

faith at home

Weekly Resources for Schools

PHASE: SECONDARY

FESTIVALS THEME: HARVEST





KEY CONCEPT/MESSAGE:

Harvest is a time for celebrating abundance, giving thanks for all the good gifts we have received. Yet we know that many people do not have enough. In the Bible, God frequently reminds His people of the importance of taking care of those who are in need. The story of Ruth and Boaz is an example from the Old Testament where they both put other people first. How can we also look to the needs of others?

‘When we give generously, with an abundance mentality, what we give away will multiply.’

Henri Nouwen

BIBLE STORY OF THE WEEK:

The Story of Ruth and Boaz

“GOD bless whoever it was who took such good care of you!” Ruth 2:19 (The Message Bible)



Gathering

2020 has been unbelievably challenging but we're not the only people to face difficulties.

There are many in this world who face even greater hardships on a day to day basis than we do. How do you react to that?

In challenging times – are we thankful for what we do have, or do we grieve what we don't have?



How has the pandemic effected your attitude to towards others? Do you feel the same about donating to charity as you did before?

Today we are going to think about the harvest we share and how we care for those whose harvest is not so good.

God has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6 verse 8

Engagement

We would like you and your students to engage with the story of Ruth and Boaz in the Book of Ruth, which is found in the Bible but is also part of the Jewish Ketuvim and is traditionally read at the Jewish holiday of Shavuot. In particular Chapter 2. Present the story in a way that is suitable for your school context. We have included here a rough script but please take this and make it your own.

'One of the best stories in the Bible you won't have heard of is the story of Ruth and Boaz. It is a story of loss and love and redemption. Set against the background of harvest in an agricultural community it's almost like a biblical Poldark!

Key to understanding the story is knowing the significance the Jewish Law of Gleaning which was a form of welfare system. If you owned a field, your reapers could go through the field once, and only once. Whatever they missed was left for widows, the destitute and orphans – for those who had no one else to care for them.

People believed that the existence of the Gleaning Law was proof of God's concern for the poor among the people.

Let's concentrate on chapter 2. Ruth was a foreign widow looking after her Jewish mother-in-law Naomi. In her gleaning, Ruth happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, one of the wealthiest landowners in the area. Boaz was introduced to Ruth by an unnamed servant. She obviously caught his eye because he instructed his supervisors not to let the young men bother her, and



The Law of Gleaning decreed that landowners were not to harvest the full extent of their fields, but were to leave produce in the hard-to-reach areas for the poor and foreigners who might be in the land.

he gave her protection. He also instructed them to drop handfuls of grain on purpose. As a woman, a poor widow, and a foreigner, Ruth could have no claims on anyone. She was at the lowest rung of the social ladder. But Boaz ensured she was looked after and provided for. **The Old Testament teaches that Ruth received the grace (undeserved favour) of God and the channel of that grace was Boaz.**

Could you in some way be a channel of grace to someone today?

Perhaps someone whom others might look down on, or see as unworthy?

In the next chapter of the story, Ruth and Boaz get together on the threshing room floor, but you can look that up later. The story has a happy ending as they get married, live happily ever after and among their descendants you find both King David and Jesus! Pretty astonishing for a poor, foreign widow!

Response

Reflect: In the story Boaz had a plentiful harvest in his fields so he was able to give some to those in need. Ruth, who in some ways was the exact opposite of Boaz – a woman, a person without any wealth or resources, an immigrant without a husband – is also generous in her own way. She has no material wealth to offer, but she leaves behind her family and follows her mother-in-law to a foreign land where she has no guarantee she will be accepted or cared for.

Is generosity only in the gift of the wealthy?

Who, in fact, in our world demonstrates the greatest generosity to others?

Action: The [Trussell Trust](#) runs foodbanks across the UK Harvest festival is an important time for food banks but this year things are a bit different with churches closed and traditional harvest festivals not taking place. This is just at the time when the need is greater. Could your school safely help out in some way? There is a guide to doing this [here](#).

