

life group study guide

LOVE: LOVE DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN

June 17, 2012



Bottom Line: Love responds in kindness. (Kindness)

Items needed: Bibles, pens, white board

Get Started: (8-10 minutes)

We've all seen or heard great love stories. Some have been on the big screen, and some have been lived out in real life. One of the overriding themes of great, long-lasting love is the amount of work it takes! Most of us have been around long enough to understand that love is a choice, a commitment, and often uncomfortable. It takes focus, hard work, and sometimes, creativity. That doesn't sound very romantic, does it? But, the same can be said for the non-romantic type of relationships, too. Think about your children, extended family, close friends... All of them take work, don't they?

My husband tells me almost daily that he "chooses me." It's an act of will. (And, some days, I'm sure it takes more will than others!) However, the fact that I know He chooses me gives me the confidence to do the work on my end of the relationship to keep it healthy.

I was overwhelmed with all the kindnesses and commitments seen in this passage. Let's take a minute to find all of those, and then we'll dig in further.

Read Ruth 2:8-3:18. Underline or list all the things that Ruth, Naomi, or Boaz did that was done out of kindness or commitment. (You may do this in small groups/tables, or as a large group on the white board.)

Get the Scoop: (8-10 minutes)

(Here are some notes about two of the main themes in the passage.)

2:8-12 Events unfold quickly as Boaz accedes to the request and offers his protection and provision ([vv. 8-9](#)). Ruth acknowledges his favor to her, an undeserving "foreigner" ([v. 10](#)). Only then ([vv. 11-12](#)) does the narrative give some inkling of God's providential working. Boaz has known already that Ruth is no ordinary foreigner. She has taken "refuge" under the "wings" of the Lord, and she will receive "a full reward" from Him ([v. 12](#)). Though a foreigner, Ruth's loyalty to God will become a key element in God's great plan of redemption. The plan will be worked out through David, the covenant king, and through Christ, David's greater Son. The reward of Ruth's faith far transcends local time and circumstances.

2:20 whose kindness has not forsaken. God's love is faithful, and He will not forget the ones He loves. The blessings He promised will pass from Boaz to Ruth to Naomi, and eventually to all the elect.

close relative of ours. See Introduction: Interpretive Difficulties. The law of redemption now comes into view. According to this law, the nearest male blood relative had the duty of preserving the family name and property. This duty could entail (a) avenging the death of a family member ([Num. 35:19-21](#)); (b) buying back family property that had been sold to pay

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debts ([Lev. 25:25](#)); (c) buying back a relative who had sold himself into slavery to pay debts ([Lev. 25:47–49](#)); and (d) marrying the widow of a deceased relative ([Deut. 25:5–10](#)). Apparently these duties could be renounced or declined under certain circumstances (cf. [Ruth 3:12](#); [4:1–8](#)). Boaz was such a “close relative” (or “redeemer”) to Ruth, and this fact now determines the course of action (see 1:11; 2:1 and notes). Ruth’s destiny will proceed according to law, unlike her ancestor, Lot’s daughter, who committed incest ([Gen. 19:30–38](#)).

Both Ruth and Boaz were choosing to be kind in ways that the law instructed, but both of them took the kindness further than legally required. Ruth’s kindness and behavior were obviously rooted in her love of God and her desire to honor her mother-in-law. *Boaz took notice of her faith and responded in kind.*

Have class members answer these in small groups/tables:

Q: In what ways has your faith caused you to choose kindness recently?

Q: How did people respond to your kindness?

Q: On the other hand, you may have felt prompted to be kind, but chose not to act on that prompting. Why? What was the outcome?

Dig In: (12-15 minutes)

There’s a goldmine of intentional kindness in this passage. You’ve already made a list of all the kindnesses you could find. Let’s dig into those a bit more:

Grab your list. As you go through each kindness, give it a category. For example: protection, needs met, relationship.

Q: Which of these kindnesses do you think “over the top”? Meaning, they were offered in an abundance, or out-of-the-ordinary.

Q: Go back to your conversations about ways your faith has prompted you to be kind recently. How were you prompted to go above and beyond what would be culturally accepted?

Q: What was difficult about it? What was fantastic about it?

Q: How did your kindness affect others?

Q: How was your faith seen in your kindness?

Q: How intentional did you have to be in your kindness?

Q: How do you feel about planning above average kindness-moments for the future?

Take It Home (10-12 minutes)

We do not live in an era where widows/orphans are encouraged to glean, where citizens live with a continual awareness of the hurting, and where kinsman redeemers are waiting to step in and save family. Instead, Christ’s body, the church, is in the position of kinsman redeemer, provider, and relationship builder. It’s in His power that we offer kindness beyond the norm, and where our faith pushes us to love even when it’s uncomfortable.

Q: Who has God brought into your life recently who needs kindness? What kind of kindness do they need?

Q: How have you responded to that need? If you’ve been hesitant, why?

Q: What challenges can you see in reaching out beyond your comfort zone? What benefits?

Q: How can we pray for you regarding this opportunity?

Q: How can we check back in with you regarding this opportunity?

Prayer time (5-10 minutes)

Pray for each other in small groups. You’ve just shared opportunities, challenges, and potential blessings. Pray specifically for courage, wisdom, insight, opportunities, receptivity, and more.