



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition November 2017 Issue 112



Hope in turbulent times: The Book of Ruth

Getting ready

This edition is part of the series on 'Hope in turbulent times'. The Bible is full of stories about people who found hope in turbulent times and one of these is found in the Book of Ruth. This issue offers some suggestions for sharing Bible stories with children so that they are engaging and meaningful, using the story of Ruth as an example.

To tell a story well, it is important to think about your audience and to know your story thoroughly. Begin your preparation by reading 'Three steps for preparing to share Bible stories with children' in *Additional resource 112.A (see sidebar)*. These steps can be applied to any Bible story. You may choose to use the story of Ruth as described here, adapt it or choose a different Bible story entirely.

To prepare to tell this story, I read it in different versions of the Bible, including children's Bibles. I spoke with both adults and children and asked them what they thought the story was about.

The author of the book of Ruth is unknown but the book is named after one of its main characters, an ancestor of King David and, later, of Jesus. It is a story that was skilfully passed on orally from one generation to another before being written down.

Preparation: a selection of magazines and newspapers available (suitable for children).

Journeys in the Spirit offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5–12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

Gather

Welcome everyone in your usual way and ensure that everyone knows each other's names. You might like to have a short time of silence with a lighted candle or have an opportunity to share news about the week.

Explain that today we are going to share in a story from one of the biggest collections of books ever written, the Bible. The Bible contains many stories: stories about the Jewish people and their understanding of God; adventure stories and love stories; stories of violence and stories of peace; stories about powerful rulers and stories about ordinary people who played important parts in history. Ask the children if they know the main characters in any Bible stories.

When you are ready, introduce the story of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz.

Underpinning references

Additional Resource 112.A accessible at www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren select 'resources for current issue'.

Ruth chapters 1- 3, found in the Old Testament section of the Bible. <https://www.biblegateway.com> contains multiple translations.

Engage

Share the story of The Book of Ruth

Use the ideas in Additional resource 112.A (see sidebar) to adapt the story to suit your audience and make the story come alive.

There was hardly any food left in the town of Bethlehem. Naomi, her husband and her two sons were in danger of starving, so they set off on a long journey to another country called Moab, where they hoped there was food. Sadly, when they arrived, Naomi's husband died. Naomi's two sons found wives in Moab called Orpah and Ruth but after 10 years, both sons died, so that Naomi, Orpah and Ruth were all without husbands. Life was very difficult for them. Naomi was very sad; she felt that everything was lost.

Then Naomi heard there was now food back in her own country, so she decided to go home. Orpah and Ruth said they would go with her. Naomi tried to persuade Orpah and Ruth to go back to their parents' houses and find new husbands to marry. Eventually, Orpah agreed but Ruth said no. She said to Naomi,

'Where you go, I will go.

Your people will be my people and your God will be my God.'

Naomi and Ruth travelled all the way back to Bethlehem. When they arrived, the people in Bethlehem were gathering in the harvest of barley and wheat. One of Naomi's relatives was a rich man called Boaz. Ruth went to the fields that Boaz owned and followed along behind the workers who were collecting in the barley, picking up the bits they missed. Poor people were allowed to do this in Bethlehem. Ruth worked hard all day, so that she could get enough food for herself and Naomi.

When Boaz found out what Ruth was doing, he told her to stay in his fields, where he could look after her and asked her to share his food and drink at lunchtime. Then he gave her lots of extra barley to take back to Naomi. Ruth was surprised that someone would be so kind to a foreigner.

When Naomi heard what had happened and saw how much food Ruth had collected, she thought how kind Boaz was. She made a plan. That night she told Ruth to wash, put on her best clothes and some perfume and go and find where Boaz was sleeping. Once he is asleep, Naomi said, you should uncover his feet and lie down and Boaz will know what you are asking. Ruth thought this was very strange but she trusted Naomi and did as she was told.

At midnight, Boaz, woke up and found a woman lying next to his cold feet. He was surprised but when he realised it was Ruth, he knew why she was there. Among his people, when a woman's husband died, a relative would usually be expected to marry her and look after her.

