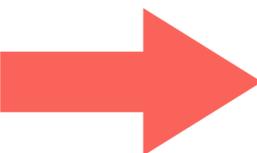


Stories of Christianity

Learning Objective:

To explore the story of Ruth and Naomi.





How many Bible stories from the last lesson can you remember?

Over the next few lessons we are going to be looking at some Bible stories which might be a little less familiar.

Why do you think the Bible has so many stories?

What is the point of them?



Reading Bible stories helps Christians to understand about God. Reading stories about other people in the past who believed in God, and exploring how God was with them through difficult or unexpected situations, helps Christians understand how to trust God and live how he wants them to live for themselves.



Today we are going to be reading the story of Ruth and Naomi. Has anyone heard this story before?

A man called Elimelech lived in Bethlehem in Judah with his wife and two sons. His wife's name was Naomi. When his sons were young, a severe famine came to the land, so Elimelech decided to move his family to the country of Moab where there would be more food to feed his family.



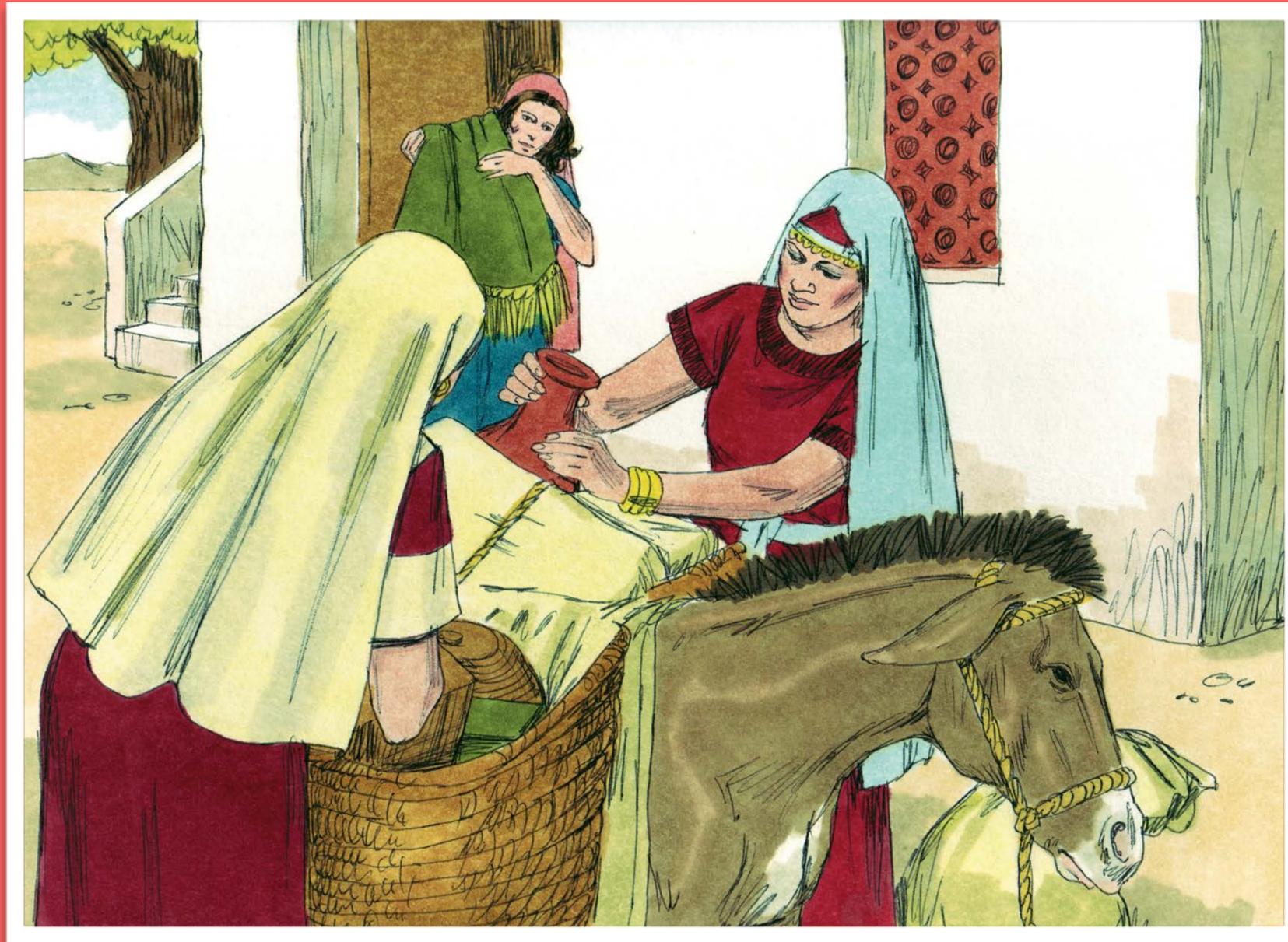
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Elimelech and his family believed in God and lived in Bethlehem with others who believed too. The people of Moab had their own gods that they worshipped.



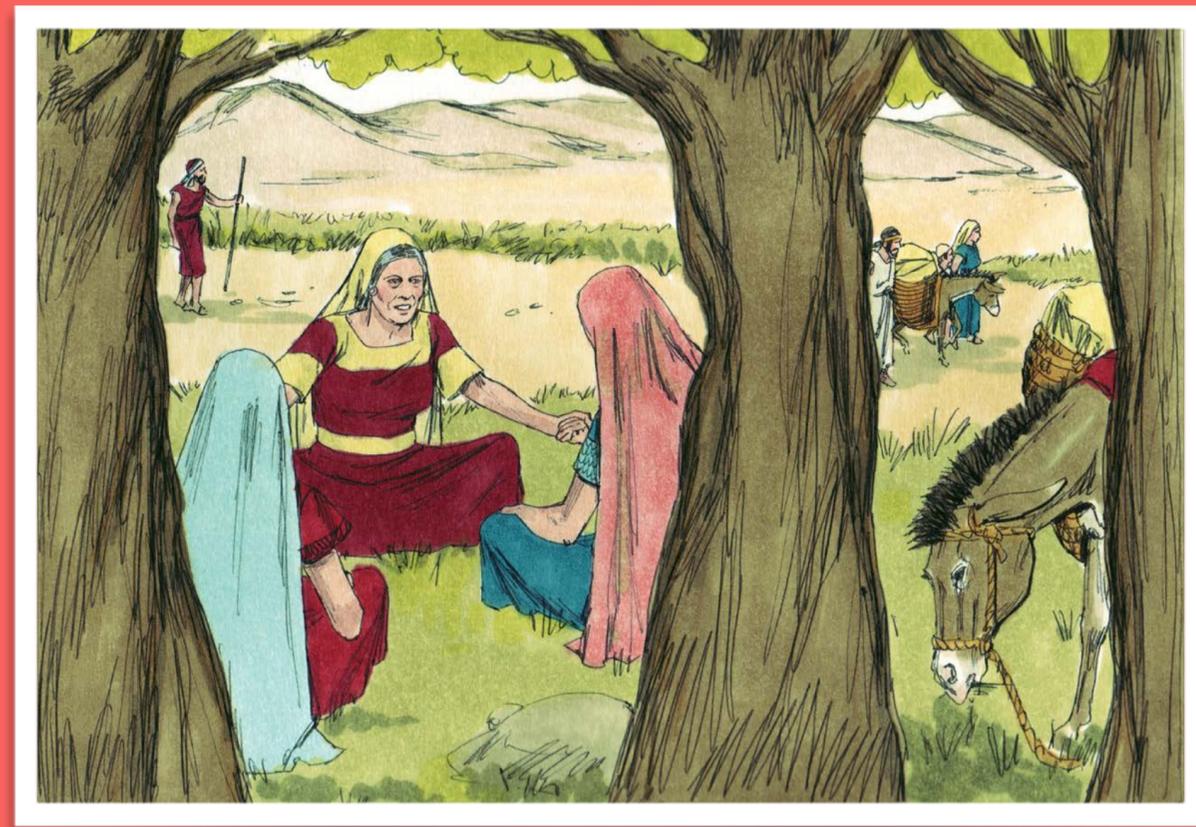
**A few years later, Elimelech died leaving Naomi with her two sons.
Both sons ended up marrying Moabite women and they all lived
happily together for the next ten years.**

