

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Proper 26
Lesson Plans for Older Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Ruth 1:1-18

Background

Why is it that the journey to go somewhere always feels longer than the return trip on the same road? We are covering the same distance by the same path, but our minds play tricks on us as we trudge towards the finish line. Today we begin the last push of the church year before the renewal of Advent. It is important that we remain alert even as the passage of time might seem slow. It can be easy at this time of year to rush ahead to the holidays that are fast approaching rather than keeping alert in the here and now to experience the important stories that will otherwise go unnoticed.

A Notation for This Week’s Scripture Passage

As we head to our journey’s simultaneous ending and new beginning, Ruth and Naomi set out across the desert on their own path. The journey they are undertaking is the rebranding of their relationship: from mother and daughter-in-law to partners and friends. Ruth’s refusal to leave the side of her mother-in-law was social suicide. Ruth chose family and love over the chance for familiarity and comfort. It is important to note that Ruth is a Moab. In the Hebrew Scriptures there isn’t really a worse thing to be than a Moabite. In Deuteronomy we learn that the Moabites were not allowed to ever convert to Judaism. Marrying a Moabite was out of the question. The author of Ruth states over and over again that Ruth is a Moabite because it is essential to understand that when Ruth returns to Judah with Naomi, she is traveling to a place that despises her because of her heritage. In choosing Naomi, Ruth chooses the God of the Hebrews over the gods of her ancestors. Ruth chooses the unknown and possibly dangerous over the safe and predictable. This section of the text sets us up to begin the journey with these two women over the next couple of weeks and begs the question: would I have the strength to follow if God called me into the unknown?

Theme: We’re In This Together

Before Class: You will need a copy of the scripture lesson for today for each person. Make sure you have 2 pieces of paper per student as well as drawing/writing utensils on hand. Set up a short obstacle course that will challenge your students.

Beginning: Give each child 2 pieces of paper and a writing utensil. On the first piece of paper, ask the children to write the names of or draw (stick figure style) all the members of their family. Give them a couple of minutes to do this. On the second piece of paper ask the children to write the name of or draw (stick figure) a very close and trusted friend. Now, have the kids put the two pieces of paper in front of themselves on the table and ask them:

- Your close friend tells you that they are leaving on a very long journey to a foreign place with no telephones or internet and they do not know if they will come back again but you are invited to go with them: what would you do?

- How many of you will stay with your family?
- How many of you will leave with your friend?
- How did you make your choice?

Opening Prayer: Dear God, thank you for bringing people into our lives whom we love. Amen.

The Story: Ruth 1:1-18 Sitting in a circle, give a copy of the story to each student. Invite the students to read the story going around the circle. Each student will read one verse and you will go around the circle until finishing the entire passage.

Reflection Questions:

- Who are the people in this story? (It's a good idea to write these names down on the board – there are a lot of names to keep track of. Writing the names down like a family tree – with Naomi and Elimelech at the top, etc...)
- Where does this story take place? Is there more than one location?
- Why does Naomi decide to return to Judah?
- I wonder how Naomi felt when she told Orpah and Ruth to go back to Moab.
- I wonder how Orpah felt when she turned away from Naomi.
- I wonder how Ruth felt when she decided to stay.
- I wonder how Naomi felt when Ruth stayed with her.

Activity: Obstacle Course Journey: have the kids pair up in teams of two. (Or assign teams.) Each child will have a turn as a leader and a turn as a follower. The goal is to get everyone safely through the obstacle course – there is no winner/loser. When it is time to begin, the follower in each team will put on a blindfold. The leader will need to use only his/her voice to guide the follower through the course. Once all of the first-round followers have gone through the course invite the teams to talk about what the experience was like for them. Then ask them to share what would have helped. After the short discussion, the team members will switch rolls and will be led through the course back to the classroom. (For added challenge, you could move some of the obstacles after the second-round followers are blindfolded so they cannot use their recall to aide in the journey.)

Getting Closure: Gather back in the classroom. Ask the students:

- What qualities make a good leader?
- What qualities make a good follower?
- What makes a good team?
- How can we use this knowledge in life?

Closing Prayer: Holy God, giver of life, thank you for all of the people you have sent to be on a team with me in life. Help me to lead and follow at the right times – and to listen for your calling, always. Amen.

*Published by the Formation Office of The Episcopal Church, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.
© 2018 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.*