

# WEEK 2

## HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

WITH YOU

### THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're lonely.

### THE BIBLE

Ruth 1:1-18; I John 4:11-13;  
John 14:16

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

#### ACTIVITY | Fastest Draw: Solo

- Welcome to Week 2 of *With You!* In this series, we're talking about what to do when our friends are experiencing something difficult. So let's see how well you handle difficult circumstances.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Call two students to the front of the room to compete against each other. For each round, have them race to create a shape with their bodies, like the letter P, a star, a diamond, or a hashtag. These shapes should be difficult or even impossible to create.*

#### ACTIVITY | Fastest Draw: Teamwork

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *After a few rounds of the Solo version of this game, have your players recruit four teammates. Restart the game, giving the teams the same shapes (and some new ones) to create with their bodies. For each round, the teams must use every person in their group to create the shape. It's a race, so they need to be fast, but their shape needs to be recognizable too! Try shapes like . . .*
  - *The letters P, A, or Z.*
  - *Heart.*
  - *Tree.*
  - *Star.*
  - *Diamond.*
  - *Hashtag.*
  - *House.*

- Sometimes going solo can make life easy and uncomplicated. After all, when you're solo, you don't have to worry about anyone else or their issues! But going solo isn't always the best option.
- We all want and need friends who know us, like us, and are there for us — especially when we're facing a challenge.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- **When you're stressed, would you rather be alone or surrounded by friends? Why?**
- ❖ **What's the difference between being alone and being lonely?**

## POLL | "Have you ever felt lonely?"

- We were built for community! But whether you have tons of friends or just one or two close friends, we all know what it's like to feel lonely.
- There are so many reasons someone might feel lonely, and some of us feel lonely more often than others. Sometimes people feel lonely it's because they're . . .
  - Fighting with their friends.
  - New and haven't made many friends yet.
  - Not getting noticed or invited to things.
  - Feeling misunderstood by others.
  - Feeling like everyone is laughing at or excluding them.
  - Experiencing anxiety or depression.
  - Dealing with the consequences of a damaged reputation.
  - Struggling with a loss or challenge no one knows about or can relate to.
- Sometimes people feel lonely and they're not really sure why! There might even be people in this room right now, surrounded by people and friends, who still feel lonely. So how about you? **Have you ever felt lonely?** Even if it was just for a moment?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask students to respond by raising their hands. If you'd like, ask a few students to share more about when and why they felt that way.*
- Last week we started this conversation about putting ourselves in the shoes of other people so we can better understand what they're going through. Why? Because as followers of Jesus, when someone is having a hard time, we need to figure out how to be there for them — and loneliness is something a lot of people are feeling.

## SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

## STORY | Talk about a time you felt lonely.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you felt lonely, using the list of scenarios in the "Poll" module just above*

*this as inspiration. Share in detail how you felt, what led you to feeling that way, and what would have made you feel less lonely.*

- As we talk today, think about the people in your school, your neighborhood, or our church. Because if we want to be people who love God by loving others well, we've got to figure out how to love others when they're feeling alone.
  - Who might be feeling lonely?
  - Who needs someone to reach out to them in friendship?
  - Even if you're feeling a little lonely too, who could you reach out to?

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- ❖ **What are some reasons why a person might feel lonely?**
- **When's the last time you felt lonely? What would have helped you feel less alone?**

