WEEK 1
LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

God gives us companions.

BIBLE

Ruth and Naomi: Ruth 1; Mark 12:28–34

ABOUT THIS WEEK

So many of our favorite superheroes have sidekicks and companions to help them out when they need it most. This week, we'll learn about how Ruth chose to follow Naomi back to her hometown after they experienced unexpected losses. Ruth knew Naomi needed someone to help and support her, and their relationship helps us see why **God gives us companions.**

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | Hero Training: Companions

- INSTRUCTIONS: *For this activity, split kids into teams and pair up (have one team member go again for odd-numbered teams). Mark three lines on the ground with painter's tape: starting, halfway, and ending. For each pair, one partner begins as the "hero," and the other is the "sidekick," whose eyes will be covered with a headband like this and is guided by the hero by voice only. At the halfway point, they swap roles. Once they reach the other side, they'll have to wrap the headband around their adjacent legs and return to the starting line by walking together backward. They then pass the headband to the next pair in their team (or give each pair their headband at the beginning). The first team to complete the course wins!*
- Okay, future heroes! The first lesson of being a hero—you can't do it alone! Heroes work together to get things done. Sometimes, a hero has a sidekick, and some heroes have an entire team supporting them.
- Today's Bible story is about a dynamic duo who formed a bond through tragic circumstances but would each be the companion and comfort the other needed.

QUESTION | Who is your superhero sidekick?

- INSTRUCTIONS: *Ask the following questions. You can have every kid shout their answer but then ask a few kids to share their answers with everyone. Comment briefly on their answers—and have fun with this!*
- Imagine you are a superhero whose main job is to protect your city! You need a partner—a companion—to fight the villains with you!
- If you could have anyone (real or fictional) be your superhero sidekick, who would you choose? Why?
- It's not just superheroes who need helpful companions. We need them in our everyday lives. It can be a friend who plays with you and helps you, a parent, a teacher, or another trusted grown-up who helps you be your best self.
- Think about the companions you already have in your life as we learn from today's Bible story!

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SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Ruth 1 (Ruth and Naomi)

- INSTRUCTIONS: *Read the passage and retell the Bible story using the Scripture segments and talking points provided below.*
- Hey, heroes-in-training, welcome to the *Unsung Heroes Herald*. I am the editor-in-chief, and our newspaper focuses solely on stories about heroes! But not just any heroes. *Unsung* heroes. We like telling the stories of ordinary people who turned out to be heroes. Who knows, you might be on the cover one day!
    - I know everyone gets their news online these days, but I like my hero news spinning in like this!
    - Today's front page news is: "Unlikely companions team up in the face of tragedy!" Whew, let me tell you, it's quite the story. Journalists aren't allowed to reveal their sources, but you might have heard of this one—it's the Bible!
- Here's what Ruth 1:1–5 had to report.
    - Most superheroes have origin stories telling us how they ended up as superheroes. *Spider-Man* was bitten by a radioactive spider, which gave him his superpowers. *Captain America* was injected with a serum that made him an invincible super soldier. *Captain Marvel* gained superhuman abilities when exposed to a powerful alien device. *Black Panther* took over after his father died and got supernatural powers.
    - However, Ruth and Naomi's origin story is not about how they got superpowers. It's about how God cared for them even in challenging circumstances.
    - Naomi and her husband Elimelek had moved to Moab from Bethlehem long ago. They had settled there, and her sons, Mahlon and Kilion, got married to Moabite women Orpah and Ruth. But some time later, tragically, Naomi's husband and sons died.
- My sources say in Ruth 1:6–9 what Naomi decided to do next.
    - Naomi knew there was nothing left for her in Moab. Back in those days, women could not make a living on their own. They needed support from their male family members to provide for them.
    - Naomi's family was back in Bethlehem, so it made sense for her to return. Her daughters-in-law began to follow her, but Naomi did not think it was a good idea for them to leave their home.
- I found out from Ruth 1:10–18 what happened next.
    - After much persuading, Orpah decided to go back with her family. But Ruth refused to leave Naomi's side. She promised to follow Naomi, her people, and her God.
    - Naomi could not convince her otherwise, so they traveled together to Bethlehem.
- Reporters on the ground witnessed this in Ruth 1:19–22.
    - Naomi's family and friends were surprised and happy to see her, but Naomi was very sad. She even said they should call her "Mara," which means "bitter." It's understandable—she lost her husband and sons in Moab.
    - But what she didn't know yet was that Ruth choosing to accompany her would be the turning point in their story... God was setting them on a new heroic adventure!
- How about that for some breaking news? You heard it here first, folks!

