

Foreword

We tried including our daughter Kim in regular Sunday school, but because of her multiple disabilities, it just didn't work. By the time Kim was twenty-three, in a house filled with Bibles, she knew little of the Bible. So I gathered Kim and a couple of her friends in the back of the church basement and began to teach them myself. I was struck by how “dumbed down” the available curriculum was for adults with intellectual disabilities. It touched lightly on Scripture and had little depth. In my desperation to find material, we spent a year looking at Rembrandt's sketches of the Bible!

The Bethesda curriculum was my wife Jill's idea. She wanted to create a complete Bible curriculum that involved real Bible study. She wanted it to use interactive questions and to be engaging for the students. Jill loved the interactive style and the story focus of seeJesus Bible studies, so she thought the material would be ideal to adapt for Kim's class.

When Jill started teaching in September 2009, it was rough going. We quickly discovered why there isn't a lot of curriculum for adults with disabilities: simultaneously teaching students on different levels with different learning styles is challenging. By January Jill told me, “This isn't working. I'm thinking about quitting.” Then I realized I had not prayed for Jill. I began to pray for her daily, and within a couple of weeks she got her voice. She not only wrote the curriculum, but she also taught every lesson to make sure it “worked.”

Why do we call it Bethesda? Jesus healed a lame man who had gathered with other adults with disabilities at the Pool of Bethesda. Joni Eareckson Tada described how overwhelming it was to visit the pool with her husband Ken. Jill had a similar experience when we visited the Pool of Bethesda in 2011. Bethesda in Hebrew means “house of covenant love.” Covenant love doesn't break. It binds itself to the object of its love and determines to love no matter what. That is God's love for us, and it is to be our love for one another.

The lame man at the Pool of Bethesda was frustrated that he couldn't get into the water in time. Our Bethesda logo, with its image of a splash of water, captures the healing hope of Jesus. Because of Jesus, we make it into the pool, the river of grace. If you look closely at the “splash” in the logo, you can see several figures going into the water.

I'd encourage you to experience Bethesda's interactive style for yourself through sample lessons and teaching tools available at the Bethesda Video Library (www.seejesus.net/resources/bethesda-video-library).

Paul E. Miller
Author of *A Praying Life*



Introduction

The book of Ruth is a story of *hesed love*—the never giving up, never letting go, sticking-to-it love of God seen and displayed through Ruth. Ruth's true story is a simple, yet powerful example of *hesed love*.

Ruth chooses to leave her home and family to

- go to an unknown land and culture.
- embrace, provide for, and obey her bitter mother-in-law Naomi.
- deny herself comfort for the sake of Naomi.
- humble herself to accept Naomi's advice.

Ruth's actions of *hesed love* lead to Jesus.

The name of Jesus is not mentioned in the book of Ruth, but the whole book points to him. Jesus is the one who displays perfect *hesed love* with us. It is only when we are empowered by this *hesed love* that we can do what he told us to do—love with never giving up, never letting go, stick-to-it-iveness.

I adapted these lessons from *A Loving Life* so students like my daughter Kim will experience *hesed love*. Kim is the fourth of our six kids. My husband Paul and I are both teachers, and we tried to teach all of our kids the Bible. We sent them to Christian schools, but Kim was frequently left out because of her multiple challenges. She was able to keep up in Sunday school until first grade, then got frustrated with all the scissors, play groups, and interaction with the other kids and teachers. I stayed with Kim for about twenty years during the Sunday school hour. I got frustrated because “this little light” was being hidden under a bushel.

I believe all of us can learn. We are made in the image of God, and God is limitless. I don't believe in ceilings where people stop learning. With this in mind, I looked at curricula for Kim and her friends. The material I reviewed looked too simple. Good teachers expose students to concepts they may never understand. Exposure is important to lifelong learning! I remember being taught trigonometry and thinking, “What in the world is this man trying to teach me?” But that didn't stop him from exposing me to it and giving me an opportunity to “grab” what I could. This is what I have tried to do with *Hesed*. I want to give Kim and her friends the opportunity to discover God's Word, the Bible.

Hesed love brought my oldest daughter Courtney to me with a very special copy of the Bible. With a utility knife, she had cut out all the stories in the Gospels that had anything to do with disabilities. Many pages were almost completely cut away. The Gospels weren't the Gospels without those stories.

My prayer is that the church will grow in *hesed love* toward people affected by disability, so the beauty of Jesus will be seen through “the least of these!”

“As your words are taught, they give light; even the simple can understand them,” Psalm 119:130.

Many blessings!
Jill A. Miller



Acknowledgements

Thank you, John and Pam, for opening your ears, after losing Ben, to the story of Ruth in 2009. It was so raw to hear of *hesed love* then but you did. Thank you, Paul, for putting *hesed love* into words and into daily action with me.

