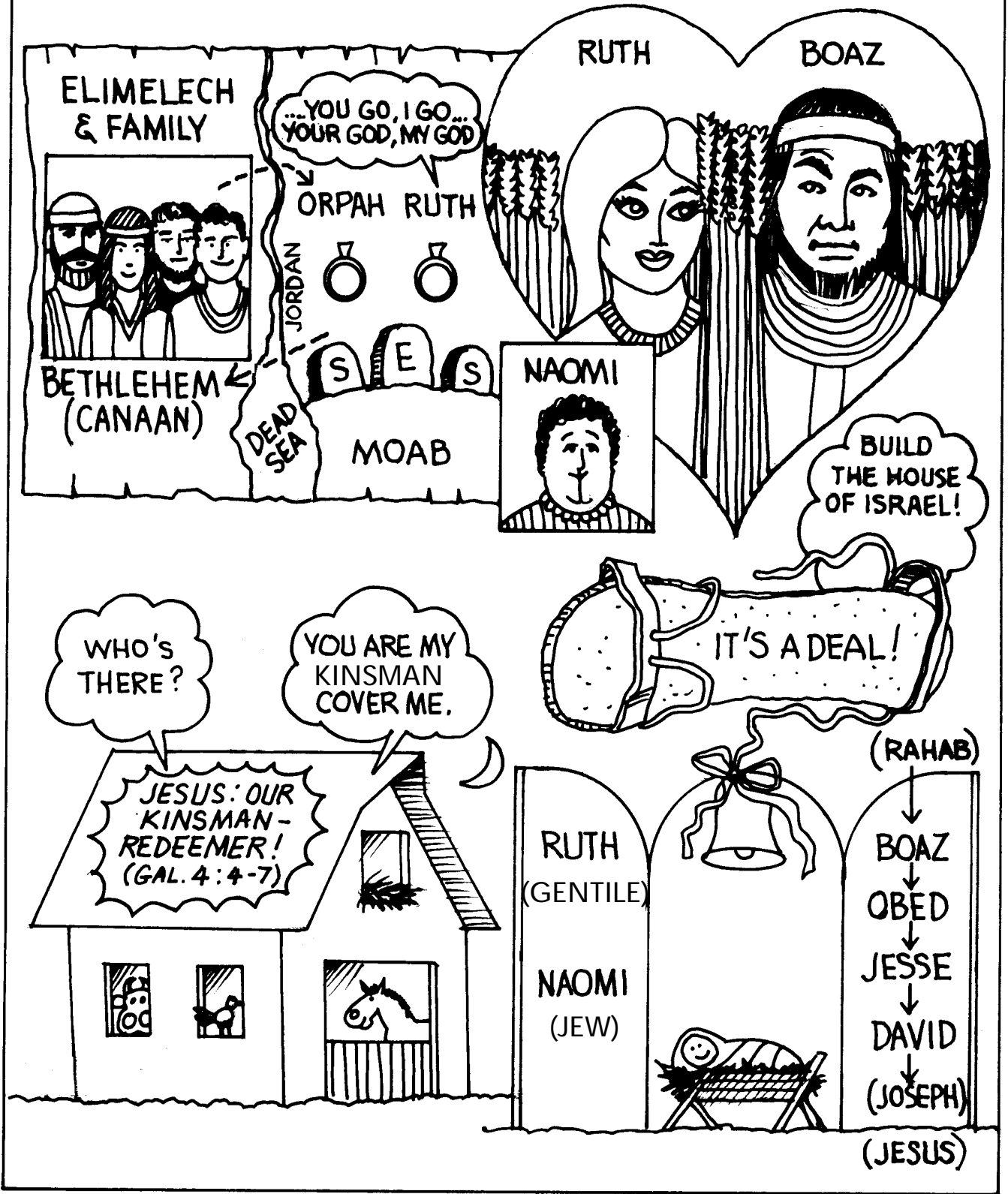


RUTH A LOVE STORY



Ruth

A Love Story

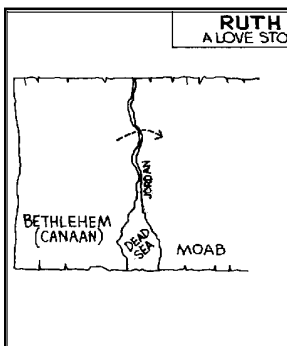
Orientation: (Write: Title and subtitle in box provided on Student Sheet)

We left Judges with “a new low” for the nation of Israel. Judges had come and gone. The people were doing many evil acts - as bad as the people in the country which God was judging. The last verse of Judges explains the problem: They did not acknowledge God as their King, and “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

God had warned Israel of the consequences for sin. “If you disobey me, I will withdraw my hand of blessing” (Deuteronomy 28:15-40). As a result of their continuing (and escalating) sin, God allowed a severe famine to strike their land. Bethlehem, meaning “house of bread” (because of its usual harvest), was empty. The book of Ruth is a wonderful love story between an Israelite man (Boaz), and a Moabite woman (Ruth). God orchestrates this love relationship, demonstrating His strong hand of protection to people of faith and obedience, even when things seem to be going very wrongly.

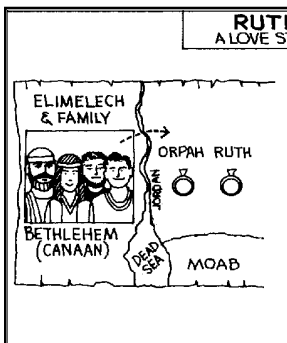
Notes

A. In Search of Food. (Draw: edges of old map with river and sea. Write: “Dead Sea”, “Jordan”, “Bethlehem”, “Canaan” and “Moab”)



1. Elimelech, whose name means “my God is my King”, lived in Bethlehem at the time of a severe famine. He and his family, desperate for food, decided to move across the Jordan River into enemy territory - the land of Moab. (**Draw: arrow from left to right**)
2. We know the move was “desperate” because the Moabites were hostile to Israel and had previously forced them into slavery. Their pagan religion included human sacrifice. But God has a plan.

B. Elimelech’s Family (Draw: family. Write: “Elimelech & Family”)

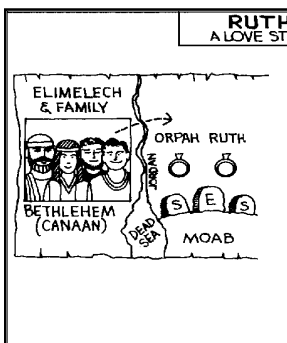


1. At the time of the move, Elimelech’s two boys were probably teenagers. We can draw a happy family, assuming that they were able to find food in the new country.
2. Whether in God’s favor or not (the record does not say), Elimelech and his family meet their neighbors and begin to settle in.

C. First Problems. (Draw: ground & tombstone. Write: “E”)

1. Unfortunately, their happiness was short-lived. Soon after moving to Moab, Elimelech contracts a terrible disease and dies.
2. The Hebrew family is now without a father, living far away from their homeland, and probably feeling very much alone.

D. Bittersweet Marriages. (Draw: Rings. Write: “Orpah” and “Ruth”)



1. Ten years pass and joy fills the home again when Elimelech’s two sons bring home brides from their Moabite neighbors. One lady is named Orpah, the other, Ruth, after whom this book is named.
2. (**Draw: Two tombstones. Write: “S” on each one**) Whether from the same disease that struck their father, we do not know; but both sons die, seemingly on the same day.

3. Now Elimelech's grief stricken widow, Naomi, with the responsibility of two daughters-in-law, is left in a strange land, surrounded by pagans who worship evil gods.

4. When all appears hopeless, word comes that God has "visited His people and given them bread", which probably means the drought is over and the grain is growing (1:6). Naomi makes plans to return home where she still has relatives and property. She tells Orpah and Ruth to go back to their homes in Moab and establish a new life.

E. Day of Decision.

1. Both daughters-in-law are heartbroken. They obviously love Naomi very much. Orpah decides to stay in Moab.

2. (Draw: balloon over Ruth's name. Write: "...You Go, I Go... Your God, My God") Ruth clings to Naomi, pleading for her to not send her away. Her words have become well-known: "For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (1:16). Naomi's faith has become Ruth's faith.

3. (Draw: arrow back to Bethlehem) Together, without the love and protection of husbands, the two ladies head for Bethlehem.

