

SKETCH ONE: HOPE

Cast:

- Mature Ruth
- Ruth at 12
- Mom's off-stage voice

Light illuminates mature Ruth. She's bending over some boxes that contain Christmas decorations.

Mature Ruth: "The holidays are almost here again. It seems like yesterday . . . I was putting up decorations. Lets see this week is the candle of hope." *(She picks up a matchbook and lights the candle.)* "I can't believe there's only 5 more weeks till Christmas . . . I can't believe I'm 65!" *(She sighs.)* "The years have really flown by. It doesn't seem that long ago when I was getting ready to help my mom with Christmas decorations. I was so excited about the future! There was so much I wanted to do. I couldn't wait to start dating, start high school, to college. I couldn't wait to grow up! I had my future all planned out." *(Light fades.)*

Light illuminates Ruth at 12.

Ruth at 12: *(She's brushing her hair. She picks up some lipstick and applies it to her lips.)*

Mom's off-stage voice: "Are you in my make-up again? You know you're too young for that!"

Ruth at 12: "No mom! I'm just playing with Harvey my rabbit. I sure wish I were in high school already. I wish I were dating!"

Mom's off stage voice: "Ruthie . . . come on . . . I need help putting up the Christmas decorations."

Ruth at 12: "Okay mom . . . be right there." *(Ruth talks to herself.)* "Oh . . . I wish I were grown up! I wish I were going to college right now! It sure would be fun to travel around the world. Maybe I'll become an airline stewardess. No . . . forget that! I'm going to go to flight school and be a pilot!" *(Ruth calls out to mother.)* "Hey Mom . . . after I get out of high school, I'm going to go to flight school to become a pilot!"

Mom's off-stage voice: "Ruthie, you know that men become airline pilots – not women! Women become airline stewardesses. Now . . . get in here and help me with the decorations!"

Ruth at 12: "I want to be a pilot, not a stewardess, and that's what I'm going to be!" (*Ruth picks up her stuffed rabbit again and talks to it.*) "I'll be starting high school in 2 more years. I hope I meet a boy who likes a pilot for a girlfriend!" (*Ruth calls out to mother.*) "Mom, when can I start dating?"

Mom's off-stage voice: "We've already talked about that. When you're sixteen, and not a day before!"

Ruth at 12: "But I'll be so old by then! Janie's mother said she could start dating when she's fourteen!" (*There's a few seconds of silence, then Ruth looks up thoughtfully and prays.*) "Oh God . . . I can't wait to grow up. I'm so excited about the future! Last year, I made the decision to follow you, Jesus. I accepted you into my heart. I pray that you help me fulfill my dreams. Oh yes . . . and do give me a boyfriend . . . one who loves a girl who wants to fly planes."

Mom's off-stage voice: "I'm saying it only one more time Ruth! Help me get the decorations up on the tree!" (*Ruth exits stage.*)

Mature Ruth: "It's hard to believe there was a time I couldn't wait to grow up. I grew up alright . . . faster than I really wanted to. I did find a boyfriend, but he wasn't interested in my dream to become a pilot. Everything fell apart during my last year of high school. I found out I was pregnant. It didn't seem fair . . . it wasn't what I planned for. I cried out to God . . . it seemed He wasn't there. I lost hope even in Him. But He didn't lose hope in me. It was hope . . . God's hope . . . that got me through those rough times. It's hope that gets me through today." (*She looks at the lit candle.*)

SKETCH TWO: LOVE

Cast:

-Mature Ruth

-Ruth at 19

Light illuminates mature Ruth. She picks up a match and lights a candle.

Mature Ruth: “Love . . . what a beautiful word. Sometimes it burns dimly though.” (*She pauses.*) “It wasn’t so long ago when love didn’t seem so beautiful. Love walked out the door, when Steve took off to Vietnam. I felt alone . . . helpless . . . with a baby. The career I wanted . . . my dream to become a pilot . . . vanished. I didn’t even feel like a wife any longer. I felt disillusioned with life . . . disillusioned with love.” (*Light fades.*)

Ruth at 19: “I can’t believe your Daddy ran out on us like that! What am I supposed to do now?” “He told me he never would have married me if it hadn’t been for you. The first couple of months weren’t so bad. I thought we were doing just fine.”

“I guess your Daddy was restless. He joined the Army . . . just like that . . . then off he went to that war. Well . . . you and I will somehow do without him. We’ll just stay with your grandma and grandpa, till I get a job.”

“I sure have made a mess out of my life. I thought I found love. Where did it go wrong? I wanted to be a pilot! Your daddy was my first real boyfriend, you know? I really loved him . . . I still do.”

