

Ruth: Hope through despair

Charlie began our Spurgeons' series in Ruth on Sunday, preaching from chapter 1.

Overview of the book

Ruth is a book about God breaking into the downward spiral of sin and rebellion in the judges and doing amazing things on the stage of history... but in the small scale. He works in the lives of 2 pretty hopeless destitute women. This is a book about the God who is active and subtly sovereign in humdrum, everyday lives.



Where do you go when God's blessings fail?

Chapter 1 is about 2 women in distinct but equally difficult situations:

1. **Naomi** – She and her family left the Promised Land, Israel, due to drought and headed to Moab. They settle there, raise the boys and marry them off. But then both Elimelech and the boys die leaving 3 widows. With no direct criticism of Naomi (she simply seems to be painted as a 'normal' person) the chapter ends with her pouring out her heart in v20–21. She was full but is now empty.
2. **Ruth** – has experienced a heart-felt conversion (v16–17), and yet what has she got for it? Where is God's rest for her? Back in v8 Naomi had made her a generous suggestion, encouraging Ruth to go back/return because she might be better off without Naomi than with her. Orpah goes but Ruth stays.

Summary of their responses to the failure of God's blessings:

1. **Naomi** – Thinks she's empty but, because of Ruth there is hope. Ruth is kind and loyal and holds to her family relationships. Also by the end of the book we see blessing. The hardship now, followed by repentance and return is rewarded with growth and fulfillment.
2. **Ruth** – For Ruth as well the seeds of blessing have already been sown. She loves in a costly way as she (unlike Orpah, stick with Naomi), in such a way that the Lord is pleased (see Is 1v11 or James 1v27)

What do we do when God's blessings fail us?

What about us? When life is hard we often don't keep the big picture in mind. We too cry out when life is hard

1. **Naomi** – The answer to Naomi's problem is not a glib 'God's in control or Heaven will be great' it's in v6: God comes to the aid of his people. Hers is a God who saves, even though she's got no idea how he will do that. She simply clings to him.
2. **Ruth** – is like us – naturally hopeless and outside the people of God. She is a foreigner and yet by the end of the book is praised for her kindness. We are to be like Ruth as she relates to Naomi – those who cling to, care for, love and provide for the people of God.

Here are some possible thoughts and questions.
Please be selective and adapt them for your group:

Possible Questions

What's the historical context of Ruth?
Why does the book matter?

What do you think this is a chapter about?

What are some of the key words in Ruth 1?
How do the names in Ruth 1 help us?

Track Naomi's 'condition' through the chapter.
How does she start, where does she end?

What do we make of Ruth?
Why do you think Ruth stays with Naomi?

What 2 things can you take away from this study?
Share them with the group and pray for each other.