

## Ruth Part I (1:1-18) Leader Page

- 1) Choose someone you know is a good reader to read the first chapter aloud.
- 2) Set the scene. Briefly recap the story through chapter one. Highlight the Background information given below.

### Recap

There is a famine in Judah. Naomi, her husband and sons go to live in Moab. Sons marry Moabite women. Eventually her husband and sons die. Naomi starts to head for “home” and her two daughters-in-law start out with her. She **risks** needing to continue her journey alone and sets her daughters-in-law free. Orpah takes her up on it, but Ruth declares her intent to remain with Naomi.

**Background information:** “There was no formal procedure for religious conversion, **nor was it even conceived of.** One’s ethnic identity determined for all time one’s religious persuasion. Therefore, Ruth mentions “people” and “God” together. Each people had its own god; or, as it was viewed in the ancient Near East, each god had its own people. **Ruth is adopting a new people, a new ethnic identity, along with a new faith.**” *The HarperCollins Study Bible* p.410, notes on verse 1:16.

- 3) Questions for reflection: Break into small groups and discuss the questions listed on the participant handout. Leader[s] circulate around to groups to help people stay on task, field any questions and to assist folks if they are stuck.
- 4) Gather the group back together. Get feedback on answers discussed (as far as they got) and record themes on newsprint. Keep the following themes in mind and highlight them as they arise. Ask questions to bring them out.
  - The recurring theme of faithfulness, of each of the characters to each other and also of God. The Hebrew word is *hesed* meaning “lovingkindness” also implying steadfastness, faithfulness. In Part II these will become clearer.
  - The theme of incorporation of people of different cultures. This begins as Ruth makes the declaration that she will let go of her own culture in order to embrace Naomi’s. In Part II, trace this progression as it continues.
  - **The paradox of letting go and taking a risk as part of making room for new possibilities in relationships. Said another way, the fruit is at the end of the branch. Getting to it sometimes means going out on a limb! This theme, too, is further developed in Part II**
- 5) Unveil the “Art” that is also a part of this (assignment/study) “with a little help from my friend.” (Performing Arts – based on third theme)