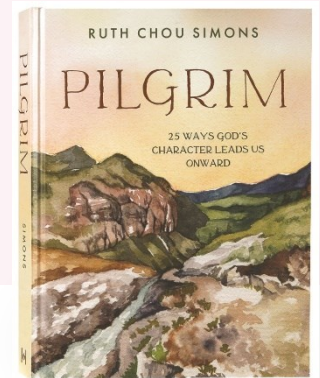




LEADER'S GUIDE

PILGRIM BY RUTH CHOU SIMONS



"I wrote this Pilgrim journey so that we might walk this road, courageously and confidently, together as Christ-followers. Through the guideposts of grace that appear in this book – guideposts which affirm key truths in the Bible – we will find that we are not alone."

RUTH CHOU SIMONS

THEMES

Pilgrimage

Theology

Encouragement

God's Love

Grace

Belonging

Faith

BOOK SUMMARY

Our Christian walk can sometimes feel unclear and complex, and we often feel as though we don't know which way to go. Ruth gently reminds us that we need not wander aimlessly, because the Bible, God's word, is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Jesus IS the way, the truth, and the life, and he will see us home.

Ruth's book helps us walk our *Pilgrim* journey with courage and confidence, by directing us to grace-filled guideposts that affirm key truths about God's character. Through these guideposts, we're reminded that we're not alone or abandoned and there's no need to strive. No matter our path, we can find secure footing for our journey by surrendering our lives to God - the author of our stories - and by following His guideposts of grace, we will be directed moment by moment, safe in His tender care and provision for us, to our forever home.

The book is a three-part journey; The Journey Begins, A Long Endurance and Nearing Home. No matter what phase of your *Pilgrim* journey you're currently in, the richness of Ruth's storytelling, encouraging scriptures and quotes from pilgrim saints who have faithfully travelled (or are currently travelling), beautifully woven with hymns for our hearts, will direct us to the most significant guidepost of all – the truth that "Christ's finished work on the cross is what makes it possible for us to complete the journey".

The 'Old Rugged Cross', has always, and will always, be more than enough to see us to our heavenly home.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS



1

Q. Have you ever considered yourself a *Pilgrim* on your Christian journey? Ruth says that there are “guideposts of grace everywhere we look”, have you been able to “cultivate eyes that see and hearts that believe” that these guideposts are God’s help in leading us home? (p10)

TALKING POINTS

“Guideposts” are reminders from Scripture that point us forward on our journey with Christ:

- They direct our hearts and minds to the truths of the gospel, the attributes of God, and the core foundations of our faith (p10).
- These truths remind us to seek God’s way, not our own way.
- They are indicators that we are living in God’s great story and that He is the author of our lives.
- They will remind us that God is here, right now, working in ways that may be unseen.

2

Q. In section one, ‘The Journey Begins’, Ruth reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God. How does God’s perfect love, and this grace-filled guidepost, give us hope for our *Pilgrim* journey?

TALKING POINTS

Romans 8:38-39 “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”;

- We are loved and welcomed.
- Nothing can get in the way of God’s love for us (including our mistakes and sin, evil, the government, and other people.)
- God’s love is so limitless that it cannot be stopped.
- God is love, and His love is perfect, self-sacrificing, steadfast and not based on feelings or emotions.

3

Q. Which guidepost from section one, “The Journey Begins”, was most impactful for you right now? Why do you think this is?

TALKING POINTS

Guideposts 1-9:

- 1. Nothing can separate us from God’s love.
- 2. God’s grace holds and guides us every step of the way to His presence
- 3. God’s mercy is always greater than our sin.
- 4. The cross gives us access to every gift the Father offers through his Son.
- 5. With our new hearts, we have everything we need for the journey.
- 6. We can walk in righteousness because God has made us righteous.
- 7. Because God sees all and knows all, we can trust where he takes us.
- 8. No matter where we are, God is with us and will never leave us.
- 9. Through Jesus, we are anchored to a sure and unchanging Father.

4

Q. In section two, 'A Long Endurance', on pages 153-154, Ruth asks us a series of questions and provides encouraging responses to each issue. As a group, read the questions out loud, and share which one best describes you right now, and if the scripture helped you.

TALKING POINTS

Questions p153-154;

- Do you feel physically weak and weary? (God promises to keep you and carry you for all the days He has for you, Isaiah 46:4).
- Do you feel unable to bear the worries and burdens weighing on your heart? (God is strong enough to bear them for you, Psalm 55:22).
- Do you lack courage to continue your journey? (God will give you perseverance, Psalm 73:26).
- Do you struggle with motivation or purpose? (God sustains you by His will, Acts 17:28).

5

Q. Which guidepost from section two, "A Long Endurance", was most impactful for you right now? Why do you think this is?

TALKING POINTS

Guideposts 10-22;

- 10. God promises to meet our every need.
- 11. God's goodness to us will never run dry.
- 12. Jesus watches over us all through life's journey.
- 13. The Lord will complete the work he has begun in us.
- 14. The God who holds the universe in his hands holds us in his hands.
- 15. No matter how great the difficulty we face, God is greater.
- 16. Because God has proven Himself trustworthy, we can trust Him with our future.
- 17. God is faithful and will never fail us.
- 18. Praising God in every situation enables us to have gratitude in every situation
- 19. As our deliverer, nothing can keep God from bringing us safely home.
- 20. As we behold God's holiness, our passions for the distractions of this world fade away.
- 21. God's glorious creation stands as a constant reminder that he is at work all around us.
- 22. When Christ is our cornerstone, even life's worst storms cannot collapse us.

