

ICEBREAKER

Brian started his sermon by describing this unexpected act of generosity from a child in Burkina Faso.

Have you ever experienced something similar? What impact did it have on you?

IDEA 1

Read Ruth 1 out loud together

Brian described the book of Ruth as "profoundly human" with relatable circumstances and emotions.

- Which character in Ruth 1 (Naomi, Ruth, or Orpah) do you most identify with at this point in your life, and why?
- When have you experienced a season of emptiness or loss like Naomi? How did that experience affect your relationship with God?

Ruth chose to leave behind her homeland, culture, and gods to follow Naomi and her God.

- What have you had to leave behind in order to follow God more fully?
- Is there anything that you are currently struggling to leave behind to follow Him more fully?

IDEA 2

Throughout the sermon Brian focused on the Hebrew word "Hesed".

- How would you define this concept in your own words?

One of Brian's favorite definitions for Hesed is "When the person from whom I have a right to expect nothing gives me everything."

- **What is your reaction to this quote? What does it bring to mind? How does it make you feel?**

Brian pointed out that "The heart of God is so often expressed through the hands of humanity."

- **In what ways have you experienced or expressed being the hands and feet of God's hesed to another person?**

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER

Introduction (Leader reads):

"Let's take some time to meditate on Ruth 1:16, focusing on how God's hesed love is displayed through Ruth's commitment to Naomi."

Preparation:

"As we begin, take a moment to become still. Close your eyes if comfortable, take a few deep breaths, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your reading and reflection."

1. Leader reads aloud, slowly and clearly:

"But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.'"

Pause for 30 seconds of silence

Read the passage again, inviting participants to listen for a word or phrase that stands out to them.

Pause for 30 seconds of silence

2. Leader instructs: "Consider the word or phrase that caught your attention. How might Ruth's loyalty mirror God's faithful Hesed love toward us? How might God be speaking to you through Ruth's example?"

Allow 2 minutes of silent reflection

3. Leader instructs: “Now respond to God in prayer. What arises in your heart as you reflect on this passage? Perhaps gratitude for God's hesed in your life, or a desire to show this kind of love to others. Maybe you're drawn to pray about a situation where you need to choose loyalty over comfort. Speak honestly to God about what this passage stirs in you.”

Allow 2 minutes for silent prayer

4. Leader instructs: “Now rest in God's presence. Release your own words and simply be with the God who shows hesed—covenant faithfulness—to you. Allow His love to fill you and transform you.”

Allow 1 minute of silence

“Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for Your hesed love that never abandons us. Thank You for showing us through Ruth what loyal love looks like in human form. Help us to receive Your hesed deeply and to reflect it faithfully to others. Give us courage to make commitments that cost us something, knowing that Your love sustains us. In Jesus' name,

Amen.”

PRACTICE FOR THIS WEEK

Read through and discuss the ideas below for practical ways you can respond to the sermon this week:

Practice “Hesed” like Ruth

1. Identify one person in your life who is going through a difficult season (like Naomi was).
2. Commit to a specific act of "hesed" (loyal love) toward them this week that involves some personal sacrifice.
3. This could be:
 - Providing practical help (a meal, childcare, transportation)
 - Offering your presence during a difficult time
 - Making a commitment that extends beyond a one-time gesture

Write a Lament Like Naomi

1. Set aside 20 minutes of quiet time with a journal or notebook.
2. Identify an area of your life where you feel empty, bitter, or disappointed—a situation where you might relate to Naomi's perspective.
3. Write a personal lament following this structure:
4. Begin with honest expression: "God, I feel..." (be completely honest about your feelings)
5. Include the crucial "BUT" transition
6. Complete with a truth about God's character: "BUT You are..." (focus on who God is, not what you want Him to do)
7. End your time by reading Lamentations 3:22-23: "The faithful love (hesed) of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease."

Remember: Honest lament is not a lack of faith—it's an expression of trust that God can handle your real emotions and will remain faithful even when you can't see the whole story.