

DISCUSSION GUIDE

PINELAKE CHURCH

LOVE STORY

LIVE WITH DIVINE PURPOSE (RUTH 4:13-22)

JUNE 15, 2014



PREPARATION

- > **Spend the week studying Ruth 4:13-22.** Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.
- > **Determine** which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > **Pray** for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their receptivity to God's Word.
- > **Focus on the Main Point.** The Book of Ruth is a love story about Ruth and Boaz, but it's also a love story about God's love for us. As we look at the conclusion of Ruth and Boaz's love story, we will be encouraged to remember that God can redeem our pasts and our pain. This is part of God's ultimate plan of redeeming us for Himself.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

How do you tend to respond when things don't go the way you planned?

Share about a time when you struggled to see God's purpose in a difficult situation? Looking back, what did you learn from that situation?

Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi's lives did not always go the way that they had hoped. However, through their story we see that God was constantly at work, bringing about His plan of redemption for them and for the entire world. As we conclude our time in the book of Ruth, we will not only see how God redeemed Ruth and Naomi's situations, but how God chose them to play a key role in His ultimate plan of redemption in Jesus Christ.

LEARN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 4:13-15.**

What hardships had Ruth and Naomi faced? How did they respond to those hardships?

How did God redeem Ruth's past (v. 13)? What about Ruth makes her a surprising recipient of God's grace?

How did God redeem Naomi's pain? Compare Naomi's response to the birth of Obed in verses 14-15 with her response to the death of her husband and sons (Ruth 1:15,20-21).

Read Psalm 127:3-5. Why was the birth of Obed such a precious gift? How did his birth demonstrate God's grace?

Ruth wasn't an Israelite, she was from Moab and yet God wrote a beautiful love story with her life. As a recently widowed woman in a foreign land, Ruth faced a difficult future. In the midst of her pain, God graciously led her to Boaz who married her and provided for her. Furthermore, the Lord blessed them with a son. In ancient Israel, sons were considered tremendous blessings as they would continue the family name. By giving Ruth a husband and a son, the Lord graciously redeemed Ruth's seemingly hopeless situation.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 PETER 1:3-9 AND ROMANS 8:28.

What does Peter say brings great joy (see vv. 3-5)?

Trials and difficulties can be a blessing because they often force us to cut ties with the things of the world and run to Christ. When we face trying times, God challenges us to consider where we have been turning for hope and joy. In these moments, believers will turn to Christ to strengthen their faith and deepen the joy they have in Him.

Peter indicates in verse 7 that God has a plan for the trials that He lets believers face. What is that plan? What is God doing in believers as He lets them face trials?

How might trusting Christ in the midst of trials result in "inexpressible and glorious joy" (v. 8)?

Peter says that trials show the proven character of your faith. He compares trials to purifying gold in a furnace. To make higher quality gold, a craftsman would heat the gold in a furnace so that the impurities would rise to the surface and the craftsman could remove them to make the gold more precious and valuable. In other words, God allows us to go through trials in order to draw us closer to Himself and so that Christ would become increasingly more valuable to us. God did this in the lives of Ruth and Naomi, and He promises to do this in the lives of everyone who loves Him (Rom. 8:28).

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 4:16-22.

Why do you think the story of Ruth concludes with a genealogy of David?

Read Matthew 1:5. Ruth was one of only five women Matthew named in Jesus' genealogy. Why is this significant?

The story concludes with a linear genealogy linking the child, Obed, backward and forward. It traces his roots back to Perez, the child born in Genesis 38 out of the dubious relationship between Judah and a foreign woman, Tamar. It also traces his progeny on to King David, who is highlighted not simply because he was a great king but also because he was the Lord's answer for the anarchy of the days of the judges, in which this story took place (1:1). The genealogy thus shows us that the Lord had been pursuing bigger plans than just bringing together

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two worthy individuals or restoring the emptiness of a Judean widow. Their story formed part of the bigger plan to provide the Redeemer, Christ Jesus, whom Israel needed. Ruth stands out as an example of faithfulness, but her story ultimately points to a greater example—the faithfulness of God.

LIVE

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives. Create some talking points for the group by looking at the practical implications of the study. Get group members to talk about the real-life implications of the passage. Look at what can be applied specifically to Pinelake.

How is your story like Naomi's and Ruth's stories of God's grace?

