

# Formation Guide

THE BOOK OF RUTH

## South Fellowship Church

LENT 2021

### **How to use this resource:**

Questions and suggested spiritual practices are designed to deepen your connection with the way and heart of Jesus. Sometime during your week, use the Apprentice Questions in your personal time with Jesus and the Table Discussions with your family, small group, mentor, or spiritual friend. Additional contemplative practices are included for Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday!





## **LENT - Ash Wednesday**

Contemplative Space

February 17, 2021

Ash Wednesday starts the Church's Lenten season - six weeks to draw close to God and seek him with greater intensity. Unfortunately, Lent often gets reduced to the question of "What will I give up?" This is a fine question but it only takes us so far. The real question of Lent is, "How will I repent and return to God with all my heart? This begs a deeper question, "Where in my life have I gotten away from God and what disciplines or practices enable me to find my way back?" Use this guide to prompt a conversation with God today.

### **HONESTY WITH GOD**

*"You desire truth in my inward being." - Psalm 51:6*

Begin your time by getting honest with God. Share with God where you feel distant from him, distracted, or like you're drifting into spiritual mediocrity.

### **SEARCH ME, O GOD**

*"You are dust and to dust you will return." - Genesis 3:19*

Spend a few minutes looking at your hands and thinking about Genesis 3:19. As we receive the symbolic gesture of ashes on our forehead today, we acknowledge our human finiteness and mortality. This is not meant to be morbid but to remind us of the real human condition we all share.

## **LONGING FOR GOD**

*"My soul thirsts for the living God." - Psalm 42:2*

Consider what you might "give up" or rearrange to create more space and passion for this most important relationship. Disciplines of fasting and other kinds of abstinence help us to face the grip sin has on us so we can somehow let go of our attachment to anything that is not God. Awareness brings about a godly grief which leads to repentance and then forgiveness and freedom.

## **GOD'S STEADY LOVE**

*"Oh Lord, you are merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." - Psalm 86:15*

Consider what you might "add in" or what will help nurture deeper love and affection for God. Serious as Lent is, it is also a time of great hope as we experience God's steadfast love for us. In him there is power to pass from death to life in the places where we most need resurrection.

## **Spiritual Practices**

*Practices for your time apprenticing Jesus on Ash Wednesday.*

**Ashing Practice** | Stop by over to South Fellowship Church sometime between 6-7PM for Drive Thru Prayer + Ashing.

**Contemplation Challenge** | Come on over to South Fellowship Church Worship Center anytime between 7AM-7PM to sit in a posture of contemplation considering your humanity and mortality.

# Ruth

A LENTEN SERIES

## LENT - Week 1

Sermon by Alex Walton

February 21, 2021

Scripture: Ruth 1:1-5

*In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. (Ruth 1:1-5)*

## Apprentice Questions

*Reflection questions for personal time apprenticing Jesus*

1. Have you had a moment or a season in your life where you felt completely empty? Naomi has left her homeland, and is now grieving the loss of her husband, and her two sons. She feels completely empty. What did your experience feel like?
2. When you feel drained, empty, completely discouraged, what sorts of things do you feel like doing?
3. Is God still present? Is it hard to see, hear, or feel Him in those times?
4. Read Psalm 13:1-4 and think about how this Psalm echo's Naomi's thoughts and feelings.
5. Read the rest of Psalm 13, pray through these verses for yourself, ask God to answer, to express his love for you in a way you can feel and understand. Thank him for His love, even when it is hard to see.

## Table Discussion

*Share with your family, small group, mentor, or spiritual friend.*

**Look Back** | How has God been present in your week and how has he felt distant? What in your life contributed to those feelings?

**Look Up** | Read Ruth 1:1-4 together. In the narrative genre, this section is called exposition. It is meant to give us some context so that we can enter into the story. What details do you notice and what questions do you have about the setting, characters, and circumstance?

**Look Forward** | In the Ruth story a famine shifts the future of the characters. What famines (circumstances) do you have in your life right now that could shift your life significantly? How do you want to facing those situations?

## Spiritual Practices

*Practices for your time apprenticing Jesus this week.*

**Practice Lament** | Lament is a practice that recognizes sorrow and brokenness. Read a Psalm of lament. Psalm 137 is a Psalm of exile. It recognizes the full range of human emotion. Notice how God does not endorse or criticize the outpouring of emotion. He allows the writer space to express his own deep struggles.

