Becoming the Neighbors the World Needs

A Bible Reading Plan

Session Three: Community Matters & Matters of Community

Welcome to session three! Today we will explore the power of community and how simple acts of kindness – or kindness in action – can transform lives. We will continue in the story of Ruth.

Opening Devotional

Carry each other's burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. [Galatians 6:2]

Prayer

As followers of Jesus, we are called to bear the burdens of others. May the Lord help us to see others and not respond with suspicion or distance, but with wisdom, compassion, care, and generosity.

Scripture*

Ruth 2:8-13

Explore

How does Boaz's treatment of her model kindness to the vulnerable?

Discuss

- How does Boaz provide for Ruth's protection?
- How do these actions extend to Naomi?
- Do you consider these burdens matters of the community?

- What did it mean to have no standing during Ruth's time? What might that look like today?

Cultural Humility

Practicing kindness in action requires cultural humility. This is an approach that acknowledges that one person can't truly understand how another person's culture and race impact that person without knowing their story. Cultural humility invites us to approach another with humility and a willingness to learn their personal story. To serve in a spirit of cultural humility is to approach others with a spirit of openness, setting aside assumptions, stereotypes, and even cultural "competencies" in order to know another through their own lens (Neal, n.d).

Summary

Boaz sees Ruth—an outsider, a widow, a vulnerable woman—and responds not with suspicion or distance, but with generosity, care, and loving kindness – *hesed*. Galatians 6:2 reminds us to "bear one another's burdens." That's not just a personal invitation; it's a communal calling. Boaz models this well—offering protection, dignity, and provision in a way that ripples beyond Ruth to Naomi and the broader community.

His sacrificial kindness lies in advocating for Ruth—a Moabite outsider—to be treated with the same dignity and protection reserved for Israelite insiders.

While Boaz allows Ruth to glean in his field, he goes far beyond the law's requirements. Deuteronomy 23 explicitly excludes Moabites from the assembly of the Lord, yet Boaz extends protection, provision, and belonging to Ruth. He doesn't just follow the letter of the law—he lives out its **spirit**.

Boaz offers Ruth not only food, but also status, safety, and advocacy. At the city gate, he works to convince his community to see Ruth as kin, arguing for her inclusion in the covenantal protections of the kinsman-redeemer. His actions model a **hesed** that breaks through ethnic and legal barriers.

This is no simple love story—it's a radical act of inclusion. Boaz becomes the embodiment of God's loving-kindness, even though the book of Ruth contains no direct speech from God. In a time when other biblical books like Ezra and Nehemiah excluded foreigners, Ruth boldly tells a different story: **sacrificial kindness makes room for the outsider**. Hesed triumphs over stereotype, and the stranger is welcomed as family.

Reflection & Practice

- How does Boaz embody love, justice and care?
- What biases might prevent us from welcoming the stranger or someone "without standing"?
- How might we, together, practice neighboring in our community?
- Have you ever considered the parallels between Naomi and Job's lives? (if unfamiliar, see the book of Job)
- This week, consider someone in your community who may be overlooked or carrying a heavy burden and take one intentional step toward supporting them. Extend kindness without expecting anything in return. This could look like reaching out to your church, local food pantry, a nonprofit, a local shelter, etc.

*When doing this Bible Reading Plan as a group, consider using the **African Bible Study Method** or another form of communal reflection. The goal is to read scripture together and listen attentively for how God is speaking to us through the Word.

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