**Ruth 1**

**“But as for me…”**

**Scripture:** Ruth 1:6-18

**Memory Verse:** Psalm 31:14*“But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God’”.*

**Lesson Focus:** Last week we introduced the book of Ruth by stopping in v. 5 in what appears to be a hopeless situation. We sketched the idea of “But God” to show that even in the darkest of times, we can trust in Him to be working things for good. This week we will focus on Ruth’s response of loyal faith in God, characterizing it as “But as for me”.

**Activities and Crafts:** Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Make It Real Discussion for 3rd – 5th.

Craft for 1st & 2nd: Friends Stick Together

**Starter Activity:** Cliffhanger Story: To remind them where we left off in Ruth 1, tell a quick story and end it on a cliffhanger. Consider asking the kids to finish the story for you. Example:

“Firefighter John slowly approached the burning home with both courage and fear. He knew that he did not have a lot of time to enter the home and rescue the children that were trapped in the basement of the home. The children’s mother had barely escaped and was crying as she watched the flames consume the home unable to save her children. John’s partners had to restrain her from foolishly running back into the home to save them herself. He said a quick prayer to the Lord and fully equipped with all of his gear and ready to risk his life, he ran into the fiery home…..”

Q: Where would you take the story?

This is similar to where we left off in the book of Ruth last week. God’s people, Israel, were being punished by God because they had rebelled and turned their backs on Him. The family of Naomi had fled the good land promised to them by God and into the enemy territory of Moab where her sons married Ruth and Orpah, Moabite women. Then all of the men of the family died and all three women were widows. In ancient times, being a widow was very dangerous as they could not get jobs and take care of themselves.

Let’s see where God takes the story of Ruth!

**Bible Study: Ruth 1:6-18**

**God’s grace! 1:6**

This is the first time we see God mentioned in this story.

Q: What do we see God doing?

A: God has mercy and grace upon His people and provides them with food.

Remember there was a famine in the land brought about by God as punishment for the sin of Israel as shown in the book of Judges. We can assume that the people of Israel had turned back to the Lord in faith and that in so doing, the Lord restored them.

In this verse it says that God “visited” His people by giving them bread.

Q: What does it mean to “visit” someone? When you “visit” people, do you often come with a gift?

In this story, God visited His people by giving them food. The Bible is full of examples of God visiting His people and giving them good things, because He is a giving God.

Q: Can you think of the most amazing way of how God “visited” and gave us the greatest gift of all?
A: Christmas! God gave us His Son what we might be rescued from our sin! John 3:16. Luke 1:68 describes the coming birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah this way:

“*Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has* ***visited*** *and redeemed His people*”

**A dangerous journey. Ruth 1:7**

Thus Naomi begins the journey back to Israel accompanied by Ruth and Orpah.

Q: How many of you like going on roadtrips? Or how many of you have flown somewhere? Does it sometimes seem like it takes forever?

Back in ancient times, there were no cars or airplanes. It was also unsafe and these three women likely traveled alone without laws to protect them. Remember Judges 21:15 “*each one did what was right in his own eyes*”. Imagine what it must have been like!

**Go, Grief, and God. Ruth 1:8-13**

Naomi urges Orpah and Ruth three times to go back to their Moabite families and life. Naomi knows that not only is the road dangerous, but she has nothing to offer them. They have become really close and grieve together over this difficult situation.

Notice in v. 8, 9, and 13 Naomi refers to the Lord, the God of Israel. Ruth and Orpah both have come to learn about the one true God through joining Naomi and marrying her sons. This is the same God that they have probably heard worked wonders rescuing the people from the land of Egypt, bringing down the walls of Jericho, etc. In Moab, they would have worshiped a false god named Chemosh and returning to Moab would involve returning to the false religion of their people. So by leaving Naomi, they would also be leaving the Lord.

Q: Put yourself in Ruth and Orpah’s shoes. Going back to old life is the easier road. Following Naomi into the unknown is the harder road. What would you do?

A: Let’s be honest and admit that all of us would take the easy road apart from God’s grace.

**Orpah’s choice. Ruth 1:14-15**

Orpah makes her choice to return to her old life and notice in v. 15 it says her gods. This is sad. While it would be easy to think Orpah is a terrible person, again, this is the choice all of us would make apart from the grace of God!

**Ruth’s choice. Ruth 1:16-18**

Orpah has left and now Ruth has to make her choice.

