

# THE COMMAND OF MERCY: UNDERSTANDING HESED

Ruth 1:14-22

*We learn that if you trust the sovereign goodness and mercy of God to pursue you all the days of your life, then you are free like Ruth. If God calls, you can leave family, you can leave your job, you can leave Minnesota, and you can make radical commitments and undertake new ventures. Or you can find the freedom and courage and strength to keep a commitment you already made. When you believe in the sovereignty of God and that he loves to work mightily for those who trust him it gives a freedom and joy that can't be shaken by hard times.*

**John Piper, "Ruth: Sweet and Bitter Providence"**

*Hesed* is a Hebrew word that expresses, far better than any English translation, the essence of life in relationship—in covenant—with God. This single word incorporates all of our concepts of faithfulness, steadfast love, kindness, mercy, loyalty, and sacrifice into one. As you can see, is not easily translated into English. The theme of *hesed* is first introduced in 1:8 when Naomi asks for God's kindness (*hesed*) to fall upon Ruth and Orpah. It is applied to Ruth directly in 3:10. But throughout the book (not just in these places), Ruth (as well as Boaz later) is raised up as a walking example of *hesed* for God's covenant people.

## I. **HESED IN THE LIFE OF THE COVENANT**

*For I desire steadfast love [hesed] and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

**Hosea 6:6**

## II. **HESED IN THE LIFE OF RUTH**

Real

Radical

Relational

Regular

Risky

## III. **HESED IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

**Matthew 10:39**