Ruth’s Faithfulness

Bible Verse
A friend loves at all times.
Proverbs 17:17

Bible Story Reference
Ruth

Teacher’s Devotional
An employer was conducting a personnel review with an employee who lacked many of the skills needed for the job. After detailing a lengthy list of shortcomings, the employer felt obligated to temper all the criticism with recognition of some positive achievement. “George,” the boss said, his mind searching for some good trait, “you’re not very good at your job, but you do show up on time every day.” This recognition of George’s dependability was what we often call a backhanded compliment. Far too often faithfulness is viewed as worth mentioning only when people cannot earn recognition for their talents and achievements.

However, faithfulness is not a secondary virtue to be noted only when everything else is deficient. Faithfulness is one of the most comforting of all God’s attributes. His consistent love for us is the ultimate example of faithfulness, especially in light of our inconsistent response to Him.

But is it possible for us to be truly faithful in our friendships, sticking with someone in both good and bad times? The story of Ruth and Naomi gives us a powerful yes in answer to that question. There is hope for all of us. As God grows His own attributes within us—not the least of which is faithfulness—our friendships will endure and flourish.

Character Builder
Faithfulness to others means being a friend in good and bad times.
Lesson 34 • Ruth

Bible Story Center

Materials
Faithfulness poster from Poster Pack, ¼ cup (2 oz.) play dough for each student.

Tell the Story
Follow along with me as we use our dough to tell today’s story.

1. Divide your dough into three parts. Use one part to make a flat piece of dry ground. Long ago, even before there were kings in Israel, there was a famine in the country. A famine is a time when there isn’t enough rain for crops to grow and drinking water becomes scarce. Because there was not enough food or water, a woman named Naomi and her family left their home in Bethlehem.

   With her husband and two sons, Naomi went to Moab to find food. While Naomi’s family lived in Moab, her husband died. When her boys grew up, they both married Moabite girls; one son married Orpah and the other married Ruth. Then, about 10 years after moving to Moab, her sons died. Now Naomi and her daughters-in-law were very sad. Without husbands, it would be VERY hard to get enough food. What would they DO?

   Naomi had heard that there was food in Bethlehem again. She decided to go back home, where the rest of her family lived. Maybe I’ll find food there, Naomi thought. Naomi also thought it would be better for Orpah and Ruth if they stayed in Moab. Orpah agreed with Naomi and decided to live with her relatives in Moab. But Ruth said, “Don’t tell me to go back, Naomi. I won’t leave you! Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.” Ruth stayed with Naomi. Ruth’s caring actions showed her faithfulness.

2. Use another part of your dough to make some tiny balls for grain. Put the grain on the ground. Ruth and Naomi traveled together back to Israel. They arrived in Bethlehem during the spring barley harvest. Ruth went to the field of
a man named Boaz. She gleaned there. That means she took leftover barley off the ground and put the grain in her basket. It was hard work out in the hot sun. But Ruth was determined to be faithful, helping Naomi no matter what.

3. **Make a small basket from the third part of your dough. Put your grain in it.** Boaz was kind to Ruth. He told her she could come to his field anytime. He told his workers to leave extra grain on the ground for her to pick up. He had heard about Ruth, you see. Boaz was impressed with Ruth's faithfulness and kindness to Naomi.

When Naomi found out that Ruth was working in Boaz's field, she got very excited. Boaz was actually a relative of her husband's! That meant that Naomi and Ruth might be able to convince Boaz to provide a home for Ruth.

Naomi had a plan. She told Ruth to go to Boaz at night when he would be sleeping outdoors to guard his grain. She told Ruth just how to ask Boaz to be her protector. And according to the law, if Boaz would agree, it also meant he would MARRY Ruth!

4. **Use all your dough to make a baby.** Ruth did just what Naomi told her to do. She talked with Boaz, and Boaz was glad to help her and Naomi. He was glad to marry Ruth, too! So Ruth became Boaz's bride. Later, she and Boaz had a baby! They named the baby Obed. Now Naomi had a grandson who would keep her land in the family. Because of Ruth's faithfulness, Naomi was cared for and had a family again!

Best of all, many years later Obed would grow up and become a grandpa himself. He was the grandfather of King David—one of the ancestors of Jesus!

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**Focus on the Fruit**

**How did Ruth show faithfulness to Naomi?** (Returned to Israel with her. Gleaned in the field to get food.) **Who heard about Ruth's faithful kindness?** (Boaz.) **What were the results of Ruth's faithfulness?** (She and Naomi had food. Boaz married Ruth.)

Faithfulness sometimes means doing something good, not just once, but over and over. It means always caring for and helping a person. Show the Faithfulness poster. As we care for others, even when it's not easy, we grow the fruit of faithfulness in our lives. God promises to help us become faithful people if we ask His help!
Lesson 34

Fruitful Lives Object Talk

Bible Verse

*A friend loves at all times.* Proverbs 17:17

Materials

Bible with bookmark at Proverbs 17:17, sleeping bag or pillow.

Lead the Activity

1. Show sleeping bag or pillow. **When do you use this?** (Camping, Sleeping overnight at a friend’s house.) **One way to show friendship is to stay overnight at a friend’s house.** One man showed friendship by doing more than staying overnight with his friends. This man chose to live with the people he wanted to be friends with.

2. **David Zeisberger lived in the 1800s.** During that time many Native Americans were being cheated out of the land they lived on. White people and Native Americans weren’t usually friends. But David was a missionary who wanted to tell the good news about Jesus to a Native American tribe called the Iroquois (IHR-eh-kwoi). So David went to live with the Iroquois and learned to speak their language. He didn’t try to make the people change the ways they dressed or ate. And instead of cheating the Iroquois out of their land, David helped them build towns of their own. David was a faithful friend.

Later, when the members of David’s church wanted to become missionaries to the Iroquois, the tribe didn’t want these missionaries to come. They had been cheated by white people too many times! But one of the Iroquois called David a friend and a brother, and others who knew David agreed that David had proven to be a fair and faithful friend by even going to jail instead of giving up his friendship with them. Because of David’s friendship, the Iroquois allowed the missionaries to tell them about Jesus.

Conclude

Read Proverbs 17:17 aloud. **Someone who is faithful shows friendship in good and bad times. Let’s ask God to help us be faithful friends this week.** Lead students in prayer.

Discussion Questions

1. **Who has been a faithful friend to you? What has this person done to show friendship to you?**

2. **When is it hard to show friendship to others?**

3. **How can you be a good friend to someone who has a hard time learning at school or to someone who has a hard time getting along with others?**
Lesson 34

Active Game Center: Stick Together Relay

Materials
Bible, balloons.

Prepare the Game
Inflate one balloon for each team of five students.

Lead the Game
1. Divide students into teams of five. Teams line up on one side of the classroom. Give the first student in each line an inflated balloon.

2. At your signal, the first student in each line taps the balloon up into the air as he or she moves to the other side of the playing area and back. The second student in line then taps the balloon across the playing area and back while holding the wrist of the first student. Game continues until the whole team is holding wrists and moving across the playing area and back as the last student taps the balloon.

3. As teams complete the relay, they sit down. A volunteer from the last team to finish answers one of the Discussion Questions below (or chooses a student from one of the other teams to answer a question). Continue the discussion, asking the remaining questions.

Options
1. Bounce a basketball, kick a tennis ball or carry a Ping-Pong ball on a spoon instead of tapping a balloon across the room.

2. Students switch teams and play game again if time allows.

3. Younger students complete relay in pairs, instead of whole team holding hands.

Discussion Questions
1. How does this game show us what faithfulness is? (Faithfulness is sticking with someone or something, no matter what.)

2. Read Proverbs 17:17 aloud. According to Proverbs 17:17, what does a faithful friend do? Would that be hard or easy? Why?

3. Why might a kid your age have a hard time continuing to be a faithful friend to someone? (When that person moves away. When he or she stops being nice. When we find new friends.) What can we do to remember to be faithful friends, even when it's hard? (Ask God’s help. Remember the words of Proverbs 17:17.)
Art Center: Transfer Prints

Materials
8½x11-inch (21.5x27.5-cm) white paper, crayons, ballpoint pens.

