

RUTH'S LIFE-CHANGING DECISIONS

You will rarely find a book in the Bible that is more redemptive, more faith building, more romantic or more illustrative of the providence of God than the book of Ruth. C.I. Scofield outlined this book of four chapters with four alliterative points--Chapter one: Ruth Deciding; Chapter two: Ruth Serving; Chapter three: Ruth Resting; Chapter Four: Ruth Rewarded. It is the story of a family who left Bethlehem-Judah during a famine and moved to the heathen world of Moab. Sad times fell on Naomi, her husband Elimelech and their sons, Mahlon and Chilion in this strange land in which they sojourned. All three men tragically died. When the famine was over, Naomi made a decision to go back to her home, Bethlehem. Her two daughters-in-law began following her. Naomi encouraged the young widows to stay in their own land, for she had nothing to give them and she had no sons to raise up to marry them. Orpah turned back, but Ruth did not. She stayed with her mother-in-law. It is a beautiful story of redemption. It tells of Ruth's sweet, godly ways in taking care of her mother-in-law and then as God takes care of her by directing her to become acquainted with Boaz, a kinsman of her deceased husband. This wealthy man, Boaz redeems Ruth and Naomi, but not without a fight. There was a closer kinsman to Ruth than Boaz, so he had to conquer the nearer kinsman to marry Ruth. This is prophetic of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who became our Kinsman Redeemer. He had a fight on His hands; he had to overcome our nearer kinsmen due to the fall of man. The Devil and sin had a claim on us. Christ, by the blood of His cross was the One and Only who could save us from the damnation of inheritance that was naturally ours. Romans 7:24, 25a: *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* *"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (I Corinthians 15:57). In our story, we see the Jewish Boaz takes the Gentile bride, Ruth and from this union came King David and ultimately, the King of Kings, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

From this beautiful story, I would like to direct your attention to the pivotal point in the story when Ruth makes the most important and right

decisions of her life. These famous decisions are found in Ruth 1:16, 17: *"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: 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: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."*

Life is made up of a series of decisions. Allow me to share some quotes from history on the value of decisions: "Where there is no decision there is no life" (J.J. Dewey). "The risk of a wrong decision is preferable to the terror of indecision" (Maimonides). "Decision is a sharp knife that cuts clean and straight; indecision, a dull one that hacks and tears and leaves ragged edges behind it" (Gordon Graham). "The quality of decision is like the well-timed swoop of a falcon which enables it to strike and destroy its victim" (Sun Tzu). "Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen" (Ralph Waldo Emerson). I want to take the liberty to tweak this quote from Emerson and give it a Christian worldview: "Once you make the right decision God moves heaven and earth to make it happen." And finally, Pythagoras said, "Choices are the hinges of destiny." For those of you that are yet to make some of these similar decisions, I would like for you to personalize them and own them. And with that thought in mind, I bring to your attention the first life-changing decision of Ruth:

1. My Destiny

"...Whither thou goest, I will go..." (Ruth 1:16b). This is huge! The words of these decisions are often sung at weddings. Although I think it is acceptable to use this as a wedding song, it should be clearly understood that this is a commitment basically, not between a woman and her husband or even between Ruth and Naomi, it is a decision between a person and their God. How true! Destiny turns on the hinges of decisions. Moses said, *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live"* (Deuteronomy 30:19). Joshua said, *"...Choose you this day whom ye will serve"* (Joshua 24:15). Isaiah gave a prophesy of Jesus when he said, *"Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good"* (Isaiah 7:15). We need to be close to God to decide correctly. Our Lord warned, *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me"* (Matthew 15:8). Our aim should be: *"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you..."* (James 4:8a). When we draw near to God we can be assured of making the right destiny decisions.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

2. My Home

"...Whither thou lodgest, I will lodge..." (Ruth 1:16c). A godly home should be the determined goal before marriage. After marriage is not the best time to decide, although it's better than totally neglecting this important decision. I love the fact that Joshua said, *"...But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15c).

3. My Associations

"...Thy people shall be my people..." (Ruth 1:16d). Our friends influence us very heavily, otherwise the Bible would not have given us such important truths as: *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed"* (Proverbs 13:20). *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend"* (Proverbs 27:17). *"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners"* (I Corinthians 15:33). We observe in II Samuel 13:2, 3: *"And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her. But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man."* God's Word shows us that Amnon was in the wrong frame of mind, but even in this frame of mind, he did not have the intention on physically harming his sister. But under the wrong influence of his wrong friend, he did something that he would never have done had an evil companion not corrupted him. This is why the Bible says, *"...neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure"* (I Timothy 5:22).

4. My Lord

"...Thy God, my God..." (Ruth 1:16e). Even in the Old Testament we see a godly life is determined by personal relationship with the Lord. In these decisions, this one decision is the hinge from which all the others turn. When we turn our life over to the Lord, everything is changed for good. *"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"* (John 14:17). *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the*

fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10).

5. My Eternity

"Where thou diest, will I die and there will I be buried..." (Ruth 1:17a). The commitment is an eternal one. Recently I visited the cemetery in which our loved ones are buried and most of the graves had a double tombstone depicting that here lies a husband and wife, connected in life, connected in death. With our Lord we are connected in life, in death and thank God, in eternity. Nothing *"...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:39b).

Conclusion:

Ruth declared that these decisions are non-negotiable. *"...The LORD so to me, and more also if ought but death part thee and me"* (Ruth 1:17b). In essence, she was saying, "I am not turning back." She drew the proverbial line in the sand. She is leaving the old wicked world in which she lived. For Ruth, this new life is a one-way ticket to the best possible life one could ever dream of living! Won't you join her?

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.