

Children's Sermon

Welcome, everyone! Thanks for coming.

Who knows what day today is? (Answer: Sunday) And on Sundays, we go to church in the mornings. What about the day after Sunday? What do we usually do on Monday mornings? (Let the children answer, guide them toward going to school on Monday mornings). That's right. We go to school on Monday mornings.

Does everybody like school here? (There will be a variety of answers, probably). Yes, sometimes school can be really fun and sometimes it can be really boring/hard/not fun at all. But why do we go to school? Why is it important for kids and sometimes adults to go to school? (Allow time for a variety of answers)

Do you know that there are some kids around the world that are not able to go to school at all? Sometimes it is because their parents need them to have a job and help feed their families, or sometimes it is because they have had to leave the places that they live because of natural disasters or wars make it unsafe for them to stay in their homes. When someone has to leave their home for reasons that they don't control, that person is called a refugee or a displaced person. And the United Nations estimates that there are over 30 million children who are refugees or displaced across the world. Kids like Karim, who live in a refugee settlement in Northern Syria. Karim is 11 years old and has not been to school in 2 years. Instead, he has a job chopping wood to help make money and feed his family.

Karim is kind of like Ruth, in today's Bible story. Both Ruth and Karim were forced to leave their homes and work to help support their family. BUT there are ways for us, here in our own hometown to help kids like Ruth or like Karim.

Today is a special day in church, because we are collecting money for Week of Compassion during the offering. Week of Compassion is a way that our church and other churches in North America can help families all over the world. And right now, there are so many people in the world who need our help.

Jesus asks us to love one another, and to help everyone we meet. And, even sometimes, we can help boys and girls who are refugees like Ruth or Karim, even if we have never met them. One way we can help anyone who is hungry or in trouble, regardless of if we have met them before or not, is to give money through our church. It's a very special way that we can love our brothers and sisters in Christ all around the world. The money we collect today will help families who don't have a home, or help families who are hungry, or help families that are trying to find safety. By giving to the Week of Compassion offering, it is a way that we can stay where they stay and go where they go... so they don't have to be alone. Isn't that great?

Let's say a prayer. Dear Jesus. Thank you for loving us, and all the boys and girls and adults all over the world. Thank you giving us food to eat. Thank you for giving us homes to be safe in. We pray that you would give food and safety to everyone who is in need, and that you would let us help you do that, so everyone will know how much you love us all. Amen.

Dramatic Scripture Reading

By Amanda Garcia

This is a dramatic reading intended for four participants. Readers Two and Four may be best read by females, and readers One and Three could be either male or female. It is suggested that –if possible–each reader has their own printed copy of the text and reads from their own individual stands with individual microphones (it is typically less dynamic and effective to have all readers sharing a podium, a mic, and one copy of the text). It is also suggested that readers practice the reading together like they would a skit, for the sake of timing and rhythm.

- 1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land.
- 2 Famine. Hunger. Desolation.
- 1 And a man from Judah went to live in Moab, he and his wife and two sons.
- 2 A stranger in a strange land, trying to do what's best for his family.
- 1 The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife's name was Naomi.
- 3 Naomi, meaning, "pleasantness."
- 1 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.

- 3 Naomi. "Pleasantness." A widow.
- 2 Naomi, a stranger in a strange land, now without her partner, still trying to do what's best for her family.
- 1 Naomi's sons married Moabite wives. The name of one was Orpah.
- 3 Orpah, meaning, "neck," or even, "to turn the neck."
- 1 And the other was named Ruth.
- 3 Ruth, meaning, "companion; friend."
- 1 When they had lived in Moab ten years, both of Naomi's sons also died, so she was left without her two sons and her husband.
- 2 A stranger in a strange land, a woman, powerless, hungry, and alone, desperate to do what's best for her family.
- 1 So she started to return to Judah with her daughters-in-law, because she heard that the Lord had given food to his people in Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law,
- 4 "Go back, each of you to your mother's house. May God deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with your dead husbands and with me. God grant you security, each of you in the houses of new husbands."
- 1 Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud, and they said to her,
- 2 and 3: "No, we will return with you to your people."
- 1 But Naomi said,
- 4 "Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband and bear more sons to grow up for you to marry. No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me."
- 1 Then they wept aloud again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and left.
- 3 Orpah turned her neck and left.
- 1 But Ruth clung to her. So Naomi said,
- 4 "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."
- 1 But Ruth said,
- 2 "Do not press me to leave you, or to turn back from following you. Where you go, I will go; where you stay, I will stay; your people shall be my people, and your God my God."
- 1 When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more and the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem.
- 2 They walked together,
- 3 bearing each other's burdens
- 4 spurring each other on
- 2 lifting each other up.
- ALL Together
- 2 They walked the miles,
- 3 Facing the unknown
- 4 Full of love for the other.