## OBJECT LESSON | The Story of Ruth & Naomi (Ruth 1:1-16)

- In the Bible, there's a book about two women named Ruth and Naomi who knew some things about loneliness.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you tell the story of Ruth and Naomi, get your students involved as silent actors. You'll need students to portray Elimelek, Naomi, Mahlon, Kilion, Orpah, and Ruth. If you'd like, provide props and costumes like robes, beards, and suitcases. As you read or summarize the Scripture, have your actors act out what they're hearing – dramatic death scenes are highly encouraged.*
- Long ago, in the nation of Judah, in the city of Bethlehem, there was a famine. To survive the famine, a man named Elimelek, his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.
  - After a long journey, they finally arrived in Moab.
  - But when they arrived in Moab, Elimelek died, leaving Naomi a widow.
  - In time, Naomi's two sons married Moabite women named Orpah and Ruth.
  - But then Mahlon and Kilion also died.
  - Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah were left without their husbands and Naomi was left without her sons.
- With no family of her own left in Moab, Naomi decided to pack her bags and go home to Bethlehem.
  - Naomi told Ruth and Orpah to go home to their families – she would go back to Bethlehem alone.
  - Ruth and Orpah said they'd go with Naomi, but Naomi refused.
  - Naomi wasn't in a good place. She was grieving the loss of her family, but her grief was greater than just sadness. Naomi felt like God had abandoned her. She was so lonely that she pushed away the only family she had left.
  - Orpah went home to her family, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi.

- Although Naomi tried to push Ruth away, Ruth said . . .

### SCRIPTURE | Ruth 1:16-18

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Ruth 1:16-18.*
- Can you imagine how difficult this must have been?
  - Naomi must have felt so alone after losing her husband, then losing her children, all while living in a foreign country separated from her people.
  - Losing a family member is always difficult, but there is another layer to Naomi and Ruth's trouble. In this time and culture, women didn't have the same opportunities they do today. Back then, they needed the men in their families to survive. Their fathers, sons, husbands, or brothers were the only way women could secure things like homes, food, and land.
  - So Ruth and Naomi weren't only sad. They were feeling alone, powerless, and abandoned.
- Like Orpah, Ruth probably still had family in Moab, but she also had a mother-in-law who was desperately lonely. Instead of staying in Moab, she decided to make a sacrifice and go with Naomi back to Bethlehem.
- If you want to know what happens next you can always read the four chapters of the Book of Ruth, but I'll summarize it for you.
  - Naomi and Ruth go to Bethlehem and Ruth finds a new husband named Boaz.
  - Ruth and Boaz have a son named Obed. Generations later, their descendants would give birth to a baby named Jesus. (Yes, *that* Jesus.)
  - In the process, Naomi discovers that she wasn't as alone as she once feared. Ruth never left her and God didn't either.
- Ruth's decision to stick with Naomi probably wasn't an easy one, but it was a choice she made in love. She saw Naomi's loneliness and knew she couldn't leave her alone.

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- **Why do you think Ruth decided to stick with Naomi? What would you have done if you were her?**
- **Read John 14:16. When someone is lonely, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?**

### SCRIPTURE | I John 4:11-13

- Many generations after Ruth and Naomi lived, letters were written about Ruth's descendant, Jesus. One of these letters later became the book of I John in the Bible. In it, followers of Jesus are given this instruction . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I John 4:11-13.*

- God has a lot to say about loneliness.
  - Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live in us so we would never be alone.
  - But I think this passage shows us God knew we'd sometimes need each other too. That's why we're told to love each other, show up for each other, and be with each other. When we love each other, it's evidence of God's love for us.
- Whether you're the one who's lonely or you notice someone else experiencing loneliness, don't try to make it alone.
  - Reach out to God, who never leaves you alone.
  - If you're like Naomi, feeling abandoned and frustrated, don't push everyone away. You were made to be in relationships with others. Let the people around you help you feel less alone.
  - And if you're like Ruth and you notice someone is wrestling with loneliness, don't let them wrestle alone. Reach out and decide to stick with them, even when it's difficult to do. Because if we want someone to know God is with them, we can start by **being with people when they're lonely**.

### **NOW WHAT?** *What does God want us to do about it?*

#### **OBJECT LESSON** | Your Friend List

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Take out your phone and scroll through your contacts or friend list on social media. If you'd like to show this on screen, mirror your device to your screen or create a screen recording in advance.*
- If you don't usually feel lonely, you might be thinking, "How can anyone feel lonely? We're constantly connected through our devices."
  - You're right! But you don't actually have to be alone in order to feel alone.
  - It's ironic how, even though we're more connected than ever through our devices, many of us are still feeling lonelier than ever.