Thank you to my friends at Cheltenham Church, including BJ, John, Adam, Hope, Pat, Beth, Andrew, Jordan, David, Tamba, Libby, Dan, Patrick, and Diane. Thank you for opening your doors for all of us to learn about this never failing, never ending, never giving up love.

Thank you, Joan, for encouraging me week after week to finish Ruth in a season of my life that was so hard.

Thank you, Steve, for leading Bethesda. Thank you Felicia, Jerry, and Jill for displaying Ruth's love to people who need to know about this amazing love of our Father.

This study would be a pile of papers in some folder in my kitchen had it not been for everyone at seeJesus. Thank you Seth, Michele, and Sherri.

And Dillon ... you know how much I love fun. Thank you for drawing pictures that are fun.

Last, but certainly not least: thank you Kim. For years I prayed for healing to come to you, for speech to flow, for your body to move with ease. What I asked God for didn't come. But what came was much louder than a voice could speak and more powerful than any body could move. God showed me how he loves—how he loves me, how he loves you, how he lives with the lowly and weak.

Thank you, Abba. You are good, so good. Your faithfulness reaches to the heavens.

Jill A. Miller



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How to Teach *Hesed*

MASTER THE CONTENT BY READING A LOVING LIFE

The book gives you an overview of the material in *Hesed* and a summary of each lesson. Each *Hesed* lesson lists the corresponding chapters in both the *A Loving Life* book and interactive study guide for your reference.

LEARN THE LAYOUT OF A TYPICAL LESSON

Goals: Every lesson has two goals.

Love: What does it look like to be loved and to love others with *hesed love*?

Faith: How does God use *hesed love* in my life?



Kim's World: Jill shares personal insights to give you glimpses into the world of disability and help you connect the lesson to the students in your class.

Q. Questions in bold type and pink are the heart of the material.

Teach is a short section that you teach. Don't linger.

Historical Background introduces historical background information to enrich your Bible study.



Draw appears where you will need to draw the story, a graph, or otherwise illustrate what you are talking about.

Review is a short teaching section, usually at the beginning of a lesson, that reviews the previous lesson and shows where it fits within the unit.



Teaching Tip is a teaching idea.



[Write their answers.] instructs you to write the students' answers on the flip chart. It always appears with the pencil icon.

[Teach what they don't say.] indicates nuances in this answer that you'll likely have to teach after participants have had time to share their thoughts.

Jill's Personal Illustration is an example to help with application. Try to personalize examples to your group.



Gospel Connection is a brief explanation of how principles of the lesson relate to the essential gospel message. If you are teaching a group that is new to church or faith lessons, remember that this is a good way to bring the full faith story into *Hesed*.



What about Me? applies the lesson to your life and the lives of your students. The church will be transformed and the world will be captured by Jesus' beauty, not because we are good teachers but because we are obedient servants. If we are communicating abstract principles and not struggling to obey, we risk being Pharisees.



List of Items for Your Prop Kit

Each week you will add at least one new prop to your kit. Be sure to keep all props handy for review.

- Lesson 1 RIP Sign (sample in leader's manual)
- Lesson 2 A stuffed dog or picture of your dog
- Lesson 3 A stuffed dog or picture of your dog
- Lesson 4 A small woven rug or other fabric or craft with a thready, knotted underside
- Lesson 5 A small woven rug or other fabric or craft with a thready, knotted underside
- Lesson 6 Seeds and a photo of a city gate (sample in leader's manual)
- Lesson 7 Seeds and a photo of a city gate (sample in leader's manual)
- Lesson 8 Ruler or yardstick
- Lesson 9 Slinky eye glasses (glasses with springy/slinky type eyes)
- Lesson 10 Picture of a mommy bird with babies under her wing (sample link in leader's manual)
- Lesson 11 Sheaf of wheat or barley or a photo of sheaves of grain
- Lesson 12 Video of threshing wheat by hand (sample link in leader's manual); cup, pitcher of water, and basin
- Lesson 13 Perfume
- Lesson 14 Box top or picture of Chutes and Ladders, a children's game (sample link in the leader's manual)
- Lesson 15 Let's Make a Deal game or video link to the game in leader's manual; sandal
- Lesson 16 Boy baby doll
- Lesson 17 Cup, pitcher of water, and basin





Lesson 1

Naomi Is Very Sad

Materials:

1. Ruth 1:1-5
2. RIP sign (the prop)

Additional Resource Material: *A Loving Life*, chapter 1; *A Loving Life Interactive Bible Study Leader's Manual*, lesson 1.

Goals:

Love: God is always with us and will never leave us.

Faith: God knows about our sorrows and will provide for us.



