

Unit 6 Women of God

Week 1 Ruth Finds a Home

Information for Leaders

Bible Reference: Ruth 1-4

Main Teaching Points

- Ruth shows great loyalty and love to Naomi.
- Naomi in turn finds a way to help Ruth and see she is happy and well provided for.
- God rewards both Ruth and Naomi with a secure future and a new family.

Themes to discover

The bitterness of grief

Naomi in her grief at losing not only her husband but her two sons, believes that the Lord has turned against her (Ruth 1:13). She sets out to return to her home country and when she reaches Bethlehem, she is greeted by the whole town who are excited to see her return with her daughter-in-law. However Naomi insists that they called her Mara (Ruth 1:20). The name 'Naomi' in Hebrew means 'pleasant' whereas 'Mara' means 'bitter'. Naomi declares that the Lord has made her life bitter. 'How can you call me Naomi, when God has turned against me and made my life so hard?' Ruth 1:21

Love and Sacrifice

Ruth and Orpah the daughters-in-law of Naomi are both set to return to Judah with their mother-in-law and in fact are already on their way when Naomi urges them to return to Moab. Naomi believes that she is to blame for the things that have happened because the Lord has turned against her and she thinks her daughters-in-law would be better off without her. She has given up hope that the future will be better. Even though Naomi puts up a good argument for returning to Moab, Ruth will not be persuaded (See Ruth 1:16-17). Ruth is willing to put up with any sacrifice in order to stay with Naomi even if it means death. God's hand is on Ruth and he is directing her to choose the right path.

God brings comfort

As time goes on even though Naomi still grieved for those she had lost, God provided other people to love her – and for her to love. As Naomi began to look past herself and care for Ruth, so God gave Naomi a new family to be part of. God has good plans for us – we might grieve for someone we love, but God will provide other people to comfort us – and for us to comfort! People who die leave a gap, but God can send people to fill the gap even though, on one level, we never actually stop missing the person who is dead.

The **Introductory activity** helps introduce the children to some of the themes in the story.

The **Story** and **Challenge** tell and reinforce the biblical story.

The **Prayer activity** encourages the children to think about their own relationships with friends and family and pray for/give thanks for the people they love.

The **Game** explores the theme of friendship.

Additional discussion questions

Ages 4-7

Why did Ruth want to stay with Naomi?

What made Naomi smile again after being sad for so long?

Ages 7-11

What shows you that Boaz was a kind man?

Why do you think Ruth was surprised to be treated so kindly?

Week 1 Session Outline

Welcome and Intro

Registration/Welcome/Prayer

Intro Idea

You will need

Younger Children Ages 4-7

6-piece jigsaw puzzles (1 each or 1 between 2)

Older Children Ages 7-11

10-piece jigsaw puzzles (1 each or 1 between 2)

What to do

Before the session, print out the jigsaw puzzle pictures onto thin card. Cut them out into the individual puzzle pieces. Children will be working in pairs so you will need 1 picture puzzle for every 2 children. If you have small numbers and enough time, you could let the children do this activity individually.

You might want to identify each separate puzzle with a symbol/number on the back of each puzzle piece. This will make it easier for the children to find all the correct pieces. Keep one piece from each puzzle that you cut out in a separate pile. Make sure the larger pile of puzzle pieces is well mixed up.

Once children are gathered for registration and welcome, a couple of leaders can scatter the puzzle pictures all over the floor, on tables, windowsills, chairs etc. Keep the smaller pile of puzzle pieces which you kept in a different pile.

Once you are ready to start the activity give each child/pair a puzzle piece and tell them their job is to find the rest of the pieces of that puzzle.

The children walk around the hall trying to collect the pieces that make up their picture. When they have all the pieces they can sit down and put the puzzle together. Reward each group that completes the puzzle with a reward of your choice. Once a few groups are finished give the rest of the children a time limit e.g. another 2 minutes with regular reminders about how much time is left. Once the time is up, gather everyone together again.

