

Topic 1

Memory Verse

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Psalm 107:1 (ESV)

Recap

After this month, we will be over halfway through our study of the fruits of the spirit! We've studied the fruits as a whole, we've learned what it means to allow the Spirit to change us, and we've specifically looked at love, joy, peace, and patience.

Discussion

- Of the four fruits that we have discussed so far, which one comes the most natural to you? Which one is the most difficult? Why do you think that is?
- Imagine the person you want to be in five years. Which of the fruits do you hope others say they see in you?
- What do you think God is doing in your life right now? Where do you see him stretching you?
- Is there a way that you think God might be calling you to join him in growing one of these fruits?

Kindness and Goodness: Introduction

It's the holiday season, so this month's lesson is going to be a little less intensive than the previous ones (very kind of me, right?). But besides the busyness of December, I do have a reason for lightening the amount of study that we do on these two fruits.

You see, Galatians, the letter where Paul wrote about the fruits of the spirit, was written in Greek. Paul, a Jewish man, was very familiar with the Hebrew Bible (we call it the Old Testament). The Hebrew Bible was written in- you'll never guess- Hebrew. In Hebrew, there's a word called *tov* which shows up ALL. THE. TIME. It is a very important attribute of God, and it's an attribute that humans are meant to embody too. *Tov* means both kindness and goodness, at the same time. Greek doesn't have a word that means both kindness and

goodness at the same time, so Paul had to make do with two Greek words in order to try to describe *tov*.

Here's an excerpt from the BibleProject that explains it:*

"These next two spiritual fruits overlap. Early Greek translators used both *khrestotes* ("kindness") and *agathone* ("goodness") to represent the Hebrew root *tov*, which describes what is good, beautiful, right-functioning, and just.

Khrestotes is a narrower term, referring to "active goodness" directed "toward others."(2) God shows his *khrestotes*, or kindness, by offering humanity true life through Jesus ([Eph. 2:4-7](#)) and also by doing good to "ungrateful and evil people" ([Luke 6:35](#)). So we can reflect God's *khrestotes* through acts of love and generosity, especially toward those whom we may not believe deserve it.

Agathone, or goodness, is more generally about acting in ways that are pure and right, or following God, who is truly good ([Mark 10:18](#)). When God creates the universe, he sees that the world is *tov*, or good, at every stage of completion (see [Gen. 1:4](#); [Gen. 1:10](#); [Gen. 1:12](#); [Gen. 1:18](#); [Gen. 1:21](#); [Gen. 1:25](#)). The spiritual fruit of goodness, in the biblical imagination, flows from the original nature of God's entire creation, especially humanity. After God sets humans within his creation, he calls everything he has made *tov me'od*, which means "very good" ([Genesis 1:31](#)).

So when we trust and follow our creator's instruction, we are cultivating the spiritual fruit of God's original goodness breathed into all creation."

BibleProject Short

[What does "tov" mean? – YouTube](#)

Discussion

- What does *tov* describe?
 - Answer: What is good, beautiful, right-functioning, and just.
- What does *khrestotes*, or kindness, mean?
 - Answer: It refers to active goodness towards others. It is acts of love and generosity, especially towards those we may not think deserve it.

- What does *agathone*, or goodness, mean?
 - Answer: This is about acting in ways that are pure or right, following God.

This month, we will be exploring the story of Ruth in order to see how God uses acts of *tov*- of kindness and goodness- to not only rewrite Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz's stories, but how the goodness that these three seemingly insignificant people show one another ends up changing the story of the entire world. The power of Christlike *tov*, of kindness and goodness, can change everything.

Prayer

- Ask God to help you notice a way that he has been kind and good to you that you hadn't noticed before.
- Thank God for his kindness and goodness to you in Jesus. Ask him to help you grow in showing kindness to others.
- Pray over any praises or requests in your family.

Topic 2

Memory Verse

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BibleProject Summary Video

 [Book of Ruth Summary: A Complete Animated Overview](#)

TOV: Ruth 1

Read Ruth 1

Discussion

- Where do you see kindness in this chapter?