Kim's World: *Kim and her peers have suffered losses. People affected by disability tend to express loss differently. It will be expressed, but in their time and in their personal way. When Kim's Pop-Pop passed away, Kim, who was very close to Pop-Pop, did not cry. One month later, while walking dogs at work, Kim collapsed, literally from sorrow. To this day, she talks about seeing Pop-Pop in Heaven.*

1. Preview the Story

10 minutes

Typically, you will find review questions here to help the students connect last week's lesson to this week's. For this week only, give the students an overview of what this study is about.

Our Bible study for the next few weeks will be in the Old Testament book of Ruth. Ruth takes place at a time when the world was in chaos and many people were suffering for different reasons. This true story happened about ninety years before David became King of Israel.



(You can begin to draw the map here and talk about the chaos and famine.)

We will be learning about how God wants us to love people in new ways and how this story looks forward to Jesus' coming to earth and loving us.

2. Experience the Story

15 minutes

Summing It Up: We will use all of our senses to experience the story in a variety of ways.

Read Ruth 1:1-5.

Students who are comfortable reading aloud may each read one verse until they finish the passage. Adapt for slower readers by assisting them and/or giving them shorter portions to read.

1 There was a time when Israel didn't have kings to rule over them. But they had leaders to help them. This is a story about some things that happened during that time. There wasn't enough food in the land of Judah. So a man went to live for a while in the country of Moab. He was from Bethlehem in Judah. His wife and two sons went with him.

2 The man's name was Elimelech. His wife's name was Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were from the tribe of Ephraim. Their home had been in Bethlehem in Judah. They went to Moab and lived there.

3 Naomi's husband Elimelech died. So she was left with her two sons.

4 They married women from Moab. One was named Orpah. The other was named Ruth. Naomi's family lived in Moab for about ten years.

5 Then Mahlon and Kilion also died. So Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

Choose at least two of these options to reinforce the primary reading of the passage.

1. Role play the story.

For costumes, use different colored scarves or shawls worn over the head or around the shoulders.

Person 1: Elimelech

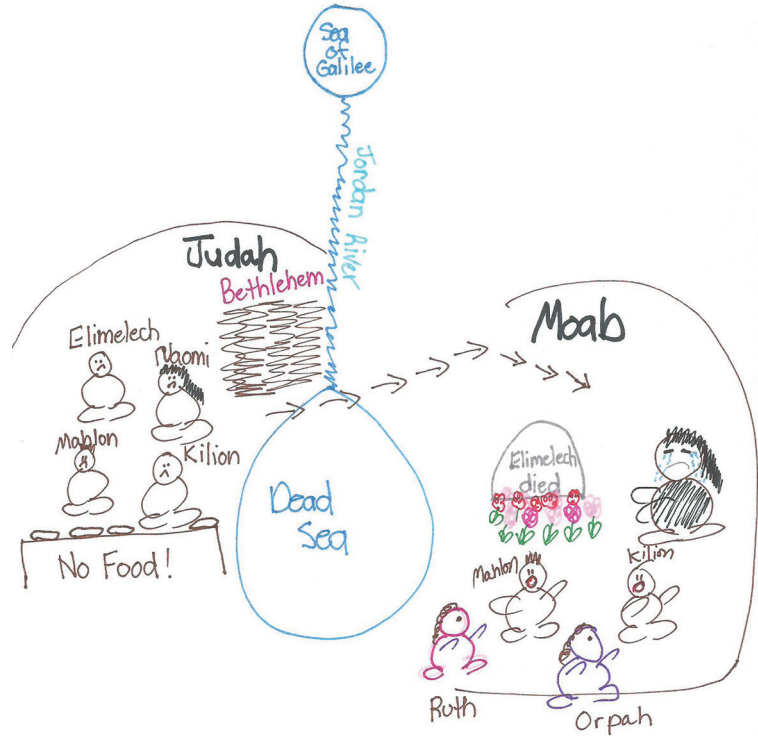
Person 2: Naomi

Person 3: Mahlon

Person 4: Kilion



2. Draw the scene as you teach.



3. Watch a video of this lesson at www.seeJesus.net/Bethesda-Hesed-videos.

4. Use puppets to act out the story.



Teaching Note: After you have read the story from Scripture and reinforced it with two of the above options, you will get the students involved in the learning process by asking the interactive questions below.

3. Understand the Story

15 minutes

Summing It Up: Ruth loses her husband and two sons. She is left with her daughters-in-law in the country of Moab.

