

Stories of Faith: **Ruth**

Bible passages: **Ruth 2: 1- 12 James 2:14 - 26**

1. What thought or idea from this passage or Sunday's service particularly surprised, encouraged, provoked, disturbed, or helped you?
2. What do you most value in friendship?
3. In what ways is 'friend' an important name for God/Jesus to you?
4. In what way does the idea of Trinity help us to understand our identity as a follower of Christ and as a friend?
5. What images, bible verses or stories, like Ruth, help us understand this theology of friendships?
6. What helps you/us embody (take into our very being) this theology of friendship? If this feels like a strange question just chat about what this could mean.
7. Friends have been described as the people who got there first. We have times in our lives when we have capacity for friendship and actively seek connection, then those 'slots' are full and we stop. This makes it tricky when people move to a new place or their circumstances change. Be honest in your discussion, Who and how could you draw others in? Do you need to be open to asking for more connection, deeper friendships, who would you ask? What would that look like?
8. If you have time, how does this discussion of friendship link to faith and deeds in James 2? The Dana Robert might help.

### Sermon Notes

In the book of Ruth, God does not speak from burning bushes; nor does God divide the sea. Instead, God acts through circumstance, and through the faithfulness of ordinary human beings. God's *hesed* is embodied in human action.

Ruth is the Hebrew for friend, here in Chapter 2 through the friendship of these two women, the tide is turning. Emptiness is being filled. Hope is born.

Ruth and Naomi, linked by shared experience, need and location, show true friendship:

1. Awareness of each other's needs (commitment)
2. Vulnerability in each other's presence (trust)
3. Notice the details of each other's lives (intimacy)
4. Communicate openly with each other (trust and encouragement)
5. Share a common goal and a wider perspective (purpose)

It is the season of Trinity, the three beings of the God woven into one. The Trinity is God as friendship, in the constant dynamic dance of giving and receiving and we are invited. This is at the heart of our faith as participation, in Christ, with Christ and through Christ. Friendship on all fronts, inwards, outwards, and upwards.

*A cross-cultural perspective on Jesus as friend says a lot about the meaning of community. For friendship always goes both ways. It requires mutuality. It involves give and take. Since Jesus is holding hands with the world, so to speak, then intimacy with Jesus extends far beyond personal needs. To befriend Jesus means carrying in fellowship the responsibilities of friendship that he carried. . Dana Robert.*