

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, January 4, 2009

Passage: Ruth 1

Memory Passage: Ruth 1:16-17

TODAY: *From your study this past week, what is one thing that impressed you that can be of help in your life?*

DAY 1 – PRAY FOR INSIGHT

READ THE WHOLE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Ruth 1:1.** The book of Ruth takes place during the period of the judges. Who were the judges (Judges 2:16-19)? What was the time of judges like in Israel? Was it good or bad?
- (b) Read Deuteronomy 23:3-6. What judgment did God place upon Moab? Why was this judgment given? What would it have meant for Elimelech to travel to Moab? What does this show about his character?
- (c) Read Judges 3:12-14. What was Israel's relationship with Moab during this time period? What does this tell us about the desperation of Elimelech?
- (d) Read Genesis 12:10-20 and 26:1-6. What similarities are there between these two stories? What do these two stories tell us about God? What phrase is repeated in Ruth 1:1 that is in both of these stories? How does that set the context for the passage?
- (e) *Think about it:* Would you have done what Elimelech had done? What was it that he was lacking? When times are tough do you turn to God or try to fix things yourself? In the midst of trials what does God call us to do (Philippians 4:6-7)?
- (f) *Family:* Read Ruth 1:1. Talk about what the time of Judges was like in Israel. What would it be like to be in a famine? What are some hard times that your family has been through? Are you in one now? Talk about what it means to trust in God and not your circumstances. Read Philippians 4:6-7. Pray that the Lord would continue to watch over you and give thanks to Him for His gracious care.

DAY 2 – PRAY FOR INSIGHT

READ THE WHOLE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Ruth 1:1-5.** Bethlehem means "house of bread." What does this tell us about Bethlehem? What does this tell us about the severity of the famine?
- (b) At the end of verse 2, the statement is made that they "settled/remained there." Why is that important? The sons ended up marrying Moabites, were the Jews supposed to marry Moabites?
- (c) In verse 4, how long had they all lived in Moab? Do you think the famine lasted for 10 years? What had happened to Elimelech and his sons to keep them there?
- (d) What happened to Elimelech and his sons? Was this punishment or a coincidence?
- (e) *Think about it:* Sin can sometimes begin with good intentions, but a little compromise can go a long way. Have you ever justified something that you knew was wrong? Did your sin stop with that? Read James 1:14-15. Sin will often start small and end with big results. What are small things that you struggle with?
- (f) *Family:* Read Ruth 1:1-5. Talk about what Elimelech and his sons did. Do you think they were planning on staying for a while when they first moved? Talk about how a "small" sin can and will often grow. Read James 1:14-15. Is any sin not dangerous? Confess any sin that you have not confessed and pray that God would give you a heart that desires not to compromise on the small things.

DAY 3 – PRAY FOR INSIGHT

READ THE WHOLE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Ruth 1:6-14.** What did it take for Naomi to come to her senses? What had happened back home in Bethlehem while she was gone? Did Naomi initially take her daughters-in-law with her?
- (b) What does Naomi tell them to do after a while? What was their initial response? In verse 11-13, why does Naomi tell them to return to their homes?
- (c) Who stayed and who remained? Was Naomi's pleading with them to leave sacrificial on her part? Who was going to help her and take care of her if they left her? What does this say about Naomi?
- (d) *Think about it:* What does it say about Orpah that after Naomi gave her argument she left? Do you think Orpah had expectations? Was Orpah willing to really take risks to go with Naomi? God calls us to leave all of our sinful past behind us and cling to Him like Ruth clung to Naomi. Are there things that you are not willing to let go of? Write them down and then give them to God. Share them with your spouse or a good friend and pray that the Lord would watch over you.

(e) *Family*: Read Ruth 1:6-14. Talk about Naomi and Orpah and Ruth. What is it that Naomi is saying? Is this a sacrificial thing that she is doing? What does it tell us about Orpah when she decides to leave? What does Ruth's response tell us about her? Are there things that you cherish more than being with God? Pray that the Lord would release you from those things and that you would cling to Him.

DAY 4 – PRAY FOR INSIGHT

READ THE WHOLE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Ruth 1:15-18.** What does Naomi's remarks in verse 15 tell us about her faith in God? What does it tell us about her desire to evangelize Ruth? What might be an underlying motive for Naomi not to return to Bethlehem with a Moabite daughter-in-law?

(b) What is Ruth's response? What are the five promises that Ruth makes? How do they encompass all of her life?

(c) In verse 17, Ruth calls God "Lord." What does this communicate? (Hint: Look at the front of your Bible for an explanation of the use of an all caps Lord.)

(d) Who seems to trust in God more Naomi or Ruth?

(e) *Family*: Read Ruth 1:15-18. Talk about Ruth's response to Naomi. Was there any area of Ruth's life that she wanted to hold back? How are we to be like Ruth? Do you find yourself in Naomi's shoes or in Ruth's? What are you holding onto that keeps you from having a heart like Ruth's.

DAY 5 – PRAY FOR INSIGHT

READ THE WHOLE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Ruth 1:19-22.** What happened at Naomi's return? Does Naomi seem to be on the defensive when she gets back? Have you ever been in a situation like Naomi, where you just knew people were talking about you?

(b) The name "Naomi" means sweet. The name "Mara" means bitter. What is Naomi's opinion of her circumstances? Does she think that God has been fair?

(c) *Think about it*: Naomi thought she had been treated unfairly, but what had actually happened? Was God just in all that he let happen to her husband and sons? God is not bitter. People are bitter. Bitterness comes when we feel that we have been unjustly treated. Do feel like that? Do you have any bitterness towards a spouse or co-worker or sibling or parent? Do you deserve any better than you have received? Read Romans 3 and Ephesians 2:8-9. Do we deserve any good thing? Pray that the Lord would take any bitterness that you might have.

(d) *Family*: Read Ruth 1:19-22. Talk about Naomi's homecoming. Why was she on the defensive? Talk about bitterness. Had God really acted bitterly against her? Was her return really empty? What is the proper perspective we are to have in the midst of trials? Pray that the Lord would give you an eternal and godly perspective in life.

DAY 6 – PRAY FOR INSIGHT

READ THE WHOLE PASSAGE

(f) *Think back through what you have learned each day this week.* Read Ruth 1-22. What has stuck out to you this week from the passage? What has God taught you? Are you more like Ruth or Naomi or Orpah? Have you allowed yourself to grow bitter toward God or anyone? Pray that the Lord would give you a heart of faith and humility like Ruth.

DATE: January 4, 2009

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Bittersweet Providence
"Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara"