

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WINTER 2023/24
Teacher's Guide
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SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION



FAITH THAT
PLEASES
GOD

SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY TEACHER'S GUIDE

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THE COMBINED TEACHER'S GUIDE

WINTER QUARTER 2023/24

DECEMBER • JANUARY • FEBRUARY

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Bible dictionary	writing paper
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digital camera	old clothing
digital camcorder	scissors, glue, paste
drawing paper	video player

The Teacher's Guide
Liberating Faith Studies
Winter Quarter: December 2023 – February 2024
Prepared by Rev. Lionel Merritt

The Faith of Ruth

Lesson 1

December 3, 2023

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1; 4:13-22

Focus Scripture: Ruth 1:6-18, 22

Key Verse: Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God."
Ruth 1:16

Key Terms

- **Symbiotic** – A relationship between two or more parties (persons) which exists for the mutual benefit of all the parties involved.
- **Paradox** – A statement or situation that on the face looks absurd or self-contradictory, but on explanation proves to be true.
- **Persona non grata** – A person considered unwelcome or unacceptable in a place or situation.
- **Imminent** – Something which is about to happen or likely to happen soon.
- **Loyalty/Allegiance** – A commitment to and support for a particular person, group, entity, nation.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Analyze the situation in which Ruth and Naomi find themselves.
2. Value courageous fidelity in relationships with God and others.
3. Imitate Ruth's model of courage and faithfulness when facing hardships in life.

Teaching Strategies

1. Do a mini-drama to act out the events of Ruth 1. In this drama you want to highlight the feelings / emotions Ruth and Naomi would have experienced in facing dire situations and in making the related decisions.
2. Ask the class to consider the difficulties Ruth faced as a Moabite woman newly arriving in Bethlehem. Refer to any material which explains how the Jews regarded people from Moab.
3. Let the class note that Ruth and Naomi returned to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. Given where they were coming from, the food situation in Moab, and the harvest customs in Israel, ask the class to consider what this arrival would have been like.
4. Compare how life for widows today may be the same or different from what Naomi and Ruth experienced. Consider that at that period no social security schemes existed.
5. Compare Ruth's change in identity with the significant life changes death and divorce lead to for adults today. Highlight that these are major changes in life and address the related trauma that may be associated.

Resources: Do a quick review of all the lessons in Unit 1 to see the range of faith topics covered in the various lessons. Have a working definition of faith suitable for the class and keep referring to that definition as the class studies various aspects of faith. Underscore the action element of faith. Note how faith differs from mere belief. In addition to the sources given in the lesson, consider the article on faith at <https://lifehopeandtruth.com/change/faith/what-is-faith/>.

The Faith of David

Lesson 2

December 10, 2023

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:1-58

Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:31-37, 45, 48-50

Key Verse: David said, “The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.” 1 Samuel 17:37a

Key Terms

- **Risk Averse** – Not open to taking risks; afraid of risks.
- **Menial** – Tasks which are considered low-class or unskilled.
- **Kicker** – Slang for an unexpected admission or remark.
- **Esoteric** – Having a secret or hidden meaning; not obvious.
- **Dogmatic** – Stating an opinion as if it were an obvious or widely accepted fact.
- **Infallibility** – Something having perfection; without faults.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Analyze David's confidence in defeating Goliath.
2. Aspire to have confidence such as David's.
3. Demonstrate one's faith in God by facing life's challenges with confidence.

Teaching Strategies

1. Emphasize to the class that the story revolves around David's faith, not his ability to throw the stone. Therefore, explore the reason for this faith. Note the role his earlier experiences played in giving him the confidence he needed to face the giant.
2. In 1 Samuel we get snapshots of Saul's failures and David's successes. From the details in the scriptures, what explains the difference in outcomes: what did David do that brought him success, and what did Saul fail to do that brought him failure? Relate the answers to our lives today.
3. To understand the rage which David felt towards the Philistines, we must understand the history of the animosity between Israel and the Philistines. Research this while paying close attention to the differences in their religious outlook and practices.
4. It is obvious from Goliath's words that the Philistines had no

respect or fear for the God of Israel. Help the class to identify any parallels today with the people who disregard Christians and their God. David killed Goliath as an expression of faith in his God. Ask the class how believers can show faith in their God to the people who show no respect for the Lord.

