

A Little Love and Kindness **12**

(a lesson for Valentine's Day or any day)

LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ God wants us to be kind and loving.

OBJECTIVES

Kids or families will

- discover how it feels to depend on others,
- hear Naomi's story,
- make gifts of kindness and examine practical ways to show God's love, and
- commit to showing kindness to others.

BIBLE BASIS

Ruth 1-4

The book of Ruth is a wonderful story of selflessness and generosity. It's so beautifully and concisely written that you could practically read the whole book aloud to your class. Read it again yourself and be inspired by God's love interpreted in simple acts of kindness.

The story of Ruth shows us that God can use everyday people to accomplish great things in his kingdom. Ruth was a Moabite, not a Jew. Yet because of her devotion to a sad old woman, Ruth became an ancestress of King David and of Jesus.

YOU'LL NEED

- star stickers
- blindfolds
- a box of doughnuts
- an adult to play the role of Naomi (optional)
- a robe for a Bible costume
- scissors
- markers
- tape
- photocopies of the "Hearts of Kindness" handout (p. 115)
- photocopies of the "Someone Cares Pop-Up Card" handout (p. 116)
- glue sticks
- a photocopy of the "Love and Kindness Mix" instructions (p. 113)
- ingredients for the mix
- a Bible

NOTE

This lesson works well with an intergenerational class. You may wish to invite whole families to join you for this session.

Ruth gave up everything that was familiar to her to accompany Naomi back to Bethlehem. She trusted herself to the living God who honored her sacrifice and blessed her greatly in return.

Proverbs 14:21, 31

It has been said that kindness is the language of love. Those who make it a point to be kind are God's everyday heroes. Acts of kindness done in the name of Christ are the building blocks of the kingdom of God. And no one has to wait to be old enough to participate.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

Kids are preoccupied with many things. Kindness isn't usually one of them. Kids understand the value of being popular or good at sports or being identified with the right group of friends. But only a few kids recognize the importance of being kind to everyone, regardless of circumstance.

A classic example is what happens in school lunchrooms. Suppose a group of friends squeezes around one table, but one child is left out and has to sit alone. How many of the kids in your class would leave the group to sit with the one who is left out? We hope that some would. But most would probably think, "Whew—I'm glad I'm not the one stuck at the other table!"

Use this lesson to help kids see that God wants us to make kindness a priority—and that he blesses us in surprising ways when we do.



The Lesson

ATTENTION GRABBER

Help Me! Help Me!

Place star stickers on kids (and adults) as they arrive. Put a sticker on the shoe of the first person, on the cheek of the second person, and on the hand of the third person. Continue in this manner so one-third of the participants have shoe stickers, one-third have cheek stickers, and one-third have hand stickers.

Say: **Quickly form trios. Each trio needs one person with a shoe sticker, one person with a cheek sticker, and one person with a hand sticker.**

Give three blindfolds to each trio.

Say: **In your trios, tie the ankles of the person with the shoe sticker. Then blindfold the person with the cheek sticker. Finally, tie the wrists of the person with the hand sticker.**

When all the trios have completed this task, say: **Before class, I put a box of doughnuts in the church kitchen (or any other place that's some distance from your room). If you'd like to go help yourself to those doughnuts, you may. But you can't untie yourself or remove your blindfold. I think I'll go get a doughnut for myself.**

Leave the classroom without further comment. Technically, all of the participants can get to the doughnuts despite being tied or blindfolded—they can feel their way or hop. Supervise the participants to keep them from running into anything as you watch to see which trios cooperate and which try to go it alone. Then return to the classroom and take the doughnuts with you. Have participants remain tied or blindfolded as they enjoy their doughnuts and discuss these questions.

- **What went through your mind when I told you to help yourselves to the doughnuts in the kitchen?** (I was mad that my ankles were tied; I thought I'd never be able to get there; I wondered if I could find my way.)
- **How did you feel if your trio members left you behind?** (I worried that they wouldn't take care of me; I trusted them to bring me a doughnut.)
- **How did you respond when some trios started helping each other?** (I was glad I was part of a trio that worked together; I told my trio members that we should work together, too.)
- **What were the rewards for working together and taking care of one another?** (We all got doughnuts; I didn't have to feel guilty because I had a doughnut and no one else did.)
- **How was being blindfolded or having your feet or hands tied together like what happens to people in real life?** (Some people have accidents or diseases that blind them or make it hard for them to get around.)
- **If you had to stay tied or blindfolded for a month, how would you want other people to treat you?** (I'd want to do most things for myself; I'd be glad to have other people help me.)

