

New Europe: teaching notes

Programme Suggestions

Lesson aim: to show how Christians, who have received God's grace, want to show God's grace to other people in need.

Passage: Ruth 2

Memory verse: Ruth 2:20 *'He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.'*

Ice Breaker: Print off the colour photo from the sheet below, and pass it round among the children. Ask them what they think it would be like to live like this homeless person. Discuss where they might sleep, what they might eat, and what other people might think of them. Now turn to the centre pages of TOGO and talk about some of the children that GAIN try to help in Latvia, and explain how poor they are.

Story: Long ago in the town of Bethlehem (about 1000 years before Jesus was born there) two women turned up called Naomi and Ruth. Naomi had grown up in Bethlehem, but had gone away to live in the land of Moab to search for food when there was a famine. Then dreadful things happened to her. Naomi's husband died, and then her two sons also died. Now she had come back to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law Ruth, to try and make a new start.

In those days when a woman's husband died, life was not good for her. She had no money, no one to support her, so she needed all the help she could get from her friends and family just to find something to live on. Things were even worse for Ruth. She was not from the land of Israel; she was a foreigner from the land of Moab, and people in Bethlehem hated the Moabites because of the things they had done in the past.

One way that people like Naomi and Ruth could get something to live on was called 'gleaning'. The farm workers cut the barley at harvest time and gathered it into sheaves (bundles). After they had moved on, poor widows like Ruth could come and 'glean' (pick up) any stalks of barley that lay loose on the ground, and they could keep these for themselves.

One day Ruth came into the field of Boaz, a wealthy farmer, to glean behind his workers. Some of his workers didn't like her much because she was foreign, but Boaz showed her great care and kindness. When they stopped for lunch, Ruth went and sat far away from the workers, but Boaz called her to come and join them, and he gave her some of their food to share. He even told his workers to pull some of the stalks out of the sheaves to make sure that Ruth got plenty for herself and for Naomi. At the end of the day Ruth threshed the grain and loaded it into her shawl (it was enough to fill a large bin) and carried it home. Boaz had been very kind to her.

Application: Boaz knew that he had been redeemed by God. That is, he knew that he was helpless and hopeless without God, but that God had paid the price to set Boaz free from his sin, and had saved him to live a new life for God. He knew that God had shown him great kindness. So he wanted to share the love of God with others, and this showed in the generous way in which he took care of Ruth and Naomi, making sure that they were well looked after. Later on in the story he marries Ruth, and they have a son, Obed, who brings real joy back into the life of Naomi after all her sadness.

Do we live a life that shows that we have been redeemed? Do we think we are special and important, or do we realise like Boaz did, that we are helpless without God's redeeming love? If we know God's love, we need to show that in acts of kindness and love to people who are lost and helpless and who need the love of Jesus. Discuss what a difference the children in Latvia will feel when they receive their clothes and shoes at the GAIN parties.



Bible Class Notes – Ruth 2

Young people growing up in the wealth of the UK often feel uneasy about how much they have compared to other parts of the world. They can be easily motivated out of guilt to want to do things for those who are poor and in urgent need. But is that the best motivation? Christians should be motivated by God's grace in our desire to bring the good news to other people and to show them the compassion that Jesus showed. The aim of the lesson is to help the young people get inside the lives of Ruth and Boaz and to explore this situation from both points of view.

1. What does the passage tell us about the standard of living that Boaz enjoyed? Did he work on his own?
2. How would you feel if you had to get what you could by gleaning (scavenging?) in the fields as Ruth did? What would it make you think about yourself?
3. When Boaz asked his men who the young woman was, the foreman didn't even use her name. He just called her 'the Moabitess, from Moab.' Was he scared of her because she was foreign? Get the group to discuss how they may find foreigners scary or threatening and why.
4. Why do you think Boaz was so generous to Ruth?
5. When Boaz was so generous to Ruth, what was her response? (V10)
6. Ruth had left behind her family and homeland to come and live in the land of Israel. In what ways was this like becoming a Christian? (V11-12)
7. When God has shown his grace to us in saving us, how should that change the way we treat other people?
8. Imagine you are a Muslim refugee from Afghanistan, living in a city in Britain. Every day you meet people who look afraid of you, or who hurl abuse at you, or who just ignore you and blank you out. Will you notice that Christians are any different to this? If so, how?