

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides January 22nd

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. Did you have a favorite pet growing up? If so, tell about it.

Bible Study Questions

1. What is your favorite genre of the Bible? Why? What genre do you find the most intimidating?
2. **Case Study: Book of Ruth**
 - **Research the setting or the book. Do you know who is telling this story? When is this story taking place? What do you know about that time period? What is the setting of the story?**
(We are not sure who wrote the book, but Samuel is suggested. A key about the time period is that it takes place during the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1) which was a time of reoccurring spiritual decay).
 - Read through the book as a whole
 - **What characters do you notice in the story? What do you notice about these characters? (Write them down). What is praised from the narrator as being honorable? What is declared to be dishonorable?**
 - **What is the plotline to the story? (Map out how the story progresses)**
(Act 1: Naomi's tragedy, decision to return home, and Ruth's loyalty.
Act 2: Ruth works in Boaz's field and Boaz shows kindness to her
Act 3: The romance between Boaz and Ruth
Act 4: Resolving the conflict with another kinsman redeemer, the resolution of the story pointing to king David)
 - **What do you notice about God in the story? Does he speak or explicitly act within the story? What things does God do implicitly (not clearly stated but evident from the story)?**
(God implicitly appears in the book. He is revealed as the God of restoration who did not abandon Naomi, but restored her. Furthermore, he blesses both Ruth (remember, she is from a pagan nation) and Boaz for their kindness and self-sacrificing love.
 - **Think for a moment about the narrator. What is the narrator's purpose in writing this book?**

(A key purpose is to highlight the story of redemption. It is to remind Israel that when they have sinned and feel abandoned by God (Naomi), or when they feel as if they are on the outside (Ruth), or when they are the only ones doing what is right (Boaz), God is faithful and will redeem. There is also a purpose of showing how God used these different people to bring about the kingship of David.

- **Are there any other specific teachings in the Bible that are illustrated in this story?**
(There are many things that you could do on an individual level. For example, you could look at the grief process with Naomi. You could look at friendship from Ruth...who is that hurting friend of whom you are willing to be fiercely loyal?)
 - **Taking this information, what principles do you learn that apply to us today?**
3. **Case Study: Isaiah 1:13-17**
 - **Read the text**
 - **Explore the context.**
 - **Who is the prophet speaking to in these verses? What do you know about these people?** (Answer: The prophet Isaiah is speaking to the people of Judah. In verse 1, it identifies the kings who ruled during this time. Most of those kings were good and Judah was considered to be very religious during this time.)
 - **What do the surrounding verses have to say about this passage?** (Answer: In the previous verses, God accuses them of wickedness. In the following verses, God reasons with them and tells them to repent.)
 - **What charge does the text bring before the people?**
 - **What does God want them to do?**
 - **How does this reinforce the covenant relationship between God and his people?**
 - **How does this passage relate to the culture today?**

January 22nd: Getting the Most out of the Bible Pay Attention to Genre

God is really smart. When God put together the Bible, he didn't just use one format to get across his message. Instead, he told the story through different genres of writing. Each genre has its own rules for interpretation. Good Bible students don't apply the same rules to the entire Bible, but apply different rules in respect to the various genres that they are studying.

Different Genres Require Different Rules

Historical Narrative: Most of Genesis through Esther

- **God is always the hero. Make him the focal point.**
- **Human characters are not always examples to follow:** Often they are doing the wrong things. Be careful in applying a person's example unless God specifically praises it.
- **Narratives often illustrate doctrines taught elsewhere:** Stories often show us the results of either obeying God or disobeying. Ask the question, what teaching is this story illustrating?

Poetry (Psalms)

- **Meant to aid us in worship, help us reflect on God's character, and to relate to him:** This is one of the best genres to meditate on and to sit with for extended period of time.
- **Look for God's character and his promises**

Wisdom

- **Not absolutes but principles that when applied are generally true:** For example, when it says that training your child in the right way will result in a righteous child, we are not to take it as an absolute. It is generally true, but not always.

Prophecy

- **Can be about future events, but often contain God's message to encourage or challenge a culture.**
- **Pay attention to context, person speaking, and the audience:** Once we do this, we can often find parallels with their setting and our own.

Gospels

- **Remember the Jewish context**
- **Ask, "why did the author include this story here?":** Jewish authors deliberately chose stories and arranged them in order to make a point. Inclusion of the story matters.

Epistles

- **Are occasional documents. Try to discern the questions being answered:** Epistles are one side of a correspondence between two

parties. They always respond to something and we want to try to figure out what it is.

Apocalypse

- **Be aware of imagery and the original audience.** Revelation does include future events, but it would have been understood by its 1st century audience who were experiencing intense persecution from the Roman Empire.