TEACHER TIP

It's fine to have one or two groups of four. Encourage a good mix of ages in each group.

Say: **People have all kinds of difficulties in life—physical problems, losing a job or a home, failing at school—anything can happen. At times like that we need one another, just as you needed your trio members in this activity. ★ God wants us to be kind and loving. Let me introduce you to an old woman from the Bible whose life was turned around because someone was kind and loving to her.**

BIBLE STUDY

Tears to Laughter (Ruth 1–4)

You may want to have a woman from your congregation dress in a Bible costume and visit your class to present “Naomi’s Story” (p. 111). Or, quickly put on a costume and read the story yourself. Do it with a sparkle in your eye and a twist of Jewish humor. It’s great fun for kids if a man presents the story in a falsetto voice.

Lead participants in a round of applause for Naomi.

Have participants return to their trios to discuss the following questions. Pause after each question to allow for discussion.

- **What terrible things happened to Naomi?** (Her husband and sons died.)

- **How would you feel if you were the only one left in your family?** (Really sad; lonely.)

- **Why do you think Ruth went back to Bethlehem with Naomi?** (Because she felt sorry for Naomi; because she was a kind person.)

- **What good things happened because of Ruth’s kindness?** (Ruth found a husband and had a baby; Naomi had a family again.)

- **When Ruth went with Naomi, do you think she expected any of these good things to happen? Why or why not?** (No, she only thought about helping her mother-in-law; she probably trusted God to take care of her but didn’t know about all the good things that would happen.)

Wave your hand to get everyone’s attention, then bring everyone together. Say: **★ God wants us to be kind and loving. Sometimes God gives us great surprises, like he did in today’s story. But sometimes our reward is just the happiness we feel for having done something kind.**

Naomi's Story

I've had a sad life, I tell you—a very sad life. But the living God has given me joy again! Do I look like a sad, old woman? Well, I'm not. I should say not! For God has filled my empty arms with a beautiful baby boy. A grandson! Can you believe it? A grandson born when my husband and sons were all in their graves. Let me tell you how it happened.

I grew up and married in the town of Bethlehem. When food was hard to find, my husband and my two sons and I moved to the land of Moab. Our sons married women from Moab, and for a time I was very happy.

But then my husband and sons died. I had no one left but my two daughters-in-law. I wailed and cried as they buried those men who were so dear to me. I felt empty. Empty and alone. So I decided to return to Bethlehem.

I told my two daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and find new husbands. One stayed behind. But Ruth insisted on going with me.

"I'll go wherever you go," she said. "Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God."

You should've seen the looks on the faces of my old friends when we arrived back in Bethlehem. "Can it be Naomi?" they asked. I told them how empty and lonely I felt. No husband. No sons. Bah! What good is a lonely old woman?

But there was Ruth. Why should she stay with her old mother-in-law? She's one in a million, that girl.

It was harvest time, so Ruth went out into the fields to gather grain the workers left behind. The owner of the field was kind to her. "Come gather grain in my field every day," he said.

And who should that kind man be but Boaz—a close relative of mine. I knew Boaz would sleep by the piles of grain, to guard them. So I told Ruth to put on perfume and her best clothes and lie at the feet of Boaz. When Boaz awoke and found Ruth at his feet, Ruth said, "You are my relative. Will you take care of me?"

Ah, that Ruth. She's a lovely girl. Boaz decided to marry her and buy the land that belonged to my sons and my husband. That was nearly a year ago. And just last week, my grandson was born.

All my friends laughed and cried like a bunch of old hens. "Praise the Lord who gave you this grandson," they prayed. "May he become famous in Israel. He will give you new life and will take care of you in your old age because of your daughter-in-law who loves you. She is better for you than seven sons, because she has given birth to your grandson."

