

- 1 Be concise.** Please share your thoughts and answers, but be considerate so that others will have time to share their answers also. Be charitable and kind. Be willing to share with the group, but do not try to dominate the conversation. Use the time after the class to find help with any personal issues or problems you may be confronting in your life.

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”

(James 1:19–20)

- 2 Be thoughtful with your answer.** Consider your words. Do not simply regurgitate what you have always heard. We have the tendency to speak in “Christianese” — words that only people who grew up on the pews would understand. Think about how your words will be heard by others. Will they understand what you are saying? Is what you are about to say going to be useful for the building up of the faith of others? Or will your words be confusing, cause hurt, or worse, damage someone’s faith? Speak without harshness or anger, but with kindness and humility.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

(Ephesians 4:29)

- 3 Rely on the scriptures for truth.** It is easy to rely upon conventional, worldly wisdom as truth. Bible study is about seeking God’s answers for our lives, not dispensing the advice of the world. We must consider that our natural answers may be the wrong answers if they are not founded on God’s word.

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

(1 Corinthians 1:25)

Tragedy strikes. A family member is struck with a terminal illness. A financial crisis blindsides the family. Unexpected death brings unspeakable pain. Life does not go according to plan. For all our planning and all of our visions for setting our future, life does not go according to those plans. This is the setting for the book of Ruth in the scriptures.

The first five verses of Ruth records the tragedy for the family. Trouble begins with a famine in the land. The family is hungry. There is not food to eat. The husband, Elimelech, decides to move his wife, Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, to Moab to survive the famine. But this turns out to be a disastrous decision. What was intended to be the rescue of the family turned out to be the doom of the family. First, Elimelech dies in Moab. The two sons marry Moabite women but after about 10 years in Moab these two sons also die. Naomi is only left with two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. Naomi appears to be destined to die alone and destitute. There is no one to care for her. There is no one to provide for her. There is no one who can change her circumstances. We must get in touch with her pain and loss to understand her statements and actions in the book of Ruth. She has nothing.

What about you? Have you gone through trial or tragedy that has left you empty or broken? Are you enduring hardships that have left you with loss physically or emotionally? Has your faith been put to the test so that you did not know if you would serve the Lord any longer? The book of Ruth is about a woman named Naomi whose faith is broken. She has not forsaken the Lord. That is not what we mean by broken faith. Rather, she thinks that God has brought this disaster on her and does not seem to be near to help her. She is suffering and God does not seem to care nor seems ready to rescue. What can you learn from these times in your life? Is God still with you, even when he feels so far away? Does God still love his people even when they are in pain? Can God change your life circumstances even when you have lost it all? Prepare yourself to study a glorious book about the God who redeems your life.

WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES

Read Ruth 1:1-5



1. What is the time frame for the book of Ruth?

2. Read Judges 2:11-13 and Judges 21:25. What is the spiritual condition for the people of Israel during the days of the book of Ruth? Are there similarities to the condition in our culture today?

3. Read Leviticus 26:3-4 and Deuteronomy 28:20-24. What does it mean for Israel to experience a famine?

4. Explain the decision Elimelech makes for his family to move to Moab. Why would this seem be a logical decision to make according to human wisdom? Explain.

By contrast, why would this show disobedience and a lack of faith in God? Explain.

What do we learn about making decisions for our family? Does doing God’s will and having faith in God always match with what seems to be the right decision according to human standards? Explain.

As a wife, what challenges do you have when your husband makes decisions for the family that do not appear to be spiritually right decisions?

How should you handle such a circumstance if it arises while still being a godly wife and not sinning? Explain.

5. What happens to Naomi once in Moab?

Do we experience consequences in life for making ungodly decisions? Explain.

TRANSFORMATION:

How should we measure life decisions?

TIME TO RETURN

Read Ruth 1:6-22



1. Why is it so tragic and difficult for Naomi to have lost her husband and her sons?

2. Why does Naomi insist that Orpah and Ruth return to their mothers' homes in Moab?

3. Read verse 13 and verses 20-21. What is Naomi's perception of what God had done to her? Have you ever felt the same way?

In spite of these feelings, does Naomi lose her faith in God? Prove your answer from the text and explain your answer.

What lessons do we learn from Naomi and her return?