F. Back Home. (Draw: Naomi in box)

1. Hard times have caused Naomi's face to change and people ask, "Is that you, Naomi?" (1:19). Naomi says, "No longer call me Naomi (pleasant); call me 'Mara' (bitter). I left Bethlehem full. I have returned empty"(1:20, 21).

2. She and Ruth have returned home with no husbands and no food. But Ruth loves Naomi and tries to take care of her.

G. The Harvest Field. (Draw: Barley field)

1. God has sent the rain; the harvest is ready and the hungry reapers are hard at work in Bethlehem.

2. The Mosaic law required all Israeli reapers to leave grain for the "poor and the strangers" (Deuteronomy 24: 19-21).

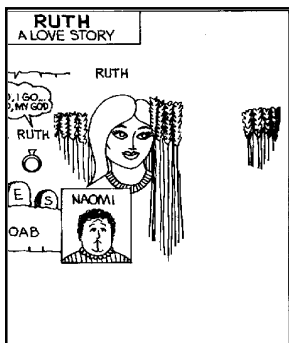
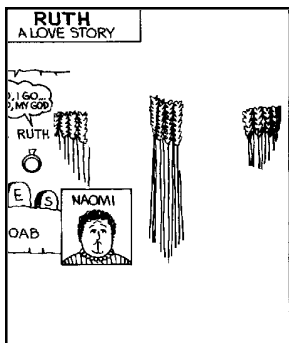
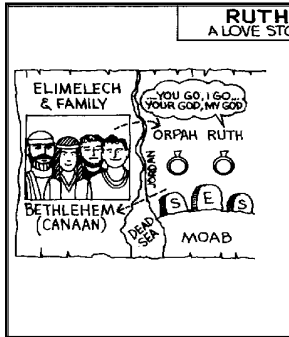
3. As a stranger with no money, Ruth felt that she qualified for this charity, and asks permission from her mother-in-law to join the harvesters.

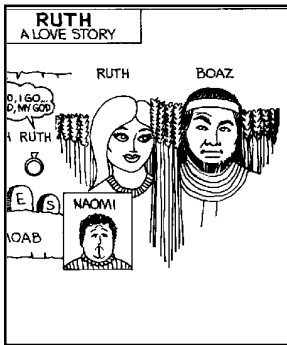
H. Ruth. (Draw: Ruth in the harvest field. Write: "Ruth")

1. Ruth is a beautiful woman. She is later described as "virtuous" (3:11). She is a woman of character and, thanks to the influence of Elimelech, she is a believer in God.

2. Ruth is totally dedicated and submitted to Naomi. In the words of the local ladies, she is "better to Naomi than 7 sons"(4:15).

3. However, she is a lone woman in a strange land. She is helpless and vulnerable. She "happened", on that day, to harvest in a field owned by Boaz, a member of Elimelech's family (2:1).





I. Boaz. (Draw: Boaz in the harvest field. Write: “Boaz”)

1. Boaz is a wealthy land owner with many employees.
2. He is a good boss. When he arrives in the field, he openly blesses his workers, and they bless him. There is obvious mutual respect and affection in this workplace.
3. Boaz is a man of solid, mature character. He does things God’s way, the right way.
4. He is also a man. He sees Ruth and asks, “Who is that?” (2:5).
5. An employee tells him about Ruth and how kind she has been to Naomi. Boaz is impressed and instructs his workers to leave extra grain for Ruth to pick up ...and to leave her alone.
6. (**Read: 2:12**) Boaz is “in touch” with God. He recognizes God’s hand in sending Ruth to his particular field. He asks her to eat at his table with his employees and to harvest only in his field.

J. Ruth Returns Home.

1. When Ruth returns home, she shows Naomi the big bundle of grain which the owner of the field had arranged for her.
2. “And who is the owner?” Naomi inquires. Ruth responds, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz” (2:19).
3. Ding! Lights go on for Naomi. He is not only wealthy, generous and nice, he is their next of kin.

