

Getting Connected

“For whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God”

Ruth 1:16



Sometimes we have to make very difficult choices. Sometimes, because of circumstances, our options seem limited, and we feel that we have no choice but to move away from the comfortable and familiar. Whether it's changing jobs, relocating to another part of the country (or the world for that matter), it means adjusting to a new place, new surroundings, new people, new culture (in some cases), and a new faith community.

To briefly recap the story of Ruth, Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, had to return to Bethlehem. Her husband and sons had died, and she had no relatives in Moab, a foreign country where they had been living because of famine in Israel. She faced severe poverty and hardship as a widow, so Naomi knew in her heart that now that the famine was over, she had to go back to the place where God was providing for His people. Bethlehem was her home, her people, and the place where she could worship her God. Naomi had faith that her God would provide all she needed. At some point in their journey back to Bethlehem, Naomi told her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, who were accompanying her, to return to their mothers' homes. Naomi wanted the very best for them in the future and wanted them to find security and a good life through new husbands. Naomi knew that the probability of finding that in her homeland was small. So she was willing to go on alone and leave them behind to find new love without her. They wept and kissed. Orpah returned to her home, but Ruth clung to Naomi, indicating that she was going to stay with her.

Ruth had to make a very difficult choice, but she chose life with Naomi over her own family, her national identity, and her religious idolatry. In a beautiful expression of commitment, she tied her future to that of Naomi's and confessed allegiance to the people of Israel (your people) and to the God of Israel (your God). Ruth, in effect, made a complete break with her past and took a leap of faith, despite the attempts of Naomi to urge her to go back home. Ruth showed the kind of faith that is a prime example for anyone who wants to have a relationship with God, and eventually Ruth's faith was rewarded.

Ruth made a significant choice. It involved the choosing of an entirely new community along with an entirely new lifestyle. All that she had known previously was now set aside in her pursuit of Naomi's God. God's love for everyone in the world is so great that He sent his only Son to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Everybody is faced with a choice that can lead either to unhappiness and eventual eternal separation from God or to an eternal existence in heaven. Each of us needs to make a choice and get connected with Jesus Christ!

Questions for Discussion:

1. How do we choose which communities to belong to?
2. What racial, cultural and religious barriers would Ruth have to deal with in Israel? How does Ruth's experience compare with today's racial, cultural and religious climate?

3. Why do you think Orpah and Ruth, who were facing the same reality, made different decisions? Was one right and the other wrong? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Ruth choose to go back with Naomi to her mother-in-law's land and people and to commit herself to Naomi's God?
5. What indicators are there that Ruth's commitments were genuine and well thought out? What help does she give us in regard to making our own decisions?

Reflections:

Even in sorrow and pain the believer can be kind and thoughtful. Considering the facts, instead of one's alterable feelings, makes good decisions. In our sorrow we can fail to understand what God is doing in our lives. That said, the right decision for one person is not necessarily the right decision for another. True commitment to God and His people is life impacting and determination to do the right thing is a good and godly characteristic.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to remember and understand that you love me, and you care for me and that you are always with me, even when I feel all alone. You have provided your Spirit and a community of faith to encourage me and for this I thank you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

What God wants me to do:

Special insights I have learned:
