**Community Group Discussion Guide
Matthew 1:5 (Ruth)**

*Read Matthew 1:5*

*Set the Context…*

**Context**: The Bible contains four detailed accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry on earth, often referred to as “the Gospels” (e.g. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Of the four Gospels, Matthew was written to a predominately Jewish audience with Jewish customs in mind. Under Jewish tradition and in accordance with such customs, genealogy (i.e. tracing one’s family line) was of utmost importance because it gave credence to Jewish heritage, rights, inheritances, and societal acceptance. Matthew begins his gospel by writing of Jesus’ genealogy to achieve two specific purposes: (1) provide grounds for Jesus’ authentic Jewish heritage; (2) proclaim that God’s Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are fulfilled through Jesus as the Messiah (Gen. 12; 2 Sam. 7). In Matthew 1:5, as Matthew provides Jesus’ genealogy, readers are introduced to Ruth. Ruth is unique in that she was not born an Israelite or originally of Jewish faith, but was instead “redeemed” and adopted into the family of God later in life by means of marriage. The inclusion of Ruth in Jesus’ ancestry, therefore, reveals both God’s grace, faithfulness and redemption, as well as His loving kindness which is not limited only to Jews but rather all humanity.

**Commentary:** Ruth was a contemporary during Israel’s season of Judges (Ruth 1:1). Judges were sent as an indictment on Israel due to their disobedience to God. It was an era described as when Israel did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 2; 17:6). During this time, there was spiritual, social, and political unrest, as well as famine. Elimelech, Naomi, along with their sons and wives (Ruth included) left Bethlehem for Moab. (Ruth 1:1-2). After moving to Moab, Elimelech and his two sons died, leaving their wives widowed and without children (1:4). This great loss landed Ruth in a very desperate situation. She was now impoverished, regulated to gleaning from the fields of wealthier people just to eat and sustain life. Naomi planned to return to Bethlehem but attempted to convince her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to return to their own people, gods, and comforts (1:7-14). In response, Ruth declared she would stay with Naomi and pledged herself to follow the LORD “***But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”*** (Ruth 1:16) In addition to her tragic loss, Ruth gave up any support networks she might have had among her own people to follow Naomi and live with her people.

 After Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem, Ruth scavenged for food and gathered left-over grain in the fields. “***And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor***…” (Ruth 2:2) This was a common practice that God charged the Jews to provide opportunity for the poor among them to work at a chance for sustaining life’s needs. (Leviticus 19:9-10) Unaware of who’s field she was in, Ruth picked grain in a field belonging to a man named, Boaz, a relative of Elimelech (2:1-2). Boaz learned of Ruth’s situation and became amazed with her faithfulness (2:4-7). Throughout several conversations, Ruth seeks Boaz’s help in “redeeming” her. In so doing, Ruth makes a bold marriage proposal to him, knowing that marriage would enable her family line to continue.

 Boaz desires to redeem Ruth and take her as a wife but knows there is a kinsman redeemer who is closer to her than himself. (Ruth 3:11-12) He then speaks with the nearest kinsman of Elimelech about purchasing Elimelech’s land and gaining Ruth as a wife (4:1-3). The nearest kinsman expressed interest, however, Boaz reminds him that “***the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance***” (4:5). The nearest kinsman became concerned that Ruth would share his inheritance with her future children. Boaz, in turn, purchased the land and declared he would marry Ruth to perpetuate the name of her dead husband and also bringing her into the family of Israel and ultimately the royal line. “…***and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the Father of David the king***.” (Matthew 1:5-6) This king David would bring us Jesus the Messiah.

