

Small Group Discussion Questions

Heaven on Earth: the Book of Ruth

These questions are designed to invite group reflection on today's Bible passage and life application of the themes introduced in today's sermon.

Week 7

Ruth 4:11-22

1. Recall some of the unexpected twists and turns of your life. Were these welcome or unwelcome developments? Can you identify anything positive that came from them? What is one experience of drama or disruption from which you can identify *no* positive result – an experience about which you wonder, “Why did that have to happen”?
2. One of the predominant themes of Ruth is infertility or barrenness. Can you name some of the examples of barrenness presented in the book? Can you think of any other notable examples of barrenness (either of persons or places) in the Bible? Why do you think barrenness is an important biblical theme? What does God reveal about Himself in these accounts?
3. What different troubles or tragedies occur in Naomi's life? What good things does she experience over the course of the Book of Ruth? If these things happened to you, would you conclude that the good things made up for the bad things?
4. The townspeople play a small but pivotal role in Ruth. Contrast Naomi's response in Ruth 1 to her circumstances in Ruth 4. What role does public witness play in God's work in Naomi's life? What might be the value in the events of Ruth unfolding not just privately but in the sight of God's people? Might there be similar value today in Christians testifying to God's work before the community of the church?
5. The Book of Ruth focuses heavily on Naomi. But it adds something after the conclusion of Naomi's story. What is this additional element? What does it establish about the larger significance of Naomi and Ruth's story? Where else does this element appear in the Bible? What is different about Old Testament and New Testament versions of this part of Ruth? What two things are significant about the additional names in the second version, and what might that communicate about the even greater story of which Ruth is a part?
6. Where does most of the Book of Ruth take place? What is significance about this location? What event does Ruth anticipate?
7. Is it likely that Naomi ever finds out the significance of her grandson, Obed, to Israel's history? Does the author of Ruth ever find out the full significance of this story to God's story of salvation? Read Hebrews 11:13-16, 39-40. What do we learn about virtually every notable character in biblical history? What does this teach us about true faith? How does this impact our own expectation of what God does or does not reveal about His purposes? How might this teaching prepare us to accept difficult circumstances – even when we never fully understand *why* they happened?

Pray: Thank God for His sovereignty over the events of your life; ask God's comfort for trouble or tragedy you have suffered; praise God for His providential hand, steering all circumstances toward His saving purposes.