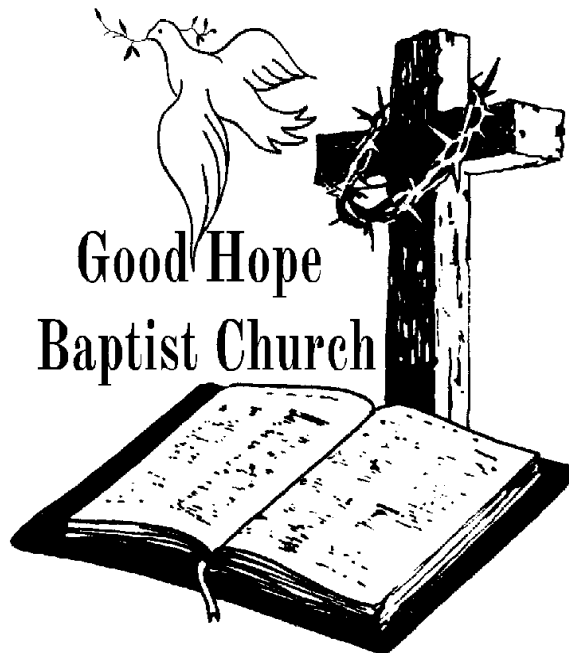


# Choose God

Ruth 1:16-17



Living Together In The Love Of God

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**FOCAL** **Ruth 1:16-17** And Ruth said, Entreat 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: **(17)** Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

**Illustrate Opening** A little boy went to the pet store with his dad to pick out a dog. As he looked over the dogs trying to decided, he saw one little dog furiously wagging his tail. When his dad asked him, “Which little dog do you want” the little boy replied, “I want the dog with the *happy ending*”.

We all like a *happy ending*. God designed us to be more than most of us ever realize. We were created by a loving God Who literally kissed us to life. The Bible says **(Genesis 2:7)** “the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul”. Just as an great sculptor takes clay and makes a fantastic creation, God took dirt and – loving forming it – He breathed into us life. We are not dirt – we are designed by God to walk with God.

“He does not love us because we are valuable, we are valuable because He loves us”. (Adrian Rogers)

We are – the Bible tells us - **created in the image of God**. God said before He made Adam and Eve, **(Genesis 1:26)** “Let us make man in our image, after our

**likeness: and let them have dominion over {the other creatures of the earth}**". We are not dirt, and we are not animals. We were created to *have dominion* over the animals. I love my little dog Scooter, but he is not created in the image of God. I am. We all are. We are not animals, but are created in His image and after His likeness to walk and talk and be with God.

God did not design us as robots. We were designed in God's image, and that means we have the power to *choose*. Every human with normal senses has the ability to choose. We can choose the good, or we can choose the evil. We can choose to walk with God or choose to walk with evil. We may blur the lines between good and evil with the strange drunken drivel of the post-modern mindset, but at heart we know the difference between good and evil. We have been given the power of choice, moral and ethical choice.

We have the ability to choose, and our lives are the sum product of the choices we have made. The choices we make determine whether we have a *happy ending* or not.

Adam chose badly. Placed in a beautiful place called "**Eden**", (אֵדֶן pronounced ay'-den, which means "Pleasure") Adam had the easiest job in the world. He tended a garden that was without weeds and without thorns. Eden was Heaven on earth. All he had to do was choose to walk with God, but his bad choice caused him [ and us – to fall into the terrors of sin.

**Romans 5:12** Wherefore, **as by one man sin entered**

**into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:**

Listen Beloved, the choices you and I make *day by day and moment by moment* do not just effect us, but they effect others as well.

Since 1960 there has been a 560% increase in violent crime. Since 1990 there has been a 200% increase in *youth* suicide. Why is that? It is because "We the People" have made *bad choices* in our lives. Many of us have chosen to walk away from God.

**Each day your heart will beat an average of 100800 times, pumping 158 gallons of blood per hour through your body. Life is a free gift from God. You don't make your heart pump, but you do choose how to live the life He has given you. Don't waste it.** You were made to be more than dirt. You were made to walk with God – and walking with God will always give you a happy ending!

**Principle #1: Just Because You *Can* Do A Thing Doesn't Mean You *Should* Do A Thing**

America is a free country, one of the greatest countries in the world. We have freedoms that are unprecedented in other nations. You can decide to travel from where you live right now, all the way from east to west coast, and no one will challenge you as you move from State to State. No one will stop you and ask you for your "citizenship papers", a normal procedure in other "free countries". You have unprecedented freedom. But Beloved, **just**

because you can do something doesn't mean you should do something. A wrong choice or series of wrong choices affects your life. You are given freedom of choice in America, and are given freedom of choice by God.

Every choice you make – good or bad – has an impact on your present and future life!