**Cemetery Challenge** | We often 'whistle past the graveyard'. We avoid thoughts of death because they are uncomfortable. Choose to visit a graveyard. Take note of the dash in between birth and death. Our lives on this earth and summed up by what we do with that dash. The opening passage of Ruth recognizes the grief each of us encounter in life. It reminds us every person will have to walk the 'valley of the shadow of death'. One day we will be grieved in our turn.

# Ruth

A LENTEN SERIES

## LENT - Week 2

Sermon by Aaron Bjorklund

February 28, 2021

Scripture: Ruth 1:6-14

*When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you because the Lord's hand has turned against me!" At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. (Ruth 1:6-14)*

## Apprentice Questions

*Reflection questions for personal time apprenticing Jesus.*

1. Naomi's grief is all encompassing. She believes she has nothing to offer to anyone, even her daughters in law. Have you ever felt this way? What adjectives would you use to describe grief?
2. In grief, it's a normal response to push others away- even family and close friends - and to want to be left alone. Can you recall a time when you may have responded this way when

you were grieving a loss? Do you have a friend or relative who has done this?

3. Ruth refuses to leave her mother-in-law. She is in pain herself, but she refuses to leave Naomi. Read Job 2:11-13. Notice what Job's 3 friends did when they heard of Job's suffering. How did they show him their love and support?
4. "The father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God," II Corinthians 1:3b-4. Is there someone in your life who has suffered a recent loss? Talk to God about how you could show support to someone suffering loss. Ask him what would be the right thing to do, make a phone call, send a card, make a meal, go and visit and listen.
5. Perhaps you yourself have suffered a loss recently. Grief can interfere with our ability to experience God's presence. It is important to know God is with you, even if you can't always feel him. God promises, "I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him," Psalm 91:15. Read the following verses and use them to talk with Jesus about your pain - seeking comfort in God to help you grieve with hope. Psalm 61:2, Psalm 130:5, Psalm 46:1, Isaiah 26:3, Psalm 34:18, Revelation 21:4.

## Table Discussion

*Share with your family, small group, mentor, or spiritual friend.*

**Look Back** | Describe to the group a moment where you felt encouraged this week and a moment of discouragement.

**Look Up** | Read Ruth 1:6-19 together. Do you see God in the Ruth story yet? If so where? If not, what can we learn from a section of scripture where God's presence seems absent?

**Look Forward** | What is a step you can take this week that might help you notice God's presence more throughout your week.

## Spiritual Practices

*Practices for your time apprenticing Jesus this week.*

**Practice Contemplation** | Contemplation is a set aside time where we focus on something in particular. Use this time to think about grief and loss. First, think about grief without God. Second, think about grief with God.

**Darkness Challenge** | Naomi expresses her deep grief and the bitterness that follows. She is living an experience of darkness. While we worship a God of whom it is said "even the darkness is not dark to you", our humanness has a reluctance towards darkness. Choose to sit in the darkness for a few minutes. Recognize your own feelings during this time. You may feel an increasing tension in your body. Allow yourself to relax. Choose to recognize that God is still present even when nothing is clear.



# Ruth

A LENTEN SERIES

## LENT - Week 3

Sermon by Alex Walton

March 7, 2021

Scripture: Ruth 1:15-22

*“Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.” But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, “Can this be Naomi?” “Don’t call me Naomi,” she told them. “Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.” So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning. (Ruth 1:15-22)*

## Apprentice Questions

*Reflection questions for personal time apprenticing Jesus.*

1. The Name Naomi means pleasant and Mara means bitter. Naomi’s view of herself and her life is that she is empty and bitter. Wanting to change her name seems to suggest she views her current situation as permanent and unchangeable. Have you had a season in your life where you could only see emptiness, bitterness and no way out? What brought about your bitterness?
2. Next Naomi blames God for her misfortune. This is a common grief response to loss. We desire to blame someone. She is lashing out at God for the deaths of her 2 sons, and her

husband and perhaps because she doesn't have grandchildren either. Notice how Naomi handles these intense, real, honest emotions. How do you see her dealing with them? With God? With Others?