BIG IDEA | God gives us companions.

- INSTRUCTIONS: *Introduce the kids to today's Big Idea.*
- God gives us companions.

ACTIVITY | Stick Together

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- INSTRUCTIONS: *For this activity, get a T-shirt in as large a size as possible. Recruit a pair of kids to wear the shirt together. Both heads should fit through the neck (feel free to cut a wider hole if needed), and one arm from each kid should work through a sleeve. Have them walk around the room and do simple tasks together, like stacking chairs, picking up something from the ground, or pouring water from one cup to another. If you can get more t-shirts and space allows, feel free to turn this into a relay race so more kids can participate.*
- Imagine you are a superhero made up of two superheroes stuck together! At first, it might be awkward because you can't move as freely as you could. But imagine the possibilities! This superhero could have 360-degree vision because two heads are better than one! And most importantly, this superhero would never feel alone.
- Ruth and Naomi weren't literally stuck together, but when Ruth told Naomi, "Where you go, I will go," she meant it. She intended to stick by Naomi no matter what lay ahead.
- Can you think of anyone in your life who would stick by you no matter what? God gave you those people! Can't think of anyone at the moment? Let's ask God to give us more faithful friends. God gives us companions.

SCRIPTURE | Mark 12:28–34

- INSTRUCTIONS: *Read the passage out loud or ask a volunteer to read.*
- Ruth truly loved Naomi as herself. She gave up everything to stay with her mother-in-law. Think about that for a moment. She left her home—her whole life—to follow Naomi.
- Who in this passage we just read also gave up everything for someone else... namely us? That's right, Jesus! Jesus gave up heaven to come to Earth and be among humans. As he spent time with people, teaching them about God and caring for them, he showed them what it looked like to be a true companion to others.
- So when Jesus was asked which of God's commandments was the most important, he told them to love God with everything and to love others the way God loves them. He was saying that we can show our love for God when we show our love for others.
- Ruth was a good companion and a good example of the love Jesus taught his followers. God gives us companions, the greatest of which is Jesus himself!

VIDEO | Teaching Video (Week 1)

- INSTRUCTIONS: *Play this week's episode of Grow TV.* (https://vimeo.com/933125112/005141bac4) *If you're short on time, show the illustrated Bible story video. (https://vimeo.com/996232750/91fd1087e0)*

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

REFLECTION | Hero Hangtime

- INSTRUCTIONS: *Have kids pair up with others in the group or with a leader and share their responses to the prompts below with their partner. Afterward, have them share with the rest of the group, and be sure to share your thoughts. Remind kids to be respectful toward each other as they share, especially as they talk about their families, which can include non-traditional family structures like single-parent homes and foster families.*
- Superheroes have all kinds of family backgrounds. Take Spider-Man, for example. He grew up with his aunt and uncle.
- Ruth and Naomi were a different kind of family, with just the two of them who weren't even really related! But God loved and cared for them just as God loves and cares for all families.
- Tell your companions about your family.
    - What is something unique about your family?

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    - What is something you love doing with your family?
- Ruth gave up everything to stay with Naomi. She left her own family and home. There was nothing for her to gain by staying with Naomi.
- Why do you think Ruth stuck by Naomi?
- Ruth and Naomi experienced so much sadness and lost so much, but one thing they never lost was each other. God gave them each other as companions and looks out for us, too. God gives us companions.
- Thank your hero buddies for hanging out with you!

MEMORY VERSE | Zephaniah 3:17a (NIV)

- INSTRUCTIONS: *Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: memory verse coloring page, sign language motions, or choose from this list of our favorite memorization techniques!*
- "The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves."

PRAYER

- God, thank you so much for the companions you have given us and for sending Jesus to be our best companion! Help us be great companions to others by showing them the love you show us daily. You are the true hero! Amen.

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