In the beginning of the story, circumstances of this broken world forced Ruth lived in physical poverty. Ruth did not have food to preserve her life and did not have children to preserve the lineage of her dead husband’s family. Likewise, Ruth lived in spiritual poverty as a pagan who worshipped the gods of Moab, until she turned and followed the God of Israel. Even though there were uncertainties in Ruth’s life, Ruth was faithful to obey God. God provided for Ruth and made a way where there was none. Like Ruth, we have an opportunity to experience a great redemption; we can experience redemption from our spiritual poverty through having a relationship with Jesus—the God man who came from the line of Ruth. We can also live with hope that He sees us and providentially works in our lives for His glory.

*Share main truths of the passage along with verses that teach them* and discuss how to apply to our daily lives …

**Key Points**:

* Ruth in the Genealogy, and her example of faithful obedience (Matthew 1:5; Ruth 1:16-22)
* The Lord is a refuge in Ruth’s suffering (***Broken***) (Ruth 2:1-23)
* God is a faithful redeemer of Ruth’s suffering (***Redeemed***) (Ruth 4:7-17)

**Discussion and Application Questions:**

Matthew 1:5; Ruth 1:16-22

1. When tragedy strikes and life becomes difficult, what is often your first response (e.g. fear, anger, peace)?
2. Similarly, where do you first look for support and/or your peace when these trials arise?
3. Looking to Ruth 1:6, have you sought the Lord in times of need and cried out to Him? If not, why?
4. Knowing that the Lord “pays attention to our needs,” what in your life distracts you from trusting Him and being obedient?
5. Following Ruth’s example in v.15-17, are you willing to surrender to the Lord in the midst of uncertainty even when it costs you everything?

Ruth 2:1-23 (*Broken*)

1. Similar to v.8, have you had times in your life where you saw the Lord provide blessing(s) through someone you least expected?
2. Although we know the Lord is our refuge and faithful to provide, why do we struggle to trust Him and wait upon His timing?
3. During times of financial stress and struggle what are thoughts about God, and or yourself that creep into your heart?
4. Just like the tragic loss of Ruth’s husband sometimes poverty and suffering can fall on us due to no fault of our own. How can a right view of the fall in Genesis 3 help our hearts and minds when suffering?
5. Do you recognize that your actions and decisions, during the times we suffer, are a representation of your faith to others? How ought we guard our witness in every-day life?
6. Can you recall times in your own life where the Lord far exceeded your expectations and provided for a need in ways you did not expect (v.18-20)? Share with others!

Ruth 4:7-17 (*Redeemed*)

1. In Ruth 3:9, Ruth cried out and acknowledged her need for a “redeemer.” Have you cried out to the Lord as your redeemer and found rest in Him? Discuss what brought you to this point…
2. Just as Ruth seeks and follows Boaz’s directions in Ruth 3:11-14, are you seeking and following the Lord’s direction when He leads? How can you better do this?
3. Are you living with confidence each day, knowing the Lord’s timing is good and perfect?
4. In review of our own life, what motivates you to seek and obey the Lord (i.e. duty vs. desire)?
5. How can you use this concept of kinsman redeemer to share the gospel with someone?
6. Like Ruth we are all Moabites in need of grace and redemption. How does this story motivate your helping of others?

*Share a key take away or challenge for the week…*

*Pray together in light of Matthew 1:5…*

**Prayer Guide:**

Pray for our church that in light of these passages, we would be encouraged and emboldened to share the greatest redemption story ever told—Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection—with those around us because of a desire to see people come to know and follow Jesus. Pray for opportunities to be a Boaz for someone who is in need in our lives. Pray for hope and comfort for those who have lost loved ones to death and are grieving during the holidays.

Pray for our city that we would see many *redeemed* through coming to know Jesus and walking in a personal relationship with Him. Pray that in Louisville, Highview Baptist Church would specifically be a light in the midst of darkness. Pray for the homeless, the immigrant, and the impoverished among us that God would provide for their needs through Christians who love their neighbors.

Pray for our world that through the transforming power of the Gospel, people would come to recognize who Jesus was, is, and forever will be. Pray also that the Lord would raise up men and women on fire to live out their faith to our lost world.