

adult

real life
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Sunday School That Clicks

Lesson 1 / December 6, 2009

Relationships and God's Plan

for use as

STEP 1 

Lesson 1
Focus:

God is faithful to
redeem and restore.

Lesson 1
Bible Basis:

Ruth 4:13-17;
Matthew 1:1-6

Students will discuss how God used the relationship of Naomi and Ruth in His plan of redemption and restoration for the whole world.

OPENING STORY [read it aloud to your class, or make copies and pass them around]:

CLINTON WOULD WELCOME TALK WITH PALIN

WASHINGTON—In her recently-released book, 2008 Republican Vice-Presidential hopeful Sarah Palin expresses the desire to have coffee with current Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to discuss their different views.

Surprisingly, the former First Lady is open to the idea.

"I absolutely would look forward to having coffee," Clinton said from Singapore during an interview that was aired on NBC's *Meet the Press*.

Sarah Palin has been on the road promoting her book, *Going Rogue: An American Life*. Although Palin is certain that she and Clinton would disagree on many fundamental political and social issues, she would still see significant value in the conversation. In the book, Palin also congratulates Clinton on her hard work during the 2008 campaign. After a bit of a hold out, Clinton conceded the nomination to Barack Obama, who went on to win the presidential election.

Clinton said, "Obviously we're going to hear a lot more from her in the upcoming weeks because of her book coming out, and I would look forward to having a chance to actually get to meet her." Despite the significant comparisons made between the two women during the campaign, apparently the two haven't actually met yet.

While we might not expect Palin and Clinton to become good friends, we can imagine the possible significance of such a dialogue. And if the conversation was ongoing, all the better. Even though they probably would remain in fundamental disagreement over core issues, the younger would certainly benefit from hearing about the experience of the older of the two. (Sarah Palin was born in 1964, Hillary Clinton in 1947).

Lesson 1
Memory Verse

The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

— Ruth 4:17

Today we're looking at the story of Ruth and Naomi and how God used a relationship between an older and younger woman to bring redemption and restoration out of a seemingly hopeless situation.

The apostle Paul certainly saw the value of older people mentoring those who are younger. In Titus 2:3-5, he admonishes older women to take young women under their wings to teach them practical ways of living that are honoring to God and those in their homes and communities. Paul describes Timothy and Titus as if they were his "adopted sons" in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2, Titus 1:4).

So, should we have mentoring relationships like this today? Could God use them to accomplish his redemption and restoration, just as He did with Ruth and Naomi?

The obvious answer seems to be a resounding "yes."

[Now form small groups and have your class discuss the following questions.]

- ▶ We know that ultimately it is God Himself who redeems and restores relationships. How have you seen Him work in the lives of people to restore broken or non-existent relationships?
- ▶ Describe the most significant mentoring relationship you have ever been in. Were you the mentor or the mentoree?
- ▶ Who initiated that mentoring relationship? Did it seem to have a decisive (but gracious) ending point? How did that come about?
- ▶ How are you different today because of that mentoring relationship?
- ▶ Do you think mentoring is different from discipling? Explain.
- ▶ Why would it be important for both people in a mentoring arrangement to be motivated to be in such a relationship? In what ways could such a relationship become unhealthy? How would clearly defined boundaries prevent this from happening?

Let's take a look at the mentoring relationship between Ruth and Naomi, and how God used Naomi's experience and wisdom as part of His plan of redemption and restoration—Naomi's family line would eventually reveal the Savior of the World.

(When you are finished with the questions, go on to Step 2 in your *Adult Teacher's Guide*, where you read the Scripture and begin to discuss it.)

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STEP 4 

Lesson 1
Focus:

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Lesson 1
Bible Basis:

Ruth 4:13-17;
Matthew 1:1-6

THE CHURCH NEEDS ITS OLDER ADULTS

Some older people in the church lament that they aren't really making a difference in the church anymore. When they were younger and had more energy, they overcommitted themselves to ministry. But now that they have the time, no one seems interested in tapping into their wisdom and experience. They go to church and sit on the sidelines, waiting for someone to ask them to be involved.

And then there are those who don't let this apparent lack of interest stop them from advancing the Kingdom in ways that at one time even they couldn't imagine. They're discovering that if they just do a little digging, the apparent lack of interest is just that—only apparent. The need for their gifts and experience is significant.

Younger adults really do desire the caring interest and involvement of the older adults in their churches. Just knowing someone cares about what's going on in their lives can give younger adults just enough hope to get over some of life's most significant hurdles.

Of course, there's the danger that these younger adults may not have had caring parents growing up and might "latch on" to these older adults as parent "surrogates," but would that really be so bad?

If everyone involved maintains healthy and appropriate boundaries, there's absolutely nothing wrong with older folks "adopting" those in the early stages of adult life as sons and daughters in the faith.

In fact, some churches who have discovered the value of older people in the church have asked older adults to be "father surrogates" and "mother surrogates" and bless those who may have been neglected or abused by their biological parents.

We all know the profound effect that parents have on shaping a child's view of God. If that initial experience was negative, that child may grow up to be an adult with a warped view of God as someone who doesn't really care. The right type of mentoring relationship can redeem and restore such a broken perspective.

Lesson 1
Memory Verse

The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

— Ruth 4:17

Sometimes, all it takes to get this started is an arm around the shoulder and the quick question, "How's it going?"

[Activity]

Return to the groups you had in Step 1 and answer the following questions:

- ▶ If you were to pronounce a father's blessing or a mother's blessing (depending on your gender) upon a young adult, what would you include in your blessing?
- ▶ Do you feel like you received this type of blessing from your biological parents? If not, would it necessarily disqualify a person from giving such a blessing? Explain.
- ▶ How would you know if a mentoring relationship was "successful"? What kind of goals would you have before you even started?
- ▶ What could a church do to be more deliberate about setting up these types of relationships?
- ▶ Who could you approach about mentoring this week?

Close the class in prayer, asking God for the courage and wisdom to initiate mentoring relationships in the church. Thank God that He uses these relationships in His plan of redemption and restoration.

(David C. Cook is not affiliated with and does not endorse any website listed on these pages.)