5. Often people put us in situations where we must defend ourselves physically. Discuss how we should act in these situations, given that as Christians we are to be peacemakers, and the scriptures specifically command “do not commit murder.” Discuss how we resolve this paradox.

Resources: The story of David and Goliath is a familiar one. Therefore, it is not necessary to spend a long time on the mechanics of the story. Instead, spend time showing how in the ordinary course of life situations can call us to do acts of faith. Underscore that David apart from his faith was just an ordinary young man. Participants must be able to identify with David, so they can be confident that when the situation arises, they too can act in similar faith.

As part of your preparation, try to anticipate the excuses the class may give for not wanting to exercise faith. Note David exercised faith in a physical fight. Our battles can take various forms in families, on the job, in church, and in the communities.

The material in the lesson is adequate to achieve the lesson goals. But you can consult any resources on faith you have available.

The Family of Faith

Lesson 3

December 17, 2023

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17; Genesis 38; Joshua 2, 6:22-25; 2 Samuel 12:24; Ruth 4:13-22

Focus Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17

Key Verse: An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matthew 1:1

Key Terms

- **Genealogy** – Family line; list of relatives by generations.
- **Aberration** – Irregular, a departure from what was normal.
- **Tainted** – Spoiled or contaminated; a person's bad character or reputation.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Trace God's provision through the difficult life circumstances of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba.
2. Value moments of God's providential care in one's own life.
3. Draw a timeline of one's life (or congregational life) and identify significant moments of God's provision or direction.

Teaching Strategies

1. Put the lives of the four women in focus. To do this, provide a summary of the lives and contributions of the four women named in the genealogy of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born. (See **Lesson Scripture** above for biblical sources to their stories.)
2. From the text, the class should see for each woman faith and cleverness. Let participants highlight how this blend worked together to achieve the desired results for each woman.
3. Give the class the opportunity to discuss the reasons Matthew might have had for including four female outsiders, and no other women, in establishing the background of Jesus. Were there other women the class would have preferred to put in Jesus' genealogy?
4. Expand on the idea that the four women were outsiders. Do this by asking participants to name some people who grew up outside their faith community and who have been accepted as a part of it. Ask for the factors which led the church to accept / adopt these persons.
5. This exercise gives the lesson current application. Brainstorm

the names of particular people or groups to whom the faith community must reach out. Then let the class identify what can keep church members from accepting those persons or groups. This is the same issue Israel had with the women featured in the lesson.

Resources: As noted in the **lesson Introduction**, this study raises questions of personal behavior and morality. “How has traditional values been modernized in pop culture?” is an online article that gives insight into this matter. The insights can help as you prepare for discussions on views the class may raise. Read it at the link: <https://askwonder.com/research/traditional-values-modernized-pop-culture-u7lsbq3b5>.

The Teacher's Guide
Senior / Intermediate Student Lessons
Winter Quarter: December 2023 – February 2024
Prepared by Rev. Faith Waters

The Faith of Ruth

Lesson 1

December 3, 2023

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1; 4:13-22

Focus Scripture: Ruth 1:6-18, 22

Key Verse: Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God."
Ruth 1:16

Words to Know

- **Kindly** – Considerately, caringly, attentively.
- **Security** – The state of being free from danger or threat.
- **Refrain** – To withhold; keep back.
- **Barley** – A cereal grain of Palestine that is made into bread.
- **Moab** – Pronounced: MO – ab.
- **Orpah** – Pronounced: OR – puh.
- **Elimelech** – Pronounced: ee – LIHM – eh – lehk.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explore the importance of close relationships as you deal with life's struggles.
2. Value trustworthiness in relationships with God and others.
3. Imitate Ruth's model of courage and faithfulness when facing hardships in life.

