



Your God Shall Be My God

(based on Ruth 1:1-22)

Naomi's life had been bitter.

Many years before, Naomi and her husband and sons had moved from Bethlehem to the country of Moab (MOH-ab). There was a famine in Bethlehem, which meant that there was very little food to eat. But there was food in Moab. So Naomi's family left the home they loved and moved far away.

While they lived in Moab, Naomi's husband died. Her sons took care of her. Both of her sons married women from Moab. Their names were Ruth and Orpah (OR-puh). Sad times came again, however, when both of the sons died!

One day, Naomi had news from her family in Bethlehem. The rain had come back, and the food was growing again. Naomi decided to make the long journey back. Ruth and Orpah went with her.

As they traveled, Naomi began to worry: "Would Ruth and Orpah be happy in Bethlehem? Would it be hard for them to be so far away from their families?" Ruth and Orpah were Moabites, enemies of the people of Israel. Naomi loved Ruth and Orpah. She did not want them to be sad and lonely. She worried that they might not be accepted in her home in Bethlehem.

"My dear daughters," Naomi said. "You don't have to come with me. Why don't you return to your families? If you go with me, your lives will be bitter. You should go back to your families where you belong."

Ruth and Orpah thought carefully about what Naomi had said. They loved Naomi, but they missed their homes. What to do? Orpah decided that it would be best for her to go back home as Naomi had suggested. She said a sad goodbye to Naomi and Ruth, and went back home. But Ruth decided to go with Naomi to Bethlehem.

"Do not try to send me home," Ruth explained. "I really want to stay with you. I promise I will never leave you. I will go wherever you go. I want to live with you, wherever you live. I will love the people you love. And I will love your God."

When Naomi heard that Ruth was determined to go with her, she was glad. The two women continued on their way. It was a long journey. After many days they reached Bethlehem. The people of the city welcomed Naomi and Ruth. Everyone was excited to see Naomi again.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Locate where your immediate family lives on a map. Use a map of the United States or the world, whichever is more appropriate. Use the map to find all the places your family has relatives. Talk with your children about what would be involved in traveling to where the extended family members live. Remember that God is with you where you are, and wherever you go.
- Ask your children to draw a picture of their extended family on one large piece of paper. Give thanks for every person in your family.



Responding to God's Grace

- Talk with your children about what they can do if there is a new child at church or school. Could they sit with the new child at lunch or snack? Could they play with the new child?
- Help your children send a communication to relatives far away. This could be a card, letter, email, or social-media message. Pictures and words are so wonderful to receive, for those who live far away.
- Go on a family walk or bike ride, as an example of a mini-journey, like the one Ruth and Naomi did.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Plan a special meal to celebrate being a family. If you have relatives nearby, invite them to join your celebration.
- Ruth's name means "friend." Read *Are You My Friend?* by Janice Derby. *How to Be a Friend: A Book about Friendship* by Molly Wigand, or *How to Be a Friend* by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown. Talk about friendship.
- Pray this prayer:

God, help me to think of others who need my care. Amen.