

THE BUDDY SYSTEM

AN EDGE NIGHT ON RUTH

SCRIPTURE

Sirach 6:14-16

CCC

374

YOUCAT

486

KEY WORDS

Widow
King David

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Friendship quote posters and pictures to decorate the youth room.
- Two children's puzzles, two piles of Legos®, 6 balloons (for game)

- Friendship quizzes (self-evaluations)
- Ruth and Naomi Prayer cards (See Media Suggestions)
- Affirmation activity list
- Small group questions

MEDIA

SUGGESTIONS

- YouTube: "I'm With You Nichole Nordeman and Amy Grant" by TheWaddellFamily
- YouTube: "You've Got a Friend in Me - Toy Story (Actual Clips)" by MotherAtHeart25

- Song: "Lean on Me" by Bill Withers (*Bill Withers: Greatest Hits*, MCA Records)
- Song: "Hold Us Together" by Matt Maher (*Alive Again*, Provident)
- Image: "Ruth and Naomi" Icon Prayer Cards by The Printery House
- Edge Video Support: "Old Testament's Got Talent: Ruth" (Edge Video Support 14)

EDGE NIGHT GOAL

The goal of this Edge Night is to introduce the middle school youth to the biblical character of Ruth who was one of the significant women in salvation history and ancestress of David and most importantly, Jesus. The night will focus on Ruth's obedience to God, specifically through faithful and selfless friendship.

EDGE NIGHT AT A GLANCE

This Edge Night will help the youth learn the story of Ruth as a model of faith and godly friendship. It will also help them to reflect on the importance of having good fellowship and being a good friend to others. The Gather begins with a fun and fast-paced game showing that two is better than one. The Proclaim spends time sharing the story of Ruth and encouraging the young people to consider whether or not they honor God by being a good friend. The Break allows the youth a chance to take a "friendship quiz" to get them

thinking about areas that they could improve as a friend, followed by a small group discussion. During the Send, the youth will be invited to participate in an affirmation activity designed to empower them to build up those around them. Finally, the night will close with them putting into practice what they learned about praying with and for their friends.

ENVIRONMENT

Make large posters with quotes about friendship to decorate the room. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- “A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow.” – William Shakespeare
- “A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you.” – Elbert Hubbard
- “Don’t expect your friend to be a perfect person. But, help them to become a perfect person. That’s true friendship.” – Bl. Mother Teresa
- “A true friend is someone who says nice things behind your back.” – Unknown

You can also put pictures of friends up around the room, from famous friendships to youth group pictures. Make a playlist of songs about friendship to have playing as the youth enter the room.

CORE TEAM FORMATION

Ruth is a great example to us of loyalty and friendship. Her relationship with her mother-in-law is truly a unique one and calls us to a greater love and respect of our own family members. We are called to live in harmony and peace with those around us and most especially with Christ (CCC 374). Friendship with Christ, our family members, and our community is essential to living a happy

and fulfilling life. Ruth reveals the importance of this, if you are not familiar with the story of Ruth be sure to read about her before this Edge Night. Here are some questions to contemplate this week or to discuss with other Core Members:

- Are there family members you struggle to get along with? Why?
- What are some things that you can do to improve this relationship?
- Do you have a friendship with Christ?
- What can you do to improve this friendship?
- How can you make the story of Ruth relevant to the youth?

TO THE PARENTS

This week at Edge, we spent time learning about the biblical character of Ruth and her example of friendship. We talked about the importance of being a good friend and ways that we could honor God by being a good friend to those around us. If there are qualities of a good friend that you recognize in your middle school youth, this would be a great opportunity to affirm them. Here are some questions to ask your child after Edge:

- Why is Ruth one of the great women of the Bible? What does her story teach us?
- What do you think is the most important trait to have in a best friend?
- Who do you consider your best friend? What is something you appreciate about them?
- Who is someone that you have a hard time being a good friend to? Why is that? What is one thing you could do to be an example of Christ-like love to them this week?

GATHER

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

(5 min)

As the youth enter the room, have fun songs playing that are about friendship.

Gather the youth together, introduce any youth at Edge for the first time, and acknowledge any birthdays. Give a brief introduction to the theme for the night and begin in prayer.

After the prayer, play the video "Old Testament's Got Talent: Ruth" to introduce the Bible character for the night.

BETTER TOGETHER

(15 min)

Supplies:

- Children's puzzles
- Legos®/Building Blocks
- Balloons

Pick out two youth to play this game. Be sure that one of them is your youth who is known for being really confident and thinks that he or she can beat anyone. Explain to the youth that there are three parts to this game, and the first one to finish all three parts will be the winner.

