



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of November 13, 2016

WEPC small groups meet in homes across Richmond every week to participate in Jesus Christ's mission to Richmond, enjoy fellowship, study God's Word, pray together, and explore the fruit of the Gospel on our lives. Simply put, these groups are small enough to be the church to one another, and they serve as bridges between WEPC and the community where God has planted us. It is a place where the church can go deeper in the worship of God and further in Christ's mission.

Note to Discussion Leaders: Have members read the Bible passage in the group meeting. This is a "worship discussion" guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. Read through this guide before meeting with the group. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for the time of meeting together, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

Ruth 1:6-18, "Where You...I Will"

⁶ Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. ⁷ So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸ But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹ The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. ¹⁰ And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹ But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹² Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this

night and should bear sons, ¹³ would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me." ¹⁴ Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵ And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." ¹⁶ But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." ¹⁸ And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

1. Why did Naomi tell her two daughters-in-law to return to their individual natural family when she herself had no other family (vv. 6-13)?
2. What do her prayers in vv.8-9 reveal about her view of God?
3. To what does Naomi attribute her plight (v.13)?

4. Both Ruth and Orpah originally planned to stay with Naomi (v.10). What persuaded Orpah to return to her mother's house (vv.8-9,11-13)?

5. What does Ruth risk in going with Naomi (vv.10-14)? What five vows of faithfulness did Ruth make to her mother-in-law (vv.16-17)?

6. How should a Christian respond to the kind of tragedy experienced by Naomi? How would you respond to her?

7. Share a time in your life when you were spiritually empty and afflicted. How did you respond to God and to others? What did God do in your situation? How have you been changed through that difficult season?

8. Consider a relationship where you sacrifice to love someone. How does Jesus Christ's love for you make a difference in that relationship?

Going A Step Further...

- Each week in worship, we confess our sins and then hear a Scripture verse that encourages us with the Good News that Jesus loves and forgives sinners. **This week's Words of Encouragement come to us from [Titus 2:13-14](#)**. What do these verses teach us about the identity and purpose of Jesus?

- Each week in worship we read another Bible passage to complement the sermon text. **This week's New Testament Reading comes from [II Timothy 2:8-13](#)**. What is the Christian's hope? What does it mean that we are "redeemed"?

- As a part of worship [we sing songs and hymns](#) that further amplify each Sunday's message. **This week, we sang John Wilbur Chapman's great hymn, "Jesus! What a Friend for Sinners"**, a reflection of the grace provided for those who call Jesus Friend. [Read](#), [listen to](#), or [sing](#) the hymn, and enter into a time of prayer thanking the Jesus for all the ways He has shown Himself to be your Friend, Savior, Strength, Comfort, Guide, Keeper, Pilot, Help and All.

*Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
[To hear sermons and access past study guides visit www.wepc.org/archivedsermons](http://www.wepc.org/archivedsermons)*

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on Ruth 1:6-18.

- In Ruth 1:1-5 we witness catastrophe upon catastrophe: Famine, Death, Barrenness, Triple widowhood.
- Does God see? Does God hear? Can He heal and restore?
- Verse 6 hints that the LORD has something in store for these women in Bethlehem.
- The writer of this story wants us to see to the fullest extent Naomi's misery and bone-deep bitterness.
- "Go...return...turn back...turn back...turn back...return..."
- Why would Naomi do this?
- Note what she says: "Go to your mother's house" (?)
- "The house of her husband"
- "See your sister-in-law has returned to her people and to her gods"
- She does not want the responsibility of these women. Because...
- There is no hope for her to provide what she could provide husbands (levirate marriage)
- God is against her ("the hand of the Lord has gone out against me"). God is against me and therefore you will suffer if you stay with me.
- "There's a lesson here. When we have decided that God is against us, we usually exaggerate our hopelessness. We become so bitter we can't see the rays of light peeping out around the clouds. It was God who broke the famine and opened the way home (1:6). It was God who preserved a kinsman to continue Naomi's line (2:20). And it was God who constrains Ruth to stay with Naomi. But Naomi is so embittered by God's hard providence that she can't see His mercy at work in her life." (*John Piper*)
- But God is providing for Naomi in Ruth's amazing, remarkable faithfulness: "Do not urge me to leave you or return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God; where you die I will die and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you."
- The more we think about Ruth's words the more amazing they become. Ruth's commitment to her destitute mother-in-law is simply astonishing.
- First, it means leaving her own family and land.
- Second, it means, as far as she knows, a life of widowhood and childlessness, because Naomi has no man to give, and if she married a non-relative, her commitment to Naomi's family would be lost.
- Third, it means going to an unknown land with a new people and new customs and new language.
- Fourth, it was a commitment even more radical than marriage: "Where you die I will die and there be buried" (v. 17). In other words, she will never return home, not even if Naomi dies.
- But the most amazing commitment of all is this: "Your God will be my God" (v.16). Naomi has just said in v.13, "The hand of the Lord has gone forth against me." Naomi's experience of God was bitterness. But in spite of this, Ruth forsakes her religious heritage and makes the God of Israel her God. Somehow or other Ruth had come to trust in Naomi's God in spite of Naomi's bitter experiences.
- Ruth stands alone; she possesses nothing. She makes a clean break.
- Naomi's response: Silence in the face of this vow.
- "And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.' And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.' Peter began to say to him, 'See, we have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'" ([Mark 10:23-31](#))
- A picture of the community the Lord is building....
- His goodness
- His commitment
- A rebuke and an encouragement.