UNIT 14 ■ Ruth Shows Naomi Kindness

RUTH 1

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." *Jeremiah 31:3b*

STORY

Ruth Shows Naomi Kindness

Many, many years ago—hundreds of years before even Jesus was born—lived a woman named Naomi. Naomi lived in Israel with her husband Elimelech and her two little boys. Their names were Mahlon and Kilion. Life was hard in Israel during those years. Most of the people were farmers. But for a long, long time crops didn't grow properly. Farmers would plant seed, but the plants wouldn't grow. Or the plants would grow, but they would die because there was no rain. Farmers couldn't grow anything, so they didn't have anything to sell to people who wanted to buy food. People started to grow very hungry. Some people went such a long time without food that they died. This is called a famine.

Naomi and her family decided to move someplace where they could have enough food to eat. They went to live in a place called Moab. Now, most of the people in Moab did not worship the One True God like Naomi's family did. Most of the people in Moab worshiped false gods. But that didn't stop Naomi and her family from worshiping the One True God, the God of Israel.

Naomi's husband died. This made Naomi very sad. She missed her husband. It was hard taking care of two boys all by herself. Eventually, Naomi's sons grew up. They married girls from Moab named Orpah and Ruth. Naomi was so happy to have her new daughters-in-law living with her and her sons.

But then Naomi's sons died. She was sad again. She heard that the famine in Israel was over. She decided to go back to Israel to live. She would be with her family and friends again. She would be with people who loved the One True God like she did. She packed her things and started the long, long journey back to Israel.

Orpah and Ruth did not want Naomi to leave them. They loved Naomi. They went with her. All three of them would live together in Israel.

"No, this isn't right," said Naomi. "You have been kind to me. I love you, but you should stay here in Moab. God will give you new husbands. This is your home."

The three of them cried and hugged each other. It was so hard to say good-bye! Finally Orpah turned around. She went back to Moab.

But Ruth hugged Naomi harder. "Please don't make me go back," she told Naomi. "I will go with you to Israel. I will live where you live. Your family will be my family. I will worship the One True God, just like you do. Let us stay together always."

So Naomi let Ruth come back to Israel with her. They lived together, and Ruth continued to show kindness to Naomi all the time they were together.

REFLECTING

Use these questions to help your students think about the story. You can use any combination of the questions below.

I Wonder About the Story—

I wonder how hard it is to grow your own food. I wonder if Naomi's family was scared when they were hungry. I wonder what it feels like to be really, really hungry. I wonder how Naomi's family felt about moving to a new place, far from home. I wonder if Naomi was happy when her sons got married. I wonder how Naomi felt when she lost her husband and sons. I wonder if Naomi was sad to leave her new home to go back to her old home. I wonder why Orpah decided to stay behind. I wonder if Ruth had a hard time deciding what to do.

I Remember the Story—

Why did Naomi and her family have to leave their home? Where did they go? Did the people in Moab worship God? What happened to Naomi's husband? What happened to Naomi's sons first? Then what happened to Naomi's sons? What did Naomi decide to do? What did she tell Ruth and Orpah? What did Orpah do? What did Ruth do?

I am a Part of the Story—

What do you think you would do if you couldn't find food at your home anymore? Would you move away to a place where there was food? Do you think that after a little while your new home might make you happy too? How do you think Naomi felt after her husband and sons died? Was God taking care of her even when her husband and sons could not take care of her anymore? How did Ruth show Naomi kindness?

Use these activities during your lesson to help kids feel welcomed into the story, remember about the stories from weeks past, and respond to the story in a way that will help solidify the Bible story in their minds. Each category has activities for week 1 and week 2 of the unit.

WELCOMING

WEEK 1

CENTER 1—Print out one picture of an open suitcase from page 59 of this book for each child in your group. Let the children draw items inside the suitcase that they would take on a trip. Or you may choose to let children cut out items for their trip from a magazine and glue them inside the suitcase shape. Discuss where they might go on a trip and what kinds of things they would need to take along. Ask, "Are you going on a short trip or a long trip? Are you going to a warm place or a cold place? Pack what you will need for your trip.

CENTER 2—Play a word game. Have everyone sit in a circle. Begin the game by saying, "I'm going on a trip and I'll take an apple." Then let each child take a turn. When it is their turn they will say, "I'm going on a trip and I'll take a…" then they will fill in the blank with something that starts with the next letter. Help younger children think of what letter comes next or what words start with that letter. Challenge older children by asking them to remember all of the items listed.

WEEK 2

CENTER 1—Divide children into groups of two. Have children race from a starting point to a finish line. The only rule is that they must hold hands and not let go. This should be non-competitive. The idea is not to be the first to finish, but simply to finish. As children cross the finish line, cheer them on and say, "Hurray! You made it to Israel!" Allow children to repeat the activity as many times as they wish. (This will keep them occupied as latecomers arrive.)

Make the journey more challenging by creating a simple obstacle course. Have the "road" curve around the room instead of running in a straight line. Place chairs or other obstacles in the way so that children have to go around. Use pillows as "rocks" children must climb over.

CENTER 2—Let the children make friendship bracelets using yarn and flavored ring cereal. Have the children wash their hands or use hand sanitizer. Give each child two pieces of yarn about a foot long and a small bowl of cereal. Let them string the cereal on the yarn and then tie the ends in a knot around their wrists to form a bracelet. You will need to help them tie the yarn. Have them make two bracelets. They can keep one and give one to a friend. Discuss the importance of friends and how we make and keep friends.

REMEMBERING

WEEK 1

Play this game using a soft, squishy ball or beanbag. Toss the ball to a child and have him or her tell one thing they remember from the story and one way to show kindness to someone. Then have the child toss the ball to another child to do the same thing. Continue playing until each child has had a chance to share. Discuss how we show kindness to friends and family.

WEEK 2

Lay craft paper on the table along with glue and magazines. Invite children to look through the magazines for pictures of families and glue them to the paper. While children work, talk about the family in today's Bible lesson. Ask children questions to help them remember about the family in the story such as, "How many people were in Ruth's family?" or "How many boys were in Ruth's family?"

RESPONDING

WEEK 1

Allow children to act out the story, with or without costumes. Characters include Naomi and her husband, their two sons, Ruth, and Orpah. Other children may be townspeople, farmers, etc., if they don't want to wait to take their turns as main characters. You may narrate the story as the children perform, or allow them to narrate as they go. Repeat the story as many times as necessary so that all the children may be a main character if they wish. The repetition will reinforce the lesson in their memories.

WEEK 2

Have children act out ways they can show kindness in their own lives. Ask children for ideas. Some ideas might include sharing toys with others, helping someone who falls down, getting things for Mom or Dad, feeding/watering their pets when they are supposed to, picking up their toys, etc. Explain that showing kindness really means that we are just being nice to one another, and that it pleases God when we are kind.