

# Book of Ruth: Choices of Consequence

---

**Scripture Focus:** Ruth 1:6-18

Life is full of choices. Some of those choices have greater consequences than others. In many instances, the choices we make communicate much about who we are, our nature, values, and priorities. This lesson focuses on the period of time when, after Naomi's husband and two sons have died, Naomi chooses to return to Bethlehem. The famine is over and Naomi believes it is right to leave Moab and return to the home she left 10 years prior.

Her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth who were Moabites, start out to go with her. Naomi encourages them not to accompany her and gives them her blessing. [Naomi said] ***“Go back each of you to your mother’s house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and me.”*** (v. 8) Both of the women respond with ***“No, we will return with you to your people.”*** (v. 10)

Naomi lays out the case for why it would be foolish for the women to go to Bethlehem with her, a country that is not theirs, with seemingly no future due to Jewish law. In Israel, a living brother must marry the wife of his dead brother, so that the property and name of the brother and the family is not lost. This is called a “levirate marriage.” There is no chance of this since Naomi has no other sons. This is at the heart of Naomi's argument to the women in verses 11-13.

With tears, Orpah chose to say good-bye and return to her family. Ruth chose differently and her words of devotion are some of the most quoted in all of the Old Testament, especially at weddings. It is one of the Bible's greatest declarations of interdependence and consists of three parts: a refusal, a poetic comparison, and an oath. Here it is in the King James Version of Ruth 1:16-17, as read at my own wedding.

***“Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn away from following after thee; for where 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 anything but death part thee and me.”***

- Describe the relationship between Naomi and her daughters-in-law.
- How might you interpret Naomi’s argument shared with the women concerning why they should stay in Moab? What are the emotions, what are the practical elements?
- Looking at what Ruth is pledging to Naomi, what conclusion might you make concerning Ruth? What are her priorities?
- What aspects/characteristics of “love for others” as required of us by the Lord are emphasized in the example of these women?
- In what ways do you think living in a very individualistic society, as we do, has made it much more difficult to demonstrate “other-regarding behavior,” which may be defined as regarding the needs and interests of others and responding accordingly to promote their well-being?

The Apostle Paul wrote the following in Romans 12 concerning loving and honoring one another.

***Don’t just pretend that you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other.***

(Romans 12:9-10, New Living Translation)