

Small Group Lesson

Bible Passage: Ruth 1—4
(Ruth)

God Blesses

REMEMBER VERSE

For what you have done I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. And I will hope in your name, for your name is good.
Psalm 52:9

SERVICE SCHEDULE

Explore

Welcome & Engage

10–15 minutes

Discover & Respond

Large Group

30 minutes

Respond & Bless

Small Group

25 minutes

Inspire

I began my eighth-grade year at a new school, in a new city, without any friends. It was a horrible feeling not to know anyone, and I dreaded the first day, especially lunchtime, when I would be forced to sit alone.

There was a girl I noticed in a few of my classes that morning, named Lindsay. She was very social and appeared to have a lot of friends. As we were leaving our last class before lunch, she said, "You're new, right? Where are you from?" she asked. And before I knew it, she'd invited me to sit with her and her group of friends at lunchtime. I was relieved that someone reached out to me and blessed me in my moment of need.

Lindsay and I became good friends, even through our high school years. It was because of her willingness to step out and welcome me into her community that I was able to transition into a new school during an awkward time in my life. God used Lindsay to bless me in many ways. It was through her friendship that I began attending her church and eventually rededicated my life to Christ. I often think back to that moment and how the small act of kindness and obedience of a young girl helped change the entire trajectory of my life. It would have been just as easy for Lindsay to sit with her friends that day and ignore the new girl she'd met in class. But instead, she allowed God to use her life to bless another.

Equip

As God's children, we've been blessed. We, in turn, can be a blessing to others. Ruth, a Moabite woman, chose to bless others through her life. Shortly after becoming a widow, Ruth made a pledge to stay with her mother-in-law, Naomi, rather than return to her homeland to find a new husband. In doing this, Ruth agreed to walk away from the gods of her youth to serve *Yahweh*, the one true God.

During this time and in this culture, women were entirely dependent upon their husbands. The outlook for widows was limited; if a woman's husband died, she would rely upon her son for support. But neither Ruth nor Naomi had a son. Their only hope was that Ruth would be able to enter into a "levirate marriage," when a family member would marry the widow of a deceased relative in order to continue the family line. This man is often referred to as a family- or kinsman-redeemer. The role of kinsman-redeemer also allowed for the purchasing back of land and settling of any debt of the deceased. If Ruth could enter into this type of relationship, both she and her mother-in-law would be provided for.

God used Boaz to bless Ruth for her faithfulness. Boaz gave Ruth and Naomi provision and protection. But there is a greater picture of God's blessing in this part of The Big God Story. The union of Boaz and Ruth is an important one, for God used them to become the great-grandparents of King David and ancestors of the Messiah. Jesus would be the ultimate Redeemer who would bless the entire world.

Support

God has put people in our lives to bless us along our journey: family, friends, teachers, mentors, and even seemingly random encounters with strangers. God uniquely orchestrates the events in our lives to bless His people.

Take a moment to reflect on your day. Who did God uniquely use in your life to bless you on this day? Now think back to the past week. Who are the people or faces who stand out in your mind as those who played a role in blessing your week? Spend some careful time, as it's often easy to overlook the small roles, and yet they might have greatly blessed you. Now stretch your mind back even further; consider those God has used in the past month to bless your life. Write down the names and faces you remember. Spend some time in thanksgiving to God for providing people in your life to bless your days.

Just as others have blessed *us*, it's God's desire that we would be a blessing. This week, be intentionally aware of the people and the needs around you. What would God have you do? How would He have you play a role in blessing the lives of the people you come in contact with on a daily basis? Look at your day with fresh eyes—eyes focused on blessing others as you have so been blessed.

Lesson Overview: Ruth 1-4

Experience	Time	Summary	Supplies/Prepare
Explore Welcome & Engage	10–15 min.	Exploration stations create space intended to transition children—to lead them from the external world into an environment where they can commune with God, just as they are with all that they are.	Lasting Impressions (per small group) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artificial or silk grain stalks Copy paper (1 sheet per child) Crayons (with paper removed) <i>Wheat Sheaf</i> image Coloring Page (per child) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesson themed coloring page
Discover Large Group	30 min.	Facilitate interactive games, songs, and storytelling, allowing children to participate in discovering God’s Word.	God Blesses Worship songs Mail Time/Remember Verse What’s It: Family Tree The Big God Story Today in the Big God Story we will hear the story of Ruth. Worship through response
Respond Large Group		Create space for children to respond to the Holy Spirit in worship and community.	
Respond Small Group Review/Bless/Connect/Create	15–30 min.	Further process the story through discussion and interaction with others, and respond to God in worship through creative expression.	Wonder Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Group Resource (campus optional) Blessing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blessing/Remember Verse See How the Blessings Grow (per small group) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poster board or foam board (1 sheet) Permanent markers (1 of each color: brown and black) Leaf Die cuts Washable markers (4–5, black) Tape/Glue Sticks Engage: A Traveling We Go (per small group) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Remember Verse</i> template Card stock Masking tape Optional: laminator
Bless Small Group	5 min	Bless the children that they may experience God fully and be a blessing to others.	

Explore Lasting Impressions

Ruth made the choice to follow the God of Israel and serve Him. While caring for her mother-in-law, Naomi, Ruth made a lasting impression on Boaz. He watched her faithfully gather wheat, working the fields behind his harvesters. Today, children will explore wheat, barley, or oat hay and make impressions of the grain with crayon rubbings.

