

Covenant Kindness

Ruth 1:8-18

This Week's Focus

Most people think they are kind at heart. What does it mean, however, to be kind? And what does Scripture say about the human heart? Is it naturally kind? Paul, quoting Psalms, says in Romans 3 that there is no one who is righteous and does good (Rom. 3:10-11; Ps. 14:1-3). Isaiah described the human heart as deeply deceitful and desperately sick (Jer. 17:9).

To be kind is to desire good for and do good to others. So, according to the Bible, our hearts are not naturally bent toward kindness. True kindness is unusual because it goes against our selfish nature as sinful human beings (Rom. 1:18-32) because to be truly kind to others requires that you sacrifice your desires for their good. True kindness is supernatural. It doesn't come from us. The presence of kindness in the world is evidence of the goodness of God.

Ruth 1:8-18

8 She said to them, "Each of you go back to your mother's home. May the LORD show faithful love to you as you have shown to the dead and to me. **9** May the LORD enable each of you to find security in the house of your new husband." She kissed them, and they wept loudly. **10** "No," they said to her. "We will go with you to your people." **11** But Naomi replied, "Return home, my daughters. Why do you want to go with me? Am I able to have any more sons who could become your husbands? **12** Return home, my daughters. Go on, for I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me to have a husband tonight and to bear sons, **13** would you be willing to wait for them to grow up? Would you restrain yourselves from remarrying? No, my daughters, my life is much too bitter for you to share, because the LORD's hand has turned against me." **14** Again they wept loudly, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. **15** Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her god. Follow your sister-in-law." **16** But Ruth replied: Do not persuade me to leave you or go back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. **17** Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May Yahweh punish me, and do so severely, if anything but death separates you and me. **18** When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped trying to persuade her.

Begin by reading
the passage through
two times.

Share about a time when someone went out of their way to show you kindness. What did they do? How did it make you feel?

Why do we sometimes neglect opportunities to show kindness to others?

Loving Kindness

The Hebrew word *chesed*, which English Bibles often translate "Loving kindness" is an important concept in the Book of Ruth. We see this concept clearly in Ruth 1:6-17 where Ruth promises to stay by Naomi's side no matter what, to adopt her way of living, her culture, and her God. Ruth's commitment to Naomi is a picture of God's perfect covenant Love and faithfulness to us.

Context

The story of Ruth happened during the time of the judges. What do you know about this time from our study of Judges (see Judg. 21:25)?

Read Judges 1:1-7. What happened to Naomi in these verses? Why might Naomi's situation have been even more difficult than a similar situation for a woman today?

Ruth 1:8-14

After losing their husbands, what did Naomi tell her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to do (vv. 8-9)? Why do you think she did this?

What is significant about Naomi weeping with Orpah and Ruth (vv. 10, 14)? What does this tell us about Naomi's relationship with her daughters-in-law?

Naomi said that the "hand of the Lord" was "against" her (v. 13). Was this true? Why or why not?

How did Orpah respond to Naomi's plea? How did Ruth respond (v. 14)? What can you learn from her example?

Ruth 1:15-18

What did Ruth's commitment to go with Naomi mean to her?
What did Ruth give up to go with Naomi to Bethlehem?

How does Ruth's statement in verses 16-17 mirror what happens when we receive and begin to follow Christ?

Central Truth

God is committed to showing kindness to His people and calls them to commit to showing kindness to others.

Now What?

How has God brought good out of painful experiences from your past? How might remembering God's past kindness help us face new trials and difficulties?

How is God at work in the details of your life, drawing you closer to Him? How might we grow to be more aware of God's presence in our everyday lives?

What are some practical ways we might commit to showing kindness to the people around us? How is this connected to the mission God has given us?

As a group, what are some practical ways we might demonstrate our commitment to one another in times of difficulty?

Personal Challenge

Dwell: Read Psalm 40 and as you do, journal a list of where David was physically and spiritually, and where the Lord brought him. Also journal your answers to the following questions.

- How do you see God's sovereignty on display in these verses?
- How should you respond to the many ways God has shown you His grace? His kindness?
- How do you see God's mercy and grace in Psalm 40? How has God been gracious to you in the past? Recently?
- How did David respond to these demonstrations of God's sovereignty, mercy, and grace?

Memorize: Ruth 1:16

Pray: Thank God for being sovereignly in control of your life. Thank Him for His promise to work His ultimate good out of every situation and circumstance you face no matter how bad. Ask God to give you eyes to see the many ways He has shown kindness to you. Pray that He would help you to count the cost and consider it worthwhile to sacrifice of yourself in order to serve others. Pray that God would use you to point many people to Christ by showing self-sacrificial kindness to them.

Keep on Digging

Read the following verses and jot down what they tell you about God's kindness. After reading these, journal one way you will seek to demonstrate His kindness to others.

- Nehemiah 9:17
- Isaiah 63:7
- Psalm 31:21; 36:7; 69:16
- Ephesians 2:7