However, disaster struck when both sons died. Now Naomi was left only with her two daughters-in-law (who were called Orpah and Ruth). Naomi was devastated. She was too old to marry again and have more children so she decided to leave Moab and go back to Bethlehem.



The three women started packing up their belongings. Before long, they were ready to leave and they set off on the long journey back to Bethlehem.

After a little while on the road, Naomi stopped and told Orpah and Ruth that they should go back to Moab. “There is no reason for you to stay with me,” she said. “I am old and can give you no more sons to marry. Go back home and live with your mothers. I have nothing else I can give you.”



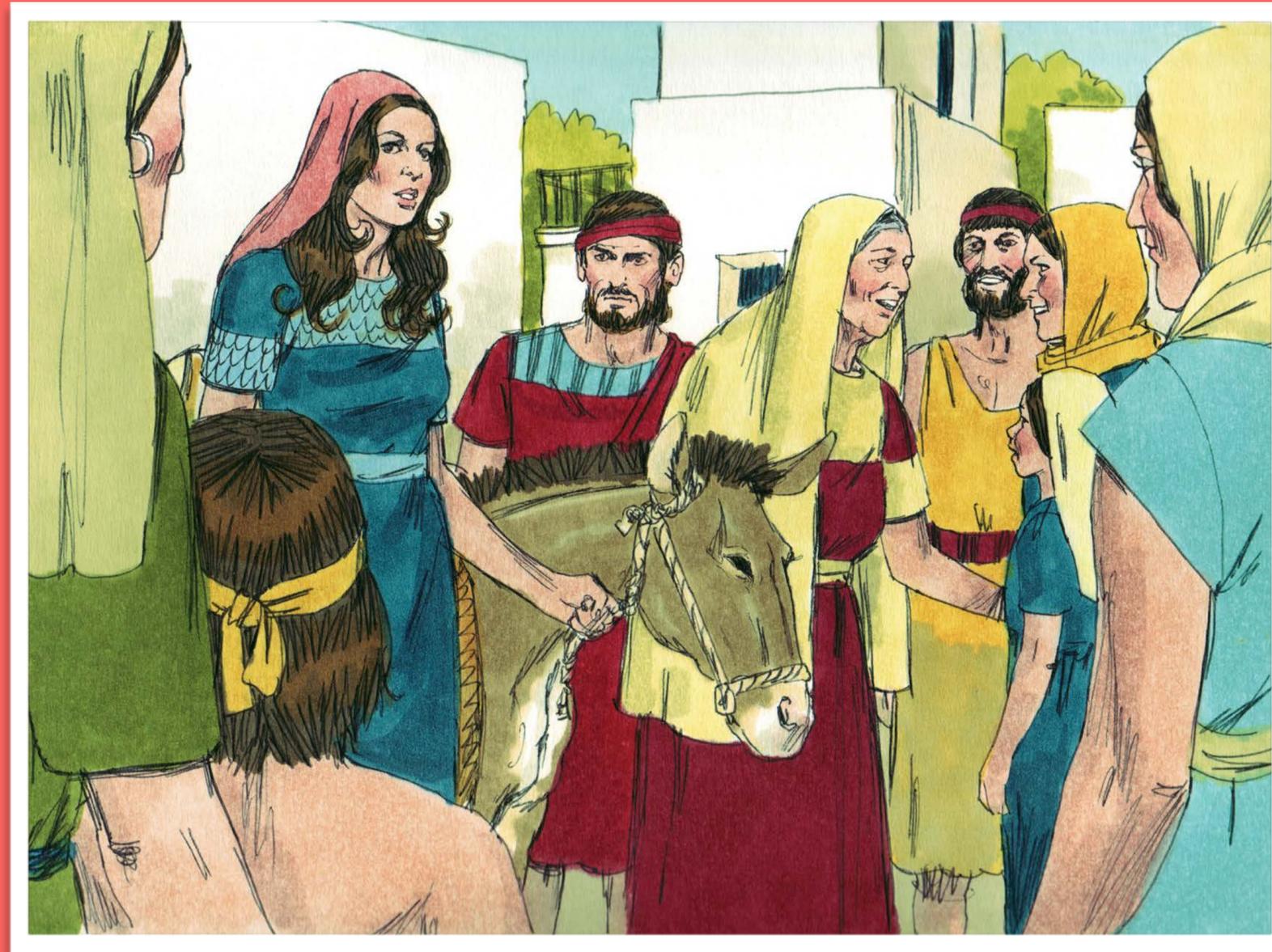
They all cried at the sadness of their situation. Orpah gave her mother-in-law a long hug, then turned around and headed back to Moab. Ruth also hugged Naomi but didn't let go.

