

Tips and Tricks:

The sermon notes are designed to be used as a guide for discussion. Don't feel like you have to use every question. Some questions will take a while to work through and others will be over in a few seconds.

1. Don't teach the lesson. The sermon was just preached. Just ask the questions and let everyone else talk.
2. Let other people ask questions. It's OK to go "off topic" for a while. Sometimes those conversations are more interesting anyway!
3. Have fun. Don't forget to laugh and crack up. Relationships, not curriculum, are the heartbeat of our ministry. Remember: We have to build a relational bridge strong enough to hold the truth!

Agenda for Group Time

1. Ice Breaker - Lighthearted ice breaker question (10 minutes)
2. Discussion - Bible study, sharing and application. (25 Minutes)
3. Prayer - Pray together (5 minutes)
4. Planning - Remember to talk about what's coming up.

Icebreaker

What do you miss most about being a kid?

When I think about the losses I've had:

- What I've lost in love, I gained in weight.
- Some were just a *stupid tax*.
- Most involved my car keys, portable phone or TV remote.
- I can't wait to ask God, "Why?"
- Hey! The dog ate my homework!
- Many are not related to anything I've done.
- Other: _____

Read Ruth 1:1-7 together as a group

Pain is a fact of life, and God meets us there.

The setting for the book of Ruth is found in the very first verse: *"In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land,"*

The days when the judges ruled was a time when people did whatever seemed good in their own eyes. And because there was a famine we can assume a great economic crises where people were struggling to eat.

Question: How is our culture similar to the setting of Ruth and how is it different?

Question: In your opinion, why do we like to forget that pain is part and loss is part of living?

- We have expectations for more.
- We are ashamed of pain and loss.
- Instagram. I blame Instagram. And Facebook as well. Ok.... Snapchat and and Twitter don't help either.
- Pain and loss isn't part of the American Dream
- Other: _____

1. The Circumstance of Pain

For Discussion: Look at the first 5 verses of Ruth again. As a group, list all the pain and loss that Naomi has gone through.

Question: In your opinion, how would people today respond to this kind of loss?

- They might question God
- They might wonder if God is good
- They would sink into depression
- They would try to make it all numb
- Other: _____

2. The Reaction to Pain

As we look at the story, there is the pain of a famine and Elimilech got very pragmatic by going to where there was food.

What was the problem with Elimilech's decision to go to take his family to Moab? Do you think the decision seems reasonable?

Question: Why do we tend to get very pragmatic during times of pain and loss?

- It just keeps us moving rather than dealing with the loss.
- It gives us the illusion of control.
- It actually helps.
- It makes us think we can save some of what was lost.
- Other: _____

Share a time in your life when you tried to fix a the problem of pain by getting pragmatic.

3. God's Hand in Pain

Question: As we look at the first 5 verses, where do we see God at work?

Read verses 6-7 and try to find the glimmer of hope?

Question: Why do you think Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem? Is she being pragmatic or is she looking for God? Or is it both this time? Does it even matter?

If you are familiar with this story, how does God end up using the pain and loss of the first 5 verses along with the Naomi's return in verse 6?

- He redeems Naomi and Ruth.
- This story shows us how God works through His providence.
- Ruth became the ancestor of Jesus.
- This story points us to the Gospel.
- Other: _____

The story of Ruth shows us how God works out the good news of Romans 8:28

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (ESV)

Question: How does this verse comfort you? What does it assume about the world? What does it say about God?

Prayer

As a group, thank God for his goodness in our lives. Ask him for the strength to keep walking even through pain and loss. Ask him to give us all faith that would believe that even the pain will be used for our good.

Work It Out!

One thing I'll do differently because of this sermon:
