

RUTH: LOVING AND SUPPORTING

Team time topic talk

Many of us know the book of Ruth for the beautiful declaration of support she makes to her mother-in-law, Naomi, or the slight snicker at teenage youth group when we try to discuss what is meant by covering Boaz's feet.

But to me, this misses the real point of the story. Ruth is a Moabite, one of the traditional enemies of Israel who, out of love and concern for her mother-in-law, risks moving to a place where she is likely to suffer discrimination and poverty. At that time, Naomi, as a 'useless' widow without any men to define herself by, would find life very harsh indeed. Ruth's sacrifice of her own future to save her mother-in-law makes her the very model of someone who gives support and love, with little thought for herself.

Some commentators consider that the book of Ruth is about changing the story of one of Israel's traditional enemies. She is the good immigrant, the virtuous alien, almost a cipher of goodness to counteract the negative stories earlier in the Bible about the Moabites and their beginnings in Lot's drunken incest with his daughters.

Of course, this story has a happy ending. Ruth marries Boaz, and is doubly blessed with a son – a true sign of God's favour. Indeed, Ruth is so blessed that she is one of the four women in the genealogy of Jesus, and King David's great-grandmother.

- a) Who would we be willing to sacrifice everything for?
- b) What are the good and bad stories we tell about people we see as different to ourselves?
- c) The Bible has several stories along this theme – the most famous is the Good

Samaritan. What is God trying to tell us through these Biblical stories?

Take some time to pray together. No matter what we do in a holiday club, no matter how good the games and the craft, no matter how professional the acting and deep the message, the thing that will make the biggest difference is building a relationship, the love and acceptance and welcome that children feel in this place. Ask God to build and nourish those relationships. Go through the names of the children and leaders, and ask God to be with each one, so they may experience God's love through their interactions with you, and each carry God's love home to enrich their relationship with others.

Detectives' den

Arrival activity: Code breaker

Before the session, the leaders will hide around each Detective Den five items/pictures which are clues to the story. On a sheet will be five coded words which tell the detectives what items they will looking for. The detectives have to crack the code, write down the word, find the item in the den, and draw it on the paper. A sample code is available at urc.org.uk/holiday-club

Case file update

For activities, see urc.org.uk/holiday-club

Detective briefing

Ruth: Loving and supporting

Travelling story

Exploring a suitcase filled with clues and evidence from Ruth's story. This can be done up front with all the children, or in smaller groups. The case could be at the front when the children arrive to get them thinking and curious about its purpose and owner.



You will need a suitcase prepared in advance with the relevant 'clues' in it.

Begin by explaining that this suitcase is going to help us with our detective work today.

Who do we think it belongs to? Are there any clues? *The luggage label will have Ruth's name on, and her home address.*

Ok, so we know our person of interest today is called Ruth. Does anyone know anything about her to start us off? *(Take comments and suggestions from all groups. Perhaps capture them on your main investigation board.)*

Ruth has obviously moved around a lot – look at all these stickers. *Place stamps on the case showing the journey: Moab, Judah, Bethlehem.*

Shall we open it and see what clues we have inside? Oh it's locked, and we need a code to get in. Can anyone think of where we might find the code? *(Try all the options children might throw at you but without opening the suitcase)* Someone might suggest that if it's a Bible character, the code might be found in there. *The code will be the page number for the book of Ruth in your church Bible, eg OT307.*

Encourage children to come and lift an item out of the suitcase, and explore together what it might be telling us about Ruth's story. *Here are the items and what they might be clues to, but you could add others.*

- **Passport:** simple paper passport showing the journey Ruth went on, perhaps showing an immigrant stamp
- **Diary:** Old paper diary showing an entry for each part of the story you want to hone in on. Examples include the death of her husband, deciding to go with Naomi, the kindness of Boaz, finding a new family and faith. This could be referred back to when exploring the items

- **Drawings:** An alternative to the diary could be hand drawn pictures of key parts of Ruth's story, such as her wedding to Boaz, a picture of Ruth, Naomi and Orpah
- **Map:** showing the route from Moab to Bethlehem, showing Orpah leaving to go away
- **Two wedding rings** on a black ribbon with the names Mahlon and Boaz, to show her two husbands
- **Promise card:** with the words 'Dear Naomi, Where you go, I will go; Where you stay, I will stay; your people will be my people and your God my God. Love Ruth x
- **Wheatsheaf:** telling us about her gathering in from the edge of the field
- **Valentine's card:** to Ruth from B (helping us see that Boaz loved her)
- **Baby nappy/cloth:** Showing that she had a child
- **A family tree** – showing that Ruth is in the line of Jesus
- Once the suitcase is empty, quickly review them as an opportunity to tell the story of Ruth.

Put all the pieces back in the suitcase and close it. This can be used by any of the groups during the day. Well done detectives, on with the day.

Bible verse – John 15:12. This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you.



Video

Animation by Crossroads Kids – www.youtube.com/watch?v=irThVpdeSXk



Detectives investigate

Game: House-moving relay

Place a pile of household items for each team at one end of the room. Make sure that the items are fairly easy to carry. You may want to get one team member to stand by the pile to help the runners pick things up.

