

THE GOD OF...STEADFAST LOVE?

Ruth 1

Hesed (typically translated “steadfast love” in the ESV) is the Hebrew term for God’s sacrificial, loyal, generous love toward His people. Our text explores what our response should be whenever our experience doesn’t line up with the *hesed* God says He has for us.

The story (so far)

Ruth 1 primarily focuses on Naomi, Ruth’s mother-in-law, who relocates to the foreign land of Moab due to a famine and loses her husband and sons.

When Naomi returns to Bethlehem ten years later, she describes herself as empty and bitter because of the Lord (Ruth 1:20-21).

Naomi’s response reveals that she professes good theology (uses God’s covenant name, understands him to be full of *hesed*) but hardship has revealed she still misunderstands God’s love.

The sticking point

There is a difference between stated belief (what we say we believe) and functional belief (what we actually believe and act upon). We can fall into one of two erroneous functional beliefs about God.

Error #1: God’s love means He is nice and gives us what we want. If we hold this functional belief, when we experience hardship it leaves us confused and bewildered at how a God who loves us could let this happen.

Error #2: God loves us but doesn’t like us. If we hold this functional belief, we don’t doubt God’s sovereignty, but His love in His sovereign workings, resulting in bitter resignation that God will do what He’s going to do.

The root cause of both errors is a mistrust of God and His disposition toward us.

The solution

Through Ruth’s address to Naomi, we glimpse what God’s *hesed* looks like (v.16-17). It’s not until Jesus that we see the full extent of God’s loyal, costly, self-sacrificing, enduring, and freely given love for us (cf. Romans 5:6-8).

While the cross doesn’t tell us the reason why we experience hardships, it does tell us what the reason can’t be. It can’t be because He doesn’t love us.

How do we respond to hardships in light of the fuller story of God's *hesed*?

We lament (which is a prayer in pain that leads to trust)

We look for ordinary manifestations of God's *hesed*

Main Point: Our hardships and God's *hesed* can only co-exist when we look to Jesus.

Small Group Application Questions:

Read Psalm 13. What do you notice about the Psalmist's lament? Where does he start? Where does he end? How does he get there?

What are some ways that we can train ourselves to observe and be refreshed by the ordinary manifestations of God's *hesed*?

Read 1 John 4:7-12. What would it look like for you to show *hesed* to those around you?