Explain that today's bible story is about a woman called Ruth who 'sticks by' someone who needs her. She goes with her friend to a strange land and finds a job doing something a bit similar to what we have been doing. It involved searching, picking up and gathering together.

Story telling suggestions for unit 7

Choose some of these options to help tell the story.

1. Read the story from the Lion Storyteller bible with good pace and expression. To add visuals to your storytelling, use the available PowerPoints (see digital resources).
2. Use the short videos provided to tell the stories. (see digital resources for this unit)
3. Give children the blank heads template with 3 heads. As you tell the story, ask the children to draw the expression on the face of one of the characters at 3 different stages in the story e.g. In 'Ruth finds a new Home', draw Naomi's face just after her husband and 2 sons have all died, when Ruth insists on coming with her to Bethlehem, when Ruth gets married to Boaz.
Draw Naaman's face when the servant girl tells him about Elisha, when Elisha doesn't come out to see him, when he comes up out of the water and is healed.
Draw Esther's face when she heard about Haman's evil plan, when she went to see the King without permission, at the dinner party when she manages to save her people.

Story

pages 48-49 from The Lion Storyteller Bible

See Story suggestions for this unit

Challenge Harvesters and Gleaners

You will need

Large sheet (optional)
Lots of small food items e.g. dried pasta/pulses/cereal
Scales
Large bowl
6 plastic bowls

What to do

Place the sheet on the ground and scatter the food on it. (You can just scatter the food onto the floor if you don't mind the mess)

Divide your group into teams of around 6. Team 1- 'the harvesters' have a small amount of time e.g. 30 seconds to gather as much of the food as they can. However they can only collect the food in their hands. At the end of the time the team members tip their gathered food into a bowl and a leader weighs it. Next team 2 –'the gleaners' have double the time e.g. 1 minute to collect what is left over and they also have a bowl each. At the end of the time they tip their collected food into the leader's large bowl and the leader weighs it.

Repeat if you have more teams or swap and let the harvesters be the gleaners and vice versa.

Talk about

Which was easiest? Being the harvester or being the gleaner?

How did Boaz make Ruth's job a bit easier?

Prayer Activity

You will need

Play dough or clay

What to do

Give everyone a lump of clay and ask them to model members of their family and as they do, thank God for them and pray about anything that that person needs. A leader could guide the children by giving them 2-3 ideas. Here's some examples:

- make someone in your family that you want to thank God for
- make someone who has done a kind thing for you recently
- make someone you remember who has died and thank God for all the wonderful memories you have and for that person being part of your life.
- Make someone who is sick and ask God to make them well again
- Make someone that you haven't seen in a while and you miss and ask God to keep them safe

Finish by thanking God for all our families.

Game Unlikely Friendships

Naomi and Ruth were unlikely friends because they were very different. Naomi was much older than Ruth, they came from different countries, they believed in different Gods. When Ruth decided to stay with Naomi she had to move away from her county, her family and everything that was familiar to her.

You will need

Unlikely Friendship Cards
Unlikely Friendships Visuals

What to do

Younger Children Ages 4-7

Have a look together at the PowerPoint visuals and guess who the friend is in each slide. Talk about why they are unlikely friends.

If you have time play a pairs game using the 'Unlikely Friendships cards' resource. Give everyone a card and explain that they have to move around the room and find their partner.

Older Children Ages 7-11

What to do

Ask the children to get into pairs. Each pair should think of a surprising or unlikely friendship, from either from a T.V. programme or a film – like Shrek and donkey; characters that you wouldn't expect to be friends. Each pair should think of 3 clues to help describe themselves without giving their names away. They come up to the front and tell the others their clues one at a time and everyone must guess who the unlikely friends are e.g.

- One of us is really talkative and the other is very grumpy.
- One of us is green and the other is brown/grey.
- One of us is an animal and one is an ogre.

Afterwards discuss together why the various pairs made unlikely friends. Which two were the most unlikely friends?

You could finish off the activity by talking briefly about what might make very different people want to be friends with each other. What makes a good friendship?