3. Look at this example from Job, "My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God:" Job is upset, he laments, he grieves deeply, but he also brings his emotions, his questions, his confusion and his sadness to God in prayer. Do you have a difficult situation that is full of emotion for you? Take some time to pray about it and be sure to listen to what God wants to tell your heart about your situation.
4. Notice the ways God IS providing for Naomi. First by Ruth's determined companionship in her grief - she told her "Where you go I will go" in Ruth 1:16. Second, Bethlehem no longer has a famine and Naomi and Ruth arrived "as the barley harvest was beginning" in Ruth 1:25. What character qualities of God show up in the ways he provides?
5. Do you need reassurance of God's provision for you? Is it hard to see God working in your life right now? I Thessalonians 4:13b says, "Grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope" and Philippians 1:6 says, "He that began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Write out these verses meditating on them to help assure you God IS working in your life too even if it is hard to see.

## Table Discussion

*Share with your family, small group, mentor, or spiritual friend.*

**Look Back** | Have you ever had a friend or loved one do for you what Ruth did for Naomi? If so, tell that story. If not, has there been a time where you wished you had that kind of friend?

**Look Up** | Read Ruth 1:15-22. What are the glimmers of hope in this passage? Why do you think Naomi doesn't seem to see them?

**Look Forward** | Who could you reach out to this week to be a little bit of what Ruth was for Naomi in this text? When and how do you think you want to do that for them?

## Spiritual Practices

*Practices for your time apprenticing Jesus this week.*

**Practice Walk of Discernment** | Walking can be a wonderful practice through which God brings focus and resolution to questions. Take a question for discernment and allow God to speak to you as you walk.

**Challenge** | Take a walk (or a car ride). Choose to notice what it feels like to leave your home. Imagine what it would look like to leave it being uncertain of when you will return. As you journey homewards imagine that you have not been home for ten years. Who knows what home will look like when you return. Imagine what might look the same and what might look different. Imagine who might have moved on, passed away, and who might remain. Now, place yourselves in Naomi's shoes as she returns to what was once so familiar to her. She left full and she returned empty.



# Ruth

A LENTEN SERIES

## LENT - Week 4

Sermon by Alex Walton

March 14, 2021

Scripture: Ruth 2

*Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek. Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!" "The Lord bless you!" they answered. Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?" The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter." So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants." At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat*

down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her. Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her." So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough. Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!" Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said. "The Lord bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers. Then Ruth the Moabite said, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.'" Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else's field you might be harmed." So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law. (Ruth 2)

## Apprentice Questions

*Reflection questions for personal time apprenticing Jesus.*

1. Read through Ruth chapter 2. Count how many times you can see God working behind the scenes providing for Ruth and for Naomi. Were you able to find at least 4? Did you find more?
2. Even though Ruth is grieving the loss of her own husband, she is making a conscious effort to do the next thing. She is committed to Naomi and puts Philippians 2:4 into practice. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Have a conversation with Jesus about this topic, let him direct you to someone whose interests you could help with this week.
3. As this chapter unfolds, Naomi begins to move forward on her grief journey as well, because she starts to recognize Ruth's need for protection. Naomi begins to see another person's need. When we are in pain, it can help our own healing process to reach out to help another person. Have you had this experience yourself? When? With whom?
4. Make a list of the ways God has provided for you, protected you, and given you hope in the past year. Use this list and enter into a time of praise and thanksgiving to God for always working in your life, even when it seems to be "behind the scenes."

## Table Discussion

*Share with your family, small group, mentor, or spiritual friend.*

**Look Back** | Have you had a chance to be a friend like Ruth to someone recently? OR has someone done that for you?

**Look Up** | Read Ruth 2 together. How is God providing for Naomi and Ruth in this text? Does that provision seem direct or indirect?

**Look Forward** | What if your everyday interactions with others could be an answer to someone's prayer? How might you make yourself more available to see the needs of others gleaning in the field?

## Spiritual Practices

*Practices for your time apprenticing Jesus this week.*

**Practice Confession** | What is holding you back? What do you need to let go of? Confession means to 'come into agreement with' or 'say the same as'. Spend time confessing and agreeing with what God says about our actions.

**Challenge** | Put together a Genogram. Sketch out your family tree to your grandparents or great grandparents. Recognise some of the burdens they carried or struggles they dealt with and how those things have passed down to you. It may be an addiction, an emotional struggle, a sin issue. Come into agreement with God. Your position as his child is greater than your human DNA. You are redeemed. Choose to listen to God whisper to you as his child. What is he saying is true of you today?

