

Join us in being on mission with God!

OUR VISION

To continually mature and grow as a united body of Jesus-imitators who live out God's greatest commandment to "Love" by exalting God and serving one another, and His greatest commission to "Go" by reaching into and shaping our local, regional, and global communities.

"Hope in Tough Times"

Ruth Chapters 1-4

Getting Started

After an introductory time, discuss the following questions in your group or class.

Q. Most of us like the idea of friendship, yet it many of us find it difficult to cultivate a deep and lasting friendship with one or more persons. What are some of the obstacles in life that make cultivating friendships difficult?

Q. Sometimes current friendships get in the way of cultivating more friendships. What are some of the reasons a person might deliberately limit the number of people they would classify as a close friend?

Q. What is the difference between someone who is an *acquaintance* and someone who is a *close friend*?

Friendship: Naomi and Ruth

1. Ruth 1:1-5 describes the background for Ruth and Naomi. What did they have in common? What was there that made them different from one another?

2. How old would you suspect Naomi was? What was the age of Ruth? What do you think Ruth's relationship with her birth family was like?



3. What was Ruth's original plan? (See verses 6-9) If you were in Ruth's situation, would you have made a similar suggestion or proposed a different plan?

4. Do you think Orpah was wise in choosing to take Ruth's advice and go back to her biological family? She disappears from the story. What do you think might have happened to her?

5. Ruth's loyalty to Naomi is quite surprising, given the differences between the two women. What do you think made Ruth so stubborn in the face of Naomi's repeated attempts to return to Israel alone? When is stubbornness a virtue? When is it a vice?

6. Naomi reveals the condition of her spirit when she comes back to Israel. What do you learn about her initial attitude in verses 20-21?

7. How would Naomi's recent past contribute to a spirit of bitterness?

8. If Naomi had been a modern woman, she might have blamed her husband for leaving his homeland and traveling to a strange country. She might have blamed God for taking the lives of her two sons and leaving no grandsons to carry on the family line. She might have blamed circumstances like famine for some of her afflictions. How do you think she displayed her bitterness?

Something Else Here

9. Sometimes Christians are quick to show their friendship by suggesting reasons behind God's actions. Ruth doesn't try to give Naomi biblical answers to her questions about the painful circumstances that are part of her life. She simply insists on not allowing Naomi to go through this trial alone. What is wise about Ruth's approach?

10. Describe a situation in your own life where someone ministered to you as a friend by staying in touch with you and partnering with you rather than trying to explain your circumstances and God's possible role in them.

11. What are some challenges you have faced alone that would have been easier if a friend had shared them with you?

12. List some practices that you regard as dos and don'ts for acting wisely as a friend in a situation?

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13. Like most people, Ruth could have used a friend who was supportive, mature, and on fire for God. The text seems to suggest that Naomi was wrestling through with issues of her own. How can you be a quality friend when your own life has its challenges? What do you think God expects of you when you share in adversity with your friend?



Reaching Up and Reaching Out

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Part of the power in a friendship comes from the ability to process the challenges of life with another person. There is a synergy that takes place when we share life with someone else, even when they don't seem to have lots of answers.

- 14. Ruth and Naomi could have spent their time feeling discouraged, waiting for someone to do something for them. What kind of initiative did Ruth take? (See Ruth 2:2.) What risks did she take in this course of action? How might her status as a foreigner made this more difficult?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 14.

We don't know what kind of living situation Ruth and Naomi had. They could have enjoyed temporary lodging with some distant relatives. (Remember, that family, clan, and tribe were high values in this culture.) They may have been ostracized because Ruth was not Jewish. (You recall how much later Peter did not want to associate with Gentiles.)

- 15. As the 7-week grain harvests were ending, Naomi came up with an initiative of her own. What was it? (See Ruth 3:1.)

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 15.

- 16. How do you think Naomi's idea sounded to Ruth as a foreigner and a relatively young woman?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 16.

- 17. What were the risks Naomi was calling Ruth to take in approaching Boaz the way she did?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 17.

- 18. What are some choices in your life where the perspective of a friend might help?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 18.

- 19. How might the counsel of a friend open doors to a possibility that you might not even be aware of?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 19.

- 20. In what way does the teamwork between Ruth and Naomi give both of them greater hope in times of difficulty and uncertainty?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 20.

- 21. Who do you allow to speak into your life and suggest "out of the box" initiatives or ideas? Whose counsel do you take most seriously?

Two horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 21.