



theme: Scripture #4 (Justice) – Telling The Story
materials: Bibles

The theme for the month is Scripture. How might we be challenged in our perceptions of what the Bible is and is meant to be? Should we always put ourselves in the position of the scripture writer or is it possible to uncover meaning blind to context or history? What new ways could we use the Bible? Certainly, proof and argument vs. dialogue, conversation and search – which is the best way to approach the Bible? What is the Bible? Have we under or over-estimated the Bible's importance in the Christian life?

welcome

Share the stories of your past week, in particular where you saw the work of the Lord in your day to day circumstances. Did you see any justice this week? Any grace? Any love?

interact

Offer your stories back to God as prayer, thanking Him for the blessings and giving any struggles or pains to Him to help you bear them.

read

Once again, you get to read a bunch from Scripture. Together read the whole book of Ruth. It's only 4 chapters long, and it will give you a great chance to hear the whole story, rather than just one small part of it.

What do you take from this story?

Where was God evident in the story? What does it tell us about God?

Where do you see justice being done in this story?

Do you find yourself relating to anyone in this story?

Why do you think this story – a very small story compared to some of the huge, earth shattering events told elsewhere in Scripture – gets a place in the Bible?

Can this Bible story help us in any way today?

Is it helpful to have read the whole story to get a better understanding of it? Is this how you normally read the Bible?

Would you find it helpful to know more about the customs of the time and the history behind the story, in order to get a better understanding? Where can you find this information?

think

Are there any refugees or recently immigrated people in your community? Ruth was and immigrant, and this story shows justice being done as she is shown mercy and taken care of. How can your cell show mercy and love by caring for the refugee or immigrant in your midst?



live & pray

Read the story of Ruth a few more times this week, and see if there is anything you missed the first time around. For instance, why is it such a big deal that Ruth stayed with Naomi? What is the significance of Ruth being a Moabite? Why did Boaz go so far above the call of duty in helping Ruth? Does this story point to Christ in any way?

useful resources

Movie: *Children of Men*

Book: *Guide To The Old Testament*, by John Drane

leader's guide

This story is often told as a simple love story, or a nice story of compassion. But there are a lot of things happening under the surface here. For instance, it is very significant that Ruth is from Moab. Marrying a Moabite woman was not forbidden for a Jewish male, but in Deuteronomy 23 it states that neither Moabites nor their children were allowed in the assembly of the Lord for up to ten generations.

Consider then that at the end of this story Boaz and Ruth (the Moabite) are portrayed as grandparents to David, the great King. We don't know if this genealogy is meant to be historically accurate, but the symbolism at the very least suggests that something very strange and redemptive is going on here. It gets even more significant as we realize that Boaz and Ruth are ancestors of Jesus Himself. This is one example of how God is clearly shown to be at work in and through this story. Had Boaz not acted as he did, would his line have continued on to David?

The Old Testament often gives us glimpses of "small" stories in amidst the "bigger" sweep of history (ie. Many of the Judges, Esther). These stories illustrate through narrative some of what is going on in the bigger stories, but they also sometimes challenge some of the assumptions of the bigger stories as well. As mentioned above, Ruth's heritage made marrying her more than a little dodgy, but Boaz is clearly shown as doing the proper thing. Many Bible commentaries and studies on Old Testament history and culture can give excellent background information on stories like Ruth. Without this type of information it is easy to make wrong assumptions, or to miss out on a lot of the meaning in Scripture.