# Ruth

A LENTEN SERIES

## LENT - Week 5

Sermon by Dan Elliott

March 21, 2021

Scripture: Ruth 3

*One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do." "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet! "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family." "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning." So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, "No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor." He also said, "Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her.*

*Then he went back to town. When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "How did it go, my daughter?" Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her and added, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today." (Ruth 3)*

## Apprentice Questions

*Reflection questions for personal time apprenticing Jesus.*

1. Notice the mention of barley harvest and consider how the wheat harvest takes several weeks. As Chapter 3 unfolds, Ruth has been gleaning in the fields of Boaz for some time. The physical need for food for both Ruth and Naomi has been provided by Ruth's gleaning and Boaz's generosity. Do you think Ruth had opportunities to observe Boaz and his management style and his treatment of his servants?
2. Naomi begins to think about Ruth's future, and in a small way her own as well. Naomi begins to have hope for a future that isn't empty. She gives Ruth instructions to approach Boaz in such a way as to ask for his protection and his provision by asking him to be her husband and her kinsman redeemer. What sorts of feelings might Ruth have had? Do you think she was nervous or anxious about going to the threshing floor and uncovering Boaz's feet?
3. In what ways does Boaz continue to show generosity, kindness and protection for Ruth and Naomi?
4. Can you think of a time in your life when you have been discouraged and then you get a glimmer of hope - you begin to see that God is working to change you, or change your circumstances? What has the first glimpse of hope look like for you?

## Table Discussion

*Share with your family, small group, mentor, or spiritual friend.*

**Look Back** | Do you feel like you were able to notice the needs of others more this week?

**Look Up** | Take a few minutes to read Ruth 3 together as a group. Now, retell the story again in your own words. What do you notice?

**Look Forward** | When was the last time you felt like your faith journey had any risk involved? How might you break the monotony of your normal patterns of life to take a risk that is worthwhile for your faith?



## Spiritual Practices

*Practices for your time apprenticing Jesus this week.*

**Practice Intercession** | Intercession is a prayer in which we intercede on behalf of somebody. We ask God to meet them in their needs. Naomi sends Ruth off into a dangerous situation and is left at home waiting. She must have slept very little that night and must have entered deeply into prayer on Ruth's behalf. Pray on behalf of someone you know is in need.

**Challenge** | Choose a person close to you or somebody you know who is walking a difficult journey. Actively bring them to mind during the day and recognize the wonderful privilege God has given you to intercede on their behalf. You are invited into the presence of God and are able to see change happen through prayer. Pray for this person through each step of their day as they come to mind. Expect God to see how they move.

# Ruth

A LENTEN SERIES

## LENT - Week 6

Sermon by Dan Elliott

March 28, 2021

Scripture: Ruth 4

*Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer[a] he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down. Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so. Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line." "I will redeem it," he said. Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property." At this, the guardian-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it." (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal. Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!" Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the*

*Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah." So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth." Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. (Ruth 4)*

## Apprentice Questions

*Reflection questions for personal time apprenticing Jesus.*

1. Boaz, the other close relative of Naomi's and the 10 elders make a legal, binding transaction at the town gate - the place where such business was conducted in Israel. Boaz takes Ruth as his wife, his first born son will bear Mahlon's name, and he and his son will provide for both Ruth and Naomi in their old age. When Obed is born, who do the women praise? How do they describe Ruth? Who holds and cares for Obed?
2. At least a year has passed since Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem as widows, empty and grieving. Naomi still has no husband, but she now has a son in law, and grandson, a daughter in law who loves her and she has assurance of future generations. What sorts of emotions do you think Naomi had as she held Obed as a newborn? As a baby? As a toddler?
3. The women of Bethlehem praise God for Naomi's many blessings. Do you think Naomi herself did as well? What sorts of praise might Ruth have given?
4. Read Isaiah 61:1-3. Do you see phrases might describe Naomi and Ruth in Ruth chapter 4? Use the phrases in these verses to pray for someone who could use these types of blessings.
5. As we finish this book, and the Lenten season comes to a close, pray about how you could praise God for your blessings.
6. Ask God if there is someone in your life you could show generosity to. Ask him to show you who you could be a blessing to this week.

## Table Discussion

*Share with your family, small group, mentor, or spiritual friend.*

**Look Back** | We are approaching the end of Lent quickly. How has this season been for you? What have you learned?

**Look Up** | Read Ruth 4 together. This chapter is what you might call a happy ending. Take a few moments to reflect on HOW God worked in this book? Is that still how he works in the world today?

**Look Forward** | Ruth get's written into the story of King David's lineage and ultimately Jesus' too. What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind and what can you do this week to start leaving that legacy?