Teaching Strategies

1. The term *Moabites* is used to denote the people of Moab (Num. 22:3-14; Judg. 3:30; 2 Sam. 8:2; Jer. 48:11, 13). The land of Moab (Jer. 48:24), called also the "country of Moab"

(Ruth 1:2, 6; 2:6), was on the east of Jordan and the Dead Sea, and south of the Arnon (Num. 21:13, 26). In a wider sense, it included the whole region that had been occupied by the Amorites. It bears the modern name of Kerak. In the Plains of Moab, opposite Jericho (Num. 22:1; 26:63; Josh. 13:32), the children of Israel had their last encampment before they entered the land of Canaan. It was at that time in the possession of the Amorites (Num. 21:22).

2. Discuss the stages of grief and how they impact your life: Denial (I don't believe they are really gone); Anger (I am so angry that they are gone); Bargaining (I promise I'll change if they return); Depression (I feel hopeless about my future without them); and Acceptance (I can go on with my life and deal with their absence).
3. The trip to Bethlehem from Moab is 50 miles. It would take Naomi and Ruth 7–10 days to walk through this mountain region.
4. Explore the impact of Naomi ensuring Ruth had a kinsman-redeemer through Boaz (Ruth 3–4). As a result, Ruth was a part of God's plan to prepare for the births of David and Jesus, the Messiah.
5. This is the first day of Advent. Advent is a season observed in most Christian denominations as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for both the celebration of the Nativity of Christ at Christmas and the return of Christ at the Second Coming. Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year for the Christian faith.
6. Every week a candle is lit representing a theme which is accompanied by scriptures and song. The weekly themes are: 1) Hope; 2) Peace; 3) Joy; 4) Love; 5) Christ.
7. This week remind the class to pray, read scriptures on hope, and fast at least one day if possible.

Senior: Do some additional research on Tina Turner. Some might question why her story is being studied since she did not sing gospel or religious music professionally and ultimately became a practicing Buddhist. Explore how her story is a story of new beginnings after great pain and sorrow much like that of Ruth and Naomi.

Resources: Candles (battery operated), wreath

The Faith of David

Lesson 2

December 10, 2023

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:1-58

Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:31-37, 45, 48-50

Key Verse: David said, "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." 1 Samuel 17:37a

Words to Know

- **Uncircumcised** – Not circumcised; spiritually unclean heathen.
- **Defy** – To openly resist or refuse to obey.
- **Wadi** – A ravine that is dry except during the rainy season.
- **Philistine** – Pronounced: fil – uh – steen.
- **Elah** – Pronounced: EH – laa.
- **Goliath** – Pronounced: guh – LAI – uhth.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explore how David's faith in God gave him strength in his battle with Goliath.
2. Aspire to have a deeper faith that comes from a consistent relationship with God.
3. Exhibit faith in God by being confident when facing life's challenges.

Teaching Strategies

1. Today is the second Sunday of Advent. The theme is peace. Light the peace candle and discuss the peace God gives us during life's struggles.

2. Tell the class to look up the location of the valley of Elah.
3. 1 Samuel was written to record the life of Samuel, Israel's last judge; the reign and decline of Saul who was the first king; and the choice and preparation of David to be Israel's greatest king. The book begins in the days of the judges and describes Israel's transition from a theocracy (led by God) to a monarchy (led by a king).
4. Sling stones have been excavated at Megiddo that average approximately four inches in diameter and weighed over two pounds.
5. For a summary of the book of 1 Samuel, watch this video: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-samuel/>.
6. Be sensitive towards those who may have loved ones in the military or on the police force. Sometimes these persons may have to resort to violence in battles, which may result in death.

Senior: For more information on the Children's March or Children's Crusade: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/childrens-crusade-march-birmingham>.

Resources: Advent wreath, sticky notes or index cards, posterboard

The Family of Faith

Lesson 3

December 17, 2023

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17; Genesis 38; Joshua 2, 6:22-25; 2 Samuel 12:24; Ruth 4:13-22

Focus Scripture: Matthew 1:1-16

Key Verse: An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matthew 1:1

Words to Know

- **Genealogy** – A line of descent traced continuously from an ancestor.
- **Aminadab** – Pronounced: ah – MIHN – uh – dab.

