

## Aim of lesson

To see how God shows his care to us even in times of real problems; and to see his care expressed in the kindness and care of other ordinary people.

## Bible background

Ruth chapters 1-4.

## Outline of lesson

The structure of this lesson is a dramatised reading of the whole of the book of Ruth. This is done in sections with discussion between each section.

Prepare the group beforehand. Advise them of the characters they will be reading and encourage them to form impressions of the characters.

Make sure all the class are using the same version of the Bible. If you need extra characters, maybe classes could be combined, or brethren and sisters invited to take part.

You may like to take the narrator's part yourself so that overall control can be retained and discussion directed.

Before beginning the reading give out four sheets of paper headed God's care, Ruth, Naomi and Boaz respectively, so that one or two people in the class are responsible for noting what is learned about that character or subject during discussion.

### Famine in the land (Ruth 1:1-7)

Discuss the difficulties the family went through; how they must have felt and what they thought. Did they think God had stopped caring for them? Can you see anything of God's care at this stage? Be prepared to discuss God's care of the hungry today. Guide the group to an understanding that God has provided all the resources necessary for everyone to be fed. National self-interest, greed and ignorance have led to the situation we see today, with people in the West wasting so much of what God provides. Even in Africa, rich dictators make themselves richer at the expense of their people.

### Decision time (Ruth 1:8-18)

Discuss the decision the young women faced. How hard it would be to go to a strange country with no one to support you, no family around to help. Look at the character of Ruth, her kindness and care of the older woman without expecting a reward. What do you think she had learned from Naomi about her God?

### Back to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:19-22)

Ask the class about their feelings for Naomi in this passage. God had brought her home, she had the loyalty and love of Ruth but, not unnaturally, she looked back at her leaving Bethlehem with a husband and two sons. She remembered her loss and felt empty, depressed and possibly bitter. Do the class think she trusted God even when things were bad?

### Under whose wings you have come to take refuge (Ruth 2:1-16)

How did Ruth know she was allowed to glean? Naomi must have taught her some of the law (Leviticus 19:9-10). Would they see how God had prepared some of his care for them years before they were born? Can the class see God's guiding hand in the lives of Ruth and Boaz? What impressions do the class form of the character of Boaz? How does he show his kindness and care?

### The kindness of God (Ruth 2:17-23)

Look at the reactions of Naomi. Note how she sees the kindness of others as the kindness of God himself. Have the class ever considered that the kindness they show to someone is part of the care that God wants to show to that person and that he lets them share in his caring?

### At the threshing floor (Ruth 3:1-13)

Ask the class what they learn of Ruth's character here? Is obedience to parents or elders something they find easy? Do they think it applies to them? What do they think obedience means in practical terms?

Make the point that though Boaz was deeply attracted to Ruth, he accepted without question the laws of God which laid down family responsibilities. (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Some young people may be interested to know that in verse 9, the word translated 'corner of your garment' (NIV) is the same as the word for 'wings' in 2:12; Ruth had trusted in God to protect her; now she is also trusting in a Godly man.

### A gift of love (Ruth 3:14-18)

This passage is one of great beauty. Ask the class to think about what the bag of barley meant to each one involved. Help them to see not only Boaz acknowledging Naomi with this gift, but also God reassuring Naomi. Through it Boaz also shows his love for Ruth. Above everything else God's care and guiding hand is seen in the lives of all.

### Ruth is redeemed (Ruth 4:1-12)

Note how carefully the law was kept. Emphasize that everyone saw that the happiness of the couple and the success of the marriage depended on God's blessing being upon them. That meant seeking to do things his way.

### God's blessings (Ruth 4:13-22)

Show the class how God blessed Naomi with friends who cared for her, with a grandson who was to be King of Israel and with that greatest of all blessings, that Jesus was to be born into her family so many years later.

## **Summary**

Use the workbook to summarise the conclusions or use as a homework sheet.

## **Digging deeper**

### **Find out about Bethlehem**

This study investigates what happened in Bethlehem throughout scripture, and links the story of Ruth to the life of Jesus.

### **Relevance to our lives**

Ask the class to think of some act of kindness that they can do to someone in need this week. Perhaps they could visit someone old or lonely. Ask them to pray about it first, asking that God will let them be part of his care for others.

## **Prayer**

Dear Lord, teach us to trust you as Ruth had learned to trust. When we feel low and upset, build us up as you did Naomi. Help us to see your guiding hand and care in our lives, and to show that same care to others.

## **Other suggestions for activities**

- The class could write two prayers that Naomi might have said, one on the way back to Bethlehem and another after the birth of Obed.
- The class may like to write a song on the theme of God's care in the lives of Ruth and Naomi.