

LIFEGROUP NOTES: RUTH 1:1-22

As ever, please use (or discard!) these ideas as is most suitable for your group. Don't feel you have to use everything.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Read Ruth 1:1-5. How did Naomi's life change during this time? What difficulties did she face? Have you ever been through a time when one problem seemed to pile on another, and it felt like you were losing everything? How did you react?
2. Read vv.6-22 and notice expressions like "return / turn back / go back / brought back." The writer highlights the fact that Naomi, Orpah and Ruth are at a crossroads and have to make a big decision about the future direction of their lives. What has God done that beckons them to "return to Him" (v.6)? Compare John 6:35: how does God express this same invitation to us in Jesus?
3. For Naomi, this crossroads in her life became a point of restoration to God, leading her home to Him. Yet it was not without pain. How does she interpret what has happened to her (vv.20-21)? Share an experience where God has worked through hardship in your life to restore you to Him, or to bring you closer to Him.
4. For Orpah, the crossroads became the point of rejection, in which she turned away from trusting God with her future. Why (see vv.11-14)? Why do you think Naomi warned her daughters-in-law of the cost of joining God's people? Notice that Jesus did the same thing (see, for example Lk 9:57-63; Jn 6:60,66; compare Mk 8:34). Have you known people who are put off from following Jesus by the cost?
5. For Ruth, the crossroads began (or confirmed) her conversion to the Lord (v.16, compare 2:12). What was she willing to surrender in order to belong to God? Why – what must she have come to believe about the Lord? How does Jesus express the supreme worth of God's Kingdom in Mt 13:44-46? What is belonging to the Lord worth to you?
6. The word of God always brings us to a point of decision requiring a response. As God calls you again to forsake all and to trust Him with your life, how do you find yourself reacting? Where, for you today, is it a struggle – and where is it a joy – to follow Jesus in complete surrender?

Responding in Prayer

- Thank God for His grace that is leading us home to Him in Jesus. Pray for strength for those places in your life where you struggle to take up the cross and follow Him wholeheartedly.

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