#### **DISCUSSION** | When did you feel included?

- We can probably all remember a moment when we felt excluded or alone, but let's take a moment right now to think: **when did someone (or a group of someones) make you feel welcome or included?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give students a moment to think. Then ask a few students a chance to share their examples.*

### **HOW TO BE WITH SOMEONE IN LONELINESS**

- Just like Ruth took a risk to be with Naomi when she was alone, I wonder if there are some risks we need to take in order to be with someone who is feeling lonely. We might have to risk . . .
  - Our reputations.
  - Our schedules.

- Our plans.
  - Our comfort.
- But if you're willing to take a risk in order to show someone how much God loves them, here are some ways you can "be with" someone who's lonely.
  - **LOOK AROUND:** Most people who are feeling lonely aren't going to tell you, "Hey! I feel lonely." Instead, you're going to need to look around and wonder about the people around you. Does someone always seem to be sitting alone? What about the quiet kid? Or the person who doesn't usually fit in? Do you know someone is going through a hard time? Do you know someone who's fighting with a friend or going through a break-up? There are so many reasons someone might be feeling lonely and need a friend.
  - **REACH OUT:** Even if you don't feel lonely or left out right now, you've felt it before, right? Start with a smile or a hello. Ask if you can sit with them or how they're doing. Small gestures are a great place to start, but you and your friends can make someone feel welcome with just one question: "Hey, want to hang out?"
  - **KEEP IT SMALL:** If they're opening up to you, that's great! But don't scare them by bringing your whole crew over at once. Consider smaller hangouts of just a few people rather than large groups so they feel noticed, heard, and important.
  - **DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY:** Just like Naomi pushed people away when she was lonely, it's okay if someone doesn't respond the way you want them to. Maybe you misread the situation or maybe they're just not ready to connect with you yet. If they seem standoffish or rude, try approaching them with curiosity instead of jumping to conclusions.
  - **KEEP TRYING:** Even if they say no the first time, don't be scared to keep trying. It took Ruth a few tries to reach out to Naomi too. Try setting a reminder on your phone to text them regularly, even if it's just to say hi or ask what they're up to.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- ❖ **Why is it hard to reach out to people who are lonely?**
- ❖ **How can you tell if someone is feeling lonely? What if they try to hide their loneliness?**

## ACTIVITY | The Friend Test

- If we really want to be ready and prepared to support someone, practice is key! Let's see if we can use some of the ideas we've learned to plan how we might reach out to someone who's lonely.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a group, in pairs, or with a few people at the front of the room, run through a few scenarios and formulate a response together. You can either act this out or just strategize together. Try some scenarios like these, or have students propose their own:*
  - *Someone is sitting alone at lunch.*
  - *Someone is wearing headphones and avoiding talking to anyone.*



- Someone says, "I don't have any real friends."
  - You find out someone is disappointed they weren't invited to a hangout.
  - You know there is drama happening between friends.
- We all know what it feels like to be left out, so what if we decided to be the kind of people who make sure . . .
  - The people around us don't have to feel lonely?
  - Everyone feels welcome?
  - It's easier for people to believe God loves them because they can see how much we love them?
- What if we started with our group right here?
  - What if we decided to make our church a place where people who feel lonely could feel included?
  - How could we make our church a place where everyone feels welcome?
  - How do you think it would change the way people see God?
- You don't have to do something as dramatic as Ruth moving to another country for Naomi because there are so many small but meaningful ways you can reach out to someone who is feeling alone, left out, or excluded — even when you're feeling that way too.
- So the next time you meet a "Naomi," find a way to be a "Ruth." Because if we want someone to know God is with them, we can start by **being with people when they're lonely**.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- **What are some ways we could make people feel less alone here at church?**
- **Who's someone who seems lonely right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?**