

C O R N E R S T O N E

Sermon Based Study Guide

The Story of Ruth: Act I

Ruth 1:1-5

August 6, 2017 – Chris Hay

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

Here is the link to the sermon podcasts and archives of these Study Guides:

<http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/resourcesmediaclasses>

1. Share about a time when you had lost hope. What were the things that brought you out of that despair? How can you relate to Naomi and Ruth and the incredible loss they experienced?

2. In what ways can you relate to the theme of Judges: 'everyone did what was right in their own eyes'? This might be a good time for some confession, repentance, and publicly sharing how you are going to change your ways. Pray for each other about this.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. James 5:16

3. Talk about those people and groups in your world that are outsiders, those that have been pushed to the side. Identify these people and groups—even if you don't personally feel that they are outsiders. Do you feel like you are part of a segment of society that has been looked down on or marginalized? Share how this feels so that others can 'see' what you have experienced.

4. What are some practical things you can do so that you intentionally 'see' those who don't quite fit in? Talk about places to go, people to engage in conversation, etc.

5. How can you show kindness and grace to those around you who are 'different'? How can you as a group show kindness and grace to those who have been given second class status?

6. If appropriate for your group, watch the movie 'The Blind Side' together. Be sure and plan time to discuss it afterwards (it is just over 2 hours long).



C O R N E R S T O N E

Sermon Based Study Guide

The Story of Ruth: Act II

Ruth 1:6-22

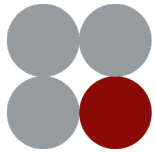
August 13, 2017 – Todd Nighswonger

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1. Last week, Chris gave us three things to think about: (1) There is always hope, (2) Open our eyes and see, and (3) Do something! Show grace and kindness. In what ways have you been faithful to being a doer of the Word and not just a listener (James 1:23-25)?
 2. Discuss as a group why “hope” is so important. Make sure to define what hope is from Scripture in your discussion. What happens to people when they find hope (even if it is false hope)?
 3. Naomi believed that hope for Orpah and Ruth would be found in returning to their people and gods, and finding husbands. This was a common-sense approach to hope in the Ancient Near East. Discuss what is wrong with this and how we tend to do the same thing in our time and culture.
 4. The word “bitter” becomes a key word as Naomi discussed her current situation. In its figurative sense “bitterness” refers to a mental or emotional condition that corrodes or “eats away at.” It often tends to affect a person experiencing profound grief or hardship in the same way poison acts on the body. The narrator of Ruth describes Naomi as “bitter.” How did this impact Naomi? How do you see bitterness in our culture? In yourself? How does this tend to cause one to think of themselves as a victim? Discuss the implications as a group.
 5. Read Ruth 1:16-17 aloud as a group. Discuss as many of the implications that you can from this passage. Try to focus on the ways in which Ruth was different from Naomi.



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Sermon Based Study Guide

The Story of Ruth: Act III

Ruth 2

August 20, 2017 – Christian Burkhardt

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

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Note to Leaders: In addition to these discussion questions, you should also have received a PDF of two application slides from Christian's message. Feel free to incorporate those into your group's discussion.

The following discussion questions have been adapted from Dean R. Ulrich's commentary on Ruth, *From Famine to Fullness* (P&R Publishing, 2007), p. 69:

1. In Ruth 2, the author tells us that Ruth just "happens" to end up gleaning in Boaz's field, and a short time later Boaz just "happens" to show up. Yet, in writing it this way, the author means for us to recognize that these are not mere coincidences, but the sovereign hand of God guiding the events in Ruth and Boaz's lives. Can you recall an incident in your life when something was simply too well-timed and too perfectly suited to be anything but the gracious hand of God intervening on your behalf?
2. Compare Naomi's words in 1:20-21 with those in 2:20. Ruth and Boaz' example of trust and faithfulness began to make Naomi aware of another way of understanding God's activity in her life. Has God used another person's example of trust to open your eyes to the reality of his presence in your life? Has he used you to do the same for someone else?
3. Boaz reached out to a Moabitess—someone different and even despised by his fellow Israelites. Are there certain people whom you wish to avoid? Why? How does the message of the Book of Ruth change your perspective toward those people?
4. Is there an area of your life where you are hesitant to entrust your well-being to God's care and risk serving others in the name of Jesus? How does Ruth 2 encourage and challenge you to live by faith?