Part One: Put together an easy children's puzzle.

Part Two: Build a Lego® tower over 12 inches high.

Part Three: Blow up three balloons and then pop them by sitting on them.

In order to show that we work better as teams, let the second student choose another person to be on his or her team. The team of two should easily

win, and it will illustrate that God uses other people to help strengthen us.

PROCLAIM

"THE BUDDY SYSTEM" TEACHING

(10 min)

This teaching can be found on pages 71 to 74. Here are the main points from the talk:

- Ruth is one of the great women of the Bible. She is an example to us of how to trust and follow God, even in difficult times. She shows us what it means to honor God by loving others and being a faithful friend.
- One of the ways that we can choose to follow and obey God is by being a good friend. We honor God when we show His love to others.
- There are many qualities that make someone a good friend. Being selfless, loyal, and prayerful are important ones.

BREAK

FRIENDSHIP QUIZ/ SELF-EVALUATION

(10 min)

Supplies

- Friendship Quiz Handout
- Pens

Break the youth into their small groups and handout the Friendship Quiz on pages 75-76 to each youth. Explain to the middle school youth that this is an opportunity for them to quietly think about their own actions and reflect on ways that they need to work on becoming a better friend. They are not to talk or compare answers. This is not a competition but rather an opportunity to be honest with oneself about areas of strength and weakness. It is recommended, if space allows, to

give them a few minutes to spread out and spend time alone and in silence, or with soft music playing.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

(15 min)

After the youth have had some time to fill out their friendship quizzes, gather them back together, begin in prayer, and discuss the following questions.

- Why is it important to have friends?
- What are some qualities of a good friend?
- Is Ruth an example of a good friend? Why or why not?
- The story of Ruth and Naomi shows us the importance of praying for and with our friends. Have you ever prayed with a friend before? If not, why not?
- After taking some time to think and take the quiz, what is a way that you are a good friend to others?
- What is one way that you could try to be a better friend in the coming week?

TAKING IT DEEPER: SMALL GROUP ADAPTATIONS FOR 8TH GRADE:

If the small group leader wants to spend more time focusing specifically on the “Friendship Quiz,” this could be a good opportunity to encourage and challenge the older youth in the importance and value of being a good friend, modeled after Ruth and most importantly, God’s love for us.

SEND

AFFIRMATION ACTIVITY

(15 min)

Keeping the youth in their small groups, have them direct their attention to the front of the room. Instruct the youth to close their eyes. Explain you will call each small group up, one at

a time, and when your small group is called, you can open your eyes and come to the front.

Then, with everyone’s eyes closed (except for those who were in the small group that was called up), they will listen to a list of positive traits being read by the youth minister. At this time, those who are in the “up front” small group will listen to the traits listed, find someone in the crowd who exemplifies that trait, and tap them lightly on the shoulder when the trait is read. They can tap a couple of people for each trait if they want to. Those who are not in the “up front” small group will remain sitting quietly, with their eyes closed, and feel encouraged to know someone else in the group appreciates them.

After a few traits are read, ask those who are standing to quietly sit and close their eyes. Then call up the next group, and repeat until all the groups have gone. Make up your own affirmations or repeat ones you have already used, if necessary. Here is a list to get you started:

- Someone who has a great smile.
- Someone who you look forward to seeing at Edge.
- Someone who tells great jokes.
- Someone who makes you feel welcome.
- Someone who is fun to be around.
- Someone whose faith you admire.
- Someone who had been a good friend to you when you were having a bad day.
- Someone who you really enjoy talking to.
- Someone who is a good listener.
- Someone who always sees the bright side of things.
- Someone who is a good example of following God.
- Someone who you have noticed doing something kind.

- Someone who inspires you to be a better person.

Note: It is a good idea for Core Member to go around and tap any young people they see who may not have been tapped during this activity.

CLOSING PRAYER ACTIVITY

(10 min)

Have the middle school youth get into groups of two or three, and explain to them that they are going to practice one of the most important parts of being a good, Christian friend: praying with and for each other. Explain that they will each tell the other youth they are grouped with one specific thing in their life that they need prayer for (an upcoming test, their relationship with their parents, etc.). Then, the other youth will say a short and simple prayer, asking God to help them with that particular situation, and close with a simple memorized prayer (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be), if desired.