The Book of Ruth is a wonderful story of God's faithfulness. Where have you seen God faithfully at work in your life in the past? Where do you need to trust His faithfulness now?

What difficult situations and circumstances are you or your family currently facing? How might God be using that situation to strengthen your faith and deepen your relationship with Him?

LEAD

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage impact the way you lead at Pinelake and interact with people outside of Pinelake.

Faithfulness might not come with ease, but it does come with promises. What are some practical ways to remember God's promises when persevering in faith is difficult?

Who do you know that needs to be reminded that God is in control and has a purpose for their lives? How might you encourage them to trust Christ in the midst of their difficulties this week?

PRAY

Close in prayer for your group members to grow in experiencing and living in faithful love. Thank God for the promises of His Word and the opportunity to study it together as the body of Christ. Close by praying aloud over your group, challenging them to apply everything they've learned through this study as they go out into the world this week.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

- Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
- **Has your perspective on your current life circumstances changed since this week's study? How so?**
- **In what areas of your life do you most need to trust God's sovereign hand to guide you? What is one step you could take to deepen your trust in God in that area of your life?**
- The challenge to memorize 1 Peter 1:6-7.

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RUTH 4:13-22

4:13-17. Although for 10 years in Moab, Ruth had been unable to bear a son for Mahlon, through the Lord's direct intervention she immediately conceived and bore a son for Boaz. The child would be a comfort for Naomi in her old age (lit "would sustain her grey hair"); he would be her family redeemer who would provide for her needs in her declining years. He was named Obed, a short form of Obadiah, which means "servant of the Lord." Though no one could bring back Naomi's husband or sons, now she had a daughter-in-law whom all recognized as better to you than seven sons—an astonishing accolade in the ancient world.

4:18-22. The story concludes with a linear genealogy linking the child, Obed, backwards and forwards. It traces his roots back to Perez, the child born in Genesis 38 out of the dubious relationship between Judah and a foreign woman, Tamar. It also traces his progeny on to King David, who is highlighted not simply because he was a great king but also because he was the Lord's answer for the anarchy of the days of the judges, in which this story took place (1:1). The genealogy thus shows us that the Lord had been pursuing bigger plans than just bringing together two worthy individuals or restoring the emptiness of a Judean widow. Their story formed part of the bigger plan to provide the Redeemer, Christ Jesus, whom Israel needed.

1 PETER 1:3-9

1:3. Peter piled up expressions in verses 3-5 to talk about a believer's relationship with God through salvation. His opening words are those of worship and praise, reminding us that salvation did not come because of who we are or because of what we have accomplished. Salvation came as a gift of mercy. Salvation represents a new birth (see John 1:13), a changing of who we are. Salvation makes us dead to sin and alive to righteousness in Christ.

Peter linked our salvation relationship to what he termed **a living hope**. Peter is without question the apostle of hope. The hope that he had in mind is the eager, confident expectation of life to come in eternity. Hope in the New Testament always relates to a future good! Amid present and difficult dangers we are justified in viewing the future with optimism because we are securely attached to the God who deals in futures. Furthermore, our hope is a living hope because it finds its focus in the **resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**. Our living hope comes from a living, resurrected Christ.

1:4. Peter used the word inheritance to describe our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. **Inheritance** emphasizes the believer's eternal home in heaven. Peter used a triple word picture to describe this inheritance. Our inheritance can never perish, spoil, or fade. These three verbal adjectives indicate that the inheritance is untouched by death, unstained by evil, and unimpaired by time. Our inheritance is death-proof, sin-proof, and time-proof. This inheritance is kept in heaven, for believers. **Kept** means "to guard or reserve." The tense of the verb emphasizes the state or condition and underlines the fact that the inheritance already exists and is being preserved. God Himself has reserved this inheritance in heaven for believers, and it continues to be there, still reserved for us. The difficulties we experience cannot undermine the certainty of our coming inheritance.

1:5. **The salvation that is ready to be revealed** is synonymous with the inheritance described in verse 4. Believers are cared for by God the Father. We are shielded by God's power. **Shielded** means "to guard" or "watch over." This military term describes how soldiers guard someone. The present tense emphasizes the continual nature of this shielding. It does not suggest that believers are shielded from pain, difficulty, or anguish. It means that God Himself guards and watches over our salvation, our inheritance. Our relationship

with God now as we grow more like Christ is a foretaste of that salvation which will be revealed when Christ returns.

