

### TEXT SUMMARY

In our text, Ruth 1:1-5, we meet two of the main characters in the narrative: Naomi, a widowed Jewish woman living in Moab who has also lost her two sons; and Ruth, her widowed Moabite daughter in law. We see Naomi dealing not only with the loss of her husband but also of her two sons, and Ruth loses her husband.

## INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

- 1. The Book of Ruth opens with a familiar scenario: God's people leaving the Land during a famine to seek help. Where else have we seen that chain of events?
- 2. The opening words of Book of Ruth tell us that the story takes place "in the days when the judges ruled." From your knowledge of the Book of Judges, how would you characterize the moral and spiritual atmosphere in and among God's holy people?

### **DISCUSSION** (INTERPRETATION):

A main storyline in the Book of Ruth is the transformation of Naomi's attitude toward God. Her situation could not have been more fraught: a Jewish widow in a foreign land without a husband or sons to provide for and protect her. In our study of Hebrews, we thought about the terrifying slide from discouragement to hardening of the heart to unbelief, a very real possibility for someone in Naomi's situation.

Use your imagination to enter her interior world.

- What are some of the traumatic events she has endured and witnessed? We are never given access to her interior life, but like Job, she surely must have had questions about God.
- 2. What would she have been tempted to think about the power, goodness, and wisdom of Israel's God?

# DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE



## SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

Have you ever, like Naomi, experienced a series of catastrophic events that shattered your faith? When we run into faith-shaking events, there are two realms that come into play: our interior life (the conversations we have with ourselves) and our outward circumstances. If we pay attention, we can see God working primarily in the first, but also sometimes the second.

### Your interior life:

- 1. As you recall those dark moments...
  - ...what was your interior dialogue like? What questions did you find yourself asking about the wisdom, power, and love of God?
  - ...did you find yourself on that slippery slope from distress to discouragement to hardness of heart leaning toward unbelief?
- 2. What are some of the means God used (His Word, His people, the inner voice of His Spirit, etc.) to heal and restore your trust in Him?
- 3. What was the timeframe for your healing? How long did it take for God to restore your spiritual health and your confidence in Him?

#### Your exterior circumstances:

- 4. Although God's primary interest is in our spiritual (inward) formation, He often provides for our material needs as well. Did you see God provide for your needs...
  - ...in the way that you expected?
  - ...in some way you didn't expect?
  - ...at a *time* that you didn't expect?

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