So who wouldn't be happy? Praise to the living God who fills me with joy!

LIFE APPLICATION

Love and Kindness to Go

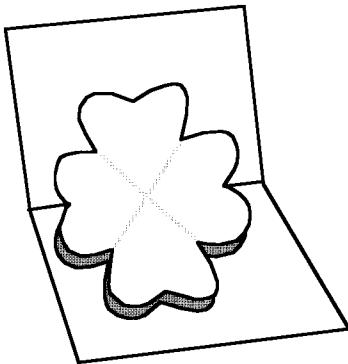
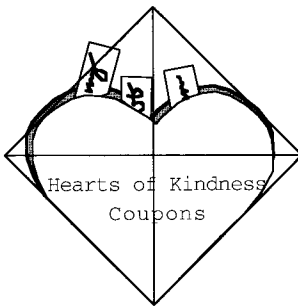
Say: Turn to your trio members once more. Take turns telling about a time when someone noticed that you were sad and did something kind to help or encourage you. Listen well, because in a moment you'll get to share what you heard from someone in your trio.

Allow a couple of minutes for sharing. Then wave your hand to get everyone's attention and invite volunteers to share what they learned.

Say: Now tell your trio members about someone you know who seems sad or discouraged, someone who could use some special love and kindness.

Allow two or three minutes for sharing. Then wave your hand to get everyone's attention and say: **There are lots of ways to show love and kindness to people who are sad or discouraged—people in your own family, people at church, at school, or in your neighborhood. Let's have fun finding out how we can show love and kindness to all kinds of people.**

Choose one, two, or all three of these "Love and Kindness" learning-center ideas. Each is easy to prepare and fun for both kids and adults. (Consider photocopying the handouts on colored paper or stationery.)



● **Hearts-of-Kindness Coupon Center**—Participants make personalized kindness coupons to give away in decorated hearts. Set out photocopies of the "Hearts of Kindness" handout (p. 115), scissors, tape, markers, and a finished sample.

● **Heart Pop-Up Card Center**—Participants make pop-up cards with encouraging messages to send to people who are sad. Set out photocopies of the "Someone Cares Pop-Up Card" handout (p. 116), scissors, glue sticks, and a finished sample.

● **Love-and-Kindness Mix Center**—Set out bowls of cinnamon heart candies, peanuts, and shredded coconut. You'll also need a small scoop for each bowl, sandwich bags, and ribbon. Photocopy the instructions below and set them out with the ingredients.

Love-and-Kindness Mix

Put a few cinnamon heart candies in a sandwich bag. Then add a scoop of peanuts and a scoop of coconut. Tie the bag with a ribbon, then give it to someone who would appreciate your gift of kindness.

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Introduce the learning centers. Allow participants to choose where they'd like to begin. Encourage adults and older kids to work together with younger kids to help them complete their projects. If you have plenty of time, let participants do the projects at all three centers. Or, offer to send home photocopies of the handouts they didn't have time to complete.

As participants work, circulate among them and ask:

- **Who's the lucky person you're going to give this to?**
- **This looks great! Where are you going to mail it?**
- **Do you have plans for sharing this with someone?**

Announce when there are three minutes of working time left, then two minutes, then one. When you call time, have participants gather their projects and return to their trios.

COMMITMENT

Gifts of Kindness

Say: **Show your trio members one thing you made. Then tell who you're going to give it to, and why you chose that person.**

Allow trios to share. Then wave your hand to get everyone's attention. Bring everyone together and ask:

- **How did you feel as you worked on projects that you knew would brighten someone's day?** (Warm and happy.)

Have a volunteer read Proverbs 14:21, 31.

- **Why is it important for Christians to be loving and kind?** (So we can show God's love; because we care about people; because it honors God.)

Say: **★ God wants us to be loving and kind. The little gifts of kindness you've made today are just the beginning. God can show you many people who need your encouragement and love throughout the week.**

CLOSING

Blessing the Gifts

Ask everyone to hold a gift of kindness they made as you pray: **Lord, thank you for the beautiful story of Ruth and Naomi. We pray that you'll bless the gifts of kindness we made today. May they bring comfort and joy. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen.**