Sending

Why not 'send' with some prayers taken from this [prayer guide](#) produced by the Trussell Trust? They can be easily adapted to suit your community and age group.

Here are some ideas from the guide of what we might want to pray for:

- People experiencing acute poverty: that they would receive the support they need and be able to find positive pathways forwards.
- Food banks: that they would receive sufficient food donations, and that they would be able to respond to every person who needs their support with sensitivity and kindness.
- Our society: for justice and compassion to prevail in political and economic decision-making, so that everyone is protected from poverty and has the chance to flourish.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

(practical ways to help us explore faith and develop spiritually at home together)

EXPERIENCES that can help us ENCOUNTER:

Listen to the song '[Harvest for the world](#)' originally written by the Isley Brothers but many other versions are available including this version by pop band The Christians.

Reflect on the words to this song and produce an artistic response to the powerful lyrics.



Harvest Festival looks very different this year but consider holding a 'Brew and Bake' event to raise money for Christian Aid or other charity that you would normally support at Harvest Festival time. You can either do this in your bubble or virtually across the schools. There are some great ideas about how to do this [here](#).

To find out more about Christian Aid's harvest appeal why not look at Ariana's story in this [PowerPoint](#) resource. The PowerPoint is designed for Primary, but it is adaptable and it might be worthwhile to focus on Ariana's older sister Johaira and her role in sustainable development.

ACTIVITIES that can develop PRACTICES-HABITS:

Use the **EXAMEN** prayer to reflect on harvest. The Examen is a 500-year old prayer, designed to help people in their every day lives. It was written originally by St Ignatius of Loyola, who started his young adult life as a soldier who wanted to save everyone. However, he was injured in war and when he started reading the only books available in hospital – Bible stories – he realised he wanted to help people in a different way. Not as a hero, but as someone who served others. He set up a group of people, now known as the Jesuits, who helped the poorest in society. The current Pope is a Jesuit.

Since St Ignatius' time, people have used the Examen in lots of ways. It starts with gratitude and ends with thinking of how to serve others.

1. GIVE THANKS – what can you be grateful for today? It might be something very small – it might be that you had enough to eat today.
2. ASK FOR HELP with your attitude toward those who are in need – for whatever reason.
3. REFLECT on your day and think about the times you felt generous and loving towards others, and also on the times you felt resentful and unwilling to share what you have.
4. SAY SORRY for the times you may have been selfish and hoarded things only for yourself.
5. DECIDE how you will be more generous, sharing what you have, tomorrow.

To discover more about using the Ignatian Examen with young people, listen to this [podcast](#).

CONVERSATIONS which CONNECT COMMUNITIES:

Christians believe that the story of Ruth and Boaz can offer many insights for people today.

Firstly, they believe that God often works through those who have endured tragic situations to change the lives of others.

How have people you know coped and managed through tragic situations? Has the situation caused them to become more turned in on themselves, or to look outward at others?

Do you think that it is possible to sustain belief in God if a person encounters tragedy and loss?

What attitudes do you believe we should show to the poor and to foreigners, particularly those that have experienced tragic situations?

Second, they believe that God can work through unlikely means. Ruth, a poor widow and a foreigner, was welcomed and provided for by the wealthy and respected Boaz, and consequently became part of the family line of both King David and Jesus.

What impact can kindness and generosity have on others?

Is it ever possible to transform or turn around another person's life by helping them?

Third, some Christians see evidence of God's sovereign power in this story – that is, they believe that God is in control of everything that happens, even when we do not understand the situation.

How do you react to the statement 'God is in control of everything that happens, even when we do not understand the situation'?

How do you make sense of the suffering of billions of people around the world without homes, food or safety? Who do you think is responsible?

What about those in my own community who are struggling? Do we have a responsibility to help, serve and care for them?

What is the modern-day equivalent of the Law of Gleaning?



INVITATIONAL

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

INCLUSIVE

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is 'what Christians believe', saying things like:

'I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?'

'The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ...'

Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

INSPIRING

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?