“When I was little, life was simple. Then . . . life just got so complicated. We were so much in love, I was sure our love was special - unlike anyone else’s.”

“I’ll never forget how hard it was telling mom and dad I was pregnant. I almost didn’t come home. They did forgive me . . . that really surprised me. When they forgave me, I actually caught a glimpse of God’s forgiving grace. I wanted to live in His grace . . . I needed to feel God’s love.”

Mature Ruth: “I remember how scared I was . . . scared of living my life as a single parent . . . scared of not making enough money to support Luke. We weren’t completely alone. We did have loving friends and family.

There were people in the church who opened their arms to us. Their love carried me through lots of rough years. Because of the love I received, I began to again feel God's love in my life. He was changing me." (*Light fades to black.*)

SKETCH THREE: JOY

Cast:

-Mature Ruth

-Steve

Light illuminates mature Ruth. She's looking at old pictures, and holds up one picture and speaks as she looks at it.

Mature Ruth: "I was only 20 in this picture . . . It was a time filled with lots of changes and challenges." (*She picks up a candle and lights it.*) It was joy that got me through the ups and downs of life....the good times . . . the bad times . . . and joy in the midst of it all."

"Thank you God for giving me the gift of joy. I'm sorry I doubted you. This letter meant so much to me then." (*She looks at the letter and begins to read.*) 'Dear Ruth, this war has changed me. I've had a lot of time to think about things. You know, I really didn't want to be married. I didn't want to be a father, but . . .'

Light fades, then light moves to middle of stage where Steve is writing the letter from Vietnam. As he writes, he speaks.

Steve: ' . . . but now I see things differently. You loved me when no one else did. It's so lonely here . . . so depressing. I wasn't ready to be your husband . . . to love you as much as you loved me. I wasn't ready to be Luke's dad either. This war . . . it's changed the way I look at life. Life is just so short....My friends...so many are gone. This rain, it's deafening...I can hardly think. All I know is that I miss you and Luke...terribly. I want to come home to you while I'm still in one piece. Ruth . . . please . . . let's start all over again. Let's give our marriage another shot. I'm so sorry for the pain I caused you.'

Light fades, goes back to Ruth.

Ruth: "I really thought that letter would change my life . . . the next letter did." (*Ruth sets down one letter, and picks up another letter and reads it.*) 'Dear Mrs. Lucas, we regret to inform you.... . . . ' "I thought my life would end right there. I dreaded being alone, raising Luke by myself. The thought of it overwhelmed me." I never thought I could find joy as a single mom,

but I did. Thank you for blessing me with a wonderful son and loving friends.” You brought me out of my suffering and despair. You showed me mercy and grace. You touched my life and blessed me . . . and brought me joy!”

SKETCH FOUR: PEACE

Cast:

-Mature Ruth

-Luke at 30

Mature Ruth: *(She picks up a candle, lights it, then puts it back down.)*
“Peace . . . *(she chuckles and looks at candle)*. This candle represents peace, but Luke’s teen years were anything but peaceful. After Steve’s death, I prayed that God would bring someone into my life, but it didn’t turn out that way. I didn’t think I’d make it through the years . . . being alone. Those teenage years were really tough.” *(Light fades.)*

Light illuminates Luke.

Luke: “Boy, I sure wanted that Schwinn bike. When she said we couldn’t afford it, I threw a fit. I also wanted a red Daisy BB gun, but you said ‘no way’ you’ll shoot your eye out. . . so I ran away for 3 hrs. My teenage years were hard for both of us. I remember that day I walked into the house, smoking a cigarette. I was around 16, and thought I was grown-up enough. I had my hands in my pockets . . . a James Dean type of look on my face. She said nothing at all. She just looked at me. . . it wasn’t anger. It was . . . I’m not sure what it was . . . it just got to me. Maybe she knew about the drinking and the drugs I was into . . . maybe she didn’t. As I got older, I began to appreciate her more . . . I began to see just how tough it was for her. *(Light fades.)*

Light illuminates Ruth.

Mature Ruth: “When Luke was growing up, there were times I wanted to give up! Later on, his ideas about life changed. He came to my rescue . . . many times. He was there when I really needed him. I can see how God has turned him into a great husband and father. I’m so proud of him!” *(Light fades.)*

Light illuminates Luke.

Luke: “It’s amazing how responsibilities help you grow up. Now I’ve got a son of my own. He’s just like I was. He wants a bike too . . . a Harley . . . and a paintball gun. He also wants to join the Marines like his Dad. Mom,

you just about died when I told her I was enlisting. Maybe that's why I never got the BB gun I wanted. I can see why she hated guns. It had something to do with dad's death in Vietnam. I wish I knew then, what I know now." (*Light fades.*)

Light illuminates Ruth.

