

**RUTH  
DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

*"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6*

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

**Lifegroup 12s**

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

**Lifegroup 3s**

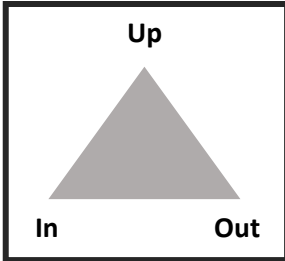
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

## A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

### Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

### In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

### Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

# HOW TO USE THE BOOK

## First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

## Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

## Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

## Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

**This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.**

## INTRODUCTION TO RUTH

This is an amazing story of commitment and dedication, trials and testing, deliverance and freedom. As in other historical books in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit has placed within the characters and storyline key elements and pictures that teach us today about our relationship with the true redeemer, Jesus Christ. Each of the four chapters gives us a glimpse of the progressive stages in our walk with the Lord, as you will hopefully see.

The book of Ruth starts in the days of the judges and in a time of famine. Elimelech and his wife Naomi are living in Israel, God's chosen land, yet we read that their eyes began looking to the prosperity in the world. The picture for us is clear and one that we often see around us. It's a picture of the Christian who, when times get hard, looks not to God but to what the world can provide. There are so many nuggets of truth scattered through this little book, a book that is strategically located in our Bible. Stuck between the end of Judges and prelude to Samuel comes this little oasis of truth for us to enjoy.

So, Bibles opened, grab your journal, pen and your brew, and off we go again!

Love and prayers,  
Phil

**Live**

Today we see an interesting picture involving three different women. In Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah we see a backslider, a new convert, and a double-minded woman. From their lives we can learn many useful things.

Elimelech and Naomi were faced with either running away or trusting God; they chose the former, and worse, of the two options. It was a decision that would cost Elimelech and his two sons their lives. They left Bethlehem ('place of bread') in Judah ('praise') to go to Moab ('from father'). Elimelech probably thought he would go for a little sojourn and enjoy Moab for a season, yet he never came out! What's more, it took his wife ten years to see that Moab promised much but delivered nothing. Moab only produced death. It's no coincidence that Mahlon ('sickly') and Chilion ('pining') also met their end there. We are, however, introduced to two new characters – Ruth ('friendship') and Orpah ('stiff-necked'). Both well named, as we shall see.

Finally, a good decision is made. Naomi is coming home for the Lord had visited His people in giving them food. Orpah had promised to come back with Naomi but when she learned what it may be like, she decided to do a 180 degrees turn and go back to her own people. But not our Ruth. In Ruth we have an awesome picture of a true conversion. Even when others around her are leaving, Ruth states in utter dedication and commitment she will stay.

The two women make it to Bethlehem but Naomi ('pleasant') doesn't want to be called that anymore; she prefers Mara ('bitter'). We can understand her sorrow; she has lost her husband and sons. It's a hard lesson to learn that backsliding and running off to the world never produces anything but death. The Lord has called Naomi back, yet she comes back empty-handed.

**Pray**

Father, in a day when we seem to need more gadgets and gimmicks to create "worship experiences", free us from needing anything more than the gospel to worship You the way You deserve and delight to be worshipped. Let me never forget that You are not seeking great worship but true worshippers, those who worship You in the Spirit and in truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

## Ruth 2

### Live

Having dedicated herself to the God of Israel, Ruth begins to grow in her relationship with Boaz. In Ruth we see the attitude and character of one in whom God is pleased; through humility and dependence she begins to grow in grace. This chapter also displays the gracious provision and protection Boaz supplies. Boaz, we are told, is a relative of Naomi and so qualified as a kinsman redeemer. We are also told that he was a man of great wealth.

In His mercy to foreigners, widows and the poor, God instituted laws that governed the harvesting of produce to ensure no one went empty handed. It wasn't easy being a widow on your own in those days, but Ruth had no reason to fear with Boaz at hand. He provides the field for her to glean in, water to drink when she was thirsty, and protection from anyone harming her. It's really beautiful. Boaz has one command: stay in his field. In other words, look to him and he will provide. Sound familiar?!

