

# UNLIKELY HEROES



## Opening Prayer

God of Unlikely Heroes,  
We do not always offer caring relationship and servant leadership. By Your Spirit, help us, like Ruth and Naomi, to have courage to put the needs of others above our own. Help us to become a people whose lives proclaim Your story and witness to Your amazing provision. Form us as Your disciples, so that we, like these two women, might be agents of grace. For this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

## Scripture: Ruth, Chapters 1- 4

- *This week, we will read and reflect on each chapter, one at time.*
- *Have someone read the chapter aloud.*
- *Allow time for silence.*
- *Then for each chapter, share your responses and reflect on the questions as you make your way through the book of Ruth.*

## Background

### Ruth (*Rooth*) and Naomi (*Nay oh' me*)

There are only two books of the Bible named after women: Esther and Ruth. Ruth is also one of the few women who are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus found in the book of Matthew. And this was in a time when women weren't ordinarily included in genealogies. The book of Ruth is a beautiful piece of sacred literature, applauded by many for its literary excellence. The story is of a Moabite widow who becomes an essential character in the powerful story of salvation woven through the Bible.

A famine in Canaan forces Elimelech and Naomi, along with their sons, to migrate from Bethlehem to Moab. Their sons marry Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Elimelech passes away, and about ten years later, both of Naomi's sons die, as well. Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah are all widows.

The world is not kind to widows today, and being a widow was even more difficult back then. In fact, Naomi encourages both girls to go back to their parents and find husbands who can take care of them. Ruth refuses with a passionate speech to Naomi:

*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, will be 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 anything but death separates you and me.*

—Ruth 1:16-17 NIV

## Reflect

- *Take a few moments to respond to the questions below. Share with one another as partners or the whole group.*

## Digging into Ruth, Chapter 1

1. What is the climate of the times for Naomi as a widow in a society without welfare?
2. Given the history of war between Moab and Israel, how does this complicate prospects for Naomi's daughters-in-law?

## Applying the Word to our Discipleship

1. Among what kinds of groups do you feel a stranger? And on what basis? Social class? Race? Creed? Politics? Past hurts?
2. Like Ruth, have you ever crossed over to another ethnic or cultural group? Were you able to assimilate or did you remain a stranger?

## Digging into Ruth, Chapter 2

1. What signs of hope do you see as this chapter opens?
2. Given that it is the harvest, how long will it be until Ruth and Naomi can grow their own food and, in the meantime, how will they meet their most pressing need?

## Applying the Word to our Discipleship

1. How convinced are you that God wants to be involved in your life to accomplish his purposes? What evidence or lack thereof, can you point to in supporting your conclusions?

## Digging into Ruth, Chapter 3

1. Ruth went alone at night to the threshing floor, a place where women would not be. How do you think she was feeling when she did this? What does this chapter show you about Ruth's obedience and boldness?
2. Reread verses 3-4. To lie down at someone's feet would be to take the position of a servant, waiting for the command of the master (something Ruth references later). Ruth also waits for Boaz to tell her what to do. She could demand his protection under the law, but instead comes in a posture of humility and servanthood. What do you learn about both Boaz's and Ruth's character from this interaction?

## Applying the Word to our Discipleship

1. There are debates among scholars as to what Naomi's instructions really meant and how dishonorably things might have gone. What is important to note, however, is that regardless of the situation, Boaz and Ruth acted honorably and in a godly way. How will remembering their example help you no matter what situation you face?
2. Ruth showed obedience, boldness, and humility in her actions, and was praised by Boaz for her virtue. What qualities of Ruth do you most see in yourself?

## Digging into Ruth, Chapter 4

1. How did Ruth and Boaz's marriage affect Naomi?
2. Remember what Naomi thought God was doing in her life when she was empty of wealth, family, and status? What part did God play in filling her emptiness?

## Applying the Word to our Discipleship

1. Where have you seen God act providentially and redemptively on your behalf? Where have you seen God concern Himself equally for all people who put their trust in Him?
2. Who is the "untouchable Moabite" in your life, the one you keep at arm's length? And how will you bridge the gap between you?



### Skyline Presbyterian Church Zoom Meeting

**Unlikely Heroes** Bible Study

Thursdays | 6:00 PM Pacific Time

Meeting ID: 850 6452 1664 | Password: 796162

BY PHONE: Dial by your location

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)