

SESSION 2

Bible Study Notes: Ruth Chapter 1

"From Famine to Faithfulness"

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Share one thing your parents taught you that has significantly shaped your life, OR one thing you wish they had taught you.

Sermon Overview (5 minutes)

This week we began our study of the book of Ruth, set during the time of the judges (around 1100 BC) when Israel was in rebellion against God. We examined the choices of Elimelech's family to leave Bethlehem (the "house of bread" in the land of "praise") during a famine and relocate to Moab—a land founded through incest and known for idolatry. Despite tragic circumstances, we see Ruth's remarkable faith and commitment emerge.

Key Themes Identified

- **Redemption and Restoration**
- **God's Sovereignty**
- **Faithfulness and Obedience**
- **The consequences of our choices**
- **God's grace for those who return to Him**

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Understanding Context (15 minutes)

1. **What stood out to you most from the historical background of Moab?** How does understanding this context change your perspective on Elimelech's decision to move his family there?
2. **The sermon mentioned that Elimelech's name means "my God is king," yet his actions didn't reflect this.** Can you think of times when our theology (what we say we believe) doesn't match our actions? What causes this disconnect?
3. **Naomi lived in the "land of praise" and the "house of bread" but left during famine.** What might have happened if they had stayed and sought God instead of fleeing? What does this teach us about facing difficulties?

Part 2: Examining Choices (20 minutes)

4. **The pastor said, "Sometimes Moab looks good because it's prosperous and there's food, but sometimes that is not where you want to go."** What are some modern-day "Moabs" that look appealing but could lead us away from God's best?
5. **Discuss this statement: "I want to be really careful not to be jealous of other people and be offended with the Lord that I'm not where they are when the devil has them right where he wants them."** Have you ever been jealous of someone else's prosperity only to later realize they were in a spiritually dangerous place?
6. **Elimelech went to Moab "for a while" but stayed over 10 years.** Share an example (without naming names) of when a "temporary" compromise became permanent. What warning does this give us?

Part 3: Ruth's Response (15 minutes)

7. **Read Ruth 1:16-17 together.** What do Ruth's words reveal about her character? What made her willing to leave everything familiar and follow Naomi to an uncertain future?
8. **The pastor said Ruth "wasn't going to get anything from [Naomi]; she was going to serve her."** How does this challenge our consumer approach to faith where we expect to "get something" from our relationship with God or church?
9. **Ruth chose faithfulness over comfort, the unknown over security.** What situation in your life right now requires this kind of faith? What's holding you back from taking that step?

Part 4: Naomi's Journey (10 minutes)

10. **Naomi said, "The Lord's hand has turned against me."** Have you ever felt this way? How can pain distort our view of who God really is?
11. **Despite her bitterness and loss, Naomi still chose to return to Judah.** What does this teach us about coming back to God even when we're hurt, angry, or have made mistakes?

Key Takeaways

- **Our choices have consequences** that often extend beyond ourselves to our families and future generations
- **Prosperity in the wrong place is still the wrong place** – don't be deceived by comfort that comes at the cost of obedience
- **God redeems even our worst decisions** when we turn back to Him
- **True faith serves without expecting immediate return** – Ruth's commitment wasn't based on what she could get
- **Pain can distort our perspective of God** – we must anchor ourselves in truth, not feelings
- **"God will bring you out to bring you in"** – sometimes leaving the wrong place is the first step toward blessing

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge (Choose 1-2):

1. **Identify Your "Moab":** Is there an area of your life where you've chosen comfort or prosperity over obedience? Write it down and pray about what returning to "Judah" (God's best) would look like.
2. **Practice Ruth-like Commitment:** Choose one relationship or commitment where you'll serve without expecting anything in return this week. Journal about the experience.
3. **Truth Over Feelings:** If you're in a difficult season, write down 5 biblical truths about God's character. Read them daily to combat distorted perspectives caused by pain.
4. **Evaluate Temporary Compromises:** Ask God to reveal any "temporary" compromises that have become permanent patterns. Confess them and make a plan to change.

5. **Study Names:** Look up what your name means. Does your life reflect it? If you could rename yourself based on who you want to become in Christ, what would it be?

Going Deeper (Optional Homework)

- **Read all four chapters of Ruth** this week (it's short!)
- **Study the genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22** – trace how this story connects to Jesus
- **Research the concept of the "kinsman redeemer"** in Jewish law – how does this foreshadow Christ?
- **Memorize Ruth 1:16-17**

Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

Silent Reflection: Take 2-3 minutes of silence to ask God:

- "Where am I choosing Moab over Judah in my life right now?"
- "What step of faith are you calling me to take, even if it's uncomfortable?"

Share: If comfortable, share one commitment you're making based on tonight's discussion.

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

"Lord, we want to be like Ruth – faithful, obedient, and committed to following You no matter the cost. Help us recognize when we're choosing comfort over Your will. Give us courage to return to 'Judah' when we've wandered to 'Moab.' Strengthen us to serve without expecting immediate return. May our lives reflect not just right theology, but right action. In Jesus' name, amen."

Next Week Preview

We'll continue in Ruth chapters 1-2, following Naomi and Ruth as they arrive in Bethlehem and Ruth begins working in Boaz's field. We'll explore themes of provision, favor, and how God positions us for blessing even in humble circumstances.