4. Read verses 16-18. Why are these amazing words coming from Ruth? What is the likely outcome of her life by following Naomi back to Judah?

Based on what Ruth says, what does covenant loyalty and faithfulness mean?

What does this loyalty and faithfulness look like in marriage?

What does this loyalty and faithfulness look like toward God?

What does this loyalty and faithfulness look like toward you from God?

TRANSFORMATION:

How does this lesson help you when you are broken by life?

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Read Ruth 2

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1. Describe the kindness and generosity that Boaz shows Ruth (2:8-9 and 2:14-16). How is Boaz going above and beyond the requirements of the Law of Moses?
2. Why does Boaz show this great generosity to Ruth (2:10-12)? What lessons do we learn from Boaz to apply to your life? How can you do this as a wife? How can you do this as a mother? How can you do this in the world?

Read Ephesians 4:28. Why does God give us the wealth and possessions that we have? How should we look at our physical blessings?

3. In this account we see the providence of God at work. This providence is spelled out in verses 3, 4, and 20. Did Ruth or Naomi know that God would do this work for them when Ruth went to the fields to glean? What lessons do you learn about the providence of God? How does this give you hope for your life when in distress or when faith feels broken?
4. We see in this second chapter that God begins to bless Naomi and Ruth through their tragedy and distress. Can you think of other examples in the scriptures of people who went through suffering and distress but were blessed by God through the suffering or at the end of the turmoil? Can you look at your own life and see God's hand doing the same for you?

TRANSFORMATION:

How does this lesson help you when your life is broken? How does it help you grow your faith?

FAITH IN GOD'S PROVISION

Read Ruth 3



1. What is Naomi's concern for Ruth (3:1)?

2. What is Naomi telling Ruth to do (3:3-4)? Consider each part of her instructions:

"Wash therefore and anoint yourself"

"Do not make yourself known to the man"

"Uncover his feet and lie down"

— Read Ezekiel 16:8. What is Ruth hoping Boaz will do when she uncovers his feet? Confirm your answer by reading Ruth 3:9.

3. Boaz praises Ruth for two aspects of her character and actions. What does he praise Ruth for in verse 10? Why? Would it have been wrong for Ruth to marry a young man? What about coming to Boaz for marriage is praiseworthy?

What does Boaz praise Ruth for in verse 11? The description is the same Hebrew phrase in Proverbs 12:4 and 31:10.

TRANSFORMATION:

Consider this chapter. Does having faith in God mean that we do not take action? Explain.

What characteristics in Ruth are praised that you can emulate in your life? Give examples.

FROM EMPTY TO FULL

Read Ruth 4



As we go through difficulties, suffering, trials, and tragedy it is hard to see how life can get better. It is often difficult to see how God is at work. Many times it is only much later in life where we can look back and see how God was at work.

1. Before we think about the life of Naomi and Ruth, consider the life of Joseph. How did God take his life from being empty and make it full again? When did Joseph see this reversal in his life as accomplished by God?

2. Trace the reversal happening in Ruth's life. What is Ruth's status in 2:11? What is her status in 2:13 after Boaz shows her kindness? What is Ruth's status in 3:9 in her marriage proposal? (Please note that some translations have the same word in 2:13 and 3:9, but they are different Hebrew words — look at other Bible versions). What is Ruth's status in 4:13?

3. Look back at Ruth 1:16-17; 2:11-12; 3:10-11. Through all of Ruth's loss and difficulty, what characteristics has she shown? What must we do during our suffering while awaiting God's reversal in our lives?

4. Consider the life of Naomi. What has she lost in her life up to this point? What reversal has God brought to the life of Naomi in 4:14-17? Why is this a blessing to her?

5. This reversal stands as a symbol of God's grace for future reversals to come. Through Obed would come David, and through David would come the Christ who would be the restorer and sustainer of life (4:15, 18-22).

What reversal would come to the Gentiles through Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22)?

What reversal would come to you through Christ (Ephesians 2:1-10)?

TRANSFORMATION:

Are there difficulties that you experienced in your past that you can now see God brought you from empty to full? Explain, and share with the class if you are willing.

FAITH WHEN BROKEN

The Life of Naomi and Ruth



SELF-STUDY WORKBOOK

by: Brent Kercheville