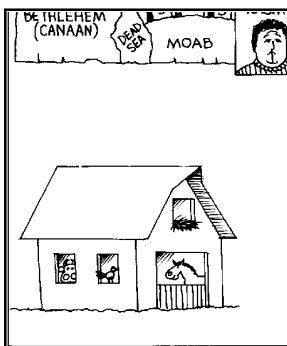
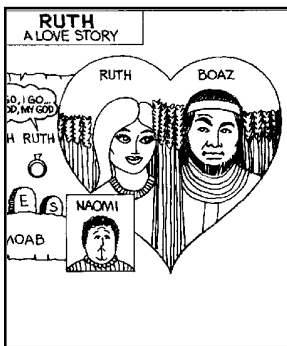
The Mosaic law provided for the next of kin to marry a man’s widow so that his name continue and his property be kept in the family (Deuteronomy 25:5, 6). Naomi’s husband had property which she wanted to sell, and she, no doubt, saw the possibility of Boaz redeeming the property.

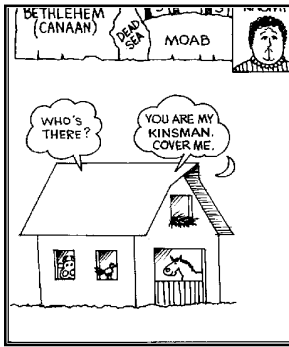
K. A Relationship Grows. (Draw: heart outline)

1. At his request, Ruth stays close to Boaz and his workers (2:21). The harvesting continues for the next 3 months and a relationship blossoms.
2. Naomi sees what is happening and decides that the best approach is to let Boaz know of their willingness to fulfill the “next of kin” law. However, since the next of kin was not obligated to accept the responsibility, Naomi decides to make the “approach” as attractive as possible.

L. Harvest Has Ended. (Draw: Ground and barn with animals)

1. Naomi knows that tonight Boaz, with other men, will be processing their grain at the threshing floor (illustrated for our purposes as a barn). After their work is complete, the men will eat, drink and go to bed.
2. Naomi instructs Ruth to take a bath and to put on perfume and her best clothes. She is to go to the barn, wait until everyone is asleep, then lie down at the end of Boaz’s blanket (3:3,4). Putting her trust in God and Naomi, Ruth obeys. (Once again, Ruth has placed herself in great vulnerability.)





M. That Night.

1. (**Draw: moon & balloon. Write: “Who’s There?”**) About midnight, the startled Boaz realizes someone is lying at the foot of his bed (3:8).

2. (**Draw: balloon. Write: “You Are My Kinsman. Cover Me.”**) Ruth responds. Ruth’s statement is not a proposition; it is a proposal, within the Mosaic law, for marriage (See Deuteronomy 25).

3. Boaz is a man of God. He also loves Ruth very much and wants to protect, not take advantage of her. He compliments her for her virtue and selecting him over the “younger men” (3:10).

4. “I am willing to perform my duty,” he says, “however, you are mistaken- I am not your nearest kin. I must make you available to him first.” (Ruth’s heart may have skipped a beat.)

5. In the interest of her reputation, should she be seen, Boaz instructs her to wait until everyone is fast asleep. He then loads her shawl with an abundance of grain, and sends her home.

N. Back Home With Naomi.

1. Ruth arrives home early in the morning. Naomi must have been waiting at the door, wringing her hands, asking, “Yes, yes, what happened?”

2. Ruth shows her the container of grain. (She may have also expressed concern that she was not, after all, the nearest of kin).

3. Naomi assures her, “Don’t worry, honey; Boaz is a man of action, and he knows what to do” (3:18). She was right.

O. At Daybreak. (**Draw: Sandal. Write: “It’s a Deal!”**)

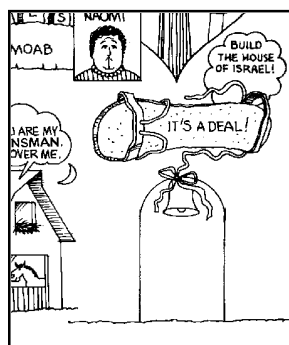
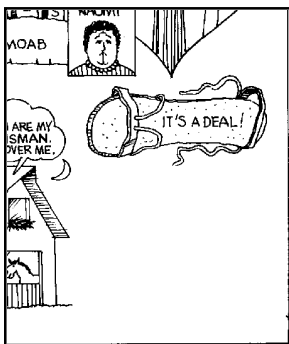
1. Boaz calls a city council meeting with the elders and the next of kin. After reviewing the case, he concludes, “Naomi has property to release and this man has first right. However, if he accepts the land, he must also marry the Moabite widow”(4:5).

