

#LIFEHACKS

5. How to Exceed Expectations

Start off with feedback from Sunday's message. What did those that were there - or those that have caught up online - take away from it? What encouraged them, what informed them and what challenged them?

Read Ruth 1

16 *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. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.'*

- v20. *'Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter'*. Naomi left the promised land and broke the Jewish law by putting her sons into inter-racial, inter-religious marriages. Was she right to blame God for her suffering? Have you ever made bad choices and then become disillusioned with God?
- v8. *'May the Lord show you kindness'*. Naomi prays for God's blessing and Grace to be upon both women. But we only read of the tremendous blessing that comes to Ruth. Do we have a part to play in whether or not we experience God's blessing? Does this mean that Grace can be earned?
- v14. **Kiss or Cling?** When it comes to faith, and your relationship with God, are you more like the one that clings on, no matter what, or the one that kisses and then gets on with living their own life? What would 'clinging' look like for you?
- Think about **Constraints and Dedication** in committed relationships. Does this theory of commitment ring true for you? What do you find helpful about it? Have you ever been in a situation of high constraints but low dedication?
- Dedication commitment means looking to the future, counting the cost and defining yourself by something bigger than just you. How did Ruth embody these qualities (v16-17)? What would it mean in practice for you to develop dedication commitment in your relationship with God, and your engagement with (a) His people and (b) His purposes?

"When you put yourself in a place of commitment, you put yourself in a place of Grace."

Take some time to pray together in smaller groups. Pray for each other that God would show kindness to you. Pray that He would lead you into greater commitment and trust in Him. Pray for help where we feel disillusioned and abandoned by God. Pray that God would use your commitment to Him to bring Grace and kindness to those around you – your friends, colleagues, neighbours and family – just as Ruth's commitment brought blessing to Naomi. Pray that God would exceed our expectations.