

## SESSION 1

# TRAGEDY STRIKES



**Aim: To learn how to find hope in God in times of crisis**

'Crisis' is one of the most popular words of our generation. We talk of a political crisis, an economic crisis, a work crisis and even a family crisis. And at some point in life, a crisis will touch each of us. In those times, how do we find the strength to keep on going? The answer is hope. The story of Ruth reminds us that even in the deepest crisis God offers us hope. He alone can bring something good out of a tragedy.

*In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.*

*Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.*

**Ruth 1:1-5**

### TO SET THE SCENE

We all face difficulties in life and cope with them in different ways. Think back to a particular 'crisis' in your life. What helped you keep going?

- ▶ Someone praying for you
- ▶ Someone bringing a meal round
- ▶ Listening to a sermon
- ▶ Something else

Explain how these words or actions helped you find hope in the middle of your

### READ RUTH 1:1-22

**1** Describe the moral and spiritual crisis that was facing the nation of Israel in the time of the Judges.

**2** Look at the crisis that has hit Naomi's family in 1:1-5. In 1:21, Naomi describes herself as 'empty' – is this a good description?

**3** Naomi attributes her sorrows to God in 1:20-21. Is this valid?

HOW DOES THIS



**4** To what extent is God responsible for the difficulties in our lives?

**5** Naomi felt that Ruth's returning with her to Bethlehem would just add to the family crisis. What was her reasoning?



**6** In times of crisis it is often difficult to know how to respond. In those times, our true character and faith in God are shown for what they are. What aspect of your spiritual life or your character would you like to work on so that you are more prepared to handle crises?

**7** Despite this tragic family crisis, what are the signs of hope in this chapter?



**8** Look at the following verses. What hope do they give you for your own situation?

- ▶ Lamentations 3:19-26
- ▶ Romans 8:28
- ▶ Romans 15:13
- ▶ 2 Corinthians 4:7-8
- ▶ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

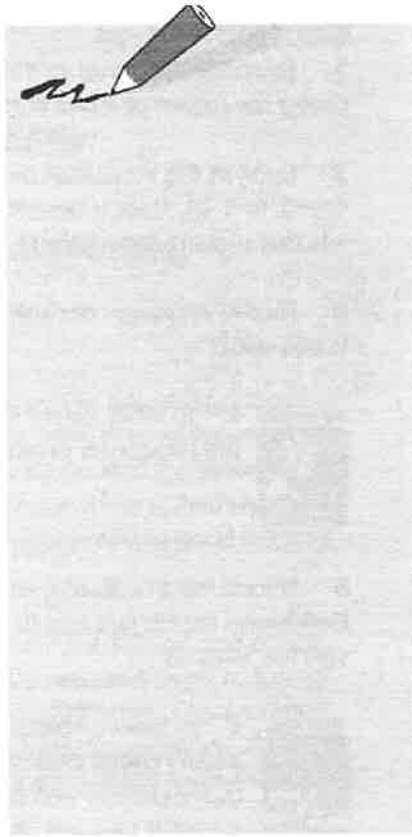




**9** What practical steps can the church take to help families facing crisis?



**10** Spend some time in prayer for families and individuals in your church or group who are facing difficult situations.



## WORSHIP

Give each person time to reflect on their personal situation. Naomi spoke of the Almighty (*El-Shaddai*, the powerful one) and the Lord (*Yahweh*, 'I am who I am', the ever-present and unchanging God). Pray these names of God into your own situation. Then read through Psalm 13 together and thank God for his constant love, salvation and goodness that are realities regardless of our circumstances. If it is appropriate, in twos, petition God to intervene in your current difficulties.

## FURTHER STUDY

There are many books written on the subject of pain and suffering. Two well-known books are *The Problem of Pain* by C.S. Lewis and *Disappointment with God* by Philip Yancey.

## FOR NEXT WEEK

Look back to your answer to question 6. This week put practical measures in place to help you work on a particular aspect of your spiritual life or character. See if you're able to handle the stressful points in your week differently as a result!