## Spiritual Practices

*Practices for your time apprenticing Jesus this week.*

**Practice Gratitude** | Gratitude is a focus on recognizing the goodness of God

**Challenge** | Return to your Genogram from week 4. Choose to find reasons to be grateful. This may be for the wonderful gifts that each represents even in spite of their brokenness. It may be for the ways that they were able to overcome obstacles. You may find it difficult to see reasons to be grateful for some people listed but you can be grateful for the ways that God has rescued you from situations and how he has redeemed your story.



## LENT - Good Friday

Contemplative Space

April 2, 2021

Good Friday is a day when we commemorate the death of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Some wonder why such a brutal and malicious death can be called “good.” But for those to believe in resurrection, we count the sacrificial love demonstrated on that day to be worth honoring with sweet reverence because of the strength and solidarity it offers us in our suffering. This journey of light takes you through the story of Jesus’ final days. Allow the story to create space to contemplate the extent to which Jesus allowed the sin of the world to wound and kill him in order that he might crush the entanglements of sin and death. Let this journey help to feel the longing for the victory yet to come.

Begin by lighting 7 candles in a dark room and watch as the light of life slowly fades away.  
\*Note: If you may want to add in the optional elements of communion and tearing of cloth, you will need to have them ready before you begin this journey.

### **LIGHT OF BETRAYAL**

*READ MATTHEW 26:20-25*

Extinguish one candle’s light and respond “Lord, Have Mercy!”

### **LIGHT OF AGONY**

*READ MATTHEW 26:36-50*

Extinguish one candle’s light and respond “Lord, Have Mercy!”

### **LIGHT OF DENIAL**

*READ MATTHEW 26:69-74*

Extinguish one candle’s light and respond “Lord, Have Mercy!”

### **LIGHT OF ACCUSATION**

*READ MATTHEW 27:11-14, 20-30*

Extinguish one candle’s light and respond “Lord, Have Mercy!”

**LIGHT OF CRUCIFIXION**

*READ MATTHEW 27:31-43*

Extinguish one candle's light and respond "Lord, Have Mercy!"

Optional: Take communion to represent Jesus' blood and broken flesh.

**LIGHT OF DEATH**

*READ MATTHEW 27:45-54*

Extinguish one candle's light and respond "Lord, Have Mercy!"

Optional: Tear a piece of cloth to mourn Jesus' final breath.

**LIGHT OF BURIAL**

*READ MATTHEW 27:57-60*

Extinguish one candle's light and respond "Lord, Have Mercy!"

Optional: Sit in darkness contemplating the night that Jesus was buried in the tomb.

## Spiritual Practices

*Practices for your time apprenticing Jesus Good Friday.*

**Lament Practice** | Read Psalm 22. Now read John 19. Enter into the full horror of the eternal God crucified by sinful men.

**Good Friday Service** | Attend one of our Good Friday Services in person. Register and join us at 6:00PM or 7:30PM for an hour long service to commemorate the death of our Lord, Jesus Christ.



## LENT - Resurrection Sunday

Contemplative Space

April 4, 2021

Resurrection Sunday is the most important celebration of the entire year for us, even over and above Christmas because resurrection proclaims the hope we had for both now and eternity.

### **RISE EARLY**

Wake before dawn to watch the sunrise and praise God for the newness of day.

### **WORSHIP LOUDLY**

Declare praise to God for the gift of resurrection through music and loud singing..

### **CELEBRATE WITH FOOD AND FRIENDS**

Enjoy a delicious meal in the company of friends remembering the newness of relational life restored through resurrection.

## Spiritual Practices

*Practices for your time apprenticing Jesus on Resurrection Sunday.*

**Practice Celebration** | On Easter we sing 'Christ is risen from the dead, trampling over death with death and on those in tombs bestowing life!' Spend time celebrating today through the arts. Google the *Anastasis Icon of the Resurrection*. It's an Eastern Orthodox Church image that celebrates resurrection. The risen Jesus stands on top of the gates of hell. In his two hands he holds Adam and Eve, our forefathers. He is victorious over the grave. Spend a few minutes allowing yourself to rejoice because like Adam and Eve, YOU are included in the promise of new life. Also, google *Praise the Name* (also "anastasis") by Hillsong and celebrate the risen Jesus.

**Easter Sunday Service** | Attend one of our Easter Morning Services in person. Register and celebrate with us at 7:00AM, 8:30AM, 10:00AM, or 11:30AM. Come ready to sing for joy and proclaim "Christ is Risen!"