**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 1 of 4

# Naomi

### MEETING AIM

To explore how Naomi faced losing her family and livelihood.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Ruth 1

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

This is the first of four sessions looking at how we deal and cope when we struggle. We focus on four characters from the Bible who, each in their own way, faced and reacted to difficult situations, including illness, deaths of close family, hunger, aggression and bullying, and even hatred. Because Naomi is a character in the larger story of Ruth, she often gets overlooked. How often is that the case with those in need?

These sessions may evoke painful memories or stir difficult situations and feelings. It is vital that all those leading are able to offer appropriate pastoral care. A risk assessment of what to do if situations arise is advisable.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Share any refreshments you have and invite the group to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. As they share, encourage them to be open about anything that might be worrying them. It doesn’t have to be something personal, it can be about wider events at school, in the country or the world.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a map of the world

Before the session, find out some facts on the following groups of people who migrated from their home country: Huguenots (French Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries); Vietnamese ‘boat people’; current Ukrainian or Syrian refugees.

Divide into small groups and give each group one of the migrations to learn about. Ask each group to find out the cause of the migration and, on the map, to mark how far they went. Bring the groups together and feed back what they have learned.

Point out that it is often desperation that drives people to make these long and difficult journeys. It might be hard for us to imagine a life where we don’t know where the next meal will come from. Explain that in this session you will be looking at someone who had to ‘migrate’ twice in order to find food.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

Use this following monologue to introduce the Bible passage, called ‘Naomi visits the counsellor’:

Well, I’m here because the doctor suggested I need to talk to someone. Apparently, some people I used to know think I need some ‘help’. Yes, I have been moping around a bit. What? Oh, yes, that is true. I have been thinking of changing my name. I mean, what is the point of having a name that means ‘pleasant’ when my life isn’t? That’s why I think ‘bitter’ suits me much more. First of all, my husband dies, then my two sons; how am I going to survive? I mean, what is the point? If the Almighty is making my life so bitter, then why not [itals]be[end itals] bitter? Life just isn’t fair. None of it is my fault, it’s all God’s doing, you know. I bet you don’t have an antidepressant pill to fix that. I mean, if God and the whole world is against you, what is the point? I suppose the news that this year’s barley harvest in Bethlehem looks good is a positive. I might go back there. But there is no point my daughters-in-law coming with me. They should steer well clear of bitter old me. My whole life’s a disaster.

After the monologue, have someone read Ruth 1. Briefly summarise the events so the group know what led Naomi to feel so bad:

* Naomi moves with her family looking for food, a better life (just like the migrations in ‘Intro activity’).
* Things were initially good, but then Naomi’s husband dies.
* Her sons get married to Ruth and Orpah, but her sons soon die.
* There was no support from the government; it was the men who supported the family.
* Naomi decides to go back to Bethlehem, but tells the daughters to stay in their own land and find new husbands and have families.
* Ruth stays with Naomi.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Chat about the story using these questions, encouraging everyone to join in if they want to:

* What words would you use to describe Naomi’s situation?
* What impact do you think Ruth staying with Naomi had on her?
* What was the significance of Naomi’s name change? Do you ever put labels on yourself? What is their impact?
* Have you ever felt like Naomi?
* Do you think Naomi should blame God? Why? Why not?
* If we are feeling bad about ourselves, who do we blame? Does blaming someone else help the situation?
* Is the answer to do something ourselves, like the people in ‘Intro activity’?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** paper, pens and art materials

Give each person a piece of paper and access to the art materials. Explain that they are going to draw a map. The map will illustrate a journey from one place to another. However, instead of drawing real locations, they will add places to illustrate difficulties they face in everyday life. These places should be located in one area of the map, the area which they are leaving.

In their destination, they should add places to illustrate how they would deal with or face the issues they have already drawn. Some examples could be places like ‘Prayer Town’ or ‘Youth Leader Park’. They should illustrate and make the maps look authentic. You could tea-dye the paper before they create their maps to give them an ‘ancient’ feel.

These maps can be kept in their Bibles or other safe place when the young people feel things are against them.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** paper; pens

Hand a piece of paper to each group member. Fold in half down the centre, and on one side write ‘Naomi’ on the other, ‘Ruth’.

Ask the group who they currently feel more like. Do they feel closer to Naomi – feeling bad and wishing they weren’t where they are and in their current situation? Or do they feel more like Ruth – sticking with someone as they journey through the dark? There is nothing wrong with feeling like Naomi. And there are also Ruths ready to stand with us.

This story shows us that there is hope even in the darkest situations, and that we can help and walk with others. Close with this simple prayer:

Dear Lord,

Send light when we can’t see a way forward.

And help us guide others, when they can’t see their path.

Amen

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tells stories at the [Creative Minimalist](https://www.darrenrhill.com/).