Week 2 The Helpful Servant

Information for Leaders

Bible Reference: 2 Kings 5 1-19

Main Teaching Points

- The servant girl was faithful to God in strange and difficult circumstances.
- She was kind her new employer even though his army had taken her captive.
- When we are faithful in our duties it helps people to see that our God is good.

Themes to discover

Naaman's Leprosy

Naaman was ill with leprosy, which made him physically unable to perform his duties. He would not be able to lead the army to further victories for Syria if the disease was not stopped. Leprosy was feared at the time as being a highly contagious disease so people would shun anyone with it. However, Naaman's position meant that he was permitted to stay in his own home, possibly living in separate rooms from the rest of the family. On hearing what his young servant girl said about the prophet Elisha's ability to heal, Naaman acts on her advice showing in part his desperation to be healed but also the respect he must have had for this little girl.

The servant girl's faith

It is interesting to note that the young servant girl from Israel wanted to help her master. She could have just taken the attitude that he deserved what he got. After all, these were the people that took her away from her family. Instead, she told Naaman's wife that a prophet in Samaria (the capital of Israel) named Elisha could heal her husband (2 Kings 5:2-3). The fact that this young girl did this shows that she had been taught about God from a very young age. She still loved God and believed in his power even though she was far away from her parents and religious teachers. She believed in God's power enough to take a big chance and tell her mistress about the prophet Elisha.

The **Introductory activity** and **Edible craft** help the children think about what life was like for the young servant girl in our story.

The **Story** and **Quiz** tell and reinforce the biblical story.

The **Prayer activity** encourages the children to think about how they can be faithful to God and to others in different ways.

Additional discussion questions

Ages 4-7

How do you think the servant girl felt.....

When was she taken away from her family?

When she found out her master was very ill?

When her master returned from Elisha and had been healed?

Ages 7-11

The servant girl had been taken prisoner and was living in a foreign country far away from her family. What sort of problems would she have faced? What would have been most difficult?

How easy was it for her to stay faithful to God when nobody around her believed in Him?

What would have happened had the servant girl said nothing to Naaman's wife?

Week 2 Session Outline

Welcome and Intro

Registration/Welcome/Prayer

Intro Idea

You will need

Charade cards

Charades

What to do

Play charades with your group. Ask for volunteers to come forward and act out what you have written on the cards. All of the mimes are related to chores that the servant girl in our story would have done for Naaman's wife in their home.

Today's story is about a young girl (around 8-10 years old) who had been captured by the Syrian army and taken away from her parents and from her country Israel. She became a servant of Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, and had to serve his wife in their house. She would have had to do chores like the ones we have just acted out.

Story

Pages 64-65 from The Lion Storyteller Bible

See Story suggestions for this unit

Quiz

Four Colours Quiz

You will need

Four Colours Quiz (see digital resources)

4 sheets of coloured card (red, yellow, blue, green)

What to do

Gather your group together in the middle of the room where they can see the PowerPoint visuals displayed. Stick the 4 coloured sheets of card on the walls around the room. In this quiz, the children are shown 4 multiple choice answers with each question, each on a coloured background. When they think they know the correct answer, they run to the area in the room which has the card of the same colour. The answer will then be revealed. Gather the group back into the middle before proceeding with the next question. There's no winners or losers with this quiz, so just enjoy playing together.

Prayer Activity

Being Faithful

Our bible story starts with a girl who had been taken prisoner and was living in a foreign country as a servant. She might only have been 8 or 10 years old. I wonder what sort of problems she would have faced when she first arrived. Would she have known how to do everything her mistress asked of her? What would have been most difficult? (They can think about the charades game).

I wonder how easy it was for this young girl to stay faithful to God remembering all her parents had taught her. Wouldn't it have been so easy to worship the foreign gods that her new family worshipped? She didn't though, she stayed faithful to God, even though her life had been turned upside down. And she was faithful to her new mistress because she did what she could to help. It was because of her faithfulness that Naaman was healed from his leprosy and became a believer in the one true God and worshipped Him for the rest of his life.