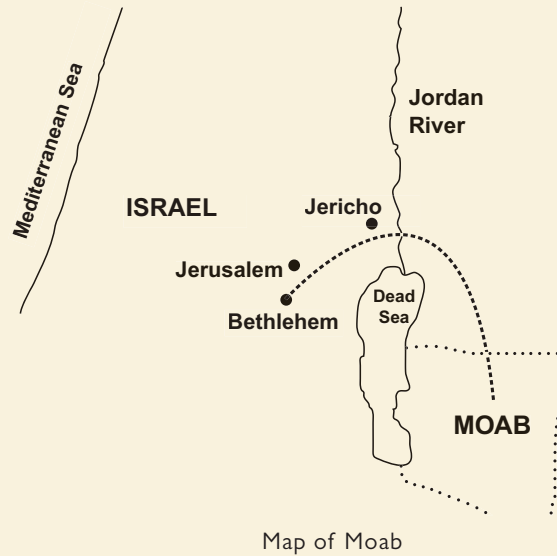
This story is true, and it happened during a time when things were feeling out of control and dangerous.

Q. Have you ever felt that things were out of control and dangerous? (Yes.)

Q. How did you feel during these times? (Scared. Sad.)



Draw: Map of Moab



Teach: *Moab was like a bad cousin to Israel.*
(Point out locations on map as you mention them.)

Think *of Cousin Eddie in the movie National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. The people who lived in Moab did not like the people from Israel.*

- *The King of Moab tried to get a man named Balaam to curse Israel when they were walking through their land. (Instead of cursing the Israelites, Balaam blessed them. That made the Moabites really mad.)*
- *The Moabites worshipped Chemosh. They did not worship the LORD.*
- *The people from Moab spoke almost the same language as the people from Israel.*

Q. **Do you think most people from Israel would like or not like people from Moab?**
(Would not like.)

Q. **There is a change in how long the family intends to stay in Moab. It is hidden in the verses. Can you find it?**

Read Ruth 1:1-2 and 4.

Emphasize the phrases "For a while" ... "lived there."

Verse 1: **for a while** meant a lengthy visit. They didn't plan to make this move permanent.

Verse 4: **lived in Moab for about ten years**

So it seems that in the beginning the family was going to just stay a short while, but then they decided to settle down.



Q. Let's list what Naomi lost in order. Write down their answers, and teach what they do not say.

1. There was a famine. No food.
2. She left her friends and family in Israel.
3. Her husband died.
4. Her sons died.

In other words, she lost everything. Show prop of RIP sign.

Q. What has happened to Naomi's life? (It is wrecked. She is so sad.)
Refer to drawing above.

After Elimelech dies, Naomi still has hope.

Q. What could be her hope?

Ruth 1:4

Yes, her sons got married.

Q. And when people get married, after a while what usually comes along? (A baby.)
That's right!

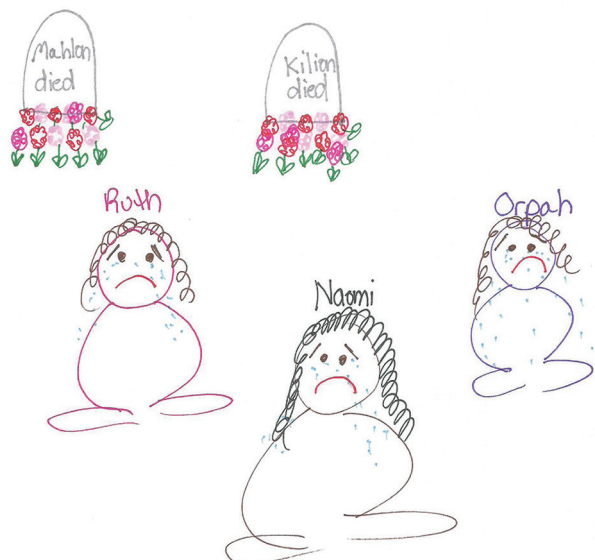
Q. But then what happens to that hope Ruth had?

Ruth 1:5

Yes, it dies when both sons die.

Q. So what has happened to her family? (It is gone.)

Q. Everyone is not gone. Who is left? (Ruth and Orpah.)





4. What about Me?

10 minutes

Summing It Up: *In our losses, God is still in control.*

Q. Have you ever had a loss like Naomi's? (Yes.)

Write their answers.

Q. How have you felt after these losses? (Sad. Very sad.)

Q. Do you think God knew how Naomi felt after her husband and sons died? (Yes.)

Q. Do you think God knows how you feel when you are sad? (Yes.)



Gospel Connection: We are going to see how God takes very special care of Naomi in this book of Ruth. We know that God will take care of us as well because Jesus promises that He will never leave us alone.

5. Reminder Sheet

Find this lesson's reminder sheet in the student manual. We encourage you to send a sheet home with each student.



"Naomi grew devastated while thinking about her husband and sons after their death; she lost them."

6. Close in Prayer

Dear God...thank you that you are with us when we are sad. Thank you that you have said you will replace our tears of sorrow with tears of joy. We love you. Amen.





Bethesda