

Transcript: Introduction to The Book of Ruth

SLIDE 1:

Today, we are going to be reading a new selection from the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament. This selection is called The Book of Ruth. It is often called a short story, which is essentially true, since it contains the typical elements of a short story, including character development, setting, plot, and theme. The Book of Ruth contains four brief chapters (we'll read all of them today), and it shows how God uses people in amazing ways.

SLIDE 2:

The main characters in the story are: Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. A minor character is named Orpah. I'm mentioning this in order to share with you a bit of trivia. Although many of you may not have heard of Orpah before, almost everyone knows the celebrity Oprah Winfrey. Well, Oprah Winfrey was originally named "Orpah" after the biblical character in The Book of Ruth. The story goes that her family and friends constantly mispronounced her name, and so they legally changed it to Oprah when she was one year old.

SLIDE 3:

In the story, during the time of the Judges, there is a famine. An Israelite family from Bethlehem—Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons—emigrate to the nearby country of Moab. Elimelech dies, and the sons marry two Moabite women: Ruth and Orpah. The two sons of Naomi then die themselves. Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem. She tells her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to return to their own mothers and remarry. Orpah reluctantly leaves, but Ruth says, "Wherever you go, I will go," and returns to Bethlehem with Naomi. In Bethlehem, it is the time of the barley harvest, and in order to support her mother-in-law and herself, Ruth goes to the fields to glean. (To glean means to collect leftover crops from a farmer's fields after they have been harvested.) The field Ruth goes to belongs to a man named Boaz, who happens to be a relative of her husband's. Boaz is kind to her because he has heard of her loyalty to her mother-in-law. What happens between Boaz and Ruth? You'll find out as you read the story.

SLIDE 4:

One more quick thing I need to explain before you start to read is the concept of "levirate." (LEV u rit) A levirate marriage is a type of marriage in which a close male relative of a dead husband, such as a brother, is obliged to marry the widow if the husband left no son. This man may be referred to as a "kinsman-redeemer." This custom will affect Ruth and Boaz. In the case of Ruth and Boaz, although Boaz is a relative of Ruth's husband, he is not the closest relative, and that matter must be settled before anything can occur between Ruth and Boaz. This information will make it easier to understand chapter four of the story.

SLIDE 5:

Themes in the story include faithfulness, kindness, and honor. The story provides examples of individuals obeying God's laws.