If your youth have not had the opportunity to pray aloud with each other before, or you think they might need a refresher, have two of the Core Members do a brief demonstration. This is an excellent opportunity for the youth to put into practice something that they will be able to use regularly in their friendships.

Close with the youth minister saying a short prayer and handing out the Ruth and Naomi prayer cards, if applicable (See Media Suggestions). Suggest that the youth put the card/image somewhere so they will frequently see it and be encouraged to be a faithful friend.

FURTHER ADAPTATION IDEAS

- Play the opening game as small group competitions rather than just between a few youth, or have the small groups compete against the youth minister.
- If your youth are not comfortable praying over each other, pray together as a small group and have each youth offer up an intention.

THE BUDDY SYSTEM

TEACHING

KEY WORD DEFINITIONS

Widow - A woman whose husband has died.

King David - Israel's greatest ruler, an ancestor of Jesus, one of the most significant figures of the Old Testament

FRIENDSHIP

We all know that friends play an important role in our lives. Good friends can help us through difficult times and be a lot of fun to hang out with, even if you are not doing something really exciting. Bad friends can bring lots of unnecessary drama and make your life miserable. God wants to be our friend, and He wants us to be an example of His love to the other people in our lives. What are some qualities of God that make Him a good friend? What are some qualities that you think are important in a friendship? (Allow time for youth to respond.)

Key Word

Not only is God a good friend to us, but He also gives us other good examples of friendship in His Word, the Bible. The story of Ruth is one of the shortest books in the Bible, but it tells the story of one of the greatest women in the Bible. Ruth's story is an incredible and sacrificial story of friendship that pleased God so much that He welcomed Ruth into a very important family tree: Jesus' family tree! Ruth followed God and was a faithful friend, so God called her to be the great-grandmother of **King David**, who is one of the ancestors of Jesus.

WHO IS RUTH?

Here's the short version.

Ruth 1:1-5

"Once in the time of the judges there was a famine in the land; so a man from Bethlehem of Judah departed with his wife and two sons to reside on the plateau of Moab. The man was named Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and his sons Mahlon and Chilion; they were

Ephrathites from Bethlehem of Judah. Some time after their arrival on the Moabite plateau, Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons, who married Moabite women, one named Orpah, the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion died also, and the woman was left with neither her two sons nor her husband.”

This story starts out pretty sad, right? Basically, this little family leaves their homeland in search of food and within a few years, both the husband and the two sons die. So this poor woman, Naomi, is in a foreign country, and all she has left as family are her two sons’ widows, her daughters-in-law. She (Naomi) hears that there is no longer a **famine** in Judah, her homeland, so she decides to go back.

Key Word

The story continues, “Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, ‘Go back, each of you, to your mother’s house! May the LORD be kind to you as you were to the departed and to me! May the LORD grant each of you a husband and a home in which you will find rest.’ She kissed them good-bye, but they wept with loud sobs, and told her they would return with her to her people. ‘Go back, my daughters!’ said Naomi...Again they sobbed aloud and wept; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth stayed with her. ‘See now!’ she said, ‘your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her god. Go back after your sister-in-law!’ But Ruth said, ‘Do not ask me to abandon or forsake you! For wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge, your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Wherever you die I will die, and there be buried. May the LORD do so and so to me, and more besides, if aught but death separates me from you!’ Naomi then ceased to urge her, for she saw she was determined to go with her.”

Ruth 1:8-11a,14-18

When Naomi decides to go back to her homeland, she tells her daughters-in-law to stay there with their families and marry again, so that they will be happy. One of them decides to go back to her home and family, but Ruth tells Naomi that she will not leave her. Ruth knew that there was a reason that God wanted her to stay with Naomi and chose to be a faithful friend, even though it meant leaving her own family and maybe sacrificing her chance of finding a new husband. She promises that she will follow Naomi wherever she goes and follow God, as Naomi has taught her.

God blesses Ruth for her sacrifice and faithfulness to Naomi. Ruth works hard to provide for herself and Naomi and, in the end, marries one of Naomi’s relatives, a very good man named Boaz, who becomes the great-grandfather of King David.

God gives Ruth to us as an example to follow, of how to be a good, Christian friend. We are going to spend some time talking about what it means to be a good friend. Obviously, as we brainstormed at the beginning of this teaching, there are many qualities that make a good friend. However, we are going to specifically focus on three.