- **Nahshon** – Pronounced: NAY – shuhn.
- **Obed** – Pronounced: OH – bed.
- **Rehoboam** – Pronounced: ree – ho – BO – am.
- **Abijah** – Pronounced: uh – BAI – dhuh.
- **Jehoshaphat** – Pronounced: dzhee – HAHSH – uh – fat.
- **Manasseh** – Pronounced: man – AS – eh.
- **Jechoniah** – Pronounced: dzhehk – o – NAI – uh.
- **Salathiel** – Pronounced: SU – lay – the – al.
- **Zerubbabel** – Pronounced: zuh – RUH – buh – behl.
- **Eliakim** – Pronounced: ee – LAI – uh – kihm.
- **Eleazar** – Pronounced: ehl – ee – AY – zer.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explore Christ's genealogy.
2. Value those who have impacted our legacy of faith.
3. Demonstrate gratitude for the persons God used to fulfill his plan of salvation through Christ.

Teaching Strategies

1. For a summary of the Gospel of Matthew, watch this video: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/matthew-1-13/>.
2. As a widow, Tamar had the legal right in the ancient Near East to continue her husband's line and ensure her place in his family clan by bearing a son in his name, with his bloodline. Her father-in-law, Judah, sent her away from his family, withdrawing his support, protection, and family honor. Tamar's actions led to adultery and yet maintained her covenant of loyalty to the house of Judah, even holding the head of her husband's family (Judah) publicly responsible.
3. Matthew's Gospel is traditionally known as the Gospel to the Jews because of his focus on Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy; yet he begins the Gospel with this implicit statement

that God is not so concerned with bloodline and background as God is in faith and a person's response when faced with the reality of God.

4. The stories of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba raise complex social issues including rape, adultery, poverty, and womanizing. It is difficult to tell the stories of all four women in a single lesson; however, the focus of this lesson is not their stories. Rather, it is a question of why Matthew chose to mention them in an otherwise male-dominated genealogy. Focus on this "why?" question but be careful, too, that the lesson does not gloss over the more complex stories represented in the lives of these women.
5. Be sensitive towards those who are in foster care and do not know their birth family as well as those who have been adopted.
6. This is the third Sunday of Advent.

Senior: For more information on Alex Haley: <https://alexhaley.com/biography/>.

Resource: Advent wreath

The Teacher's Guide
Junior Lessons
Winter Quarter: December 2023 – February 2024
Prepared by Monica C. Jones, Ph.D.

Ruth Trusts Naomi and Her God

Lesson 1

December 3, 2023

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1

Focus Scripture: Ruth 1:6-10, 14-16

Key Verse: Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God."
Ruth 1:16

Word Power!!!

- **Naomi (nay-o'-me)** – The mother-in-law of Ruth and a widow who lost each of her sons.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand that family relationships are not always biological.
2. Understand that loyalty and love go hand in hand.
3. Understand the parallels between Ruth and Naomi's story and Karen's.
4. Understand that God will not leave us alone.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Stress the importance of family relationships and loyalty.
2. Compare the Ruth and Naomi narrative with the story of Karen and her foster parents.
3. Encourage the participants to consider the relevance of extended family and friendships in their lives.
4. Stress that God can bring people into our lives who can become our family.

Questions

1. What do you think about Ruth’s decision to stay with her mother-in-law, Naomi?
2. Do you think it was okay for Karen to run away from her foster family?
3. Do you have any opinions about the best way to live and be happy in a foster home? (It would probably be helpful to find out ahead of time if there are any foster children in your class; use your discretion to avoid sensitive areas.)

Resources: Device to play music, music app, prizes for participants

David’s Faith in God

Lesson 2

December 10, 2023

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:1-58

Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:31-37, 45, 48-50

Key Verse: David said, “The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.” 1 Samuel 17:37a

Word Power!!!

- **Philistine (fil'-lys-teen)** – A member of a warrior nation who were enemies of the people of Israel.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand what it means to have faith in God in times of trouble.
2. See parallels and challenges between their own lives and those of the connection between David’s declaration and José’s prayer.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Encourage self-reflection regarding challenges and trials in the students’ lives and how God can be a problem solver for them.

