

THE BIG STORY

Faith Journeys

Week of October 25

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you.

*Where you go I will go,
and where you stay I will stay.
Your people will be my people
and your God my God.*

*Where you die I will die,
and there I will be buried.*

*May the Lord deal with me,
be it ever so severely,
if even death separates you and me."*

Ruth 1:16-17



Artwork by Dick Ramsey

Legend

CARAVAN! (FOR GROUPS)

Unpacking is designed for a discussion of Sunday's message. It gives a chance to interact further with the Sunday message as a group.

Trip Planner Bible study that explores the story that we will be studying in the coming Sunday – explore the stories before Pastor Laurie preaches.

On Mission is a super important section exploring our life together as West Side family. How do we participate, in tangible ways, with God's mission to bless our neighbors and city through his people?

SOLO TRAVELERS

Day Trips gives daily readings through the story cycle that we are on.

Playlist A curated list of songs from the Psalms just for this journey.

Where are we in the BIG story?

A lot has happened since last week! The children of the wilderness generation entered the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership (book of Joshua) but according to the book of Judges that venture was never fully successful (Judges 2:1-19). So begins a downward spiral of stubbornness until at the end of the book of Judges we are told that "every person did what was right in their own eyes". Nestled as a transition from the chaos Judges and the coming order and justice of David's reign is the story of Ruth – a comfort in our own time!

On Mission!

Last week the call on mission was to identify those considered the widow, orphan, foreigner or slave in your corner of Seattle. Report back on any further reflections.

This week, the call is loyalty. How can you as a group act with loyalty in God's name toward others? You can either reflect on the people to whom God is provoking you to act with loyalty OR maybe you already know an organization that you are passionate about working alongside to extend God's loyalty. Can you as a group identify a people to whom God is calling you to extend loyalty and commit to specific actions on their behalf in the coming months?

Perhaps your small group would like to be a champion for one of the partner organizations here at West Side? For example, our church has in the past given time and/or money in partnership to Young Life, Young Lives (teen Moms), Union Gospel Mission, local Food Banks, WIN (West Side Interfaith Network), Angel Tree and Foster Care partnerships. Global partners have included the Presbyterian Outreach Foundation (church in Syria and other vulnerable places), World Vision and Wheelchairs for Nigeria. Would your Connect Group consider adopting one of these partnerships and dedicating yourselves to supporting their loyalty to the people they serve?

Playlist

Psalm 12
Help, O LORD, for there is no longer anyone who is godly; the faithful have disappeared from humankind.

Psalm 26
For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you.

Psalm 40
Do not, O LORD, withhold your mercy from me; let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.

Psalm 85
Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

THE BIG STORY

Day Trips | With Saul and David

The books of 1 & 2 Samuel tell the story of the kingdom of Israel. Before Saul is anointed by the prophet Samuel, Israel has been a federation of tribes. It is Saul and especially David after him the unite the 12 tribes of Israel into a kingdom. This week's readings tell the stories of Saul and David.

Reflect this week – justice is the job description for Israel's kings. Psalm 72 prays:

*Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.
May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.*

As you reflect on these readings notice the positive and negative descriptions of Eli and Samuel, of Saul and David. How do these inform your own expectation of leaders or the way that you steward power in your own life?

Monday | 1 Samuel 1-3

Tuesday | 1 Samuel 8-12

Wednesday | 1 Samuel 13-15

Thursday | 1 Samuel 16-20

Friday | 2 Samuel 1-5

Saturday | 2 Samuel 7-10

Trip Planner | Demanding a King

This week's Bible study questions can be used in a group, in your own study of the daily passages, or in a conversation with family or friends. The Bible stories prepare for the sermon theme that Laurie will preach on November 1. So much more is gained by doing a little trip planning beforehand!

Key Passages for Worship November 1

1 Samuel 8, 16-17, 2 Samuel 7

Who is giving this witness (whose stories are these?)

How does this story fit the BIG story of God's rescue mission (redemption and restoration)? (Hint – notice that the end of Judges states that every person did what was right in their own eyes – while Ruth ends with the genealogy of the king who would establish justice ...)

What is the invitation from God to faith?

What was the response?

Unpacking:

Journey from Home | Ruth 1-4

The journeys in the book of Ruth are all about leaving and returning home. Naomi's journey away from her hometown results in losses and a bitter homecoming to Bethlehem, while Ruth's departure from her homeland results in a new home and family for both she and Naomi.

In your story, have you ever lived as a 'resident alien' in another place? If not, can you connect at all with the experience of friends or family who have returned after living away and try to make a place home again?

Our story and the BIG story

When you hear "loyalty" or "steadfast faithfulness" how do you define that in relationships? Whose loyalty to you has been important in your own life?

Loyalty in the story of Ruth extends beyond the normal bonds of family and friends as Boaz treats Ruth with favor – loyalty extended to a foreigner and widow, two characteristics that made Ruth especially vulnerable (see Judges 19 for a story that one contemporary Biblical scholar calls a "text of terror".) Who are the particularly vulnerable in our communities?

BIG Questions

Ruth's bold loyalty and Boaz' generous loyalty were each based in their steadfast faithfulness to Israel's God (see Ruth 1:16-17 and 2:11-13). What do you make of Laurie's claim that this is the sort of loyalty that God uses to move the BIG story forward toward order and justice, flourishing and intimacy?

Where is God calling you this week to show your loyalty the God by extending loyalty toward another?