When we are faithful in things that may seem small and unimportant it helps others know that we can be trusted and relied upon. It means that when we say we will do something, we do it and we don't let others down. This means people will trust us when we talk about God too.

Ask the children to think of a way that they are faithful – and a way that they need to be more faithful – e.g. it might be being faithful in practical ways such as doing chores for their parents, walking their dog, being helpful in school, and in spiritual ways being faithful in reading the Bible and praying, coming to Sunday School every week etc.)

A leader can pray, and everyone can shout the ideas they have had.
Lord, thank you for all the things we have been faithful in. Thank you that we have been faithful in _____. There are some things we want to be more faithful in. Help us to be more faithful in _____. Thank you, God that you are always faithful to us. Amen.

Edible activity

Hummus and Flat breads

The young servant girl had a lot to get used to after she was taken captive by the Syrian army. She was snatched away from her home and her family and brought to a strange country to live and work for people she didn't know. Their beliefs (gods they worshipped) and customs (ways of doing things) were very different from her own. She may only have been around 8-10 years old so imagine how hard it would have been. One of the things which would have been different was the food. She would have had to help prepare these unfamiliar meals for the family.

This is a recipe that people in Syria would eat today.

You will need

Ingredients for Hummus (there are lots online) or ready-made

Ingredients for Flat breads (there are lots online) or ready-made

What to do

If possible, show the children how to make either hummus or flatbreads. If this is not possible have samples for children to try. You could research what people from Syria today eat for breakfast and talk about how different their breakfasts are to ours.

You could research other aspects of life in Syria, weather, language, religion etc to give children a sense of what it was like for the servant girl to be brought to a strange country to live.

Week 3 Esther was a star

Information for Leaders

Bible Reference: Esther 2-9

Main Teaching Points

- God put Esther in her position as Queen of Persia for a reason.
- Esther chose to save her people though it meant she risked her own life.
- Sometimes doing what is right comes at a cost.

Themes to discover

Being a good influence

Esther was Mordecai's cousin and adopted daughter (Esther 2:15). He had brought her up and she respected him and relied on his wisdom and advice. After Esther had been queen for four years, an edict was released, written by Haman but with the approval of the King and sealed with the King's own ring. It declared that all the Jews in the Kingdom were to be killed (Esther 3:12-15). Mordecai gave his adopted daughter some difficult advice (Esther 4:14) telling her that staying silent was not an option and that perhaps she has been given her position for this very reason. There were no certainties, but Esther saw the wisdom in Mordecai's advice and followed it.

Being Brave

Esther's name in Persian means 'star' and she proved herself true to her name by her bravery and selflessness. If she followed Mordecai's advice, and went to see the King uninvited, she was in very real danger of angering this unpredictable ruler. If he chose, he could have her put to death. However, he hadn't asked to see Esther in a month, and she didn't know when the next invitation would come, so she had to act. She asks her cousin Mordecai to gather all the Jews in Susa to fast for 3 days and she and her attendants would do the same. Then she would go to the King and if she was put to death, then so be it! (See Esther 4: 15-16). Esther was not guaranteed her safety, but she had decided to do what was right no matter the cost.

The **Introductory activity** and **Challenge** help introduce the children to the themes of fear and bravery from the story.

The **Story** and **Edible craft** tell and reinforce the biblical story.

The **Prayer activity** helps the children reflect on their own feelings and how God is with them through them all.

Additional discussion questions

Ages 4-7

What are you afraid of?

What brave thing have you done?

Ages 7-11

Have you ever had to stand up for the right thing when others around you didn't?

Esther and Mordecai were the only people in the royal palace who believed in God.

Have you ever been in a place where you are the only one who believes in God?