SUPPLIES (per table)

- Artificial or silk grain stalks
- Copy paper (1 sheet per child)
- Crayons (with paper removed)
- Wheat Sheaf Image

PREPARE AHEAD

Cut the apart artificial and/or silk grain stalks to make smaller, individual stalks and remove paper from crayons.

SET UP

Scatter the artificial grain stalks on table. Place the crayons and paper on the table.

RELATE

Welcome children and invite them to join you at the EXPLORE Station. Encourage kids to explore the grain on the table. Ask them about their observations: **What do you see on the table? What do you think it's called? Where do you find wheat (barley or oat) hay? How is it used? Who eats grain? What can we make from grain like this?**

Model for the children how they can make impressions of the grain using paper and the sides of their crayons. Encourage kids to explore and design using various colors. They may choose to rotate their paper to create a unique design as they explore printmaking through crayon rubbings. Ask children questions as they're printmaking. **What happens when you rub the crayon over the paper? What do you see? How do you think this happens?**

Optional:

Using the wheat sheaf image ask the children if they know what the image is. Interact with their answers and help them if they have trouble guessing. Hand out the paper and crayons and ask the kids to try drawing their own picture of grain. Use the questions above to guide your conversation.

Clean up/Move to Large Group

A CD with clean up music will be played. At this time, please encourage and assist the kids with clean up and proceed to the large group programming area. Be sure to model for the kid's large group behavior. Please participate in all aspects of today's large group time.

Respond

Snack/Wonder Questions

Today in The Big God Story we heard how God used Ruth and Boaz to bless their family as they served others. We also saw how God used them to bless the world through their family. Jesus, the promised Savior, came from Ruth and Boaz's family!

SUPPLIES (per table/small group)

- Snacks
- Small Group Resource (campus optional)
- How do you think Ruth felt about moving to a new land?
- Why do you think that Boaz decided to care for Ruth and Naomi?
- Why should we serve and help others?
- In what ways could God use you to be a blessing to others this week?

Extra Small Group Resource: (Campus Optional)

Each week additional questions/images are provided for your group to go a little deeper in its exploration of The Big God Story during your snack time. You can show this picture to your group to help remind them of the story as they are answering the Wonder questions listed in your curriculum.

If time allows, there are also questions on the back of the picture. Please use your own Bible or the Bible provided in your small group bin to look up the specific verses that correspond with the questions. The kids will be challenged to listen for the answers while you read scripture as well as helping them learn how to look for truth in God's Word!

Bless

Gather the children in a circle. **Friends, we heard in The Big God Story how God blesses us through others, and that God wants to use us to be a blessing too. Right now, we have the opportunity to bless one another. I'm going to say a blessing to the person on my right, then he'll get to say it to the person on his right. We'll keep going in our small group until everyone, including me, has been blessed! Here's what we'll say to bless each other: May God bless you this week.** Continue around the circle until each child is blessed and then send your children out with these words from Psalm 115:15:

Blessing: May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth and be a blessing to others.

For what you have done I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. And I will hope in your name for your name is good.
Psalm 52:9

Remember Verse Motions:

For what you have done: Point up to God

I will always praise you: Gently clap hands together.

in the presence of your faithful people.: Spread out both arms, palms up.

And I will hope in your name: Point up to God

for your name is good.: Give two thumbs up.

Create: See How the Blessings Grow

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- Poster board or foam board (1 sheet)
- Permanent markers (1 of each color: brown and black)
- Leaf Die Cuts
- Tape or Glue Sticks

PREPARE AHEAD

Use the brown permanent marker to draw a trunk and branches of a large tree in the center of the board. Do not draw leaves or a leaf canopy on the tree; the children will be adding this in their time of response. Across the top of the board, write, "I have been blessed ..." with the black permanent marker. At the bottom of the tree, write "and I choose to be a blessing." Place the poster board, leaf die cuts, and black washable markers in the bin.

SET UP

Place the poster on the floor in the middle of your group or hang it on the wall. Place the die cut leaves and washable markers on the table.

RELATE

Welcome children to the station. **Today in The Big God Story, we saw how God blesses us through others. In our time of worship response, we remembered ways God has blessed us and then said thank You to Him. Just as God has blessed us through others, He can use us to be a blessing too! What are some ways we can serve God by serving others and blessing them?** Encourage kids to share their thoughts. Interact with their responses and encourage further dialogue and ideas. **Friends, let's stop and ask God to tell us, or show us, how He would like us to bless others by serving them.** Lead kids in a short time of prayer.

As you were praying, did a person or an idea come to mind? Allow kids to share. **God wants to use us to bless others as we serve Him. If you would like to say yes to the ways God can use you, then take a leaf and write your name and draw a picture of how you can be a blessing. You can then place the leaf on the tree. Now all of our leaves will make this blessing tree complete. Each time we see the tree, it can help us remember that God blesses us through others, and that God wants to use us to be a blessing too.**

Engage: A Traveling We Go

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- *Remember Verse* template
- Card stock
- Masking tape
- Optional: laminator

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the *Remember Verse* template. Optional: Laminate the papers.

SET UP

Tape the papers all over the floor with plenty of space between them.

RELATE

Welcome children and have them form a line. Help them to identify the beginning of the Remember Verse. **Friends, in order for Ruth and Naomi to find food, they traveled to a new home. Today we're going to spend some time traveling to the different parts of our Remember Verse! Each time we move, let's use a different way to travel, and we'll say that part of the Remember Verse when we arrive.** As the children move from paper to paper, offer suggestions on how to go: tiptoe, hop, crawl, etc. When you arrive at the next "phrase" of the Remember Verse make sure to do the motions for that part of the verse 😊