

Small Group Material - Ruth 3

Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor

Welcome (10 mins) Can you think of a risk that you have taken in your life? What was it and how did you feel?

Worship (15 mins)

Needed: a bag of grains, eg brown rice, and a bowl to put them in.

Leader: NB Don't read out all these instructions at once. Move people through them one stage at a time.

1) Put a bag of rice (preferably wholegrain or some other type of grain) in a bowl.

Invite people to take a handful and reflect quietly on the different ways God has provided for you. (*Leader: give people a couple of minutes to do this*)

2) Then, ask people to reflect on ways in which they still long for God to provide and care for them. (*Ruth and Naomi had food now for a while but they still didn't have any other close family, husbands, children, status etc. This part of the exercise could be quite painful for some people.*)

3) Then invite people to replace their handfuls of grain back in the bowl as an act of laying their longings before God.

4) Listen to or sing Reckless Love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzVjwHx8rKU>

5) Have a time of praise and prayer, giving thanks for the way God sees and knows your needs.

Word (40 mins)

In Jewish society in Ruth's time, it was understood that when a man died his nearest blood relative would marry the widow to continue the family's name. This person was called the 'kinsman-redeemer'. Naomi devises a plan to set in motion this process between Ruth and Boaz who was a relative of Naomi's deceased husband and sons.

A. Read Ruth 3.1-4.

What instructions does Naomi give to Ruth? What was their goal? In their male-dominated world, how do you account for such boldness? B. Read v.5-14. What factors could lead us as readers to believe that some sexual indiscretion took place? (*Leader's notes: Boaz's hung-over condition, the secluded bed, Naomi's instructions, uncovering Boaz, Moabite history cf Numbers 25.1, today's culture, human nature*) What features in the story convince you that no sexual encounter took place? (*Leader's notes: uncovering Boaz's feet was not a sexual forward move but a way to ensure that he woke up on a cold night; spreading the corner of one's garment signified a request for protection and marriage, cf Ezekiel 16.8. Ruth's indisputable moral integrity and the proper deference of Boaz to others in accordance with the law of the kinsman-redeemer, v13*)

Who is likely to get blamed if 'caught' - Naomi, Ruth or Boaz? v5,6,14. Why does Boaz not take advantage of her? Why bless her and consider her proposal?

C. For consideration: Ruth grounds her faith on covenant promises. What difference does it make for us to realise that faith in Christ is not a subjective quality - that some people have and others don't - but a claiming of the promises made by God to us in Christ? How will this affect the way we appeal to others to trust in Christ?

Naomi and Ruth act deliberately and intentionally in this chapter. This is what faith means for them. How is faith today a deliberate and intentional reaching out to our Redeemer? What difference does this make from thinking of faith as a purely passive 'waiting-for-something-to-happen' thing?

D. What decision(s) are you facing now that would call for decisive and even daring action? What are you willing to risk in order that the Lord's will should be accomplished in your life? John Wimber said faith was spelt R-I-S-K!

Witness (10 mins)

Pray for marriage courses run around the country and at St Mary's, for those involved in marriage preparation, for marriages (for good communication, respect and love) and for those whose marriages are in trouble.

Pray for Pandemonium in the Park (or it's results!). Pray around the purchase of the Old Bank (get the group to name items for prayer: eg the potential for ministry as well as issues)