God told His Old Testament people Israel:

**Deuteronomy 30:19-20** 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: (20) That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

God is thy life, and the length of thy days. When our choices are made with the love of God in sight then they will always be good choices. Your life is not determined by fate, and no horoscope has power over you. The Psalmist said:

**Psalms 18:32** It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

What a joy life is when we follow the Lord. But what a drudgery life can be when we become our own gods. The

Book of Ruth is written during the time of the Judges:

**CONTEXT** Ruth 1:1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled ....

This was a time in Israel's history when *there was no king in the land but God*. God used men and women called “**Judges**” to go about the land as both His prophets as well as His Heavenly ambassadors. Though there were God's Judges in the land Israel had departed from the Lord. The last verse in the Book of Judges states:

**Judges 21:25** In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

That sounds like America today: “**Every person does that which is right in his – or her – own heart**”. God was supposed to be the King of Israel, but Israel dethroned the Lord. **There was no king in Israel**. Why? Because **every man** – each person, whether male or female – **did that which was right in his own eyes**. What God thought or taught was no longer an issue.

Man was created in the image of God with the power of choice, but our choices ought to always be made with God in mind. Just because we *can* do a thing doesn't mean that we *should* do it.

**ILLUSTRATE** A person *can* choose to **abort a baby**, but just because you *can* doesn't mean you *should*. That child within the mother is a life, and abortion is a choice

to kill a life! A person *can choose* to have **sexual relations outside of Biblical marriage**, but just because you *can* doesn't mean you *should*. Sexual sin leads not only to life threatening diseases, but also emotionally scars those who participate in it. You can choose to **use drugs**, ingesting things created from poison by shady and greedy people, but just because you *can* doesn't mean you *should*. You may find yourself permanently brain damaged, or you may meet your Maker sooner than He or you planned. I remember when I was in Korea that certain evil people would drain expensive wine out of the wine bottle, then refill the bottle with *wood alcohol*, a poison. If you chose to drink the poisoned bottle you destroyed your liver, and subsequently would die.

Making choices on the basis of “because I can” rather than “because God said” often leads to destruction. God loves you, but others may not. Follow God!

### **Principle #2: Making Life Decisions Based On Circumstances or Feelings Is Rarely A Good Idea**

**CONTEXT** **Ruth 1:1** .... **there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.**

There was a famine in the land of Canaan. A man by the name of **Elimelech**, his wife **Naomi**, and his two sons **Mahlon** and **Chilion** moved from **Bethlehem-Judah** to Moab because of the famine.

**Elimelech** chose to leave Bethlehem because of famine. His situation moved him, not his God. If he had moved only when God said, Elimelech could have had a happy ending!

**Compare Elimelech to Abraham** **Abraham** – the Father of Faith – moved from Ur of the Chaldees (Ancient Babylon) toward Canaan because God told him to move (**Genesis 12:1-4**). **Elimelech**, however, moved because of *famine*, not because of God's direction. When **Abraham** moved according to the will of God he moved *from a pagan land and toward a Promised land*. **Elimelech**, on the other hand, moved *from the Promised Land to a pagan land*. **Abraham** moved when God led him to move, and because of that **his name is honored among Christians, Muslims, and Jews**. Abraham's name is found *two hundred and thirty times in the Bible*, whereas Elimelech's name is found *only six times*, all of those in the Book of Ruth. And of those six times he's only mentioned while alive *once*. The choices you make matter!

Look at the bad decision that Elimelech made. He and his family were ...

**CONTEXT** **Ruth 1:2** .... **Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.**

**Word Study** They were citizens of **Bethlehem**. The word **Bethlehem** (בית לחם) pronounced bayth leh'-khem) literally means “**The House of Bread**”. Elimelech was living in the Promised Land in “**The House of Bread**”.

He and his children were in the best place they could be. The Bible says that **they were Ephrathites of Bethlehem-Judah**. An “Ephrathite” is a descendant of the **Tribe of Ephraim**, and the word “Ephrathite” (אפרתי pronounced ef-rawth-ee') literally means “fruitful ones”.

Do you see the irony here? The *fruitful ones* move from *the House of Bread* to Moab – a terrible and pagan land - looking for bread. He would have been better off – he and his family – had he stayed close to God.

When we base our choices on *worry, fear, or adverse conditions* we often choose badly. Jesus said:

**Matthew 6:25-26** ... I say to you, **do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? (26) Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?**

**ILLUSTRATE** Peter Singer a Professor of Bioethics and a founding philosopher of the animal rights movement said “**Killing a disabled infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person**”. He also made the statement that “**The life of a unborn baby is less than the life of a pig**”. That's not what Jesus thought and believed. Jesus said “**aren't you worth MUCH MORE than the animals?**” Yes, you are! Jesus continues ...