Week 3 Session Outline

Welcome and Intro

Registration/Welcome/Prayer

Intro Idea

Bravery

You will need

Sterilised empty can with the label removed
orange/lemon jelly
2 Mars bars sliced up

What to do

Before-hand mix jelly and Mars bars so the mixture looks a bit like pet food. Add to an empty can. Show the can of food to the children and say that you found this can at the back of your food cupboard without its label and you hadn't a clue what was in it. Now that you have opened it, you still aren't sure what it is, and you are afraid to taste it. You think it is safe enough to eat because tinned food lasts for ages, but it looks a bit weird. You could briefly let the children see what the food inside the tin look like and discuss together what it could be. Then say the only way to really find out is to taste it. Would anybody here be willing to taste it? Is anybody brave enough? See if anyone volunteers, if no-one does have a leader primed to offer to taste the food. Once the leader says it tastes nice, you might get a few other volunteers to try also. Emphasize how brave the volunteers were to taste the food. Today's bible story is about a woman who does an incredibly brave thing by risking her own life in order to save her people from harm.

Story

pages 78-79 from The Lion Storyteller Bible

See Story suggestions for this unit

Challenge

Mime a fear!

You will need

Pens and paper

What to do

Divide children up into groups of 2-3. Ask them to think about some things they are scared of or things they know others are scared of. They can write down a list together. Now tell them they are going to act out 1-2 of the fears to the others. Once they have had time to practise, each group should perform one or more of their mimes (depending on time) to the other groups. See if the other groups can guess which fear is being acted out.

Prayer Activity

You will need

Large sheets of paper or card e.g. lining paper
Thick markers

What to do

Before the session stick pieces of lining paper on the wall in three different locations. Label one piece, "Sad", one "Happy", one "Afraid".

Give the children the opportunity to move between the area and write or draw something that makes them feel happy, sad, or afraid. (You can add other emotions if appropriate to your group)

When children have had time to write, bring everyone together. As a group move to each area in turn and have a look at what has been written. Give children the opportunity to pray if they wish. The leader can sum up the ideas in a prayer thanking God for things that make us happy and asking God to help us when we are afraid or sad. Emphasize the fact that God is with us in each situation and we can trust God and know that he is looking after us.

Remember that Esther experienced each of these emotions. God had placed her in the position of queen for a reason and was with her throughout her life.

Edible craft Hamantaschen

Hamantaschen [literally Haman's pockets] are traditional Jewish triangular filled-pocket cookies, usually associated with the Jewish holiday of Purim. The name refers to Haman, the villain in the story of Esther. In Hebrew, hamantaschen are known as 'Haman's ears.'

You will need

- 4 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1 tbsp lemon juice and lemon rind from half a lemon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 5 cups sifted flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 egg to brush
- jam for the filling

What to do

A leader could demonstrate this part

Pre-heat oven to 180°C. Beat eggs and sugar. Add the next five ingredients and mix well. Divide the dough into four parts. Stretch it out on a floured surface until its about ½ cm thick and cut out circles with a cup/cutter.

The children could get involved with this part

Put half a tsp of jam in the middle of each circle. Fold over the right and the left sides of the circle so they met in the middle on top of the jam forming a triangle. Fold the third side into the centre to meet the other two sides and press it together with the first two. Put them in a greased tin. Brush with beaten egg. Bake for 20 minutes.



Tip

If you don't have cooking facilities on site, the children could take their raw Hamantaschen home to bake. You might want to have a few Hamantaschen already cooked to let the children taste.

“Dive In” Activity Week

Welcome and Intro

Recap briefly on the stories covered in the last 3 sessions using some of the recap ideas at the beginning of the programme.

There is an information sheet to go along with each activity. It is helpful if leaders talk about the story as a reminder to the children when they are explaining the activity.

Explore the story

Tissue paper Hearts

You will need

Tissue paper in bright colours
Heart template (see resources)
String or ribbons
PVA glue
Scissors
Hole punch



What to do

Before hand print out the heart templates onto card. You can cut them out or leave the cutting to the children depending on age/ability. Using a hole punch or scissors, make a hole at the top of the heart for the string/ribbon. Provide various colours of tissue paper cut into small squares. Show the children how to scrunch the tissue paper into balls and glue onto the heart. When finished add some ribbon so that the heart can be hung up.