- Possible answers: Naomi is trying to be kind to her daughters-in-law by insisting that they return to their parents. Her daughters-in-law express their love for her by saying they want to go with her. Ruth ultimately expresses the most kindness to Naomi by refusing to listen to her- she insists on doing good and staying with Naomi whether Naomi likes it or not.
- What does Ruth say to Naomi when she tells her that she's staying with her?
 - Answer: Ruth declares, "Where you go, I will go and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried."
- What does Naomi believe about God by the end of this chapter?
 - Answer: Naomi believes that God is against her and is trying to hurt her.
- What does Naomi change her name to?
 - Answer: She changes her name to "Mara," which means bitter.
- Trick question: Was Naomi ACTUALLY being kind when she told her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab?
 - Answer: It seemed like a kind thing to do, and Naomi probably genuinely believed she was doing the right thing, but if her daughters-in-law stayed in Moab they would probably not be able to follow the one true God. It would have been kinder to bring them to Bethlehem.
- Another trick question: Naomi was silent when Ruth insisted on returning with her, and she was clearly upset when they arrived in Bethlehem. Was Ruth's insistence on staying with Naomi kind?
 - Answer: Yes! Ruth was determined to do the right thing and help Naomi even if Naomi was telling her not to. Sometimes, people will not like it when we obey God in showing them kindness and goodness. That's okay. We are called to obey anyway, and even though they may not like it, it is still kindness.

In *The Problem of Pain*, author C.S. Lewis points out that our society sees kindness as doing something that makes someone else happy. In some situations, that might be true. But Lewis says that it is not that simple- what if something that is bad or harmful makes someone happy? Is it kind to let them do that? Think of a young boy obsessed with ice cream. This boy would eat ice cream for every meal, every snack, every second of the day if he could. Would his parents be kind if they let him do that? No, they wouldn't be.

It's important that our kindness is connected to God's goodness. If we are just trying to make people happy, we are going to end up encouraging people to do things that are actually not good for them. Naomi was trying to make her daughters-in-law happy by

telling them to stay- this was not good and it was not actually kind. Ruth chose to stay with Naomi even though Naomi was unhappy about it- this was kind and good, because Ruth knew it was the right thing to do.

Prayer

- Thank God for being faithful and kind to us even when we are not faithful and kind to him.
- Ask God for wisdom and for opportunities in showing kindness to others.
- Think of moments when others showed you kindness. Thank God for those moments.

Topic 3

Memory Verse

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Psalm 107:1 (ESV)

TOV: Ruth 2

Read Ruth 2

This chapter introduces us to Boaz, and to a term that sounds really weird to us in our culture- a kinsman-redeemer. A kinsman-redeemer was basically a close relative who could legally step in and rescue a relative from a dead-end situation. For Ruth and Naomi, this dead-end situation is the fact that Elimelech, Naomi's husband who passed away, has no heirs. During this time, men and boys could inherit the family name and the family property, women and girls could not except for very specific circumstances. Naomi and Ruth did not qualify to inherit.

But the heir didn't just get a bunch of stuff- the heir was responsible to take care of *everyone* in the family for as long as they lived. So, for Naomi and Ruth's situation, a kinsman-redeemer could step in and choose to become the heir, allowing him to take over

all of the property, but it would also make him responsible for taking care of Naomi and Ruth.

However, becoming the heir would come at a cost to the kinsman-redeemer. We'll learn more about that as the story progresses.

Discussion

- Where do you see kindness in this chapter?
 - Possible answers: Boaz shows a LOT of kindness! He is kind to his workers by greeting them warmly and by providing food + eating with them. He is extremely kind to Ruth- he praises and blesses her, he provides her with a safe group of women to glean with, he invites her to come eat with him, and he tells her to keep harvesting in his field (this would have cost him some profit- he could have asked her to find other fields). Ruth also shows kindness by working an extremely laborious and difficult job all day without complaining in order to provide food for Naomi. She responds to Boaz with respect and thankfulness. Naomi expresses thankfulness and blesses Boaz when Ruth tells her what happened.
- Sometimes, we can pick and choose who we behave kindly and warmly towards. Do you get the impression that Boaz picks and chooses who to be kind to, or do you get the impression that he is just kind to everyone he meets?
 - Answer: This chapter gives the impression that Boaz is kind to everyone he meets. The author chooses to show him treating his workers kindly and fairly so that we know he isn't simply pretending because he is interested in Ruth- he is genuinely kind.
- Why did Boaz praise Ruth?
 - Answer: He praised her for her loyalty and kindness to Naomi.
- Did Ruth go back to work in Boaz's field?
 - Answer: Yes, she stayed working in his field for the entire harvest season.

Prayer

- Thank God for being a good provider.
- Ask God to help you become more like Boaz, warm and kind to everyone you meet.
- Thank God for the kind people in your life.

Topic 4

Memory Verse

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TOV: Ruth 3

People do not become kind overnight. Kindness doesn't happen randomly or even naturally. Kindness is something that you have to practice in the small moments and in the difficult moments. Practicing kindness, even when it seems small and insignificant and difficult, allows the Spirit to transform you into someone who is kind, like Ruth and Boaz. This chapter has some confusing cultural practices in it, which I'll explain after you read it, but pay attention to the way that the kindness that Ruth has practiced unseen for so long and the kindness that Boaz has practiced unseen for so long is leading both of them into an amazing moment that will change their lives for the better.