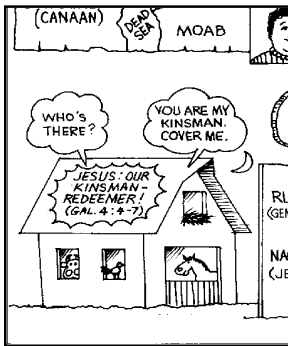
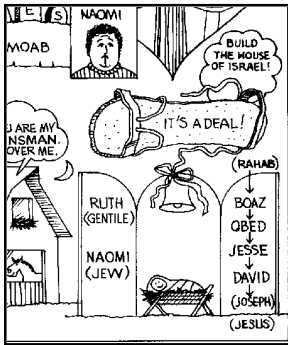
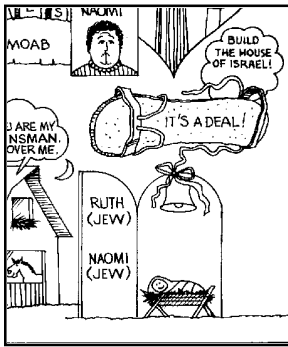
2. To protect his birthright, the nearest of kin declines. Boaz announces, “You are all witnesses. I hereby accept Naomi’s land and I will take Ruth as my wife. The “deal” is settled by passing a sandal (their contract). (See Deuteronomy 25:9, 10)

3. (**Draw: balloon. Write: “Build the House of Israel”**) The blessing given by the people of Israel that day reveals not only a full acceptance of Ruth, but a prophetic word concerning Ruth and Boaz in the ultimate plan of God. (**Read: 4:11, 12**)

P. Wedding Bells Ring.

1. (**Draw: Ground, arch & bell with ribbon**) It is a grand occasion! One of the city’s most prominent men is about to marry a woman whom, it seems, everyone loves. Wedding bells ring as a happy Boaz takes Ruth as his wife, and we can easily “picture” a big smile returning to mother Naomi’s face. God is good!





2. (**Draw: baby in crib**) In the course of time, and with circumstances still moving in God’s order, a baby son is born. His grateful parents name him Obed, which means “servant”.

3. (**Draw: Left panel. Write: “Ruth - Gentile” and “Naomi - Jew”**) Ruth, a Gentile Moabite, has been adopted into the family of God. Naomi takes the child, lays him on her bosom and becomes his nurse. Her friends declare, “A son has been born to Naomi!” God has greatly blessed this once “empty” vessel; she is full again and through it all, He has orchestrated the entire development of the Messianic family line.

Q. The Family Tree. (**Draw: Right panel. Write: following names shown in bold**)

1. This is not the first time that God has moved outside of Israel to “grow” His family tree. As you may remember, the mother of Boaz was none other than **Rahab**, the Canaanite harlot.
2. Starting with Perez, a prominent ancestor, the genealogy is traced all of the way from **Boaz** to his son **Obed** to **David** (their favorite king). We know from reading the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 1), that David was the ancestor of **Joseph** - who married Mary, the mother of **Jesus**.

R. Our Kinsman, Redeemer. (**Draw: Starburst. Write: “Jesus: Our Kinsman-Redeemer!- Galatians 4:4-7”**)

1. We, like Ruth, are helpless strangers, without help or hope in a hostile world. Our inheritance is rooted in a fallen nature. Jesus, of whom Boaz was a type, possesses the character and the power to set us free and meet our needs.
2. (**Read: Galatians 4:4-7**) Jesus left His home in heaven to become our “Kinsman”, identifying with us in every way.
3. As the Lamb of God, He paid the supreme price for our redemption. His blood covers our failures, weaknesses and sins.
4. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are adopted into God’s family.

APPLICATIONS FOR LIFE

1. As Christians, to whom could we compare Boaz? Ruth?
2. What do you mean when you ask God to “cover” you?
3. Name some character strengths of Boaz that we should emulate.
4. How did Naomi “keep the faith”?
5. What scripture assures us that, “All things work together for good for those who love God?” (Romans 8:28).
6. What is the significance of God including Rahab and Ruth in the Messianic family tree?
7. Discuss the Apostle Paul’s writing concerning staying connected to God’s family (Romans 11:20).