6

Q. In section three, "Nearing Home", Ruth says, "This pilgrim journey is a tethering of head and heart, mind and body, trust and obedience" (p236). What do you think she means?

TALKING POINTS

Every guidepost has aimed to direct a weary Christ-follower to the unchanging truth of God's character and the evidence of His grace along the windy road our journeys take (p236). There is no right or wrong answer. Answers could include;

- In the weariness of our journey, we may have head knowledge of Christ which needs to permeate our hearts to see us through.
- In the weariness of our journey, our physical bodies may fail us, and our minds must look heavenward and to eternity for the hope of healing.
- In the weariness of our journey, when all else fails, we still have the choice to simply trust and obey, knowing that whatever may come, God is good.

7

Q. Which guidepost from section three, "Nearing Home", was most impactful for you right now? Why do you think this is?

TALKING POINTS

Guideposts 23-25;

- 23. Because Jesus is the King of Kings, He rules over every circumstance we face.
- 24. Christ's finished work on the cross is what makes it possible for us to complete the journey.
- 25. God's forever grace will lead us all the way home.

8

Q. Ruth includes many quotes from Christian pilgrims throughout the book. Which quote impacted you the most? Why?

TALKING POINTS

If no one can remember a particular favourite, you may like to give them a minute to look through their book or read some of the following quotes out loud and discuss them:

- "Never did His love begin and never can it cease. It is from eternity and shall be to eternity." - C. H. Spurgeon
- The stream of grace and righteousness is deeper and broader than the stream of guilt." - Matthew Henry
- Nothing that has occurred or will occur in heaven or earth can change the tender mercies of our God." - A. W. Tozer
- "Repentance is a change of the mind and regeneration is a change of the man." - Thomas Adams
- "God does not justify us because we are worthy, but justifying makes us worthy." - Thomas Watson.
- "The believing man accepts a promise of God as a fact as solid as a mountain and vastly more enduring." - A. W. Tozer
- "This is true faith, a living confidence in the goodness of god." - Martin Luther
- "Everything we say or do will either illuminate or obscure the character of God. Sanctification is the process of joyfully growing luminous." - Jen Wilkin
- "God's plan will continue of God's schedule." - A. W. Tozer
- "He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater, He sendeth more strength when the labours increase; To added affliction, he addeth his mercy, To multiplied trials, his multiplied peace" - Annie Johnson Flint
- "Faith isn't the ability to believe long and far into the misty future. It's simply taking GOD AT His word and taking the next step." - Joni Erickson Tada
- "My security as a Christian does not reside in the strength of my faith but in the indestructibility of my saviour" - Sinclair Ferguson
- "Thanksgiving is good but thanks-living is better" - Matthew Henry
- "When God declares a man righteous, He instantly sets about to make Him righteous" - A. W. Tozer
- "Praise is the rehearsal of our eternal song. By grace, we learn to sing, and in glory, we continue to sing." - C. H. Spurgeon
- "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." C.T. Studd

9

Q. Which was your favourite hymn cited in *Pilgrim*? Do you have any other favourite hymns which aren't listed here? Why is it a favourite for you?

TALKING POINTS

The hymns are listed on pages 248 and 249.

We may be particularly connected to songs or hymns which coincide with significant moments in our lives.

- During times of trials or suffering, worship can remind us of who God is, His sovereignty and His promise for us as His beloved children.
- When we lose a loved one we may remember them through music or a song that brought them joy and now connects us, despite being apart.
- We may remember a favourite hymn played at a baptism, baby dedication, wedding or other joyful occasion which fills our soul with thanksgiving and praise.
- We may also simply connect deeply with the lyrics, the author of the hymn or the story behind the song.

You may like to encourage the women to research some of their favourite hymns, the authors and the stories behind the songs. Often the most powerful and beautiful songs were written under great oppression, hardship, trials and suffering.

10

Q. Have you read *The Pilgrim's Progress*? If not, do you think you'll consider reading it in the future?

TALKING POINTS

The Pilgrim's Progress is a classic allegorical Christian novel that follows Christian and his trials and temptations during his harrowing journey to the Celestial City.

Along a road filled with monsters and spiritual terrors, Christian meets characters such as Worldly Wiseman, Giant Despair, Talkative, Ignorance, and the demons of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. But he is also joined on his journey by Hopeful and Faithful, who encourage his faith and perseverance.

Quotes from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* featured in *Pilgrim*;

- "This hill, though high, I covet to ascend; the difficulty will not me offend. For I perceive the way to life lies here. Come, pluck up, heart; let's neither faint nor fear. Better, though difficult, the right way to go, than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe."
- "My name is now Christian, but my name used to be Graceless."
- "It is always hard to see the purpose in wilderness wanderings until after they are over."
- "Let the kingdom be always before you, and believe with certainty and consistency the things that are yet unseen. Let nothing that is on this side of eternal life get inside you."



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