



# Ruth



## Finding Hope Finding Home

Ruth – a short story about finding home and hope in the midst of loss and vulnerability.

**Loss:** For many of us COVID-19 has, at least temporarily, brought increased and intensified experiences of loss. Loss of life, freedom, physical contact, work, education, independence, certainty, hope.

**Vulnerability:** COVID-19 has also challenged our assumptions of what it means to be vulnerable, recognising the fragility of human life as a whole, as well as particular people who are especially vulnerable to the virus.

In conjunction with Bible Month 2020, join me as we read and reflect on the story of Ruth, reading a chapter each week. You'll see a suggested guide on the back of this card.

As the story unfolds I will share thoughts each week within my Sunday Reflections blogpost. Also, to offer opportunity to include you if you don't have internet access, I will share my reflection and with space for some discussion at 9:30am on Mon mornings, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> on the phone.

### How to Connect to Ruth on the Phone

1. Call **0333 011 0616** from a mobile or landline.
2. Enter PIN: **9805080** and press **#** (it will ask for £, but press **#**)
3. You will be invited to speak your name, then press **#** again.
4. You will now be connected.

You might also like to take the opportunity to study with others. Perhaps you can partner with a friend and talk on the phone about what you're reading? Or share your thoughts as a house group if you're part of one?

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# Pray - Read - Reflect

## Living in Loss

## Ruth 1 | Week beginning Sun 7<sup>th</sup>

The story opens with the loss of fruitfulness of land during famine. Soon Naomi and her daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth lose their husbands and thereby the security of their living. In their struggle with loss and death, life must go on. But what hope is there for 3 widows with a complicated and multicultural identity?

Reflect: Hope connects our present to our future.

- With the uncertainty COVID-19 has brought, how can the story of these 3 women offer us an insight to finding hope while living in loss?

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## Survival Seeking Hope

## Ruth 2 | Week beginning Sun 14<sup>th</sup>

Ruth sets out to take action – Ruth and Naomi can't survive without food to eat, let alone find hope. Ruth, a Moabite stranger in an Israelite culture is welcomed and supported by Boaz, who offers hospitality beyond expectation.

Reflect: In our loss of freedom and increased vulnerability we have had to rely on each other differently than we used to.

- Where have we witnessed or experienced an overflow of hospitality?
- How may God be challenging our own practice of hospitality?

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## Uncovering Identity

## Ruth 3 | Week beginning Sun 21<sup>st</sup>

Ruth's identity as a foreigner is a barrier to long term belonging in the Bethlehem community. At Naomi's behest, Ruth resists the cultural expectations of the times, refusing to have her future hope dominated by her identity as a Moabite. She risks losing all in the pursuit of future hope.

Reflect: Have the changes you've experienced in lockdown changed how you identify yourself? What have you resisted, and what have you embraced? What have you risked? Ask God what he is challenging you to resist and embrace.

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## Finding Home

## Ruth 4 | Week beginning Sun 28<sup>th</sup>

Boaz takes Ruth as his wife and all that was lost at the start of the story is restored, the bloodline continues and leads us to David – future King of Israel. Despite her foreign identity and outsider status Ruth finds a home, blessed as part of the community.

Reflect: How might the end of Ruth challenge us in our approach to the 'stranger', how we enable others to belong, and God's vision of what it really means to be a community of faith?