So Boaz married Ruth and they had a baby called Obed. Naomi was delighted and helped to look after her new grandson. Everyone agreed that God had given Naomi great blessings: she had Ruth to love her and a grandson to look after her in her old age.



References & other resources

Additional Resource 112.A accessible at www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren select 'resources for current issue'.

Issue 96 of *Journeys in the Spirit* considers Quaker approaches to the Bible. Other Bible stories can be found in series 7, issues 59 – 65 at <http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/resource.php?r=JC>

The Beginner's Bible by Kelly Pulley includes the story of Ruth and Naomi.

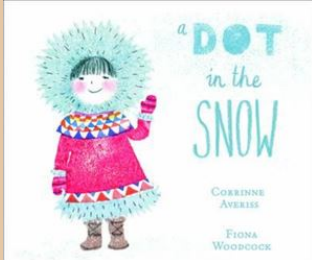


ISBN-13 978-1781283479

This is available from The Quaker Bookshop: Tel: 020 7663 1030/1031
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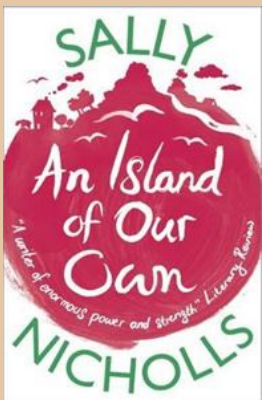
References & other resources

Dot in the Snow is a story about courage, friendship, empathy and kindness.



ISBN -13:978-0192744265

In An Island of our Own all seems lost when the mother of Jonathon, Holly and Davy dies. They struggle to avoid being placed in care until their great-aunt gives them something which offers hope.



ISBN-13:978-1407124339

Both these books are available from The Quaker Bookshop: Tel: 020 7663 1030/1031
Email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk

Respond

True stories and truth stories

Explain that some stories in the Bible are **true stories** about events which happened a long time ago and other stories in the Bible are **truth stories**, which are told to teach us something. Some stories are both true and truth stories and perhaps the story of Ruth is one of these. What can we learn from hearing the story of Ruth? Ask the children to share their thoughts. These are the thoughts that others shared with me:

- It is a story about being kind, especially to foreigners. Boaz is kind to Ruth, even though she is a stranger who comes from another country.
- It is a story about love and friendship. Ruth loves Naomi so much that she is determined to leave her own country and people and stay with Naomi always.
- It is a story about hope. Awful things happen and Naomi feels that she has lost everything but then she finds something new and wonderful.

Stories of today

What might the story of Ruth look like today? Ask the children if they can think of any other stories about kindness, love or hope. These could be stories that they have read, stories that they have seen in films or real life stories about themselves or people they know.

Look together in newspapers, magazines or online for hopeful stories. Bad news tends to make bigger headlines, so be sure to include Quaker publications such as Quaker News – available three times a year (see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters/quaker-news>) and other publications/websites which aim to share good news, such as Positive News (see www.positive.news).



- What stories of kindness, love or hope are happening in your meeting?
- Are there any stories of kindness, love or hope that you would like to make happen, where you could be a central character?

Reflect

Before the end of children's meeting try to have some time to reflect on the stories you have shared.

Questions to think about:-

- What have we learned from the stories?
- How does hearing stories of kindness, love and hope make us feel?
- Why is it important to share good news?
- How can we make stories of kindness, love or hope happen?



Talk about the way in which even small kind, loving actions can make a big difference and see if the children can think of some examples. Are there any particular community projects happening in your meeting that the children would like to find out more about or get involved in?

Materials available online are:

Additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

These can be accessed through

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren by scrolling down to 'resources for current issue'.

For a 'How to use Journeys in the Spirit guide', the catalogue of previous issues and a link to the resources for recent issues, go to www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren and scroll down to find what you want.

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Contact:
CYP Staff Team,
Friends House,
173 Euston Road,
London NW1 2BJ

Phone: 020 7663 1013

Email:
cypadmin@quaker.org.uk

Website:
www.quaker.org.uk/cyp

Review

When reviewing the session, think particularly about the way in which the children responded to the Bible story.