John 15:12-13

A SELFLESS FRIEND

The Bible tells us, “Jesus said, ‘This is my commandment, love one another as I have loved you. Greater Love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.’” The first quality that we are going to focus on is being selfless. Jesus is the ultimate example of a selfless friend, as He loved us so much that He was willing to sacrifice His very life for us to show us His love and open the doors of heaven to us. Ruth also shows us that a good friend is someone who is selfless. She made the sacrifice of leaving her home and family to take care of and help Naomi, who was alone and had lost everything.

How can you be a selfless friend? You can choose to sacrifice your preference and instead do something that you know your friend would enjoy more. You can take time to listen to your friend instead of doing all the talking. You can take the time and energy to remember and ask about things going on in your friend’s life, rather than just being preoccupied with your own life. What are some other things you could do to be a selfless friend? *(Give the youth an opportunity to answer.)*

Proverbs 18:24

A LOYAL FRIEND

The second characteristic of a good friend that we are going to learn about is loyalty. It would have been much easier for Ruth to simply say goodbye to Naomi and go on with her life, but a good friend is loyal. The Bible tells us, “Some friends bring ruin on us, but a true friend is more loyal than a brother.” Basically, this verse is telling us that it is better to have one good and loyal friend, someone who will stick by you like a brother (or daughter-in-law, in Ruth and Naomi’s case) than to have many friends who are not faithful.

What does it mean to be a loyal friend? A loyal friend is someone who sticks with you during the good times in your life as well as the hard times. It is someone who loves to laugh and have fun with you but also is there to listen and help you when things are not going so great. A loyal friend is someone who is honest and wants what is best for you, even if they know that they are going to have to tell you something that you do not want to hear in order to help you become a better person and get to heaven. A faithful friend is someone that you do not have to worry will gossip behind your back because they talk to you directly if they have a problem. They care about your dreams and support you in achieving your goals. Like the Bible says, if you find someone who is a loyal friend, make sure you are a loyal friend to them because that friendship will really be priceless!

FRIENDSHIP AND PRAYER

The final quality we will talk about, as a quality of a good friend, is prayer. A good friend will want to help others get in touch with the ultimate best friend, Jesus. You may not always have all the answers to help your friends, but you can always help put them in touch with someone who does have the answers and loves them more than

you ever could. It is important to remember to pray for our friends, but it is also important to remember to pray *with* them. It does not have to be anything big or fancy. Simply asking them if you can pray with them and saying a simple prayer to ask God to help them can really help a lot!

Although it was not exclusively mentioned in the parts of Ruth's story that we read, Naomi and Ruth prayed together and asked God to bless each other. This is an important part of what made their friendship so strong and helped them to be selfless and loyal to each other. The Bible tells us, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work; If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" Prayer is one of the most powerful things that we can do to "help our friends back up" when they are struggling or even just to "keep them up" when they are doing well.

So, let us review. What are the three characteristics of a good friend that we talked about? (*Elicit responses: Selfless, Loyal, Prayer.*) God is a good friend to us, and we honor Him when we are a good friend to others. Scripture says, "Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one finds a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price; no amount can balance their worth. Faithful friends are life-saving medicine; those who fear God will find them." God is so happy when we find people in our lives to be good friends to us and when we choose to imitate His love and friendship by being a good friend to others. We are going to spend the rest of our time talking about how we can become better examples of God's love to our friends.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Sirach 6:14-16

FRIENDSHIP QUIZ

INSTRUCTIONS:

Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 on the following questions.
Circle the one that best fits your answer.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. I avoid saying negative things behind my friends' backs.</p> <p>1 - I always do this.
2 - I usually do this.
3 - I sometimes do this.
4 - I hardly ever do this.
5 - I really struggle in this area.</p> | <p>5. I defend my friends even when it's not the popular thing to do.</p> <p>1 - I always do this.
2 - I usually do this.
3 - I sometimes do this.
4 - I hardly ever do this.
5 - I really struggle in this area.</p> |
| <p>2. I refrain from making negative jokes and sarcastic remarks.</p> <p>1 - I always do this.
2 - I usually do this.
3 - I sometimes do this.
4 - I hardly ever do this.
5 - I really struggle in this area.</p> | <p>6. I welcome and include people who may be lonely or unpopular.</p> <p>1 - I always do this.
2 - I usually do this.
3 - I sometimes do this.
4 - I hardly ever do this.
5 - I really struggle in this area.</p> |
| <p>3. I offer to pray with my friends when they're having a hard time.</p> <p>1 - I always do this.
2 - I usually do this.
3 - I sometimes do this.
4 - I hardly ever do this.
5 - I really struggle in this area.</p> | <p>7. If I am upset with my friend, I talk to them directly about it and do not gossip to others.</p> <p>1 - I always do this.
2 - I usually do this.
3 - I sometimes do this.
4 - I hardly ever do this.
5 - I really struggle in this area.</p> |
| <p>4. I make a point of telling my friends when I notice something good about them.</p> <p>1 - I always do this.
2 - I usually do this.
3 - I sometimes do this.
4 - I hardly ever do this.
5 - I really struggle in this area.</p> | <p>8. I spend at least as much time listening to my friends talk as I spend talking.</p> <p>1 - I always do this.
2 - I usually do this.
3 - I sometimes do this.
4 - I hardly ever do this.
5 - I really struggle in this area.</p> |