1 When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred, they said

2, 3, and 4: "Is this Naomi?"

1 She said to them,

4 "Call me no longer Naomi. Call me Mara."

3 Mara, meaning, "bitter."

4 Call me Mara for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty.

1 So Naomi returned to Judah, together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They arrived at the beginning of the barley harvest.

3 Naomi

2 no longer a stranger, no longer hungry

4 Did what was best for her family.

3 And Ruth

2 Her friend, her companion

4 Walked every mile by her side.

1 This is the Word of God.

ALL Thanks be to God.

1 Amen.



Children's Activity I: Puzzle of Compassion

Materials needed:

- Blank puzzle with large pieces from a craft store, OR a very large piece of thick paper
- Crayons and markers

Preparation:

On the puzzle or paper, write in large letters with a black permanent marker, "Where you go, we will go." Add whatever other flare you'd like—perhaps the outline of a heart, or globe, or a path. Then take the puzzle apart/cut the paper into large pieces of different shapes.

- 1 Distribute one piece to each child and ask them to color it with their favorite colors, however they'd like. Ask them to make it their own—the best representation of their unique selves.
- 2 Then ask them to put the puzzle together as a group. Explain that every person has a unique piece that is needed to complete the picture.
- 3 When the puzzle is finished and the message is revealed, explain that "where you go, we will go" means working together and making sure that no one feels like they are alone. By sharing our unique pieces with each other, we create something beautiful that makes God happy. Talk to them about how, sometimes, people have to leave their homes because of something out of their control, like violence in their countries. This would be a good time to bring in the Ruth and Naomi story, because they were refugees too. Share that over half of the 60 million refugees and displaced persons in the world are children. Share that refugees and displaced persons cannot return to their homes. Ask them about the ways that leaving their home might make them feel? Bring it back to the puzzle by saying that all the thoughts they just shared can make it easy to feel like you are one piece that is too far away from the other pieces of the puzzle to put together a beautiful picture.
- 4 Explain that Week of Compassion is one way that we can help put the puzzle together anyway. It is a way to give gifts which show God's love to people around the world. Make sure to emphasize that God's puzzle is so much bigger than we can imagine—that it covers the whole world, and that every little boy and girl in every country has their own piece of the puzzle that is different than everybody else's. Celebrate how wonderful it is that God made us need each other to put all the pieces together.

Children's Activity II: Popsicle Stick House

Around the world, more than 1.6 billion people live without a safe house to call home. Sometimes that means they have no house at all.* Sometimes it means the house they live in is damaged or falling down or does not have a safe place for people to cook or use the bathroom. For more than 1 billion people it means living in temporary shelters, or places that are only meant to be lived in for a short time. Refugees and displaced persons often have to live in camps where their houses are large tents or simple rooms similar to this model (See photographs on pages 14, 20, 36, 43). Money donated through Week of Compassion helps provide shelter to people who otherwise would not have a safe place to live.

*source: *UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, 2005* and www.habitat.org

As you build your popsicle stick house, tell your group about the housing challenges many people face. You might also ask the group to describe their own houses or to identify what is missing from the popsicle stick house (possible responses: a door, windows, a bathroom, a kitchen, and privacy).