1:6. This kind of care from God the Father suggests a response of great rejoicing. Verse 8 repeats this emphasis on joy, calling it an **inexpressible and glorious joy**. Such joy springs from the contemplation of God and of the salvation that comes to us from God.

This joyous response occurs even in the midst of grief caused by suffering through all kinds of trials. **Suffer grief** forms a metaphor derived from a military expression for being harassed. It includes the inner mental distress or sadness that comes because of painful circumstances. **All kinds of trials** literally means “varied, multicolored, or diversified” trials. This takes on a depth of meaning against the background of the ghastly persecution led by the Roman emperor Nero. In that persecution, Christians were wrapped in freshly slaughtered animal skins and fed to dogs and wild animals. They were dipped in pitch or tar and set on fire as torches to light Nero’s gardens at night. This persecution was the first of nine that took place under the Roman Empire during the next 250 years. Peter himself very likely died during this first persecution.

All of this sheds some light on the expression Peter used to describe these varied trials: **a little while**. Suffering here is brief in light of our inheritance that lasts for eternity. Regardless of how long our trials last, that length of time is nothing in light of eternity.

1:7. Why does God allow this suffering to occur? **Faith** is being proved genuine through the trials. One purpose of trials is to sift out what is genuine in a person’s faith. Followers of God, in both the Old and New Testaments, know that God uses trying circumstances to test the hearts and lives of His people in order to mature them spiritually. Through difficulties God often tests whether our faith is genuine.

Peter cemented his point with the illustration of a goldsmith. To form a useful object, raw gold must be cast into a mold. For that to occur, the solid ore must be melted, requiring a temperature of 1,900 degrees Fahrenheit. When the gold is melted, the impurities rise to the surface, where they are skimmed off or burned off. A goldsmith knows the gold is ready to cast when the liquid gold becomes mirror-like and he can see his face reflected in the surface.

The parallel in a believer’s life is obvious. Through the refining heat of trials, we as followers of Jesus Christ grow spiritually and thus reflect more of Christ’s character in our lives. The language of this illustration may also refer to the first-century process of making pottery. Potters baked clay pots to give them strength. The process sometimes cracked pots that had flaws, but the ones that survived the process were then marked with the same Greek word that Peter used here (*dokimos*) for “genuine.”

Peter moved his focus from our present life to look forward to the day of the second coming of Christ and the testimony our approved faith will declare on that day. The faith of these first-century Christians met with scoffing, rejection, and persecution on earth. When the Lord returns, the scene will be reversed. Gold is certainly valuable, Peter said, but it is not as valuable as our proven faith. Gold is temporary, but our proven faith is eternal. The fact that our faith in Jesus is tested and has been proven genuine results in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

God’s purposes in present grief may not be completely known in a week, a year, or even a lifetime. In fact, some of God’s purposes will not even be known when believers die and go to be with the Lord. Some will only be discovered when Christ is revealed to everyone at the second coming.

1:8. How could these Christians face their suffering? They chose to love Christ and to believe in Him even though they had not actually seen Him in the past and had not encountered Him visibly in the present. Most of Peter’s readers had no personal contact with Christ while He lived on earth. They were a generation removed from the time of His earthly ministry. This did not become an excuse. Instead, by accepting the testimony of those, like Peter, who had seen Christ, they entered into a personal relationship with Christ marked by love and belief.

Believe, as used here, means “to trust or rest your confidence in someone, to depend on them.” Having trusted Christ with present salvation from sin, you can also trust Him with future salvation from pain and suffering. The result of this active trust is an **inexpressible and glorious joy** even in the midst of suffering. Peter repeated the theme of joy that he introduced in verse 6. This joy issues from gratitude to God for who He is and for what He has provided through salvation. Joy comes especially from our hope of seeing Christ one day. Although our trials may result in temporary grief, this need not extinguish our deep, abiding joy anchored in our hope in Jesus Christ.

Biblical joy does not depend on circumstances. Joy is inseparably connected to love and trust. Even during pain, the fullness of joy comes from a deep sense of the presence of God in our lives. We can experience joy in suffering when we believe our suffering has a redemptive or refining purpose.

1:9. Not only our joy, but also the assurance of salvation is not contingent upon our circumstances. We are marching, even though in pain, toward the final goal of our faith—our place in eternity and in heaven. One day believers will enjoy salvation to the full in the presence of Jesus Christ. Pain and suffering will be no more.