9. I do not insist on always having my way but consider my friends' opinions and compromise.

- 1 – I always do this.
- 2 – I usually do this.
- 3 – I sometimes do this.
- 4 – I hardly ever do this.
- 5 – I really struggle in this area.

10. I am respectful to my friends online and in text messages as I would be to them in person.

- 1 – I always do this.
- 2 – I usually do this.
- 3 – I sometimes do this.
- 4 – I hardly ever do this.
- 5 – I really struggle in this area.

11. I follow God and encourage my friends to make choices that will lead them to heaven.

- 1 – I always do this.
- 2 – I usually do this.
- 3 – I sometimes do this.
- 4 – I hardly ever do this.
- 5 – I really struggle in this area.

12. I am happy for my friend's successes and do not become jealous or competitive.

- 1 – I always do this.
- 2 – I usually do this.
- 3 – I sometimes do this.
- 4 – I hardly ever do this.
- 5 – I really struggle in this area.

13. I find little ways to help my friends know how important they are to me.

- 1 – I always do this.
- 2 – I usually do this.
- 3 – I sometimes do this.
- 4 – I hardly ever do this.
- 5 – I really struggle in this area.

14. I am loyal to my friends, especially when they are going through difficult circumstances.

- 1 – I always do this.
- 2 – I usually do this.
- 3 – I sometimes do this.
- 4 – I hardly ever do this.
- 5 – I really struggle in this area.

15. I encourage my friends to be the best they can be and am humble when they give me suggestions on how I can be a better person.

- 1 – I always do this.
- 2 – I usually do this.
- 3 – I sometimes do this.
- 4 – I hardly ever do this.
- 5 – I really struggle in this area.

16. I do my best to see every person as a son or daughter of God and treat them with the respect and honor that they deserve.

- 1 – I always do this.
- 2 – I usually do this.
- 3 – I sometimes do this.
- 4 – I hardly ever do this.
- 5 – I really struggle in this area.

SO...WHAT KIND OF A FRIEND ARE YOU?

Take some time to re-read through your answers. If you circled 1 or 2, chances are, that is an area in which you really honor God and are a great friend. Keep up the good work! You really show God's love to others in those ways! If you circled 3, this is an area that could use a little improvement. Try to make good habits and choose to do what you know is right. On the questions that you circled 4 or 5, these are areas that really slow you down when it comes to being a good friend. Ask God to help you improve in these areas, and choose one specific way that you are going to focus on being a better friend in the upcoming week.

EDGE NIGHT CHECKLIST

EDGE NIGHT DATE:

EDGE NIGHT TOPIC:

CORE TEAM ASSIGNMENTS:

Environment -----

Opening Prayer -----

Games -----

Proclaim -----

Closing Prayer -----

Videos: -----

Songs: -----

WEEK PRIOR TO EDGE NIGHT:

- Hand out/email the Edge Night to the Core Members
- Assign duties to the Core Team
- Pick videos and/or songs
- Gather all the supplies
- Email Core Team the Edge Night Core Formation

WEEK OF THE EDGE NIGHT:

- Prep for games and the environment
- Meet with the Core Member doing the Proclaim (if applicable)

DAY OF THE EDGE NIGHT:

- Email parents the information about the Night and any announcements
- Gather and set-up for the night
- Pray!

Notes

EDGE NIGHT EVALUATION

INSTRUCTIONS:

Evaluation is a key to successful ministry. Use the following questions to discuss and evaluate your Edge Night.

What is going well at our Edge Nights? What can we improve?

Would you be interested in leading prayer, explaining games, or giving a Proclaim teaching?

Was there one particular part of this Edge Night you did not think was necessary? What and Why?

Are our Core meetings effective? How can I better serve you as a youth minister? What can we do to better serve our youth?
