

Jacob's Ladder

Program 3: Ruth and Naomi

Teaching Plan For Youth

Summary: The Hebrew family of Elimelech and Naomi are facing difficult times. A severe famine has caused them to leave their home and venture to a new land where they are not welcome and new hardships await. Questions for discussion are in *italics*.

Scripture: Ruth 1

Teaching Theme: Faith should guide us through trials. Strong, healthy communities support individuals and welcome new members.

Take a Pulse (gauge the students' understanding of some key words and get them thinking about the topic):

1. **Insider/Outsider Activity:** As students arrive, hand almost all the students a small bag of M&M's. Choose several students to receive a small bag of puffed rice cereal instead. Group the students according to what they've got as a snack. Now have the kids with puffed rice try to convince the other kids to trade with them.
2. *How is a community different from a neighborhood? Which word best describes our youth group?*
3. *How does it feel to leave a community and start over in a new one? Describe your experiences with changes in school, church, or neighborhood communities.*

View the 30 minute video. Discuss initial reactions and any points of confusion.

Explore the Story:

1. *What hardship had befallen Elimelech's family, causing them to leave their homeland? Describe their emotions as they leave and head into the unknown.*
2. *What type of welcome did they receive in Moab? What is at the root of the hatred the Moabites feel towards the Hebrews? Why did most Moabites reject the Hebrews as members of their community?*
3. *One Moabite family was kind to Elimelech's family. How did they welcome them into their "community?"*
4. *When the sons become attracted to the Moabite girls, what is the reaction of their parents? Why?*

5. *Elimelech says, “If they love our boys, won’t they love the Everlasting?” What is your opinion? Does love for God’s people typically lead to love of God? How did this concept play out in the case of Naomi’s sons?*
6. *How would you describe Naomi’s faith throughout her many trials and difficulties? Do you see her as turning from God or turning towards God?*
7. *At the end of this story, Ruth voluntarily accepts the role of outsider, choosing to accompany Naomi to what will be a strange land for her. She will now be the new person in a land of unknowns. What motivates her to make this sacrifice? What evidence do we have of her sincerity?*

Live the Lesson

1. *When you face tough times, who do you turn to?*
2. *Have you ever tried to change your own personality to fit in with a clique? How did that go?*
3. *Do you see yourself as being a part of any clique? How welcoming is your group? How about our youth group? Is it welcoming?*
4. **Welcoming Outsiders Activity:** Bring in an outrageous costume, wig, hat, or even makeup and have one or more students volunteer to leave the room to dress up. This person will be the “Outsider,” and will wait in the hall until you call them. Meanwhile, distribute 9”x12” sheets of heavy paper to the rest of the class. Have them cut their papers into large “speech balloons” and use wide markers to write a phrase that could be used as a conversation starter to welcome a new person into the group. Then invite your “Outsider” back in and have the class practice using their speech balloon conversation starters to welcome the “Outsider” into their established group.
5. *Is it harder to welcome a new person whose appearance and beliefs are different than your own?*
6. **Make a plan for how your group will make visitors and guests feel welcome in your group. Commit to carrying out your plan when you have the opportunity.**

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Program 4: Ruth and Boaz

Teaching Plan For Youth

Summary: Upon returning to Canaan, Ruth and Naomi find that their situation is not improved. Ruth is an old, broken woman and Naomi is an unwelcome foreigner. With no home and no money, these women need a plan for survival. Questions for discussion are in *italics*.

Scripture: Ruth 2-3

Teaching Themes: God's plans often involve hard work and effort on our part. God calls us to care for the needy.

Take a Pulse (gauge the students' understanding of some key words and get them thinking about the topic):

4. **Gleaning Pom-Poms Activity:** Purchase a large bag of pom-poms of various sizes from extra large to extra tiny. Give each student a paper cup. Scatter all the pom-poms around the floor and tell the students that the pom-poms represent food. In order to survive for the day, they must fill their cup with pom-poms. You can be sure the kids will work fast if you offer a candy reward when their cup is filled. Choose one or more students to be the "Gleaners," while the rest are "Workers." Give the "Workers" a head start – they will quickly fill their cups with the largest pom-poms. Then let the "Gleaners" have their turn. They will be stuck gathering the left over tiny pom-poms. Discuss why it was harder to be a "Gleaner" than a "Worker." Lead the students to an understanding of the term "Gleaner": One who gathers the left over crop after the field has been harvested.
5. Bring in a sampling of brochures or letters from various local or global ministries. Discuss the purpose of some of the ministries. *Who benefits from each of these ministries?*

View the 30 minute video. Discuss initial reactions and any points of confusion.

Explore the Story:

8. *When Ruth and Naomi return to Bethlehem, what is the reaction of Naomi's former neighbors?*
9. *Does this Hebrew community seem welcoming? Are they a healthy community?*
10. *What plan does Ruth come up with for getting food? How will this put her new faith to the test?*

11. *How does Boaz show kindness to Ruth, who is a foreigner?*
12. *Naomi is well aware of the Hebrew laws requiring their nearest kinsman to marry Ruth and care for both of them. Yet, she allows Ruth to do extremely hard work in a dangerous situation in order to survive. Why do you think Naomi made this choice?*
13. *How do Ruth's hard work and faithfulness pay off?*

Live the Lesson

7. *What opportunities do you have for sharing with those who are in need?*
8. **Leftovers Anyone?:** Bring in a dozen fresh donuts and a few day old or stale donuts. Break a piece out of each stale donut to make it look like someone has taken a bite. Prepare serving plates of each and offer the kids their choice of a snack. Discuss why no one wants the old leftover donuts. *Who might be happy to eat the leftovers?*
9. *When giving to those in need, do you tend to give your leftovers or your best? How about when giving time to God? Do you give your "leftover" time when you have nothing else to do, or do you give God your "prime" time?*
10. *If you were in a situation like Ruth's, would you be willing to work as hard as she did in order to survive? Would you be willing to work hard in order to have resources to share with others who are needy?*
11. Make a plan for your class to support a needy family or a ministry. Make this experience meaningful by requiring the kids to do meaningful work in the process, giving of their best and not their "leftovers."

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Gateway Films/Vision Video
P.O. Box 540
Worcester, PA 19490
Phone: 1-800-523-0226 • Fax: 610-584-6643
E-Mail: info@visionvideo.com
Web: www.visionvideo.com