“Look,” said Naomi to Ruth. “Your sister-in-law is leaving to live with her own people and worship her own gods. Go with her.” But Ruth would not go.

Instead she said, “I will not leave you. Where you go, I will go, and where you live, I will live. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will also die and be buried. I swear by almighty God that only death will be able to separate me from you.”



When Naomi realised that Ruth would not be dissuaded, they journeyed the rest of the way to Bethlehem together. When they arrived, the whole village was excited. “Can that be Naomi?” they asked. “How wonderful that she has come home!”



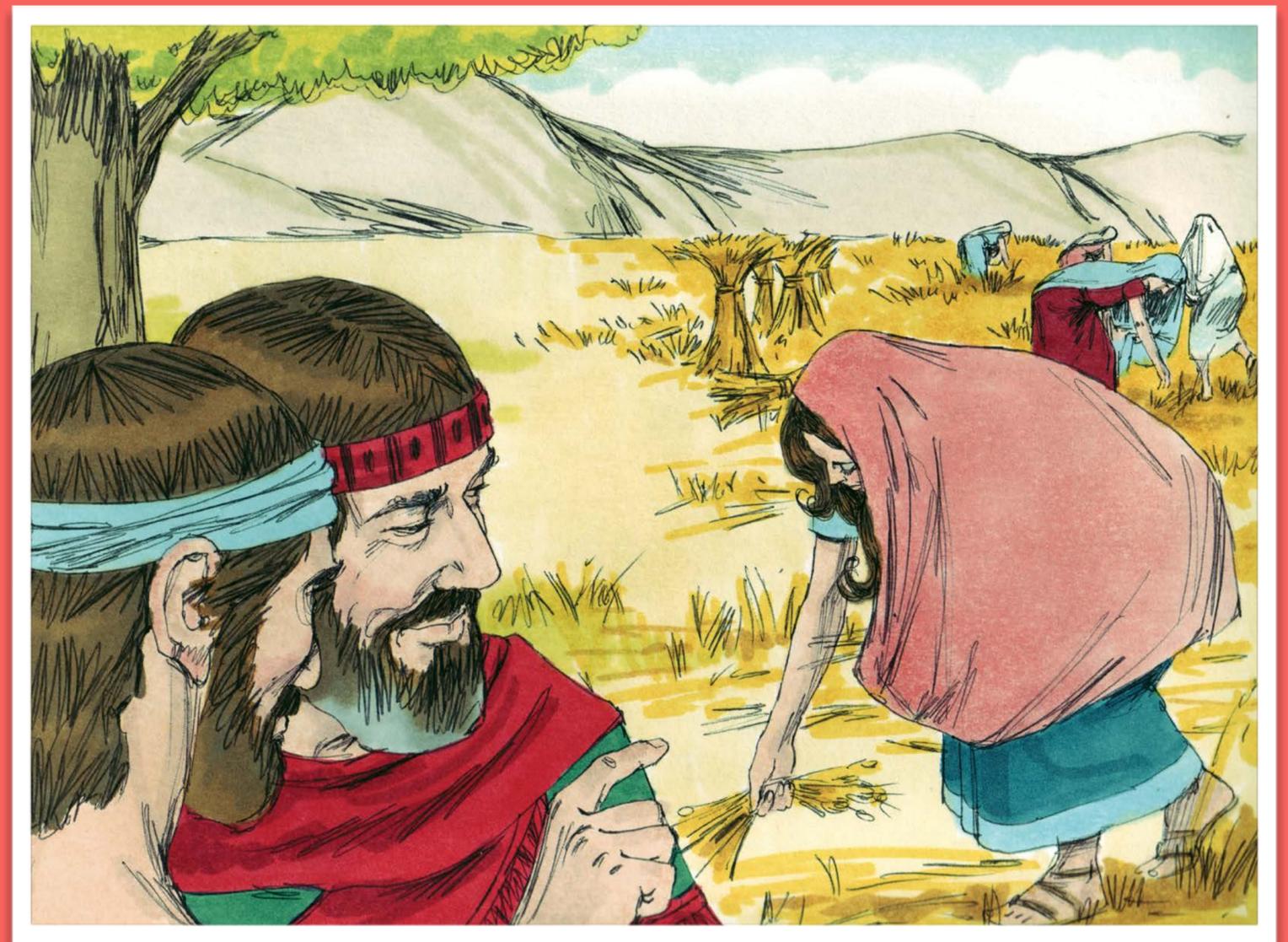
Because Naomi and Ruth had no husbands to take care of them, they had to earn their own living. It was harvest season so Ruth decided she would go to the fields and glean the grain that was left on the ground after the men had harvested the crops.