Materials Needed

(Adult supervision is recommended)

- Standard popsicle sticks (4.5" x 0.375")
- Elmer's glue or glue gun with low-temp glue sticks
- Exacto knife or scissors for cutting

1 (Figure A):

Lay 12 sticks side-by-side. Place 3 perpendicular sticks on top of the first layer, using Elmer's glue or hot glue to secure the supports.

You'll need to create THREE copies of this piece, which will become the floor of the house, the back wall of house, and the roof.

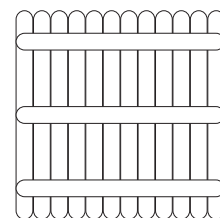


FIGURE A

2 (Figure B):

Lay 12 sticks side-by-side. Place 2 perpendicular sticks on top of the first layer, making sure these supports are near the top and bottom (to allow space for the window in the middle). Use Elmer's glue or hot glue to secure the supports. Using an Exacto knife or scissors, cut a hole in the center 5 sticks to create a window. Cut 2 small support sticks and glue those on either side of the window.

You'll need to create TWO copies of this piece, which will become the side walls of the house.

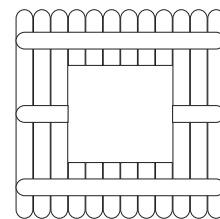


FIGURE B

3 (Figure C):

Lay 12 sticks side-by-side. Place 1 perpendicular stick on top of the first layer, making sure these supports are near the top (to allow space for the door underneath). Use Elmer's glue or hot glue to secure the support.

Using an Exacto knife or scissors, cut short the center 5 sticks to create the door. Cut 4 small support sticks and glue those on either side of the door.

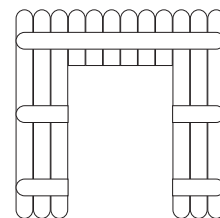
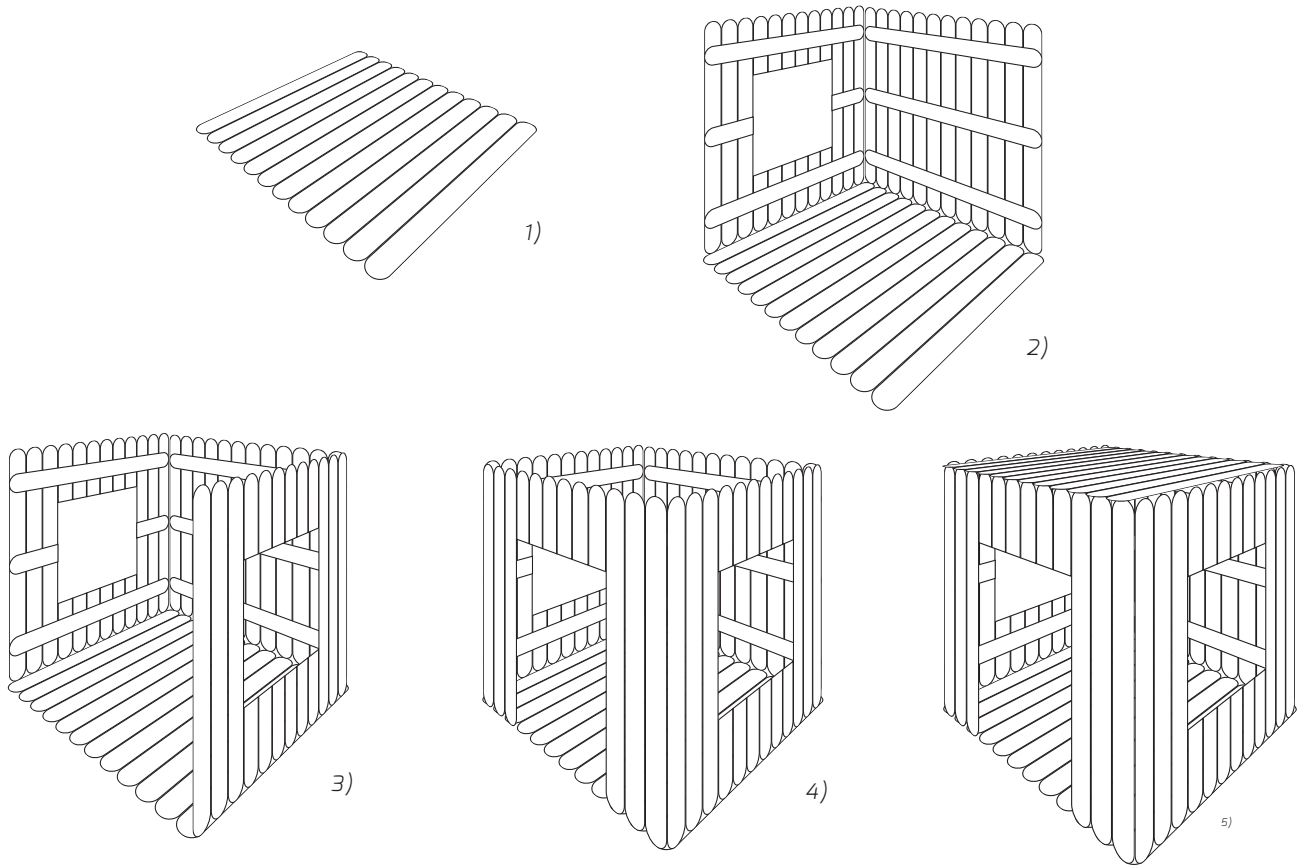