Read Ruth 3

Okay there's a lot in this chapter that is confusing. I'll explain some of these elements quickly!

1. Threshing floor:

A flat open area that was used when processing grain. When it came time to process it, farmers often held a celebration and made it fun for the workers. This is what Boaz is doing- he's hosting a celebration as a thank-you to his workers. Men and women could both be at the celebration, but typically only men slept in the threshing floor area in order to protect the crops from thieves.

2. Why did Ruth sleep there? Why not talk to Boaz about everything out in the field while she was gleaning?

We don't have a clear answer to these questions, but I have a few thoughts. By having this conversation at night, I think Ruth and Naomi were trying to emphasize the seriousness of their predicament and how much they needed a kinsman-redeemer to rescue them. I also think Ruth wanted to talk to Boaz privately which she could not

do anywhere else- the fields were too public and full of workers running up to Boaz all the time. Finally, Ruth was about to do something that would be odd even in our day and age- she was about to propose to Boaz! Back then, if a marriage wasn't arranged by parents, men were the ones who typically proposed to women, much like the norm today. I think Ruth and Naomi were concerned that Boaz might feel humiliated by a woman proposing to him if it happened in front of people, so I think they were trying to be respectful towards him. (These are my thoughts about the situation: feel free to do your own research into it!)

Discussion

- Where do you see kindness in this chapter?
 - Possible answers: Naomi shows kindness to Ruth by trying to find a way to rescue her from this situation, so she comes up with this plan to propose to Boaz. Ruth shows kindness to Naomi by listening to her. Ruth waits respectfully- though yes, very strangely- in order to propose to Boaz. Boaz declares that Ruth's proposal is kind to him, and he promises to do everything he can to rescue her. He lets her stay so that she won't have to wander home in the night, then gives her lots of food to take home to Naomi.
- What can we learn about kindness and boldness from Ruth in this chapter?
 - Possible answers: Sometimes, being kind will require us to do bold things that our culture might find very strange. Again, this is why it is important to understand what God calls good so that we are following his version of good, not our culture's.
- What can we learn about kindness from Boaz' response when Ruth proposes and asks for his rescue?
 - Possible answers: Boaz is immediately willing to help and he is not offended by the odd situation. He is thinking of her before he is thinking of himself and his reputation. He sees the same good that God sees in the situation: others look at Ruth and only see a Moabite- their ancient enemies, Boaz looks at Ruth and sees her noble character. He knows that marrying her wouldn't be charity like others would see it- he knows she would bring goodness and joy into his life too. It's his wisdom and kindness that allows him to know this.
- What does Boaz say about his status as a kinsman-redeemer?

- Answer: Boaz reveals that there is a kinsman-redeemer who is a closer relative than he is, which means this other kinsman-redeemer gets to decide if he will redeem them or not before Boaz can decide.
- Trick question: By Boaz being honest about this, what does this reveal about Boaz's dedication to God?
 - Answer: Boaz's honesty, even though he knows it might hurt him because he wants to marry Ruth, reveals that he is dedicated to obeying God's law even if it puts his own happiness at risk.
- What do Ruth and Naomi decide to do at the end of the chapter?
 - Answer: They decide to wait and see what will happen, trusting that Boaz will keep his word.

Prayer

- Ask God to show kindness to others boldly!
- Thank God for showing bold kindness to us through Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Pray for your friends and family.

Topic 5

Memory Verse

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Psalm 107:1 (ESV)

TOV: Ruth 4

Remember when I mentioned that being a kinsman-redeemer comes at a cost? Let's talk about it!

You see, when you became the kinsman-redeemer for a family with a young widow who had no children, the kinsman-redeemer was required to marry the widow. The firstborn son of the new couple would then become the future heir, but he would bear the name and

lineage of the widow's first husband, not his actual father! This was to keep plots of land within the same family, to be passed down through the generations.

That's still confusing. Let's break it down using the situation that we find in the Book of Ruth.

Elimelech, Naomi's deceased husband, was the head of the house and he had land. His heir was his son Mahlon, Ruth's deceased husband. All of Elimelech's land was supposed to pass to Mahlon and then to Mahlon's children. But Mahlon died, and he and Ruth did not have children.

