

[Read the Text]

What do we notice from these few verses pulled from this?

1. Ruth left behind the gods of Moab:

- This was a complete renouncement of Moab and its gods. Ruth understands that the only way she could proceed with Naomi to Bethlehem was to completely leave behind Moab and its gods. She was bidding farewell to the old lifestyle, attachments, associations and values that had consumed her in Moab. Ruth recognized the impossibility of keeping a relationship with Moab and having a relationship with the Lord. She could not have the values and philosophies of Moab and still do the will of the Lord.
- This is not unheard of. Every time we make a choice in life, we separate ourselves from something. Any time we choose one thing, we break off all loyalties to something else.
 - Marriage.
 - Jobs
 - College
 - Sport teams
- The Christian life is absolutely no different. It is even elevated. **We do not simply add the Christian life to all of the other things that we have going on.** Instead, it is a complete self-renunciation of all other things.
 - "Christian" should be the noun and not the adjective. Why? Because adjectives describe the noun and adjectives can change for the same noun.
 - In Mark 10:28, Peter said: *See, we have left everything and followed you.*
 - *"What does joy in Christ mean when faced with duties that you don't want?" This is the question asked by Rosaria Butterfield in her book "The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert." She would tell of her unlikely conversion to Christ. These are her own words. "After we profess faith in Christ, the next morning, the alarm still rings and we have to swing our feet out of bed and do something." "When I became a Christian, I had to change everything-- my life, my friends, my writing, my teaching, my advising, my clothes, my speech, my thoughts." She could not remain as she had been or else her conversion was not legit.*
 - Jesus himself said that to follow after him we must *deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.*

2. Ruth Chose to Follow Naomi's God:

Let's not forget what Ruth was leaving and what she was going to. She was a Moabite immigrant leaving her country to go to Judah. She was risking a lot to follow God.

- Imagine with me for a minute if a known member of Syria came to our country... or to our church? Or an Iranian. Or a North Korean. How would we respond?
- Note very quickly: what made this possible for Ruth? Relationship with Naomi. We can never underestimate the power of relationship.

- No matter how we feel about the politics of immigration, we cannot deny the theology of it. We owe them the only Gospel that will ever save them. And this should be our primary concern.
- What exactly did Ruth choose?
 - The Moabites were hostile to God and to the Israelites hope in the Messiah. The Psalmist tells us that the nations rage (Ps. 2:1). They had a disdain for this God of the Hebrew people. They had a very small view of Him and that had been what Ruth would have been familiar with growing up her entire life as a Moabite. To choose to follow the God of Israel was to choose to set yourself off for ridicule from all the other nations around.
 - In the church age, this is why baptism is so important. It clearly marks a person as a person identifying with God and His people. There are nations all over the world where people run the risk of death, torture, and abandonment if they get baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Even in the U.S. families will disown their own if they are baptized as born-again believers.
 - BUT, the God of Israel had revealed Himself to Ruth... and she responded to Him.

3. Ruth Chose to Commit Herself to Naomi's People: of course she did. Why?

- God is intimately linked to His people. Notice the language here. In verse 15, it tells us that Orpah “went back to her people and to her gods.” They are automatically tied together. That’s just the understanding.
- When we choose to follow God, we commit ourselves to His people to. **You cannot rightly love God without loving His church.** And we are not talking about His people as an organization, but His people as the organism.
- Now notice this very quickly—Ruth adds this imprecatory at the end of the oath. She says: *“May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”* She’s saying: *I swear that death and nothing else but death shall separate us and may God bring severe punishment on her if she broke this commitment.* WOW!
- Again, let’s see what Ruth was committing to. The Israelite people were a strange bunch in her sight. They worshipped in a tabernacle and they offered their sacrifices to their priests and the people were only allowed to go a certain distance. They had no image of their “god” erected anywhere. This was a strange bunch. Most of what they do does not make a lot of sense. Yet, Ruth joins this people anyway.
- The same can be said for the church. Most of the culture does not understand what we do or why we do what we do. (We are a unique bunch ;-))
 - Why do we sing the songs that we sing?
 - Why do we give our money to this place?
 - Why do we get up early on a weekend morning to come to this gathering place when we could be doing so many other things?
 These things do not make sense to the culture around us.
- What if, then, our commitment to our God was gauged by our commitment to His people? What if that was the barometer?

Let's look at a few questions to gauge our commitment.

- If we broke our commitment to our spouse as often as we break our commitment to the church, would we still be married?
- If we broke our commitment to our team (or kid's team) as often as we break our commitment to the church, would we still be married?
- If we broke our commitment to our job as often as we break our commitment to our church, would we still have our job?
- If we broke our commitment to our friends as often as we break our commitment to our church, would we still have those friends?

Why, then are we quicker to break our commitment to His people?

The people of God need a great renewal in our understanding of commitment and what is worth committing to. May God grant us the grace to leave behind that which stands in opposition to Him and may He bring about whatever He sees fit if we break our commitment to Him.