**Matthew 6:27-33** **And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? (28) And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, (29) yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. (30) But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! (31) Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' (32) For the {unbelievers} eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (33) But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.** New American Standard Version of the Scripture

If you are a Child of God by faith in Christ *situations and worry* should not drive you, but God and His Word should *guide* you. Those who **seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness** find blessing in the midst of trial, and food in the midst of famine! God takes care of His own! **Walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).**

Elimelech probably thought “**There's a famine in the land. I'd better go – right now – before it gets too bad**”. Oh that he – and we - we would remember the words of Christ, and the great promise of Scripture:

**Psalms 37:25** **I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed**

## begging bread.

Obey God in spite of appearances and regardless of the consequences. Wait upon God.

**Isaiah 40:31** But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Elimelech had the wrong master. He was trying to be God, trying to save himself. What did that get him? Death.

He was following himself and not the Lord. Because of that Elimelech found himself in Moab, the devil's territory. His wrong choices caused his children to make wrong choices. Again we read:

**CONTEXT Ruth 1:3-4** And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. (4) And they {Mahlon and Chilion} took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

Elimelech ran to avoid the arms of death, but he ran into death because he ran without the Lord. When Elimelech died his sons, **Mahlon** and **Chilion**, did something that no believing Israelite was to do. They **took them wives of the women of Moab**. Why is this wrong? The **Moabites** and the **Ammonites** were pagan people. When Lot came out of Sodom he went to **Zoar, and dwelt in**

**the mountain, and his two daughters with him (Genesis 19:30)**. Lot and his daughters – witnesses of the destruction of evil Sodom – believed that God had destroyed the whole world. So the daughters had children by their own father Lot (**Genesis 19:30-38**). The firstborn child was the father of the Moabites, the secondborn child the father of the Ammonites. The Moabites and the Ammonites were a cursed people:

**Deuteronomy 23:3** An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD forever:

not because of their origin, but because they were fierce enemies of Israel and unbelievers to boot. God tells His people

**2 Corinthians 6:14** Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Believers can befriend unbelievers. Jesus was often seen talking to Publicans, Harlots, and sinners. But believers must never **yoke themselves intimately** to the unbeliever.

Elimelech had led his wife and children to a pagan land. As Elimelech's boys grew they reached a point where they were lonely and wanted wives. Taken from among the land of their birth the boys had a choice: they could take their mother back to Bethelhem-Judah and find

wives there, or they could stay in Moab and take wives from there.

As rabbits make rabbits, bad choices lead to more bad choices.

**CONTEXT Ruth 1:5** And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

Mahlon and Chilion made bad decisions, and now *they die*. We don't know *how* they die, but we do know that the Bible tells us:

**Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God wants to bless people. He wants to bless *His people*. But when we move into sin without regard for God the Bible tells us **the wages of sin is death**. Sin always leads to death and dying. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden he brought death on himself and his family. When Elimelech sinned by going to Moab he brought death on himself. When Mahlon and Chilion made decisions to marry Moabite women – and death came to their house.

**Principle #3: The Best Choice In Life Is ALWAYS To Follow The God of The Scripture**

**CONTEXT Ruth 1:6-7** Then {Naomi} arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of

Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. (7) Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

God had come to the House of Bread and fed His people, just as He always has. When Naomi heard this she gathered up her things and headed toward Bethlehem-Judah. As she was leaving Moab Naomi releases her daughters in law of any obligation in going with her to Canaan. Naomi told her in-laws:

**CONTEXT Ruth 1:8-9** ... Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. (9) The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

These two young Moabite women – Ruth and Orpah - are given a choice. They can stay in Moab and, as they are young, they can probably find husbands fairly easily. There is absolutely no barrier to keep these women with Naomi. Naomi has given her blessing. These women reply:

**CONTEXT Ruth 1:10** ... Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

They want to stay with Naomi. Rather than applaud this, Naomi begins to use human reason with her daughter in laws. She says:

**CONTEXT Ruth 1:11-13** And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? **are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?** (12) Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, **if I should have a husband also tonight, and should also bear sons;** (13) **Would ye tarry for them till they were grown?** would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that **the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.**

Naomi reasoned that she couldn't have more boys for them to marry, and that they were young – they needed to be married. Naomi even complained that “**the hand of the Lord is gone out against me**”. God wasn't against Naomi, nor is He against us. We have the power of choice. After you choose, your choice always chooses for you. If you step off a ten story building God isn't mad at you for the splat you make. If you step off a ten story building with a baby in your arms is it God's fault the baby dies?

Choose wisely – but choose God! Don't allow what someone else says or does drive you away from God. Jesus said “**He that is not with Me is against Me**” (Luke 11:23). Even if a friend tries to get you to choose evil – repent! Turn and choose God!

