

Age 7-8

Background information

1. Ruth

- The story of Ruth is set in the turbulent times not long after the Israelites had settled in Canaan (Israel) about the 12th century BCE. There was no king at this time and the story of Ruth introduces the family who are the ancestors of a future King, David.
- Ruth was the great grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus.
- Ruth is the stranger from another land who shows how faith should be lived. She kept the Jewish law: Honour your mother and father . . . care for the widow, etc.)
- Ruth becomes a gleaner, someone who picked up the fallen bits of corn. Biblical law stated that a farmer could not pick anything that dropped or was left behind by mistake. Farmers also had to leave the corners of their fields for the poor to pick. Gleaning was a practice that carried on in Europe right through to the early 20th century. Francois Millet painted *The Gleaners* in 1857. Gleaning in a different form is now returning as a green option for cutting down on food waste. Certain

charities 'glean' food by arrangement with supermarkets and distribute it to those in need.



- Ruth's promise to Naomi from the King James Bible is some of the most beautiful language of the Bible, often chosen for weddings. The passage is poetry, but it is not laid out as poetry. Hebrew poetry does not rhyme but is full of imagery and rhythm.

And Ruth said, 'Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me'. Ruth 1:16-17

- Note: the phrase 'the LORD do so to me, and more also' is an ancient vow. It would probably have been accompanied by a gesture such as a finger drawn across the throat.

2. How Christians think about the Bible

- When the King James Bible was published in 1611 a preface was added that described the Bible using a range of images. The images tell us how Christians think about the Bible. One of those images was a treasure chest. The translators likened the Bible to a treasure chest full of jewels. This communicates how precious the Bible is for Christians.
- The Bible itself describes God's word and wisdom in terms of riches, treasure, and precious metals in order to communicate its worth. In Psalm 19:10, God's words are described as 'More precious than gold.' The Bible is a treasure for Christians because it tells them about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit (God invisible and active in the world) and how to live as Christians and serve others.
- It is not only Bible verses that contain words such as 'riches', 'treasure', 'jewels' and 'precious metals' that

Christians regard as precious. Generally the Bible is regarded as a treasure by Christians because they value what it says. Some passages are seen as particular 'treasures' such as:

'Whenever you help anyone, no matter how unimportant, you help me.' Matthew 25:40

- What makes a particular quotation a 'jewel' or 'treasure' is its worth for a person in building their relationship with God, helping them to serve others and helping them to live as Christians.

3. Background information for using a shoebox story

- A shoebox story has all the props needed to tell the story within the box. The box is covered with suitable paper reflecting the nature of the story. The paper might reflect the mood of the story or it might reflect some of the content of the story.
- The fact that the story is in something that looks like a gift box reflects the Christian belief that the stories of the Bible are like a present from God and they have something to say to people today.
- You will need to gather your props before the session and cover the

shoebox. You can deliver the script yourself or it can be done with one person moving the figures and another person reading.

- Encourage pupils to join in.
- The pupils can replay the story but all items must be child- safe.
- The shoebox story can be told on its own or can be followed or preceded by the more straightforward retelling of the Bible story (provided).
- Within each story a phrase or saying from the King James Bible that has come into English is embedded in the text. This can be followed up after the story.
- The shoebox stories were written for particular age groups but they are flexible.
- There are two phrases from the Bible embedded in this script: 'Pride goes before a fall' (Proverbs 16:18) and 'How the mighty are fallen' (2 Samuel 1:27).
- 'Pride goes before a fall' comes from the biblical book of Proverbs which contains advice for wise living. This is the observation that people who are very boastful and full of themselves are likely to make a mistake that dents their pride.
- 'How the mighty are fallen' is part of the adult David's lament for King Saul and his son Jonathan, both great warriors, who were killed in battle. It has come to be used when any person who was doing well suffers a reversal of fortune. For example, when a well-known football team drops out of the premier league.
- Sometimes problems can feel gigantic. Christians believe that they can pray to God in those times. The problem does not always disappear, but they believe that God is always with them in the situation helping them through it.

4. Background information on David and Goliath

Pastoral note

It should be made clear that throwing stones is not a way of dealing with bullies. David used what was appropriate in a war to save his people. When applying a Bible story to life it is often the meaning that is applied not the detail. This story is about attitudes. Goliath relied on size and weapons, David used a weapon (sling) but his attitude was different.

- Christians believe that sometimes God uses the weak to topple the mighty. Throughout the Bible, trust in God is seen as more important than weapons or size. Trusting in weapons or force is seen as a wrong attitude.
- David's attitude was right; he knew what he could do and was rightly 'proud' of his skill with a sling without being arrogant. It's a story about attitudes.

- David's faith and trust meant that he saw the problem of Goliath from a different perspective. Christians believe God is bigger than any problem and Goliath was only a man. As a person of faith he trusted God and that cut the problem down to size.
- The army of Israel had its own force of sling throwers. The sling was a recognised weapon. David did not go unarmed even though he was without armour. David would have learned to be expert with the sling as a shepherd; he would aim a stone to fall at the side or in front of a stray sheep to make them move in the right direction.
- The Philistines were a military people, probably of Greek origin, who had settled on the coast of Israel (modern Gaza strip and surrounding area).
- This was a battle between champions but David was a youth, not fully grown.

Resources

www.dltk-bible.com/david.htm A song about this story that Christian children sometimes sing

Signs can be added to stories:

www.christiansigns.co.uk/public/search.php

Database of signs associated with Christian worship