Mature Ruth: "God, you have has blessed me with a great son. Despite my own youthful mistakes, you led me on a path that has brought me peace."
(*Light fades to black.*)

SKETCH FIVE: HOPE IN CHRIST

Cast:

- Mature Ruth
- Ruth at 12
- Ruth at 19
- Ruth at 35
- Steve
- Luke

All characters on stage. Each will turn and move to light on center stage when they speak.

Mature Ruth: “Christmas Eve . . . how time flies!” (*pause*) “I’ve always looked forward to this day. It’s a time to think about the hope I have in Christ. I’ve been thinking a lot about Jesus . . . since the diagnosis. I was a little scared at first. I guess I’m still a bit scared . . . I don’t know what’s going to happen. Things never remain the same . . . but that’s okay. I’ve come to understand that this is just another season in my journey with God. As I look back on other seasons in my life, I can’t help but see your hand, God. I can see how you brought order to my life and blessed me with a richness I could have never imagined. I know you’re there . . . no matter what happens.”

Ruth at 12: “I can’t wait to grow up! I have so many dreams. I want to be a pilot . . . travel to exotic places . . . meet interesting people. Mom is trying to slow me down. She keeps saying there’s plenty of time to grow up. What do moms know anyway? Being grownup is cool . . . I’m ready to start right now! I’ve been praying to God . . . I know He answers prayers. Please God . . . give me an exciting life!

Ruth at 19: “I hoped for so much when I was 12 . . . things that didn’t come to pass. Here I am now . . . 19 years old. I have a crying baby, a marriage on the rocks, and a husband in Vietnam! Things moved so fast! One moment I felt carefree . . . on top of the world. The next moment I felt worn down . . . defeated. I lost all hope in becoming a pilot. I lost hope in lots of things . . . even love.”

Steve: (*addressing Ruth*) “Ruth, you know there was a time I resented you because I thought I was trapped . . . and you were the cause. I went to Vietnam to escape. How crazy that was! But some time during those empty, rainy days . . . I realized I loved you . . . and our son. I’m so grateful that God brought you into my life.”

Ruth at 35 “Life nearly broke me. Yet it was during those years of brokenness that God did a work in me. He changed me. He showed himself to me in countless ways . . . His love lifted me. It was then I learned that life was not determined by chance. My life was guided by a loving Father . . . guided by God who loves me with an everlasting love. Learning these things about myself and about God helped create a joy in my life that I never expected. Joy . . . yes, joy . . . filled my heart, regardless of my circumstances. That’s the wonder of God. He gives us joy even during sorrow.”

Luke: (*addressing Ruth*) “Mom, I was pretty angry about not having a dad. I was mad at him for going off to that war and getting killed. I was mad at you because you couldn’t be both mom and dad. I know you worried when I rebelled. But you were always there for me . . . you never gave up. You never condemned me. Thanks.”

Mature Ruth: “God, I’m so grateful for the life you gave me. I was called to be a wife, mother and friend. You gave meaning to my life. The people you brought into my life . . . my husband, my son, my best friend Angie . . . they were such blessings. Those relationships touched me at my deepest level. Life is a wonderful gift -- full of hope, love, joy and peace. Sorrow and pain – I guess that’s also a part of life. But in the midst of life’s storms, you always gave me a prevailing peace. I knew you held me in your tender hands.”

Luke (*addressing Ruth*) “Mom, you did good. You never had any doubt that we were going to make it. You modeled for me what it meant to trust God. I believed in God because of the peace I saw in you. You said we could trust God, and you were right.”

Mature Ruth: “Looking back, it’s been a good life. (*She pauses.*) God, thanks for using me . . . flawed as I am . . . to touch the lives of others. I can remember brokenness and pain in days long past. But you taught me to love with a love that was beyond my own self-centeredness. You never

gave up on me. I have tried to fight the good fight . . . finish the race with grace . . . and keep the faith. Today, I can celebrate your love, and the many blessings you've given me throughout the years. (Ruth lights candle). Jesus, I once lived in shadows. It was your life that brought me out of darkness.... gave me a new beginning. The light of this flame reminds me that you are the light of this world, the hope of all who trust in you. I'm looking forward to seeing You . . .and Steve . . . my parents . . . and old friends. Thank you for the joy of being part of your Kingdom Plan here on earth and the hope of an eternity in your presence. (*FTB.*)