



STUDENT LESSON

Like the Adult and Kids lessons, this Student lesson focuses on the account of how God provided for Ruth through Boaz. In the time and culture in which the events of the Book of Ruth occurred, Ruth was a highly vulnerable person — a widow, a stranger in a new land, a despised race, and with only her elderly and vulnerable mother-in-law as family. But God's care for Ruth was evident in how He provided for her every need through Boaz, a man of faith in God.

Connect Activity

Students will illustrate the impact of "needs" in their lives.

Clear a space in the room for students to move around freely.

Direct students to stand in the center of the room. After you ask each question, instruct students to make a choice and stand on one side of the room that you designate to represent their answer. After all students have moved to their choice, encourage volunteers to share briefly why they answered the way they did.

- Would you rather beg for money on a street or be allowed to work to get leftovers at a food factory? (As an example, have students move to the right if they'd rather beg, and move to the left if they'd rather work).
- Would you rather go without food for seven days, or go without a home for seven days?
- Would you rather stay with your friends and family in a state you didn't enjoy, or move to a new state that you love, but leave behind friends and extended family?
- Would you rather have one pair of shoes to protect your feet, or a coat to keep you warm in the cold?
- If you were really hungry, would you rather wait patiently for a gourmet meal and decadent dessert, or eat something quick from a fast-food restaurant?

After all questions have been asked, invite students to sit down. Explain that although these questions probably don't mean life and death to us, people around the world face dire dilemmas about their survival and safety every day.

Inform students that today they will explore the story of Ruth, learn about her needs, and then see how God provided for her through a man named Boaz.

Study

Students will explore how the story of Ruth informs our understanding of caring for vulnerable people.

Supplies needed: Paper and pen, or whiteboard and markers

1. Because sin messed up God's perfect world, some people live in a place of need.

Encourage students to share about needs that they have in life (either present needs, or even a list of basic-to-life needs). Answers may include food, clothing, or a place to live. Explain that we also need to be safe and to have relationships with other people, like our parents, family, and trusted friends.

Ask: Can you imagine what would happen if we couldn't get necessities like food, shelter, and the love of a family? How would you feel? Remind students what "vulnerable" means: someone who can't get these basic needs met, or are at risk of not having them met.

Invite any students who may know about the story of Ruth to share what they remember. Summarize Ruth 1 for students. You may also use page 148 in Image Bearers to read more about the context of Ruth: Ruth was a woman who lived in Moab. During a famine (when there was little food available) in Israel, a Jewish family made of Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons, tried to fix the food problem themselves and ran to the land of Moab, which was an enemy land of Israel. While there, the two sons disobeyed God's plan and married women from Moab — women who were of different faith than the Israelites. Soon, all of the men died, and Naomi made the decision to go back to Israel. Ruth committed to go back with Naomi. But, in that time, these two women had no one to keep them safe or to provide for them. They were very vulnerable — their health, safety, and lives were at risk.

Ask: How do you imagine God took care of them? After a moment, say: God had a plan to take care of vulnerable people.

2. God cares for vulnerable people by making provisions for their care.

Ask: Does anyone know what the word “gleaning” means? Remind them that when God gave His law to the Israelites, He told them to allow gleaning so that vulnerable people could have food, health, and safety while they were collecting food.

Read Ruth 2:2-9, or invite a volunteer to read it.

Ask: How did Boaz obey God's command to let others glean? After students share answers, ask: What was Boaz's attitude toward Ruth? Emphasize that Boaz noticed Ruth, saw her need, and made special provisions for her to glean in his field. He made sure she was allowed to collect food; He provided something to drink; and he made sure she was safe. Because of God's provision in the law and in giving Boaz a plentiful harvest, Ruth was cared for.

Ask: God gave His law, but what role did Boaz play in caring for vulnerable people, as God commanded? Point out that God met Ruth's needs through Boaz.

3. God meets the needs of the vulnerable through His people.

Say: God calls His people to care for the vulnerable because He cares for the vulnerable. Ask: Did Boaz tell someone else to help Ruth, or did he do it himself? Note that Boaz personally got involved in Ruth's life. He didn't send someone else or find another field for her. Boaz used his resources, his time, and his influence to help her.

Read Ruth 2:13-18. Instruct students to describe how Boaz treated Ruth.

On a piece of paper (or a whiteboard) draw two columns. On the top of the first, write “Valuable.” On top of the second column, write “Not valuable.” Encourage students to brainstorm ways that we show others they are valuable. Write their answers in the column. Answers may include the following: treat them with kindness; share with them; encourage them; give them our best; respect them; stand up for them, etc. Now, encourage students to brainstorm ways that we may show others they aren't valuable. Answers may include the following: being mean to them; not giving them our best; bullying them; ignoring them; not listening to them; not sharing our resources with them.

Ask: Looking at these lists, did Boaz treat Ruth as someone valuable or without value? Point out that Boaz treated Ruth with great respect and kindness. Say: We even read later on in the story of Ruth that Boaz married her and gave her a whole family again. Wow. God used Boaz to not only take care of Ruth's physical needs but also to change her vulnerable situation into one of stability, safety, care, and love.

Explain that like God used Boaz to care for Ruth in her vulnerability, He also wants to use us to care for others who are vulnerable.

Apply

Students will begin to learn that they can be involved in caring for people in vulnerable positions.

Say: When we look at how Boaz cared for Ruth in her vulnerability, we can summarize it in these six ways (You may wish to write these on a whiteboard or poster for students to see more easily):

- Boaz noticed Ruth's needs.
- Boaz made a plan to continue to meet Ruth's needs.
- Boaz treated Ruth with kindness and respect.
- Boaz protected Ruth.
- Boaz personally took care of Ruth and her needs.
- Boaz invited Ruth into his family.

Invite students to think of ways they can care for vulnerable people around them. Admit that they may not be able to do all of those things right now (like inviting someone to become a member of their family or providing protection), but there are ways they can do things now.

Brainstorm with students about ways they can help care for vulnerable people, especially orphans, right now. Use the following suggestions to lead students in seeing opportunities before them:

- They can help teach and lead younger children in their church. Leading Mission Kid (a gospel-centered video component to VBS or Sunday School) could be a great way for youth to serve in their church family. For more information, visit lifelinechild.org/missionkid/.
- They can raise money to support orphan care efforts — hosting things like a bake sale, car wash, or mowing people's lawns or raking leaves. This can be done through standfororphans.org.
- They can participate in the R(un) for One 5K and help support strategic international orphan care. Visit runforone5k.org to register.
- They can treat ALL people with kindness, including those who look like us, those who look differently than us, those who like the same things we like, those who like different things than we like, and those who are in different life situations than we are.
- They can get involved personally by raising money, praying, educating others, and advocating for the needs of other people.

Pray

Students will ask God to give them a heart to care for vulnerable people.

Close your time out together by praying. Inform students that you are going to say three prayer sentences out loud and then give them a moment after each one to pray it in their hearts.

- Lord, thank You for the way You care for us in every way.
- Thank You for letting us be a part of caring for vulnerable people, who are all important to You.
- Please draw our hearts to care for vulnerable people like You do.

Then, close out the prayer time by asking God to make us more like Him every day as we look for opportunities to care for vulnerable people around us and around the world.