"Trouble with Life"

Ruth 1:1-6

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell

Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Individual Study Introduction

After listening to the audio segment, use the following questions as your time allows. You may want to record your answers or jot down thoughts and notes in a personal journal. You may also want to use your journal as a record of your prayer time with God. Write out your prayer or simply record your requests and the areas of your life you are releasing to God. This written record will help you to watch God's movement in your life. You'll see more clearly the ways God is giving you "strength for the journey"!

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell has observed that a lot of people have the perception that the story of Ruth essentially is just the "chick flick of the Old Testament."

- What is your favorite movie genre? Would you rather watch a chick flick or an action film? If you're married, does that cause any problems?

- What does Joe mean when he says that the book of Ruth is anything but the chick flick of the Old Testament?

Strength through Scripture:

Read Ruth 1:1-5.

Joe points out that there are only four kinds of people:
- those who have been through deep waters—memories of the trauma are so real you can almost touch them
- those who are going through deep waters right now—the trouble is right in your face
- those who will, at some point, go through deep waters—it's just a phone call away
- those who will know people who go through deep waters and will be called alongside to try to bring them comfort, strength, hope, and help

1. What are the most difficult times you've ever gone through?

Notes:

"Both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband." Ruth 1:5

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2. Are you going through "deep waters" right now?

3. How do you feel about Joe's statement that, for some of us, the deep waters of tragedy are just a phone call away?

4. How prepared do you feel to be called alongside others who are going through deep waters to see if there is any way you can bring comfort, strength, hope, and help to them? How have you experienced that opportunity in the past?

5. How can you relate to Joe's statement that probably the biggest challenge is that when life throws you in the ditch it puts your relationship with God in tension?

Digging Deeper:

If you have enough time, answer one or more of these optional questions. But be sure to save time for the final two sections.

1. What is ironic about the fact that Bethlehem means "house of bread"?

2. What does Joe mean when he says that Naomi is the "female Job of the Old Testament"?

3. What was the social significance of the fact that Naomi was left without a husband or son?

Strength through Reflection:

1. Read the "Call to Action" below. How difficult is it for you to accept that trouble is a regular part of life?

2. How difficult is it for you, when your life is in a ditch, to be confident that God has not abandoned you but rather has already begun to work your trouble into triumph?

Notes:

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Notes:

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments in prayer. Ask God to help you respond appropriately to the fact that trials are an expected part of life.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"Heavenly Father, I realize that nobody is exempt from suffering. Thank You for Your grace that allows me, in this fallen world, to experience anything good in this life. Thank You that even when my life is in a ditch, You have not abandoned me—but rather You have already begun to work my trouble into triumph. I claim that confidence for my own life. And I commit myself to walk alongside others who go through those deep waters, in order to bring them comfort and hope."

Closing Call to Action:

First, we need to be real about life.

What do you expect from life? We need to know that we live in a fallen place among a fallen race, and trouble happens. If we understood how fallen this place is and how fallen people are, including ourselves, we would be shocked that anything good happens at all. It is a stroke of God's grace that we ever experience anything that is good.

Let's be real about life; trouble will come.

Second, we need to be confident that God is at work even when we don't see His work.

Already in the first six verses of the book of Ruth, God is working behind the scenes to bring about something unbelievably wonderful, though we won't see it until we get to the end of the book. You must have this confidence: When your life is in a ditch, God has not abandoned you; He has already begun to work your trouble into triumph.

We've heard that the "devil is in the details." That's not true. God is in the details of your life, and you can count on that.

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