

Age 8-9

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 bread basket. This communicates the Christian belief that the Bible helps people to grow.

The Bible itself likens God's Word (found in the Bible) to food.

'People do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from God.'
Matthew 4:4

'Do not work for food that goes off, work for food that lasts forever.'
John 6:27

It is not only Bible verses that have words such as 'bread' or 'food' in them that Christians regard as helping people to grow. It is any part of the Bible that helps Christians to grow in their relationship with God, with others and in living the Christian life (growing in love, justice, etc.).

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.

4. Background information on Jonah

- There is a one phrase from the Bible embedded in this script: 'You reap what you sow' (Galatians 6:7). This means that *generally* what you put into life you get out. Sow hatred and you are likely to get hatred back. Sow love and you are more likely to get love back. If you sow bad behaviour people need to be aware that they will probably suffer the consequences of that. But life is not like a sum, it is not a guarantee, sowing good just makes good results more likely.
- The point of this story is that God is concerned about right and wrong. The people in Nineveh (the town Jonah was sent to) are described by their own king as 'sinful and cruel'. God does not ignore wrong but wants people to change. He is willing to forgive, often much more willing than people are.
- Being sorry is not enough; repentance is sorry plus change.
- This story is read by Jewish believers at Yom Kippur, The Day of Atonement.
- This story is set in the 8th century BCE.
- The fish is described as a 'great fish' not a whale.
- The people of Nineveh – the capital of Assyria – were the enemies of the people of Israel. Jonah did not want to preach to them in case they repented. He was probably also afraid, with just cause; Assyrians had a fearsome reputation.
- Jonah got a ship to the farthest point in the Mediterranean – Spain which was the opposite direction to Assyria, which is located in modern Iraq.
- God is described in this story as working through nature: storm, fish, worm.

Resources

www.textweek.com Go to art index, subjects are alphabetical

Signs can be added to stories:

www.christiansigns.co.uk/public/search.php
Database of signs associated with Christian worship

www.britishsignlanguage.com/ Moving pictures for basic signs