She worked hard in the field all day long, without even taking a break. She wanted to make sure that there was enough grain to keep Naomi fed and well.

The owner of the field noticed Ruth working in the field. “Who is that woman?” he asked one of his workers. “She is Ruth, the Moabite woman who came back with Naomi,” he answered. It just so happened that the owner of the field (who was called Boaz) was a relative of Naomi’s husband Elimelech. He decided to go and talk to Ruth.

“From now on, stay in my field,” he said. “Stay close to the other women who will be friendly to you. Don’t worry about being harassed by any of the workers because I will tell them to leave you alone. And whenever you get thirsty, go and drink from the water buckets the servants have filled.”

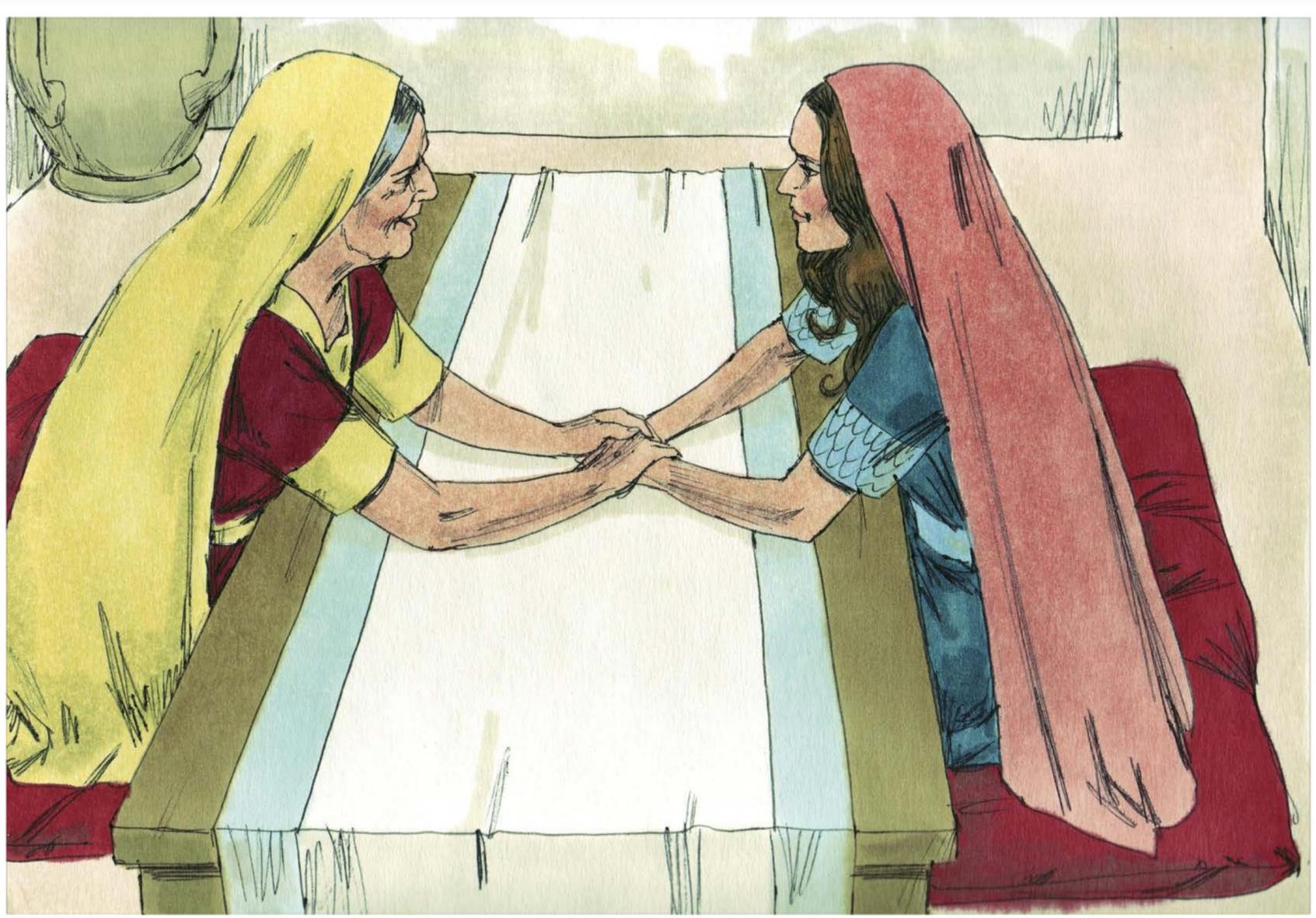




Ruth was overwhelmed by the man's kindness and bowed down at his feet. "Why do you treat me so well when I am a foreigner here? You don't even know me."