C O R N E R S T O N E

Sermon Based Study Guide

The Story of Ruth: Act IV

Ruth 3

August 27, 2017 – Chris Hay

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

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1. Do you think Naomi's plan to get Ruth married was as bad as Chris made it out to be? Or do you think she was justified in doing what she did? Discuss this and share your opinions and thoughts.
2. Share a story of when you were pretty sure you were living by 'common sense.' How did it turn out?
3. Share a story of when you were pretty sure you were living by 'faith.' How did it turn out?
4. Discuss these questions:
 - How do I know if I am living by faith or living by common sense?
 - How can I tell the difference between common sense living and faith living?
5. Boaz demonstrated living by faith by 1) following God's word and God's way, 2) placing a high value on integrity and godly character, and 3) taking risks based on God's word. Discuss these 3 and share which one is most difficult for you. Think through and discuss how you will work on that area.
6. Todd, Christian, and Chris all asked the question: "Do you really want to live by faith?" Talk about the implications of answering this question both in the positive and the negative.
7. Discuss ways in which we 'help' the marginalized that does not really restore dignity. How can we help in such a way that bestows kindness, honor, and dignity to those we are helping?



C O R N E R S T O N E

Sermon Based Study Guide

The Story of Ruth: Act V

Ruth 4:1-12

September 3, 2017 – Todd Nighswonger

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

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1. Spend time as a group purposely praying for the people in the affected areas of Hurricane Harvey. Before you pray, however, spend time as a group discussing how you might pray biblically. Slow down with this. What does God actually want us to ask Him for? Use the messages on Ruth, especially Todd's message this past weekend, as your guide.
 2. In this passage, what are all the ways in which Boaz carried out his plan correctly? What are some of the ways in which your group (or you) have tended to care for the marginalized incorrectly? Make sure to discuss why you carried your plans incorrectly. For example: 'I felt badly, and it allowed me to feel better about doing something.'
 3. Boaz sought to apply biblical principles to his plan. Why do we at times tend to avoid biblical principle in our plans to care for those in need? Why do we tend to act more like Naomi than Boaz?
 4. Boaz's plan had Naomi and Ruth (those on the margins) at the forefront. How did this benefit Naomi and Ruth? How did this bring honor to God? What was the loss to the redeemer, Mr. So-and-So? What did this cost Boaz in the short-term? Long-term? How did he benefit? How does all of this apply to us?
 5. The resounding response to the plan from the elders and the people was: "Yes!!!" Discuss all the reasons why. Why was their blessing so prophetic?



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Sermon Based Study Guide

The Story of Ruth: Act VI

Ruth 4:13-22

September 10, 2017 – Christian Burkhardt

Leader's Guide: Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

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1. We've spent the last 6 weeks in the book of Ruth. Spend a few minutes discussing together what you have learned: What has stuck with you? New insights? How have you sought to apply what you have learned so far?
 2. The story of Ruth shows us that God's way of bringing redemption usually moves from small to big, from the personal level to the societal or global level. However, Christian pointed out that in our culture, our attempts to address problems usually begin at the big-scale level, in hopes that change will eventually "trickle down" to the personal level. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not? If yes, why do you think that is our cultural tendency?
 3. The redemption of Ruth and Naomi involved both **inclusion** and **elevation** within the community. This is also the way that Paul describes *our* redemption by Jesus in Ephesians 2:11-22. Discuss as a group what it would look like to pursue inclusion and elevation, both with each other and with those around you?
 - a. Who do you tend to overlook or avoid?
 - b. Who do you feel uncomfortable or unequipped to pursue?
 4. Ruth and Naomi's redemption turns out to be a small part of God's plan to bring redemption to all people through Jesus Christ. God wasn't afraid to bring Ruth and Naomi along a very hard road in the process, because ultimately he had good purposes in mind, both for them and for the rest of humanity.

Think about your life right now: Where are you struggling to trust that God has good purposes for your circumstances? Share these struggles with the group, and spend time praying for one another (See Rom. 8:28-29 & Heb. 12:7-10 to guide your prayers).