

**Ruth 1:1-18**

**Love, actually**

We hear the story of Elimelech, a man from Judah, his wife Naomi and their two sons. Famine forces them to flee to Moab. The sons marry local women but then they and Elimelech die, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, as widows in precarious situations. Naomi decides to return to Judah, urging Orpah and Ruth to find new husbands and security. Ruth, however, refuses, vowing to stay with Naomi and to follow her God.



Give what you can to Christian Aid global emergency fund.



**Read**



Go to the local library and check out books about refugees. Use the QR code to see some picture book suggestions.

**REFLECT**



Reflect and pray for conflict situations around the world, for peace, for world leaders, for victims of war and for aid to get to those who need it most. These two websites may help.

**Bible notes**



Biblical scholar Paula Gooder suggests that 'The book of Ruth is the ultimate love story. Love in the Old and New Testaments is much more about what you do than how you feel. Ruth has *hesed* (steadfast love) not because she talks about her emotion of love towards Naomi but because the whole of her life is lived out in expression of that love'. It is also an unusual love story, set in the violent times of the Book of Judges. The stories of Judges show the disaster that came about when God's people turned away from God. By contrast, Ruth shows the blessing that came to a foreigner who turned to Israel's God, and so became part of his faithful people. It also shows how those of different ethnicities and cultures can live together harmoniously. It has a lot to say to the times we live in.

The land of Moab was to the south-west of Israel. The two fought often and Moab also raided and looted Israel when she had been defeated by other enemies. A Moabite woman would have been regarded as the lowest of the low (a bit like the Samaritans at the time of the Gospels). Knowing that life could be hard for her as a widow and even harder still for Orpah and Ruth as both widows and foreigners, Naomi urges her daughters-in-law to return to their homes. Orpah and Ruth make different choices. While Ruth becomes the central figure of the book and celebrated for her choice, it is interesting to note that there is no criticism of the choice that Orpah makes – a reminder perhaps that when it comes to big family decisions, it is often a case of different choices rather than right or wrong ones.

**First impressions**

- What is refuge for you?
- How are refugees received in your community?
- In what ways can we follow the examples of Ruth and Naomi, and show 'love, actually' to other people?



**Pray**

Lord, you are a God of love. You call us to love everyone, wherever they're from, whoever they are. You call us to love family, friends and strangers. You call us to love... (*name people you know, and outsiders in your community*). Amen.



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