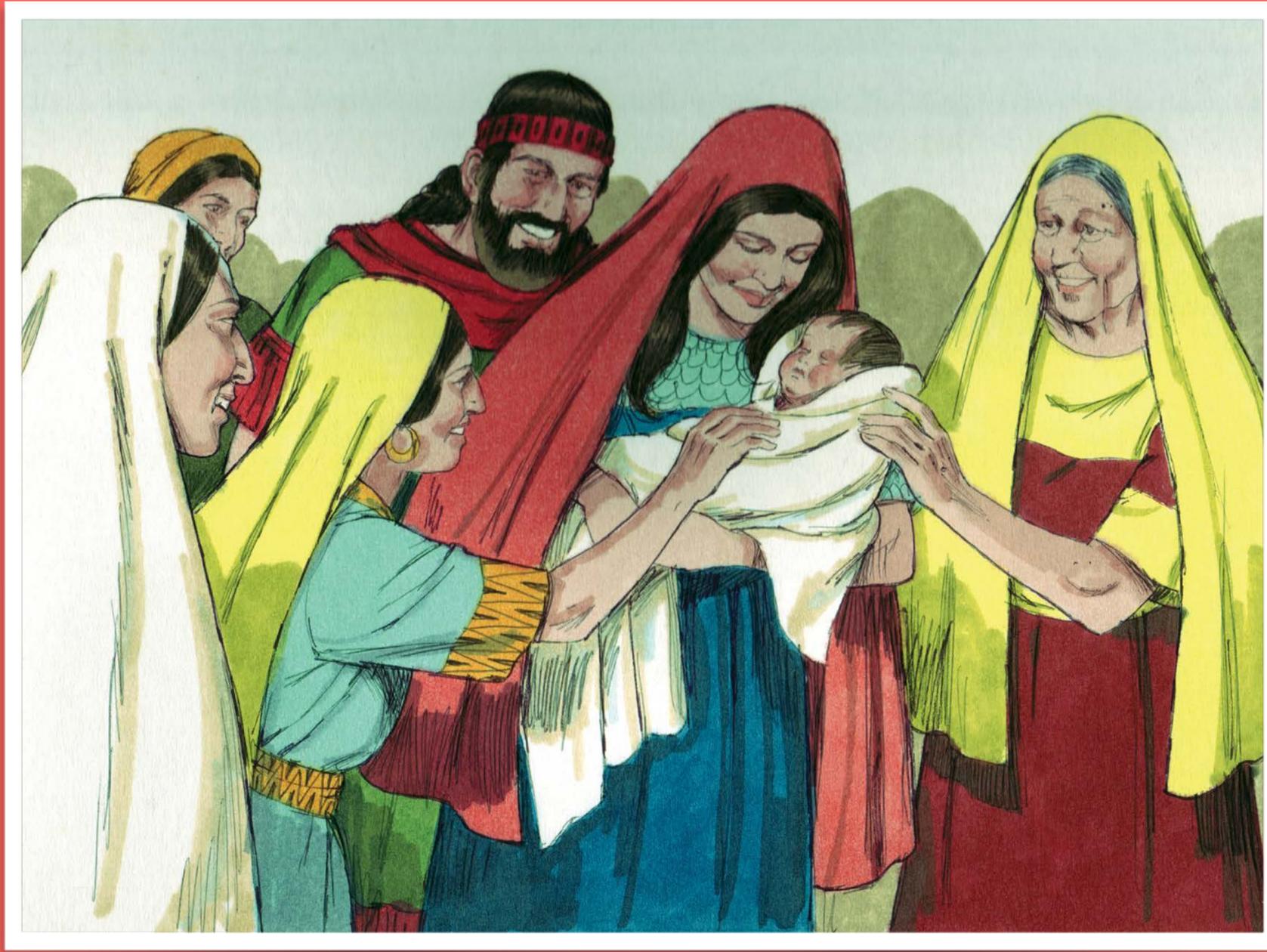
"I have heard how you treated Naomi and the kindness you showed her. I heard about how you left your home and your own family to follow her so she wouldn't be lonely after the death of her husband and sons. God will reward you for such kindness and so will I." Ruth couldn't believe Boaz would be so generous, but to prove he meant it, he prepared a meal for her and made sure she ate well.

When Ruth told Naomi what had happened she was overjoyed. “I thought God had forgotten us but he hasn’t! Now you’ll be safe working in the fields and we will have food to eat.”



Ruth continued working in the field until the harvest was over. Boaz continued to treat her kindly, even ordering the workers to drop more barley so there would be more for her to pick up.

Eventually Ruth and Boaz were married. Naomi was thrilled that Ruth could marry a relative of her husband's. She felt that God had truly blessed them all, especially once Ruth and Boaz had a son!



The women of the town said to Naomi, “God be praised! He didn’t leave you without family to carry on your life. May this baby grow up to be famous in Israel! And as for your daughter-in-law, she is more special than seven sons!”

**What do you think the
mains points of the story of
Ruth and Naomi are?**

**What do you think
Christians can learn from this
story?**



Did you think of these things?



Friends stick together

Even though it would have been very difficult for Ruth to move to Bethlehem to live with Naomi in a strange land, she did it anyway. She knew that Naomi needed a friend so she stuck by her selflessly.

God is faithful

Even though both Ruth and Naomi went through a very difficult time, they were both blessed by God. Naomi was blessed with the gift of a great friend in Ruth, and Ruth was given a new husband and baby.