2. Compare the story of David and Goliath with that of José and the opposing soccer team.

Questions

1. What are some of the similarities that you see between David and Goliath and José and the game that he wanted to win?
2. What is the prayer that you would say to the Lord if you were facing a challenge?
3. Why is it important to believe things will be okay even if they don't seem that way?

Resources: Pens, pencils, markers or crayons

Families of Faith

Lesson 3

December 17, 2023

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17

Focus Scripture: Matthew 1:1-6

Key Verse: An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matthew 1:1

Word Power!!!

- **Genealogy (jean-nee-ol'-o-gee)** – A list of relatives and family members, beginning with the oldest to the youngest.
- **David** – King over Israel; ancestor of and member in the lineage of Jesus the Christ.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Develop an appreciation for ancestry, heritage, and important names in our culture's history.
2. Become familiar with the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Teaching Strategies

(Note: have participants use a pronunciation app to learn the names here; help them practice the sounds.)

Emphasis

1. Emphasize the genealogy of Jesus focusing on the diversity of

the lineage.

2. Compare the story of Jamie's discovery with that of the unusual lineage of Jesus Christ.
3. Stress the significance of welcoming new family members into the fold.
4. Encourage participants to talk about their own families.

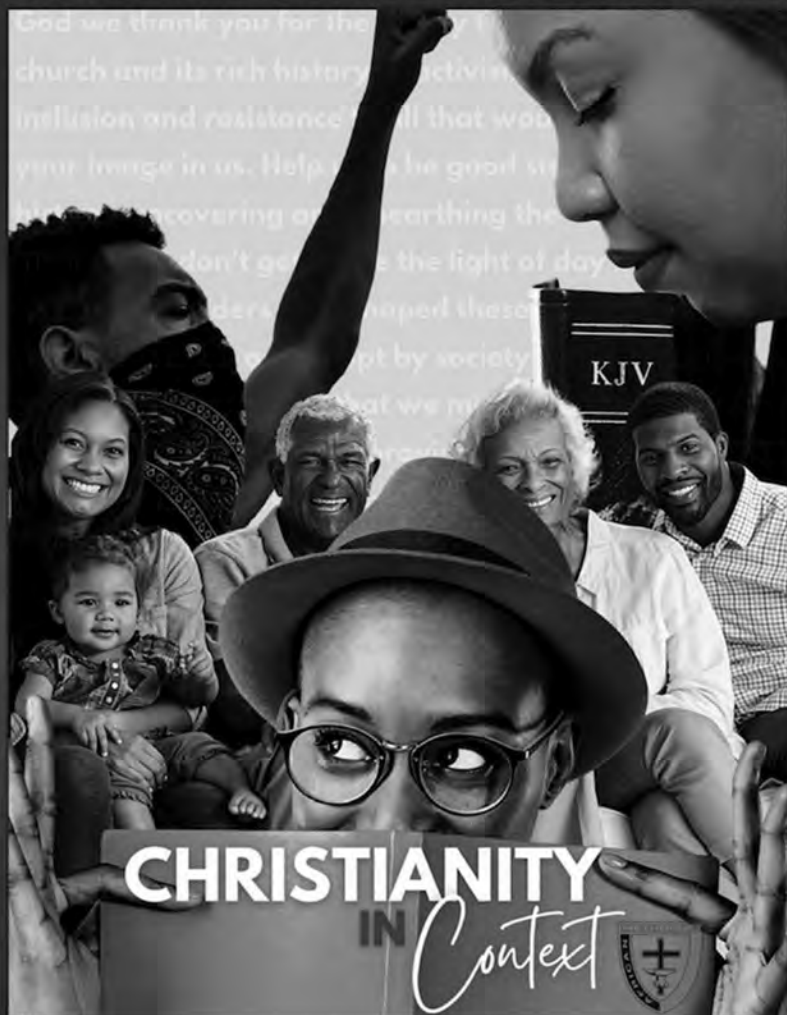
Questions

1. How do you think you would have felt had you found a new member of your family of whom you were unaware?
2. Have you ever researched or discovered information about your family tree? What happened?
3. What do you think about Jesus having ancestors such as King David who is known to have made serious mistakes including murder?

Resources: Bible dictionary or other source, paper, coloring tools, poster boards, glue and hanging kits

NOTES

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