

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends

Naomi and the Stranger

The God who doesn't turn up at all.

5/26/2019

Where We Are In The Bible

The book of Ruth has been called the most beautiful short story ever written. The setting of the book is in the time of the judges and follows the trials and tribulations of a single family from Bethlehem. In this story God never speaks or appears as a man or angel. However, we continually see evidence of God at work through godly people who simply show love and kindness to each other. We find that when God seemed absent, he was really there all along.

Lean In

- Chapter 1 of Ruth is a tragic account of when everything that can go wrong seemingly does! How does Naomi react? How does Ruth react? How do these reactions compare to our reactions when things go a bit haywire in our lives?
- In Chapters 2 and 3 we see a picture of two widows finding a way to survive in a culture very challenging for single women. What qualities of character do you see in Naomi and Ruth? What can we learn from them?
- By the time we get to Chapter 4 of Ruth a great reversal of fortunes is very apparent. What blessings do you see appearing in the lives of Naomi and Ruth? What was the long-term significance of God's blessing on these women?

The Big Idea

It is not uncommon to feel like God has abandoned us when life falls apart and we do not sense His presence. We can be encouraged, however, as we read of God's protection and provision for Naomi and Ruth even though there was no "direct encounter" with God recorded. Having the benefit of hindsight and knowing the ultimate good that was accomplished, we recognize that God may be up to more than we could ever comprehend. As Kandiah says in God is Stranger, "*God may have been out of sight, but we were never out of mind. God does not need to turn up when he is there all along.*" (Page 146)

Where To?

- In his book Love Does, author Bob Goff makes the statement "*I used to think God wouldn't talk to me, but now I know I'm just selective with what I choose to hear.*" How are you at listening to God? In what ways does God speak to us today? (See Hebrews 1:1-2)
- As noted above Kandiah says "*God does not need to turn up when he is there all along*". How do we know God is always close by? In what ways does God generally speak to us today? Review what Jesus says in Chapter 14 of John - especially verses 15-17 and 26-27 as you consider these questions.
- One of the main themes of the book of Ruth is that God is always working to bring about his purposes - even when we can't make any sense of what is happening around us or see any evidence of Him in our daily lives. What does Philippians 2:12-13 say about the workings of God in our lives?

Prayer Focus

Consider what God may be trying to say to you or to do in your life as you pray for:

- Sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life.
- Courage to trust God in the midst of trying circumstances.
- God's perfect will to be accomplished in your life and in our church.