Eat the story

Soda Farls

You will need

(Makes 4 farls)
250g soda flour, plus more for kneading
1/2 teaspoon salt
250ml buttermilk
Electric frying pan or frying pan and hob
Weighing scales/bowl/measuring jug/utensils



What to do

Preheat your frying pan on a medium heat.
Place flour and salt in a bowl. Make a well in the centre and pour in the buttermilk.
Work quickly to mix into a dough and knead very lightly on a well-floured surface. Form into a flattened circle, about 1cm thick and cut into quarters with a floured knife.
Sprinkle a little flour over the base of the hot pan and place each quarter into the pan, one at a time, until the 4 quarters create a complete circle. Cook the farls for 6 to 8 minutes on each side or until golden brown and cooked through. You may have to cut through the centre cross to turn them over.
Take the pan off the heat and allow the farls to cool in the pan for 5-10 minutes.
Split each farl down the middle, butter them and serve with jam.

Recreate a scene Naaman puppet

This idea came from <http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/search/label/Naaman>

You will need

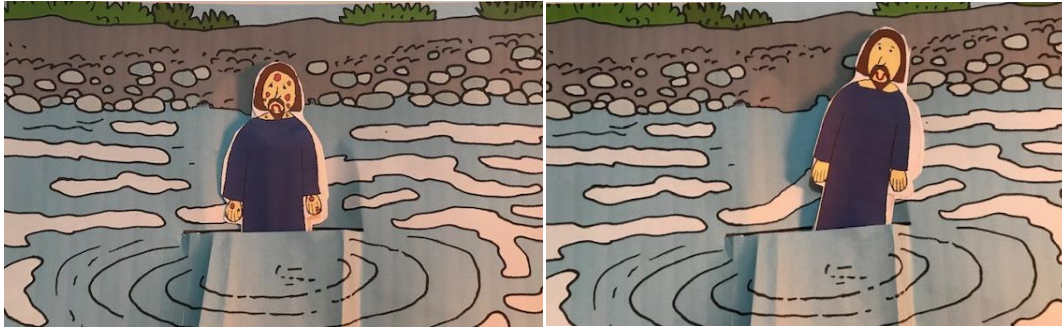
Naaman puppets and backgrounds (see resources)

Colouring pens/pencils
Wooden craft sticks or straws
Double-sided sticky tape

What to do

Print out the Naaman figure and the background onto card. If using the black and white images, the children can colour. Tape a straw or wooden craft stick to the back of one of the Naaman figures and stick the second picture on top.

Cut a slit in the middle of the background sheet. To re-enact the scene, encourage the children to retell the part of the story where Naaman goes to the river Jordan and dips himself in under the water 7 times. Have 'spotty' Naaman coming up out of the river 6 times and then, on the 7th time, turn the puppet round to show the 'healed' side!



Make the Story Strengthened Hearts

This idea came from <http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/search/label/Esther>

You will need

Paper plates
Wool
Plastic tapestry needles

What to do

Before the session prepare the paper plates by cutting out a heart in the middle of each one. To do this, fold the paper plate in half and draw half a heart at the middle fold. Cut the shape out. Punch holes all around the cut-out heart using a pen. Leaving a wide margin or so the paper doesn't tear when the children are sewing.

Ask children to choose a few different colours of wool and to sew through the holes in any order to make a 'strengthened heart'.



Live the Story

Friendship Bracelets

You will need

Coloured elastic

Selection of beads (optional—alphabet beads for names)

Scissors

Sticky tape

What to do

Empathise to the children that they are making a bracelet for a friend and talk about who they will give it to, what colours their friend likes etc.

Provide an assortment of beads in bowls.

With younger children, help them cut a length of elastic to the right size. It might help to tape one end of the elastic to the table so that the beads don't fall off after they have been threaded.

Once finished threading their beads, help younger children to tie their bracelets with a double knot.



Draw the story

Design a throne

You will need

Design a throne template

Blank paper

Coloured pens

Stick on gems (optional)

What to do

Children use their own ideas or get some help from the internet to create a beautiful throne in their own unique style fit for a King or queen.