Ruth is shaking her head, 'I don't get it. Why are you so kind to me? I'm a Moabite.' Have you come to the point in your Christian life where you just have to stop and shake your head in disbelief at the grace of God? By law, Ruth had a right to glean among the corners of the field. By grace, Boaz pulled grain for her from the bundles. She was even given the right to glean among the sheaves; she was given not just mercy, but grace. Boaz went beyond what was called for by the law and generously blessed her. At the end of the day Ruth was left with an ephah of barley, enough to feed both herself and Naomi for about ten days. We can be confident that God won't deal with us according to our sin but according to the unsearchable riches of Christ. In the gospel we find the generosity and kindness of His heart laid bare and poured out on us.

### Pray

Father, Your great welcome and grace are provision for rebels, fools, and idolaters, just like me. Just as Boaz provided for Ruth, so You go above and beyond anything I could ever imagine. Your mercy and grace are beyond words. I truly love You, Lord. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Chapter 3 presents the next step in drawing closer to the Lord. We have seen Ruth working in Boaz's field and his gracious commitment to her in return. Naomi had a greater vision for Ruth than this; she could see Ruth fully redeemed, loved, and honoured as a wife. So, Naomi becomes a matchmaker. But it wasn't going to be easy. It would involve Ruth placing herself at the feet of Boaz, totally reliant upon his will. It is a time of testing and refining. Just as the threshing floor was used to separate the true grain from the chaff, so times of testing in our lives are used to refine our faith in Him. But, as we shall see, through this testing Ruth would learn what it is to rest in him, and his provision would be greater than at any time before.

Three things are set out for Ruth to do: wash herself, anoint herself, and put on her best clothes. Each of these acts are common in the Old Testament and are interpreted for us in the New Testament. 'Wash yourself' is being washed with the water of the Word (Ephesians 5:26). 'Anoint yourself' speaks of the enabling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). 'Put on your best clothes' speaks of a righteous life (Revelation 19:8).

Unsure of how events would transpire, Ruth followed Naomi's advice and went down to the threshing floor. When God makes a somebody, He always starts with nobodies, and it always starts by laying yourself down in humility at His feet. Here was Ruth, lying at Boaz's feet thinking 'Will he marry me? Will he redeem me?' It would have been a long wait for Ruth. This reminds me of how long it can be when you find yourself on the threshing floor in the midst of a trial. Often, God seems asleep-or at least oblivious to the whole ordeal. But Boaz did waken and was pleased with Ruth's choice. He responds with the same words that Jesus said more than any other, *"Do not fear"*.

**Pray**

Father, the picture couldn't be any clearer. Testing and trials will come for the refining of my faith, but what You seek is that attitude which places the problem at the feet of Jesus, remaining restful in the midst of the trial. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

## Ruth 4

### Live

If we see the book of Ruth as a picture of our relationship with the Lord Jesus, who is the 'closer relative' that has a chance to redeem us before the Lord does? I believe that the closer relative is a picture of the law. There are only two ways Elimelech's property and Ruth can be redeemed: by either Boaz or the closer relative. No other options are available. There are only two ways of being redeemed and bought back to God: either you believe in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in dying for you on the cross or you live in total obedience to the law of God your whole life. There is nothing wrong with the law but something is seriously wrong with our sinful nature.

There was only one who would redeem Ruth – Boaz. Likewise, there is only one who is our redeemer – the Lord Jesus. The closer relative couldn't redeem Ruth so the sandal came off and that was that. So too the law cannot redeem us. No amount of good works or helping old ladies across the street can save us from the penalty of sin or from the power of sin.

Ruth is finally free to marry Boaz and we read that not long after this, *"the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son."* For years, Ruth had been barren, but having come into this new relationship with Boaz, we see the blessing of God and the fruitfulness of Ruth. Everyone likes a story with a happy ending and that's what we have here. As we come to the end of our study, we see the blessing of God restored to Naomi. Naomi has gone from a bitter, back-slidden woman to a blessed and famous mother in Israel. It started with bitterness but ends with a smiling and blessed Naomi and a foreign girl in the lineage of Jesus, the Saviour to the world.

### Pray

Father, the qualities I see lived out so well in some people are a reflection of Your own goodness. I have much to learn from other people who reflect Your image. Inspire me to see in them what You see in them. Help me to love You more as I love my brothers and sisters today. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

