

A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of November 6, 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 1:1-6, "Days Without"

¹In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. ²The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. ³But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴These

took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, ⁵and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

⁶Then 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.

- 1.) Read the Book of Ruth though in a single setting to hear the whole story. Even if you were to read it our loud as a group, it would only take 20 minutes. What first impressions do you have after a reading of the book?
- 2.) One of the prominent themes of the Book of Ruth is redemption. How have you seen God act as Redeemer in your life? What things tempt you to believe God will not redeem?
- 3.) Read Ruth 1:1-6. When did the events of this story take place? What else is said about this period (1:1)?
- 4.) Describe the family who was driven into the land of Moab by the famine (1:1-2). Identify each member: Elimelech (*My God is King*), Naomi (*Pleasant; Sweet*), Mahlon (*Weak; Sick*), Orpah (*Neck; Stiff-Necked*), Chilion (*Failing*) & Ruth (*Friend*)
- 5.) Given Israel's spiritual condition at the time, how might the family understood the famine in Bethlehem? (cf. [Deuteronomy 28:15,22-24](#)).
- 6.) How long did this family live in Moab and what tragedies did they suffer (1:3-5)? Note the use of the term "she was left". What are the various effects these kinds of suffering can have on the human heart?
- 7.) What moved Naomi to return with her daughters-in-law to her homeland in Judah (1:6)? What might Naomi, Ruth & Orpah have been experiencing spiritually as they returned to Bethlehem from ten years in Moab?
- 8.) The Book of Ruth teaches about God's gracious providence. What do you need God to do in your life?

Going A Step Further...

- Each Communion Service at WEPC, we declare the Christian faith using historic Creeds and Confessions. **This week's Declaration of Faith was the [Apostles' Creed](#)** (a summary of the teaching of the New Testament which originates from the 2nd century). Read the Creed together as a group to begin a time of prayer, and thank the triune God for all of His works as Father, Son & Holy Spirit.
- **This past Sunday we participated in the sacrament of Lord's Supper.** This was particularly poignant in light of Ruth 1:6, which reminds us that the LORD is present with His people and He has provided Bread from Heaven in Jesus Christ. As you reflect on this element of the worship service: did the Holy Spirit convict, change, or encourage you in any way you wish to share with the group?
- **In light of this week's Election Day, pray for our country, the Commonwealth of Virginia, Richmond and surrounding counties.** "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior" (*1 Timothy 2:1-6*). Pray that the Church would treasure Jesus Christ, and proclaim His sovereignty and supremacy over all nations; To live and long for the day when He will reign with His people from every tribe and tongue and nation; To expect that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.
- As a part of worship **we sing songs and hymns** that further amplify each Sunday's message. This week, we sang Sandra McCracken's great hymn, "[We Will Feast in the House of Zion](#)", a reflection on the hope we have in light of God's promises and providence. Read, listen to, or sing the hymn, and enter into a time of prayer thanking the Lord for all He graciously provides for His people.

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

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [Ruth 1:1-6](#)

The Book of Ruth Connects to the World in which We Live

- Refugees, Famine, Death, Grief, Family, In-laws, Love, Redemption
- "And Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king." ([Matthew 1:5-6](#))

Ruth

- The historical setting: "in the days when the judges ruled" (v.1)
- "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" ([Judges 21:25](#))
- "And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi.' They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David" ([Ruth 4:17](#))
- Note to whom the son is born: While the book is entitled 'Ruth' it is primarily about Naomi, her losses, her grief, and God's redemption. This woman is not insignificant. In God's economy there are not unimportant or 'little' people.
- The book serves as a bridge between what was in many ways the darkest time in the history of Israel and the glory days of the reign of King David.
- The names: Elimelech ("My God is King"), Naomi ("Pleasant; sweet"), Mahlon ("Weak; Sick"), Orpah ("Neck; Stiff-Necked"), Chilion ("Failing"), Ruth ("Friend"), Bethlehem ("House of Bread")
- The reason the family leaves Bethlehem: A famine, ironic in the sense that Bethlehem means "House of Bread"
- The text does not comment on the issue of going to Moab.
- "And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, 'Please let my father and my mother stay with you, till I know what God will do for me.' And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold." ([1 Samuel 22:3-4](#))
- Elimelech dies, and then the boys die. We don't know how long they were married but we do note that they had no children. They were barren.
- Now Naomi is left with no husband, no children or grandchildren. Note the use of the term "she was left" (vv.3, 5)

- “From wife to widow, from mother to childless, Naomi is stripped of all identity. The security of husband and children, which a male-dominated culture affords its women, is hers no longer. The definition of worth, by which it values women, applies to her no more. The blessings of old age, which come from family and children and grandchildren are hers no longer: Stranger in a foreign land, this woman is a victim of death- and of life.”
(Frederic Bush)

What Will God Do?

- We have a hint in v.6, “She heard that the LORD had visited his people and given them food”
- Does God see?
- Can He heal?
- Can He restore?
- Can He deliver?