Lead the Activity
1. Give each student a sheet of paper. Students fold paper in half widthwise and then unfold it.
2. Students color heavily with crayons on the top half of the paper, applying as many different colors of crayon as they desire. (Note: Darker colors work best.) Students fold colored half of the paper down on top of the blank half of paper.
3. On the back side of the colored half of the paper, students use ballpoint pens to draw stick-figure pictures of themselves with friends during good or bad times. Students open up paper to reveal multi-colored drawings on the bottom half of the paper. Ask Discussion Questions below as students work on pictures.

Options
1. Students write Proverbs 17:17 above their pictures.
2. If possible, provide jumbo crayons.
3. If time allows, students make more than one picture, each time experimenting with different colors of crayon.

Discussion Questions
1. What does it mean to be faithful? (Stick with someone or something no matter what happens. Be loyal and trustworthy.)
2. What are some ways to be a faithful friend? (Don’t argue, but stick up for a friend who is being picked on. Don’t stop being a friend, even if you start having other friends, too. Talk to a friend if you see them doing something wrong. Don’t listen to gossip about a friend. Pray for your friend.)
3. Who has been a faithful friend to you? How?
Lesson 34

Worship Center

Bible Verse
A friend loves at all times. Proverbs 17:17

Materials
Bible, God’s Kids Grow cassette/CD or music video and player, “Good Habits” word chart (p. 467 in this book), large sheet of paper on which you have printed Proverbs 17:17, masking tape.

Sing to God
Play “Good Habits,” encouraging students to sing along with the music. This song names ways to be faithful. What are they? (Trust God. Do our best. Pray. Practice helping others.)

Hear and Say God’s Word
Display paper on which you have printed Proverbs 17:17. Have a volunteer read the verse aloud. When does a friend love? (At all times.) Ask a volunteer to hold up any number of fingers on one hand. Students respond by repeating the verse as many times as the number of fingers held up, each time telling either a time it is easy or hard to love a friend. Repeat the activity several times, having a different volunteer show a different number of fingers each time.

Pray to God
Let’s ask God’s help in being a friend at all times. Volunteers pray aloud, asking God for His help in showing love, even when it is hard. End prayer time by thanking God that He is always faithful in loving us and asking for His help in faithfully showing love to others.

Options
1. Ask an older student to lead the Bible verse activity.
2. Provide a large sheet of paper and a marker or a white board and erasable marker for students to write prayer requests on. Praying for other people is one way we can be faithful friends in good and bad times. Each student takes a turn praying for another student’s request. (Optional: Give students large Post-it Notes on which to write their requests. Students trade Post-it Notes before praying silently or aloud for each other.)
Lesson 34

Bible Verse Coloring Center

Materials
Crayons or markers, a copy of page 63 or page 64 from Bible Verse Coloring Pages #2 for each student.

Lead the Activity
Read Proverbs 17:17. How are the children in this picture showing that they are friends? How can you show that you are a friend to someone? Students color picture.

Option
Provide leaves and tree bark. Students place leaves and/or bark underneath the paper, positioning leaves and bark under leaves and tree branches in the picture. Students rub over leaves and bark with crayons to create rubbings. (Note: Remove crayon wrapping.)

Service Project Center

Materials
Materials needed for “Snack Sacks” (p. 83 from The Big Book of Service Projects).

Lead the Activity
Students complete the “Snack Sacks” activity as directed in The Big Book of Service Projects. When do you usually like to eat a snack? What messages about friendship could you include with the snacks? Besides sharing snacks with someone in need, what are some other ways to be a friend in hard times?

Discipleship Activity Center

Materials
Discussion Cards for Psalm 23 (pp. 75-80 from The Big Book of Christian Growth), materials needed for “Mark the Spot” or “Handy Pileup” (p. 22 or p. 63 from The Big Book of Christian Growth).

Lead the Activity
We’ve been talking today about being faithful friends. Psalm 23 tells us that God is faithful to us. Today we’re going to play a game to help us discover ways God’s faithfulness can make a difference in our lives. Students complete activity as directed in The Big Book of Christian Growth.