Orpah and Ruth have a choice set before them. They can go to the Promised Land with Naomi, or stay in Moab. Notice their responses:

**CONTEXT Ruth 1:14** And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and **Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth cleaved unto her.**

Orpah was emotional, kissing her mother in law – but she ended up staying in Moab. Her name is only found twice in all of the Scripture, and, as far as I know, no where in human history. Orpah decided to stay in Moab and *save herself*. Her choice defined her destiny, and she was never heard of or from again.

Orpah's name is only found twice in Scripture. Ruth, however, had a Book named after her, and she is in the lineage of Jesus Christ. It wasn't *luck* that led to this destiny – it was making *good choices with God*.

**Word Study** But what of Ruth? **Ruth cleaved unto Naomi.** The word translated “**cleaved**” is the Qal Perfect of the Hebrew (DAWBAK, קבט pronounced daw-bak'). The Perfect Tense tells us this was a *completed action*. **Ruth stuck to Naomi like glue.** Naomi, grief stricken and back slidden, said:

**CONTEXT Ruth 1:15** .... **Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law.**

Can you imagine sending someone away from the One True God to serve the false gods of Moab? Yet people do that every day. When a Christian – *being tolerant* – says “I guess any way to God is just as valid as Christ is” that person is doing the same thing. Jesus said:

**John 14:6 ... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

There is but One God, and the only way to come to Him is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Naomi tried her best to dissuade Ruth, but Ruth wasn't moving. This woman, this Moabite, turned from her gods to the God of the Universe. She said:

**FOCAL Ruth 1:16-17 ... Entreat 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: (17) Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.**

What beautiful words these are! Ruth turned from her gods and to the One God. “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God”. She knew Who the True God was. Regardless as to what Naomi said, Ruth made a choice to follow the Lord. Her choice made a difference, an eternal difference.

**God pulled back the curtain of night, and pinned it with the star of hope. (Adrian Rogers)**

Listen to me, Beloved. The Moabites were cursed, strangers from the covenants of promise and aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel – just as we all were. But she turned to God by faith.

**Ephesians 2:12-19 That at that time ye were without**

Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: (13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (14) For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; (15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; (16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: (17) And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. (18) For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (19) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Ruth was cursed by birth, crushed by the death of her husband, and condemned by the Law of God. But all this was overturned when she believed on the Lord. Repenting she turned to God.

She made the right choice.

Whereas Orpah is only mentioned twice in Scripture, and never seen from again, Ruth had a Book written about her life by the very hand of God. Whereas Orpah went back to Moab and perhaps died childless, Ruth would meet a man named Boaz. Together they would have a son named Obed, the father of Jesse, the grandfather of King David. Ruth was placed into the lineage of Christ:

**Matthew 1:5 And Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;**

Blessed forever because she made the right choice. Dear friends, are you making the right choices? Come to God. Believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, and rose again for your justification. Salvation is only found by clinging to the God of Scripture.

May God touch your hearts with His Word!



**FOCAL Read Together** **Ruth 1:16-17** And Ruth said, Entreat 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: (17) Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

Genesis 1:26; Romans 5:12 \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Principle #1: Just Because You *Can* Do A Thing  
Doesn't Mean You *Should* Do A Thing**

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 ; Psalms 18:32; Ruth 1:1;  
Judges 21:25

Man was created in the image of God with the power of choice, but our choices ought to always be made with \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Principle #2: Making Life Decisions Based On  
Circumstances or Feelings Is Rarely A Good Idea**

Ruth 1:1; Ruth 1:2; Matthew 6:25-26; Matthew 6:27-33; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Psalms 37:25; Isaiah 40:31;  
Ruth 1:3-4; Deuteronomy 23:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14;  
Ruth 1:5; Romans 6:23

**Elimelech** chose to leave Bethlehem because of famine. His situation moved him, not his \_\_\_\_\_

**Word Study** **Bethlehem** (בית לחם pronounced bayth leh'-khem) literally means \_\_\_\_\_  
“Ephrathite” (אפרתי pronounced ef-rawth-ee') literally means \_\_\_\_\_

Believers can befriend unbelievers. Jesus was often seen talking to Publicans, Harlots, and sinners. But believers must never \_\_\_\_\_

**Principle #3: The Best Choice In Life Is ALWAYS  
To Follow The God of The Scripture**

Ruth 1:6-7; Ruth 1:8-9; Ruth 1:10; Ruth 1:11-13;  
Ruth 1:14; Ruth 1:15; John 14:6; Ruth 1:16-17;  
Ephesians 2:12-19; Matthew 1:5

Orpah's name is only found \_\_\_\_\_ in Scripture.  
Ruth, however, had \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Word Study** Ruth cleaved unto Naomi, “cleaved” is the Qal Perfect of the Hebrew (DAWBAK, דבק pronounced daw-bak') \_\_\_\_\_