FIGURE C

4 Construct Your House

1. Lay the floor piece of your house flat on the table. Make sure your support pieces are underneath and not visible from above.
2. Take one Figure A wall piece and one Figure B wall piece. Stand them up on two adjoining sides of the floor piece. The support pieces should run parallel to the floor and placed on the inside of the house (not visible from the outside). Use glue to connect both pieces to the floor and to each other.

3. Place the remaining Figure B wall piece opposite the Figure B already in position. The support pieces should run parallel to the floor and placed on the inside of the house (not visible from the outside).
4. Use glue to connect the piece to the floor and to the Figure A wall already in position.
5. Place the Figure C piece in the fourth wall position. The support pieces should run parallel to the floor and placed on the inside of the house (not visible from the outside). Use glue to connect the piece to the floor and to the walls on either side.
6. Place the remaining Figure A on top of the house. The support pieces should not be visible from above. Use glue to secure it to all four standing walls.



Scripture Lesson

“Where you go, I will go; where you stay, I will stay; your people will be my people.” (Ruth 1:16)

What do you think that means?

If someone has less than you, what can you do to help them have more?

Care Package

God created you. There is no one quite like you; you are unique and beloved by God. You are God’s very own care package! So what is inside you that you could share with others who need your care? Can you think of ways you could care for others who may not have what they need? What items would your care package contain that you could share?

(Your care package could include a hug, a smile, a helping hand, your offering, your prayers, etc.)

Your Offerings Are a Care Package for the World

When you collect offerings in your Week of Compassion coin box, which you can see is designed to look like a refugee tent, those coins and dollars turn into things that people need. When we have more than we need, we have the opportunity to share with others! WoC is like a care package from God and you for those in need in the world. Color below the things that your WOC offerings do to help others:

(Suggested images: food, water, a blanket, animals, shelter, school supplies, medicine, seeds, shovel, etc.)

Tongue Twister

Say three times as fast as you can:

Our sharing shall surely show the shining love of God!

What can you share with others?

- Collect coins and dollars in your Week of Compassion coin box
- Your lunch at school
- Help a neighbor who needs help at home
- Make cards to send to children in an area hospital
- Make art projects for nursing home residents
- Plant a community garden with your family and friends
- Collect canned goods for a local food bank
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen in your community
- Welcome a refugee family in your congregation
- Organize a blanket drive in your church (<http://www.cwsglobal.org/get-involved/cws-blankets/blankets.html>)
- Put together a CWS Hygiene, School, Baby or Clean-Up Bucket (<http://www.churchworldservice.org/kits/index.html>)
- Walk in the local CROP Walk to fight hunger (<http://www.churchworldservice.org/CROP/index.html>)