Each team forms a line. The first person runs up and collects an item and runs back to the next person in the line. They pass their item to the next team member who carries that item with them as they run to the pile to collect a second item. They run back carrying both these items and pass them both to the next person in the team who now has two items to carry as they run to get a third, and so on. If a runner drops everything, they have to put them all back on the pile and start again with one. When the time is up, the winning team is the team with most items.

Craft: Luggage label with 3D hearts

You will need:

- Red paper
- Strong card and some string
- Stapler and staples
(Optional: needle and thread)

What you do:

Cut out a label shape from strong card. Make a hole in the top and thread some string through it.



Cut out nine heart shapes that are all the same size.

Take three of the heart shapes, and place them on top of each other so that they completely line

up. Fold them in half and staple or stitch them together. Repeat this with the other hearts.

Glue the hearts onto the luggage label, and write some words which reflect the story of Ruth onto the hearts.

Then fan out the hearts to create a 3D effect.

Reflection

Ruth is a special person who loves her mother-in-law, and is prepared to give up everything, say goodbye to her friends, and travel to a strange land with different customs and traditions. For Ruth, this may even mean she would not be made welcome. This is a very brave thing to do.

- How do you choose your friends?
- How does it feel to go somewhere new?
- How might you make someone new feel welcome in your school, your church group, even in your family?

Small group prayer activity



You will need a bowl full of grain, an empty bowl, and a spoon for each child. When Ruth was working in the fields, she was a gleaner, collecting up the wheat that the farmers had left behind when they harvested their crop. Boaz took pity on her, and made sure there was plenty left for her to gather. Think about those people who do not have enough to eat, those countries where people go hungry, and people in this country who rely on food banks or other people to help them feed their families. Think, too, about refugees and migrants





in a new country. Slowly spoon the grain from the full bowl into the empty bowl until both are even. Ask God to help all to have enough to eat and for those who have plenty to be willing to share.

Recipe: Rugelach

Rugelach is a croissant-shaped filled pastry which is very popular in Israel, and among Jewish people around the world. You can buy scones or croissants or make the recipe below:

Ingredients

Puff pastry (gluten free) cut into eight equal triangles

Filling:

3/4 cup sugar
 2/3 cup dried fruit, finely chopped
 1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts, toasted (substitute with sunflower seeds or crushed pretzels)
 1/3 cup butter, melted
 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
 1 teaspoon ground allspice
 1 large egg, lightly beaten (substitute with milk)
 Additional sugar

Directions

- In a small bowl, combine the sugar, dried fruit, walnuts, melted butter, cinnamon, and allspice.
- Take one triangle of dough and sprinkle with 3 tablespoons of filling leaving 1cm round the edges.
- Roll up triangles from the wide end and place point side down on foil-lined baking sheets. Curve ends to form a crescent shape. Brush with egg or milk and sprinkle with additional sugar.
- Bake at 350°F for 18-20 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Detective update

Interviewing the suspect: MG interviews Ruth

MG: Oi! Hello, who are you then?

Ruth: I'm Ruth, I'm from Moab, I'm a widow. Who are you?

MG: I ask the questions round here! What's your story then? What's that bag for? Where are you going?

Ruth: Well, that is a lot of questions. My bag has all my things in. I'm on a journey. I'm going to Bethlehem, from Moab.

MG: Why are you going there?

Ruth: Well, I'm going there because that's where my mother-in-law Naomi is going.

MG: Not your idea then?

Ruth: Not really, but I said to her I will go wherever she goes, and stay wherever she stays.

MG: Haven't you got your own place to go to?

Ruth: Yes, but I love Naomi, we are both alone, and I have made her a promise. Where you go I will go, where you stay I will stay, your people will be my people, your God will be my God.



MG: What are you going to do when you get there?


Ruth: I'm not sure. I don't even know if we will have a job – I might not be welcome there.

MG: What's the point in going there, then?

Ruth: Well, sometimes you have to do what you think is right. And I think my place is to be with Naomi, to be a friend and look after her.

MG: Now I can see, I know who you are. You're one of us!

Song



Hints are everywhere we look as we investigate this book
We must search to see if we can find the truths
With a magnifying glass, and the right amount of sass
We will be a group of modern supersleuths

Where you go, that's where I'll go, so said Ruth
And where you live, that's where I'll live, that's the truth
I will take your God as my God, and your people as my kin
For you love me and I love you
Our adventure must begin.

Interviewing the detectives

MG asks questions of the detectives, or holds a quiz to find out what they've learned and what conclusions they've come to.

Closing prayer



This is a very old prayer, written by Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), who was a nun living in Spain. Compassion means love and concern, just as Ruth showed for Naomi.

As the leader reads the prayer, the children and adults should look at or point to each part of the body named, and think about how they can use that part of the body to do good for Christ and for others, just as Ruth did.

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.
Jesus, use our hands, our feet, our eyes,
our bodies to share your love AMEN

