

Ruth and Naomi

A young Moabite widow refuses to leave her mother-in-law, speaking beautiful words of loyalty and following Naomi to Bethlehem.

Ruth 1:1-22

CHARACTERS: Ruth, Naomi, Orpah

THEMES: Loyalty, Faithfulness, Choosing God, Family

IN THE DAYS when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. A man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife Naomi and two sons, went to live in the country of Moab.

The man's name was Elimelech. His sons married Moabite women—one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After about ten years, Elimelech and both sons died, leaving Naomi alone with her two daughters-in-law.

When Naomi heard that the Lord had provided food for His people in Judah, she prepared to return home. As she started on the road back, she urged her daughters-in-law, 'Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me.'

She kissed them goodbye, and they wept aloud. 'We will go back with you to your people,' they said.

But Naomi insisted. 'Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons who could become your husbands? I am too old to have another husband. Even if I had one tonight and bore sons, would you wait until they grew up?'

She continued, 'No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!'

At this they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

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

But Ruth replied, '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 even death separates you and me.'

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. The whole town was stirred because of them. 'Can this be Naomi?' the women exclaimed.

'Don't call me Naomi,' she told them. 'Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty.'

So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law. They arrived in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.