God loves everyone

Ruth was from Moab which was a place that ignored God and worshipped idols. God could have ignored Ruth right back but he introduced himself to her through Naomi. This reminds Christians that God loves all people.

God notices people of good character

Ruth was not an important or wealthy person but there is a whole book in the Bible about her. Her loyal, kind and selfless personality was rewarded by God.

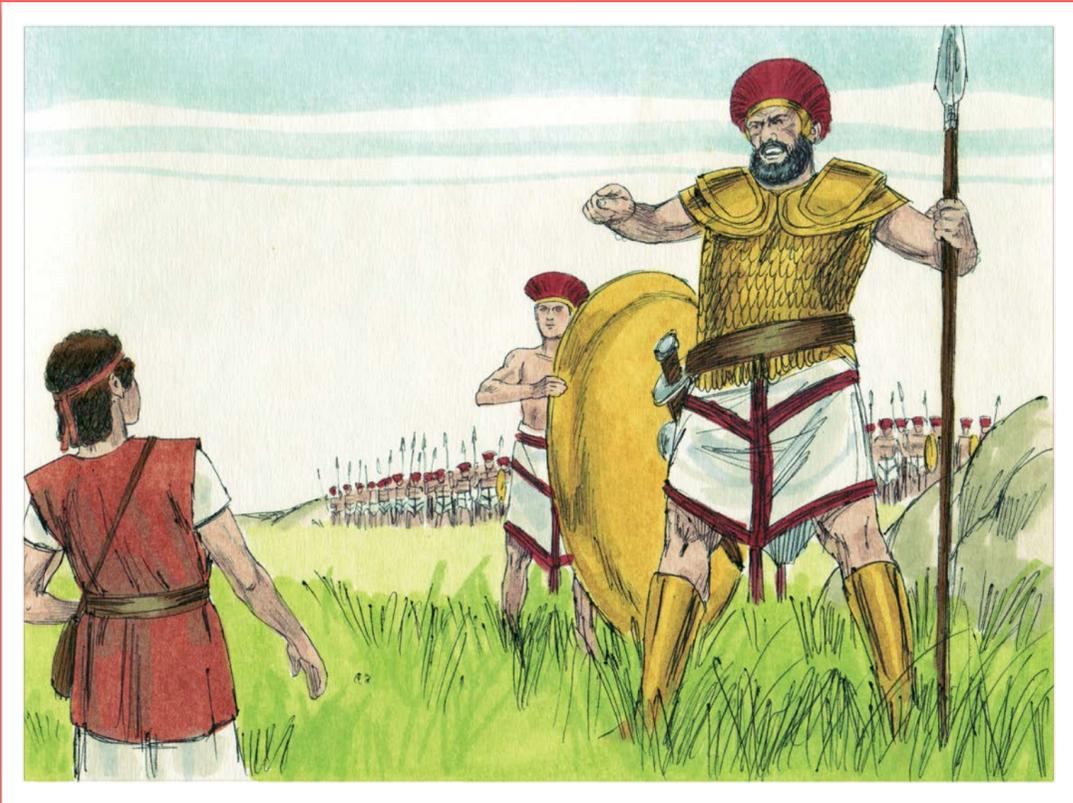
Plenary:

Like many stories in the Bible, the story of Ruth is linked with other stories. The story becomes even more significant when you know the links!



Which other stories do you think this might relate to?

Hint: Remember, at the end of the story when the women prayed that the baby would be famous in Israel?



Do you remember the story of David and Goliath?



David was a poor shepherd who defeated the giant Goliath with just a slingshot and faith in God. Remember the baby Ruth had at the end of the story? Well, he was David's grandfather, making Ruth David's great-grandmother!

David went on to become King of Israel. He is a very important figure in the Bible - even more important when you learn that both Mary and Joseph (the human parents of Jesus) were both descendants of King David.



Imagine how different the Bible might have been if Ruth hadn't followed Naomi to Bethlehem!