

# Sermon Study Guide

Pastor: Pastor Ashwin Ramani

Date: April 2/3'16

**THE MAIN THING:** Our decisions direct the course of our life and they have the power to launch us into the destiny the Lord has in mind for our future. Such decisions force us to choose between safety and boldness. When we honor God in our decisions and step out in boldness, God honors us.

**PURSUE RELATIONSHIP:** *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. When have you made a BOLD decision? What were the challenges, and how did it turn out?
2. Considering the culture in which we live, how are we challenged to choose comfort/safety or boldness?

**PURSUE GOD:** *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. What kind of future could Orpah expect in Moab? (Ruth 1:15)
2. What kind of future could Ruth expect in Israel? (Ruth 1:20)
3. What prompted Orpah to make her choice?
4. What prompted Ruth to make her choice? (Ruth 1:16-17, 2:2)
5. What in Naomi's life may have influenced Ruth to say, "Your God will be my God"?
6. What was the legacy of Ruth's decision? (Ruth 4:14-15, 21-22)

**PURSUE MISSION:** *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community as you live out your calling.'*

1. How can Ruth serve as an example to us when we have a hard decision to make?
2. What decisions are you facing right now? How do you feel God's "tugging"?
3. What does it mean to make bold decisions inspired by faith?
4. Reflect on this statement: "God presents opportunities, and we know we should say 'YES', and we'll regret it if we say 'NO'."

## THE WORD (NIV)

**Ruth 1:1–18 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup> In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. <sup>2</sup> The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was 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. <sup>3</sup> Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. <sup>4</sup> They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, <sup>5</sup> both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. <sup>6</sup> When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. <sup>7</sup> With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. <sup>8</sup> Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. <sup>9</sup> May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud <sup>10</sup> and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." <sup>11</sup> But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? <sup>12</sup> Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—<sup>13</sup> would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!" <sup>14</sup> At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. <sup>15</sup> "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." <sup>16</sup> But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." <sup>18</sup> When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

**Ruth 1:20 (NIV)** <sup>20</sup> "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter."

**Ruth 2:2 (NIV)** <sup>2</sup> And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter."

**Ruth 4:14–15 (NIV)** <sup>14</sup> The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! <sup>15</sup> He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."

**Ruth 4:21–22 (NIV)** <sup>21</sup> Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, <sup>22</sup> Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

# Sermon Study Summary

When we look at the Bible and Christian history, it is obvious that not much was accomplished for God's Kingdom when the people of God chose to play safe. Gary Haugen, President of *International Justice Mission* points out that in every decision we make in life we can choose to be safe or be brave but we cannot be both!

In his book, *Pour Your Heart Into It*, Howard Schultz, Chairman and CEO of Starbucks reflects on his defining decision: "This is my moment, I thought. If I don't seize the opportunity, if I don't step out of my comfort zone and risk it all, if I let too much time tick on, my moment will pass. I knew that if I didn't take advantage of this opportunity, I would replay it in my mind for my whole life, wondering: What if?"

We all have had our share of "What If?" moments that tend to revolve around our decisions. The Bible story of Orpah and Ruth (Ruth 1:1-18) tells us of the challenging decision they faced. Orpah decides to play it safe while Ruth takes a risk and says "yes" to God. We never again hear about Orpah in the Bible, while Ruth is now part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. What if Ruth like Orpah had returned to Moab? Ruth would have missed out on God's best for her life.

Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons lived in one of the worst times of drought and famine in Israel's history. They left Bethlehem and moved to Moab. Their sons married Ruth and Orpah, who were Moabites. In a few years Elimelech died leaving Naomi a widow and later both sons died. Naomi and her daughters-in-law faced a tragic situation with challenging decisions to make. Because they were widows their survival was at risk. (1:7-10) Naomi planned to return to Judah but encouraged Orpah and Ruth to return to their families in Moab. Initially, Orpah and Ruth decided to go with Naomi but she was intent on them having a better future. If they went to Judah with her, they would be foreigners. Naomi felt they had better chances of finding husbands if they returned to their families in Moab. (1:11-13) Orpah decided to take Naomi's advice. (1:14)

Keith Johnstone says in this profound quote, "There are people who prefer to say 'yes' and there are people who prefer to say 'no'. Those who say 'yes' are rewarded by the adventures they have. Those who say 'no' are rewarded by the safety they attain." What Orpah represents is a life of unrealized potential and missed opportunities! That's what her decision meant — not just going back to her family — not just securing her future but returning to her pagan worship. She had tasted the truth about God but did not have the guts to make a total commitment. She perished because she played it safe!

Sometimes the wise and sensible option may be to play safe. But at times our obsession with safety is a direct result of our lack of faith, our unwillingness to leave the familiar and enter into the unknown. That robs us of God's very best. We miss out on spiritual adventures when we say 'no' to things God wants us to say 'yes' to! God does not force anything upon us — He gently tugs our heart with a burden. It takes courage and faith on our part to respond to that tug and walk in the direction God is calling us to walk!

Ruth was loyal to Naomi and to God so her decision is rewarded by a legacy that will influence generations to come. (1:15-17) Her decision was clear but hard. If she stayed in Moab where she had all the prospects of a good life, family name, safety, a possible husband — her faith will die! So she chose the place where her faith will grow — she was willing to give up her comfort to identify with the community of God's people. Ruth was able to see through the uncertainty. Her faith in the one true God and her commitment to her mother-in-law were stronger than all her fears. Because Ruth honored God in her decision, God honored her. That is what we read about in the rest of the Book of Ruth as one door after another opens up for her and she marries Boaz and becomes the great grandmother of King David.

It can be the same for us. When we refuse to play safe, when we respond to that faint "tugging", when we step out in faith and out of the familiar and when we attempt something for God's Kingdom, we too will see the hand of God at work in our lives. This all starts by taking the biggest risk we will ever take — surrendering full control of our life to Jesus Christ and following Him wholeheartedly!

What is God asking you to do? Have you said "yes" to God and to His promptings, or are you playing it safe? As you step out in faith, like Ruth, you will discover that it is safe to be brave because God takes care of us and that makes all the difference.