

## ACTS OF KINDNESS



**Aim: To recognise God's kindness to us and share it with others**

The saying goes 'there's no such thing as a free lunch'. And it's true – when people give us something they generally expect something back in return. When was the last time someone showed you kindness ... just because? In fact, we're often so busy that our eyes are closed to other people's needs and struggles. The book of Ruth challenges us to get our priorities right in this area. It reminds us that showing kindness is costly but important, as it mirrors God's character to our world. How else will the world know what God is like unless we show them?

*Boaz replied, 'I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband – how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.'*

*'May I continue to find favour in your eyes, my lord,' she said. 'You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant – though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls.'*

**Ruth 2:11–13**

### TO SET THE SCENE

Brainstorm together and come up with a definition of 'kindness' that you all agree on. Who is usually first to show you kindness? Your:

- ▶ Family
- ▶ Neighbours
- ▶ Colleagues at work
- ▶ Church members
- ▶ Non-Christian friends

### READ RUTH 2:1–23

**1** 'Kindness' is a key theme throughout the book. At this point in the story, how have Ruth and Boaz demonstrated kindness to others?

The Hebrew word *hesed*, found in Ruth 1:8, 2:20, and 3:10 means steadfast love, kindness, and mercy. It was used to describe relationships between individuals but also of God's relationship with his covenant people.

**2** What were the risks involved in Ruth showing kindness to Naomi?

**3** In 2:20, Naomi recognises God's kindness to her and Ruth. Looking back over the chapter, how has God shown his kindness to the pair? Look at his activity in:

- ▶ The decisions taken by the characters
- ▶ The apparent coincidences in the story



**4** God's kindness to Ruth is particularly significant because she was a foreigner from the land of Moab. What can you find out about the history of this nation and what God felt about them? Look at Genesis 19:30–38, Deuteronomy 23:3.

**5** How had Ruth become part of the family of God? Look at 1:16–17.



**6** What comes to your mind when you imagine God's 'wings of refuge' 2:12? Look also at Psalm 17:8, 91:4, Luke 13:34.

**7** What lessons do we learn about evangelism from the fact that God extends his wings of refuge to foreigners like Ruth?

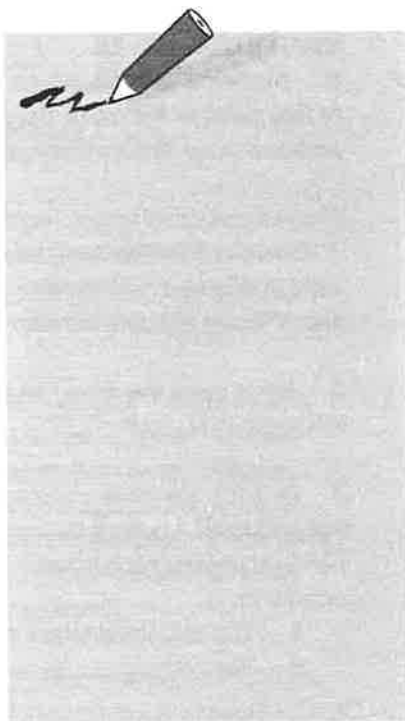




**8** What role does showing kindness play in evangelism? Look at John 13:35.



**9** Like Naomi, it is often only in retrospect that we can recognise God's kindness in our life. Take an A4 sheet of paper and as you reflect on your life, jot down all the examples you can remember of God's special kindness to you. Share some of your recollections with the group.



## ACTIVITY PAGE

'Loving kindness' looks different in different situations. Consider the following scenarios. How could you show 'loving kindness' in these situations and what factors would hold you back?

- ▮ You have a young family. Your spouse's widowed mother is becoming less and less able to take care of herself. The wider family are getting together to discuss how to take care of her. What would you suggest and what are the options?
- ▮ New neighbours have just moved in next door. How could you make them feel welcome in the area?
- ▮ There is a couple in their late thirties who have been to your church for about two years. On Sunday, you learn that the man's father has died suddenly. The father was not a Christian. You know the couple, have had a meal in their home, but don't feel you know them that well. What would you do in this situation?

### WORSHIP

Meditate together on the image of the Lord's 'wings of refuge'. Sing, or listen to, songs on this theme if helpful. Share together what picture of God this image gives you and thank him for being this kind of God to you. (Look at Exodus 19:4 for a further reference to God's wings.) Then pray for those who take refuge under your wings – it could be your children, the children in your Sunday school class, the others who serve in the ministry you lead, the older folk you look after. Pray that your care and protection of them would be a reflection of how God looks after you.

### FURTHER STUDY

People give and receive loving kindness in different ways. To learn more about this read Gary Chapman's *The Five Love Languages*.

### FOR NEXT WEEK

Have everyone in the group write their names on a piece of paper and fold them up. Put the slips of paper in a bowl and then take turns taking a name from the bowl. Don't tell anyone whose name you have and if you pick your own name put it back in the bowl and choose again. This week do an act of kindness to the person whose name you have picked. You could deliver a meal to their home, offer to pick their children up from school, invite them for a game of squash – any small act of kindness to demonstrate that you care for them.