

# Refugees and the Bible

## Welcoming the stranger

### Session 2: The gift of a stranger

#### Pray

Spend some time in prayer dedicating your discussion and reflections to God.

#### Introduction

The importance of offering hospitality to those we don't know is an important strand that runs all the way through the Bible and can be found in passages like:

'Be sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests, without even knowing it.' (Hebrews 13.2)

What do you think the author the Hebrews meant here and why was it important? Why do you think showing hospitality was such an important part of life for the writers of the Bible?

Why do you think we are a less hospitable culture? Are there some very good reasons for this? Have we lost anything by becoming less hospitable?

#### Watch

##### Part 2: The gift of a stranger

(Download from [biblesociety.org.uk/refugeesandthebiblefilms](https://biblesociety.org.uk/refugeesandthebiblefilms))

Discuss the clip. How do you react to what was said? Do you agree with it? Is there anything you disagree with?

#### Unpack

- As mentioned in the video clip, the Moabites were ancient enemies of the Israelites: as close neighbours there were running battles between them on numerous occasions. No Israelite would expect anything good from a Moabite.
- There is a very important word in the Old Testament. In Hebrew it is the word *hesed* but as with many important biblical words it is very difficult to put into English well. The word *hesed* means love, kindness, loyalty, faithfulness, grace and steadfastness. So it can be translated as steadfast love or loving kindness.
- It is one of the most important words for the covenant. God showed loving kindness to his people and asked that they responded to him in the same way. So the word *hesed* sums up the love of God and love of neighbour that is asked of God's people
- In Ruth 3.10 Boaz exclaims that Ruth has shown *hesed*, the word in bold is translating *hesed* here, 'Boaz replied: *The Lord bless you! This shows how truly **loyal** you are to your family. You could have looked for a younger man, either rich or poor, but you didn't.*' (Ruth 3.10)

## Read

Ask someone to read the passage out loud slowly, leaving enough gaps for reflection; you might also want to leave a few minutes for silent reflection at the end.

**Ruth 3.10** (Contemporary English Version)

*Boaz replied: The Lord bless you! This shows how truly loyal you are to your family. You could have looked for a younger man, either rich or poor, but you didn't.*

## Reflect

- Discuss what Boaz said in the context of the whole of the book of Ruth (you might need to skim read it to remind you of the key facts).
- What acts of Ruth in the story might be described by the word *hesed*?
- What can we learn about 'right behaviour' from the kinds of actions that Ruth displayed?
- Why do you think it is important for the story of Israel to know that Ruth, a Moabite, was an ancestress of King David?
- Some scholars think that the book of Ruth is to be seen as a 'teaching story', designed to get people to think again about their attitudes to people they view as an enemy. If you read it this way what do we learn from Ruth about our attitudes to 'outsiders' whether they be ancient enemies or simply people we don't know yet?
- Is there anything that you have explored in your discussion today that you would want to apply to the question of how we think about and/or welcome refugees?

## Pray

Spend time in prayer committing what you have discussed to God. Bring to him in prayer those who are wondering whether to flee their country; those who are currently seeking safe haven and those who are in refugee camps in various places around the world. See our online prayer resources at [biblesociety.org.uk/prayertree](https://biblesociety.org.uk/prayertree)