1. First she says, “*wherever you go, I will go*”

Q: What characteristics and qualities do you look for in friends?

A: **Loyalty** should be high on the list! Look at how loyal Ruth was to Naomi in friendship! Ruth knew that following Naomi into an unknown, enemy land would be very hard, but she clung to Naomi. (v. 14)

1. Second she also says, “*your God, shall be my God*”

Ruth had encountered the God of Israel and come to believe in Him. We don’t know when it happened, but she has responded to God in faith and gotten saved. Here she shows that her faith in God is REAL leaving her false gods behind and following Him along with Naomi. Little does she know, that this is all part of God’s plan!

Q: I’m sure Ruth was thinking how easy it would be to just follow Orpah back to Moab. In the same way, isn’t it even harder to choose the right thing when you can follow the crowd down the easy road?

***Key Point: “But as for me…”***

Sometimes we look around and we see everyone else doing the wrong thing and how easy it would be to just follow the crowd. Do we have the courage to stand out and do the right thing saying, “But as for me”? We need God’s help to do the right thing. Notice our memory verse:

*“But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God’”. (Psalm 31:14)*

Like Ruth, we trust in God first. We come in faith when we see how great He is and how great His love is for us. We make him our Lord first. Then He will help us do the right thing.

**Teachers**: I want to stress how important it is we don’t just challenge the kids with a moral lesson to be loyal and faithful like Ruth. Then we end up just teaching them to be good (which they can get in a Sesame street lesson). Rather we should emphasize that they trust in Jesus, Who will make them good. Please stress how important it was that Ruth put her trust in God and that in faith she followed God down the hard road. In the same way, we make Jesus our treasure and He will help us be loyal and faithful like Ruth.

**Our Choice. Luke 9:23**

Jesus presents all of us with a similar choice that we all must make. In Luke 9:23, He says: “*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”*

Just like Naomi warned Ruth three times it would not be easy if she followed her, Jesus warns us that it won’t be easy if we follow Him (for who wants to deny himself?). But when we trust in Him and say, “You are my God”, He helps us, He strengthens us, He takes care of us.

Q: Will you take the easy road like Orpah and choose to follow the world or will you take the hard road like Ruth and choose to follow Jesus?

2 Corinthians 5:15 says that “*Jesus died for us so that we might no longer live for ourselves but for Him, who died and rose again for us*”

When you see how great Jesus is and what He did for you, it changes how you live! Like Ruth, let’s say to God, “but as for me, you are my God!” and follow Him.

**Lesson Theme: “But as for me…”**

**Memory Verse:** *“But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God’”**(Psalm 31:14)*

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some reasons why you think Orpah chose to stay in Moab?
2. What are some reasons why you think Ruth chose to leave Moab?

**Teachers/Parents: Consider sharing with your kiddos, if appropriate, an experience where you had to make a difficult decision like Ruth/Orpah. Maybe you chose the easy road, like Orpah, and you learned a hard lesson through it. Maybe you chose the hard road in faith, like Ruth, and you saw how the Lord helped you and used you for His purposes.**

1. Is it more important to believe and trust in God or to just be loyal and good?

A: A bit of a trick question. Both are important, but God would have us humbly trust in Him first and then He, through the Holy Spirit, will sanctify us and help us be loyal and good. (Read Hebrews 11:6 and Hebrews 12:1-2)

1. Many times Jesus says, “follow Me.” In Luke 9:23-26, Jesus presents us with our choice. We must either choose Him or the world. What are some practical ways you can show that your faith in Him is REAL and follow Jesus this week?

**Further Study:**

Let’s look at some other examples of biblical characters who trusted in God and made some bold “But as for me” decisions:

1. **Joshua**: He was used by God to bring the children of Israel into the promised land. Look at his final exhortation to them in Joshua 24:14-15 where he challenges them to choose to follow the Lord and finally says, “….**But as for me** and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
2. **David**: He was surrounded by enemies and difficulty on all sides. In response, he wrote our memory verse (Psalm 31:14) and also again he wrote, “**But as for me**, I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more.” (Psalm 71:14) Read all of Psalm 71 to get the full context.
3. **Micah**: He was lamenting how Israel was lost in darkness and how everywhere he looked there was evil and yet he says, “**But as for me**, I will watch expectantly for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation.” (Micah 7:7)