The kinsman-redeemer could step in and claim the land, BUT, since Ruth is in the picture, the kinsman-redeemer is now also responsible to marry Ruth. If they have a son, that son will be legally recognized as Mahlon's son and the proper heir of the land. And so, when he gets old enough, Mahlon's land reverts to him.

Here's where the risk came from: say the kinsman-redeemer and Ruth only had the one son. They did not have another to become the kinsman-redeemer's heir. That would mean that this one son would not only inherit Mahlon's land, but also all of the kinsman-redeemer's land, effectively wiping the kinsman-redeemer's name off the map. It would all go to Elimelech's family line, not the kinsman-redeemer.

This is why, if you cared about your name and your legacy, it was a huge risk to become the kinsman-redeemer. However, if you didn't care about your name and legacy, it wasn't really a risk at all. This is the difference between Boaz and the kinsman-redeemer closer than him. Let's read to see what happens.

Read Ruth 4

- Where do you see kindness in this chapter?
 - Possible answers: Boaz follows through on his promise to both honor the law and to do everything he can to rescue Ruth and Naomi. God rescues Ruth and Naomi. He gives Ruth a good husband and he gives Boaz a good wife. He gives them both a son. The townswomen call Naomi blessed, and Naomi has a new adopted grandchild to love and care for.
- Was the kinsman-redeemer initially interested in redeeming Elimelech's land?

- Answer: Yes! He was very interested in redeeming the land.
- What caused him to back out of redeeming it?
 - Answer: He decided to back out of redeeming it when he learned he would have to take care of Naomi and marry Ruth. He did not want to put his own name and inheritance at risk in order to help two women in need- he had only wanted to get more land.
- Do we know this kinsman-redeemer's name?
 - Answer: Nope.
- Do we know Boaz's name?
 - Answer: Obviously we do.
- What do these two facts tell us about how God views kindness and how God views self-interest?
 - Answer: God rewards kindness by giving abundantly: Boaz was willing to risk his name and legacy in order to save Naomi and Ruth, and now, his name has been known for thousands of years and he became an ancestor of King David. This kinsman-redeemer was concerned with maintaining his name, and now, no one knows who he is.
- The genealogy points out that these seemingly small acts of kindness from these seemingly insignificant people led to the greatest king Israel ever had- King David. But even more importantly, who else was descended from King David?
 - Answer: Jesus was descended from King David. And Jesus would go on to redeem the entire world by sacrificing his inheritance (eternal life with God) in order to take on our sin and suffering and pay for it himself, so that we could have his inheritance if we repent and believe.

Prayer

- Ask God to give you the strength to show kindness, even when you have to sacrifice to do so.
- Thank God for being the ultimate redeemer of our lives.

Topic 6

Memory Verse

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Activities

These activities are designed to help you put into practice what we've been learning about love as a fruit of the spirit.

Activity 1: Self-Sacrifice Kindness

Find a way to give up something you enjoy in order to show kindness to someone else. Maybe you skip a shopping trip with your friends in order to help your mom clean the house. Maybe you give up a peaceful evening of reading in order to help your sibling with his or her homework. Whatever you do, how did you feel after completing this activity?

Activity 2: Art

Draw or paint your favorite moment of kindness from the story of Ruth. As you do so, reflect on the small moments in your life where you can push through discomfort in order to show kindness.

Activity 3: Christmas Kindness

Volunteer to serve at your church's Christmas service. This can be through a role in the service, a setup/tear-down role, a childcare role, whatever it is your church most needs! Go into the service determined to find ways to be kind to those around you.

Review

- What does *tov* describe?
 - Answer: What is good, beautiful, right-functioning, and just.
- What does Naomi change her name to?
 - Answer: She changes her name to "Mara," which means bitter.
- Is kindness only about making people happy?
 - Answer: No- kindness is about doing good towards others. Sometimes this will make them happy, and sometimes it will not.

- After Ruth's husband died, what did she decide to do?
 - Answer: She decided to go with her mother-in-law Naomi and take care of her, no matter what the cost.
- What is a kinsman-redeemer?
 - Answer: A kinsman-redeemer was a relative who could step in and legally rescue his family members.
- Why does Boaz praise Ruth?
 - Answer: Boaz praises Ruth for her loyalty and kindness towards Naomi.
- What did Ruth ask Boaz at the threshing floor?
 - Answer: She asked him to be their kinsman-redeemer and marry her.
- Who is descended from Ruth and Boaz?
 - Answer: King David, and then later, Jesus
- Make sure you memorize the verse!
- Make sure you complete one of the activities!

Quiz 4

[Fruit of the Spirit Quiz 4 | Middle/High Track](#)

References

<https://bibleproject.com/articles/fruits-spirit-and-their-meanings-bible/>