

LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

[Winter Season: January 11 - March 22 | Spring Season: April 12 – June 14]

LEADER DETAILS

- **MAIN TEXT:** Ruth 1:1- 22
- **MAIN IDEA:** When life falls apart, cling to God and cling to His people.
- **GROWTH FOCUS:** Have that “beyond your comfort” conversation you’ve been putting off.
- **ICEBREAKER:** If you had to move to another state tomorrow, where would you go and why?

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Full details at: emergence.church/digital-bulletin)

- **Prayer and Fasting – Tuesdays from February 24 – March 31.** In-person prayer in Totowa and Ringwood at 7:00AM (Lent Devotionals every Tuesday via email and socials).
 - **The Why** – Fasting is a spiritual discipline that helps us draw closer to God by reminding us of our dependence on Him. We are intentional as a church to practice this corporately at times. This season, we are praying and fasting as we head toward Easter, preparing our hearts and petitioning God to move in power to see people saved.
- **Easter Weekend Details! April 3rd-5th**
 - Good Friday Prayer Gathering – 5pm and 6:30pm both campuses
 - Easter Saturday (Totowa Only) – 4:00pm and 5:30pm
 - Easter Sunday: Totowa – 8am, 9:15am, 10:30am, 11:45am | Ringwood – 8am, 9:30am, 11:00am
 - Mugs and Cards to invite available at both campuses starting March 5th and 8th!

GETTING STARTED:

- **Pray:** This helps everyone to prepare their hearts as you head to the discussion
 - **Watch Community Extras Video** (length 5:48 – questions from video are included below)
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LAST WEEK’S GROWTH STEP FOLLOW-UP:

[Leaders: These follow-ups are meant to offer some accountability while being low-pressure. Keep it casual, like, “If you were able to try this last week, how did it go?” Sharing is optional; it’s always okay to pass.]

Outward Action: Have one intentional moment this week where you point someone toward Christ.

Inward Prayer: As we fast and pray, ask God to show where we need to grow in awe of Him.

SERMON DISCUSSION: (quality of discussion over quantity of questions you get through)

Famine in the House of Bread

Read Ruth 1:1-2

Ruth opens “in the days when the judges ruled,” a time when “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Jdg. 17:6). There’s famine in Bethlehem (ironically, “house of bread”), and Elimelech takes his family to Moab. The text doesn’t clearly condemn Elimelech, but there’s no mention of him seeking the Lord in his decision. Ryan noted in the sermon that when we decide to make a change that we should seek to discern whether God is moving us or if we are being moved by our own appetites.

- When faced with a major decision (financial, relational, career, moving, etc.), what helps you discern whether you are driven by faith or appetite (own desires)?

From Bad to Worse

Read Ruth 1:3-5

In more tragic irony, the story gets worse for Naomi. What was likely meant to be temporary becomes ten years. They moved to avoid death, and everyone dies except Naomi and her two daughters-in-law’s, with no social safety net. Naomi is left empty and exposed.

- If you were Naomi at this point in the story, what emotions would you be feeling?
- Have you ever made a “short-term” decision that had longer spiritual consequences than you expected? How did God use that redemptively in your life?

Bitter Honesty

Read Ruth 1:6-14

Naomi decides to return home, urging her daughters-in-law to stay behind believing that the lord’s hand is against her. Orpah eventually does. Ruth does not. As Ryan mentioned in his sermon, Naomi doesn’t need a rebuke, as much as help processing and healing from her hurt.

- When you’ve gone through a difficult season, what helped more: someone correcting you, or someone simply sitting with you in it? Why?
- How can we create a group culture where people feel safe to be honest — but also gently guided toward hope and truth?

When Life Falls Apart: Surrender to Jesus

Read Ruth 1:15-18

Sadly, we see that Orpah returns to her gods, yet we also see Ruth stay. More than that, Ruth is choosing to serve Yahweh at any cost - even her security, marriage, children, comfort, etc. Ruth chooses covenant faithfulness in a moment when it would have been easier to walk away. In the sermon, Ryan relates this to us by saying that when life falls apart, the first thing to do is to surrender and turn to Jesus.

- Share about a time where things got hard and then you got right with the Lord, and how that began to really make a difference? (Ryan’s question from video)
- Where in your life right now is God inviting you into deeper commitment when it would be easier to leave, withdraw, or stay comfortable?

When Life Falls Apart: Press into the People of God

Read Ruth 1:19-21

Naomi goes back to Bethlehem in her bitterness and pain. Pastor Ryan pointed out that she is returning to the people of God. When life gets hard, our instinct is often to isolate. But hope for healing is often found by getting around the people of God to help us heal and bear our burdens with us.

- When you're struggling, do you tend to isolate or lean in toward others? Why?
- Share about a time during a difficult season that God's people got around and really helped you.
- What practical step could help you stay connected to the people of God this season?

A Hint of Hope

Read Ruth 1:22; John 6:35

The chapter ends with a little note of hope that they returned at the beginning of the barley harvest. Reading ahead we know that Ruth will become part of the lineage of Jesus - who will be born in Bethlehem and be the true Bread of Life. When humanity was stuck in tragic spiritual need, God gave us Christ.

- In your own words, what does it mean that Jesus is the Bread of Life?
- How has Christ satisfied you in ways nothing else could?

GROWTH STEP THIS WEEK

Outward Action: Reach out intentionally to one person who may be in a hard season, not to fix it, but to be with them in it.

Inward Prayer: As we fast and pray, spend time this week simply asking God to reveal anything you're clinging to more than Him.

PRAYER TIME

Pray for:

- Courage to choose covenant over comfort
- Grace for those walking through loss
- A deeper surrender to Jesus
- Stronger commitment to Christian community
- Gratitude to God that in Christ we have hope of eternal life and joy despite our deepest pain.