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# Foreigner *No More*

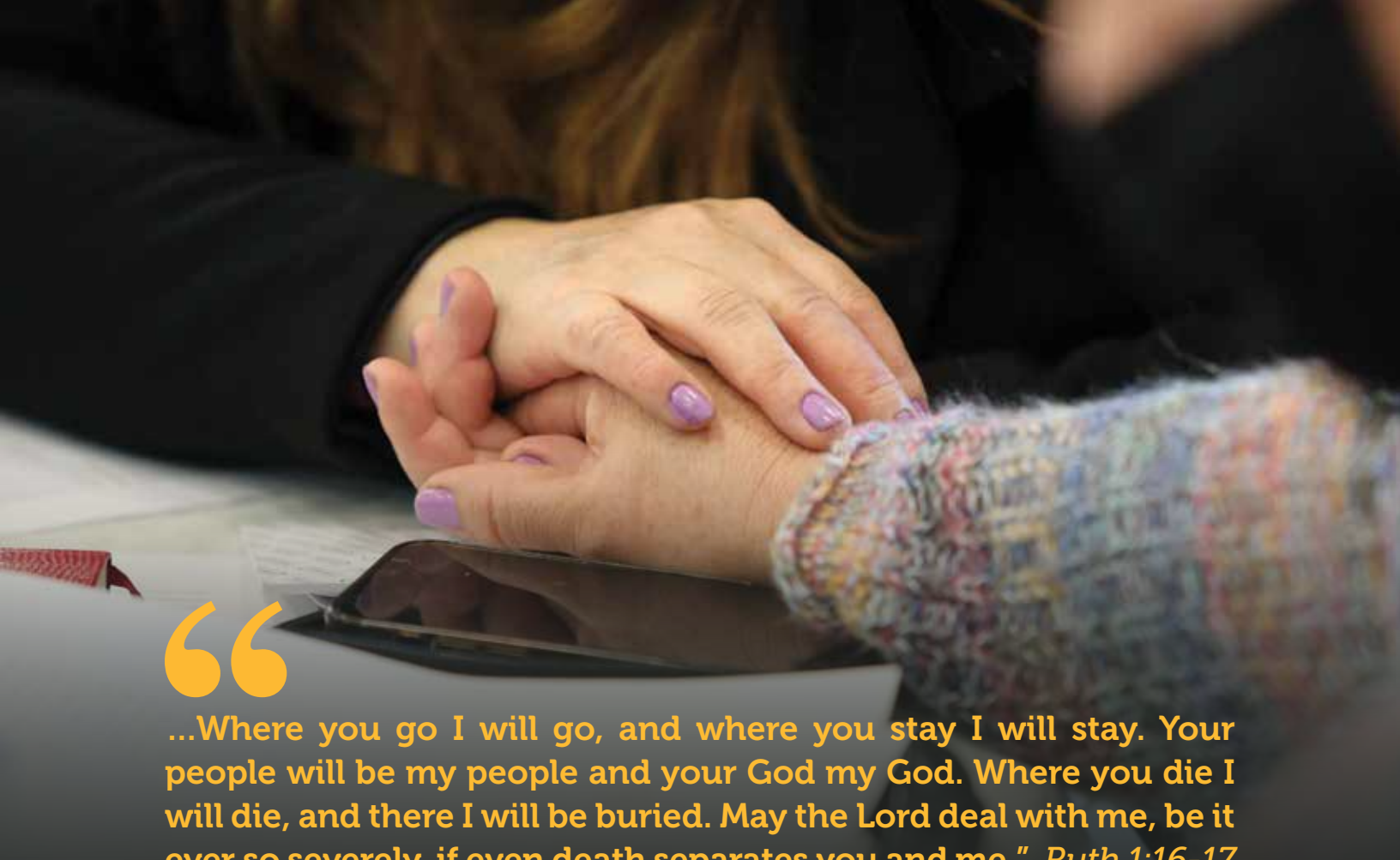
**Imagine** having to migrate to another country where you know no one and have very few, if any, resources. Now add to that a tragedy like the loss of a family member. You may think I'm talking about a current refugee or immigrant. That scenario could certainly describe many people today, especially refugees fleeing Ukraine.

But I'm actually thinking of the biblical account of Ruth. I've been drawn lately to this amazing story of loss, love, and loyalty.

There are so many layers to the story. But the one that sticks out for this edition of the *Proclaimer* is how Ruth, after the death of her father-in-law, her brother-in-law, and her husband, decides to leave her homeland and support her mother-in-law, Naomi, with everything within her. She turns her whole being from a place of hopelessness to the land, the people, and the Person of Hope (Ruth 1:16-18).

After one of the leaders and elders of the town of Bethlehem (Boaz) accepts her and lovingly helps and protects her (Ruth 2:8-13), she is welcomed into





“

**...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. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” *Ruth 1:16-17***

two families: 1) that of Boaz, Salmon, and going back to Judah (Ruth 4:11-12); and 2) that of the Jewish family!

This woman, who was once a stranger in a strange land, scrounging for food, becomes 1) the wife of one of the leaders and founders of Bethlehem; 2) the great grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:17-21); and 3) part of the ancestral line of King Jesus!

Today, thousands upon thousands of people are leaving their homelands and coming to the US with hope in their hearts. We have so many opportunities to share the beautiful love of Jesus and the message of the Gospel with the nations who have now become our neighbors. We are seeing a dramatic population increase in people of different nationalities who now make Virginia home.

Some good questions to ask ourselves both in ministry and personally:

- Are we receptive and open to approaching people from other nations to find out if they have any physical or spiritual needs?

- Are we as accepting of these as we are of those who are already part of our church family?
- Are we ready to introduce them to the Maker of each one of us...regardless of ethnicity? To tell them about Jesus, the only way to the Father—and prayerfully welcome them one day into the bigger family of God?

We need to remember that this is much bigger than just a country of origin or nationality. This has to do with eternity. By opening up our hearts and churches to the nations, we are actually paving the way for them to be welcomed into the family of God. What a blessing and celebration that happens every time someone accepts Jesus into his/her heart! Each new believer has the incredible privilege to be one God’s children—joint heirs with Jesus Christ—and we will forever be together as the family of God, worshiping and praising the King of kings (Rev. 7:9-10). ■