naomi couldn't ask them to stay as they are just for her. Naomi grieved over her situation and for her daughters' sake. She felt as if the **"hand of the LORD"** was against her. Little did she know, God's hand was working something wonderful out for her in this time of despair.

RUTH'S DECISION

Ruth 1:14-18 "And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her."

Weeping, and saying her good-bye's, **"Orpah"** headed back to her people and her mother's house. She reluctantly agreed with Naomi's take on their dire circumstance and sought something more for herself by returning to her home.

But Ruth, not seeking to make life easier for herself, could not bear to leave Naomi. The Bible says, **"Ruth clave unto her."** She would not let her go without her. She would not detach herself from her. She loved this woman and refused to walk away from her.

One must ask, what of Ruth's own mother? What of her family and the chance to see them all again and to live with them again? Surely, she could have had a comfortable life by staying in the comfort zone of the familiar. But, she feels the pull to walk away from it all, declaring, **"Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."**

She stood her ground on her original commitment. She committed herself to Naomi, her people, and her God for life! "Nothing," she declared, **"but death part thee and me."** That,

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my friend, is genuine love. Due to her husband’s death, she could have been cleared from all of this, but genuine love and commitment caused her to hold on and go all the way with Naomi and God, wherever that future may lead.

The Bible tells us, “Happy are the people, whose God is the LORD,” (Psalm 144:15b). The one who willingly attaches themselves to God attaches themselves to the best. They are truly blessed regardless of everything they have left behind. Ruth, a faithful woman, refused to have it any other way.

Naomi no longer tried to stop her. **“When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.”** Ruth’s heart and mind were made up and she would not be dissuaded from her choice. Seeing her commitment and love, not just in words, but in action, moved Naomi’s heart also to allow this beautiful daughter in law to follow her home into the new life that was waiting for them both.

Ruth’s story will continue beyond the verses covered in this lesson. In the end, her faithfulness to Naomi and God brings about a blessing she could have never possibly foreseen.

Stay faithful, dear friends, for every decision, just like those in this lesson, brings about a certain end result.

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TOPIC:

“Ruth and Naomi”

Ruth 1:1-18

Please Answer the Review Questions Below

1. **T** or **F**. The city of Jerusalem his where Elimelech took his family to during the famine. Ruth 1:1
2. Circle the names of Elimelech’s sons. (Ruth 1:2)
A. David **B.** Chilion **C.** Mahlon **D.** Malachi
3. Why do you think times were so hard for widows during the Bible period covering this lesson?

4. What does it mean when it says “**the LORD had visited his people**” in the lesson? (Ruth 1:6).

5. “Then she arose with her _____ in law, that she might return. (Ruth 1:6

A. Mother **B.** Son **C.** Seventy **D.** Daughters

6. **T** or **F**. Unlike Ruth, Orpah refused to leave her mother in law. (Ruth 1:14)

7. Love can be shown and grown in many different ways. After reviewing this lesson, are you inspired to spread some love seeds around? If you said yes, how will you do it?