- Which ideas from *Additional resource 112.A* did you use and how well did they work?
- Did the children find the story engaging and interesting?
- What might you do differently next time?
- Which other Bible stories might you share with the children?

This issue was written by Kathy Chandler and edited by Mel Cook and Howard Nurden.

Journeys in the Spirit is published in two formats on alternative months. One month the issue is on a theme, with an easy to use structure set out in a four page booklet with additional online resources. The alternative month is a topical activity – something about the news or of a seasonal interest.

Available from 1 December 2017 **Topical Activity Joy**

Available from 2 January 2018 **Issue 113 Change**



Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resource 112.A

Getting Ready Sharing Bible stories with children



1. Get to know the story

Read the story yourself several times. If possible, read it in different versions of the Bible. If you have a Bible with a commentary, read what this says about the story.

Ask others about the story and see what they say about it. We all interpret stories differently and we create their meaning for ourselves.

Even if it is a story you know well, remember that our understandings of stories can change when we come back to them because we are not the same people as we were when we last heard them.

Ask yourself:

- Who first told the story and when? What can you find out about the storyteller(s)?
- Who was the story first told to? What can you find out about the audience? What were their lives like? What was important to them?
- When was the story first written down? Remember that some stories in the Bible will have been passed down from generation to generation orally before being written down.
- What is the story about and why was it told? Is it a **true** story, based on an event which happened or is it a **truth** story, told to convey an important lesson or idea? Many stories have elements of both. Some stories in the Bible are understood differently by different people at different times. For example, some people might regard Noah's Ark as a true story, whereas others might regard it as a truth story, told to encourage people to take better care of the world we live in.

2. Think about the relevance of the story for today

Think about your own context and the children in your meeting. Ask yourself:

- What insights do you gain from the story personally?
- What are you hoping that the children will gain from hearing the story?
- Which aspects of the story will interest the children? Think about which parts of the story you plan to emphasise and which parts you might simplify.
- How does the story fit with any themes that the children or the meeting as a whole have been thinking about and how does it fit in with any other activities you plan to cover in your session?

3. Make the story come alive

Think about ways in which the children can use their different senses to experience the story. Think about:

- **Hearing:** Adapt the story to suit your audience, writing it in your own words. Don't be afraid to shorten it, simplify it and choose language appropriate for the ages of the children who will be

listening. If there is any music or singing in the story, think about how you could reproduce this and how the children might join in.

- **Seeing:** Consider using pictures, play dough/plasticine/Lego figures, felt boards, puppets, drama or Godly Play. For more information about Godly Play, see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/children-and-young-people/work-quaker-setting/resources-all-age>
- **Touching:** Are there any objects in the story that you could bring along and invite the children to touch or hold?
- **Tasting:** Is there any food, such as fruit or bread, in the story? You could prepare and share some with the children at the appropriate point. Remember to consider any food allergies.
- **Smelling:** What smells would the characters in the story have experienced? It might be a challenge to replicate these whilst telling your story but you could mention them and encourage the children to imagine the smells.

You can also encourage the children to use their imagination to **picture themselves within the story**. Ask questions like:

- Which character would you be if you were in this story?
- What do you think you were doing just before/after the story happened?
- How did you feel when...?

Think about ways to enable the children to identify with the **feelings** of the characters in the story. Ask them how they think the characters are feeling at different points: happy, sad, surprised, scared...?



Stories can also involve **movement**. You could put a different feeling in each corner of the room (see paper plates above) and ask the children to run to each one to show how they think the characters are feeling at different points in the story.

For younger children, you could add actions for the children to do each time a particular character appears in the story or each time a particular thing happens.

Many Bible stories involve journeys between different towns and different countries. Telling different parts of a story in different parts of the meeting house or garden to represent the different places can make these journeys memorable.

Alternatively, you could cut a simple written story into parts and hide the parts to make a story treasure hunt. Younger children will enjoy finding the parts, whilst older ones will enjoy trying to put the pieces in the right order.