



Becoming the Neighbors the World Needs

A Bible Reading Plan

Session Two: The Journey from Loss to Belonging

Welcome to session two! In our last session, we explored what it means to see our neighbors—to open our eyes to the people around us and the call to respond with compassion. Today, we continue the journey by stepping into one of the most powerful stories of commitment and belonging in Scripture: the story of Ruth.

Opening Devotional

Give thanks to the Lord because he is good, because his faithful love endures forever.
[1 Chronicles 16:34]

Prayer

Embracing God's steadfast love for his people. May the Lord help us to know what it means to have loyal love and commitment.

Scripture*

[Ruth 1:16-18](#)

Explore

How does Ruth's loyalty to Naomi reflect God's heart for relationship and care – and what can it teach us about becoming faithful neighbors to those in crisis?

Discuss

- How does Ruth's act of devotion transcend cultural expectations?
- What does this mean for "loving the neighbor"?

- What are the first steps from homelessness to hope?

Our Neighbors Facing Homelessness

A growing crisis in the United States is family homelessness. Homelessness is a condition in which families have no regular, adequate residence in which they can live safely and legally 24 hours a day and meet their basic needs with privacy and dignity.

Homelessness ends when the family is living in safe and sustainable housing and has support systems in place in order to remain stable.

Homelessness is not just a lack of housing, but a crisis of relationships. Families with no social supports are more likely to experience homelessness than families facing similar circumstances, but with support.

Homelessness affects families beyond just their housing stability. Without a home, a family's ability to meet its other basic needs becomes extremely challenged and is often nearly impossible.

Summary

Ruth 1:16–18 offers a beautiful picture of loving-kindness—what the Bible calls **hesed**—a steadfast, self-giving kind of care. Ruth's decision to stay with Naomi was neither practical nor expected. She crossed cultural, generational, and geographic boundaries to say, *"Where you go, I will go. Your people will be my people."* Ruth demonstrates what neighboring truly looks like.

Throughout Ruth, we see a pattern of going beyond what the law requires into the realm of sacrificial kindness. This isn't mere "nice-ness"—it's the costly gift of presence and loyalty when it would be easier to walk away.

Ruth chooses to accompany Naomi in her grief and loss, embodying what Rev. Liz Walker calls "abiding accompaniment." When Naomi urges her to return home, Ruth refuses, pledging unwavering presence. The road from Moab to Bethlehem was dangerous—especially for two women traveling alone. Ruth could have stayed in the safety of her homeland, as her sister-in-law did. Instead, she enters Israel as a foreigner, just as Naomi had once been a stranger in Moab.

Ruth's hesed is striking. She walks with Naomi despite her bitterness and despair, embracing deep vulnerability herself. No law compelled her to stay. Yet she offers radical loving kindness—becoming a powerful embodiment of hesed in action.

And what about Naomi? Her grief is overwhelming—she’s lost her husband and both sons. When she returns to Bethlehem, she tells her community to no longer call her Naomi (“pleasant”), but *Mara* (“bitter”). Like a female Job, Naomi doesn’t seem to question God’s justice so much as God’s love—God’s **hesed**.

Yet even in her sorrow, Naomi embodies a quiet, sacrificial kindness. She mentors Ruth, guiding her through the unfamiliar customs of Bethlehem. Though widowed, aging, and poor, Naomi teaches Ruth how to glean and introduces her to the law of the kinsman-redeemer—an act of deep care that goes beyond obligation.

This is Naomi’s **hesed**—not in heroic gestures, but in choosing to re-engage, to teach, to help Ruth navigate a world that may not welcome her. In doing so, Naomi becomes a vessel of God’s covenantal kindness, helping turn a story of loss into one of hope and redemption.

Reflection & Practice

- Who and where are the “Naomis” in our lives?
- How can we become neighbors to those beyond our immediate circle?
- This week, choose one person to intentionally accompany. This might be inviting them for coffee or a walk, offering to help with something practical, sending a note of encouragement or simply listening with no agenda.

*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.

Our Neighbors Facing Homelessness is provided by copyrighted materials created by Bridge of Hope National. All rights reserved.