

The Choice: *Cut or Cling* (1:6-18)

They were left, *but they survived*. They were alone, *but they survived*. They were without provision, safety, security, and shelter, *but they survived*. (Ruth 1:3, 5) Now, Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah must decide whether they would continue to live.

Behind them was a place of familiarity and comfort; all they had known and loved. Before them was a path that required greater sacrifice than they had ever known—a path of humility, humiliation, and utter dependence. But this path was also their chance to cut ties with the past and begin again with God.

Andrew Murray has said, “What can God do with a vessel absolutely surrendered to Him? Oh, God wants to bless [him] in a way beyond what [he] expects. From the beginning, ear hath not heard, neither hath the eye seen, what God hath prepared for them that wait for Him. God has prepared unheard-of-things, blessings much more wonderful than [he] can imagine, more mighty than [he] can conceive.”ⁱ

Read Ruth 1:6-7.

1. What drew Naomi back to Bethlehem?
2. Commentators liken Naomi’s *return home* to the act of repentance. What does it mean to repent? (What similarities are seen in Luke 15:11-24?)ⁱⁱ
3. Others believe that Naomi took action out of desperation and was not yet in a position to confess her sin and accept her role in the demise of her family (1:13, 20-21). Which opinion do you support? (Use scripture to support your answer.)

Read Ruth 1:8-15.

4. Under her guardianship, Ruth and Orpah set out with Naomi. What did Naomi believe was their motivation? (v.8)

Kindness, as used in verse 8, 2:20, and 3:10, speaks of covenant loyalty. “It involves grace in that it [is] extended even when it [is] not deserved.”ⁱⁱⁱ

5. Describe Naomi’s relationship with her daughters-in-law based on their exchange. (Also consider 2 Corinthians 1:4.)
6. List the reasons why Naomi strongly insisted that her daughters-in-law stay in Moab.
7. In verse 9, how does Naomi free them from obligation?^{iv}
8. What did Naomi believe made her of value to them? Do you allow the same reasons to determine your value to others? Explain.
9. What did Naomi state was the cause of the hardships that had come upon her “daughters”? (v.13) Why was she grieved?

10. How do you gauge God's love for you?

11. As they stood on the road between Moab and Judah, Ruth and Orpah were faced with a life-altering decision—what were they choosing between?

12. What causes individuals to resist change? Does the same mentality prevent them from taking steps of faith?

13. What choice did Orpah make? Why do you think she made this decision?

14. The Moabite people worshiped the god Chemosh (Numbers 21:29, 1 Kings 11:7), who accepted human sacrifices (2 Kings 3:26-27) and encouraged immorality (Numbers 25). Warren Wiersbe questions: "Why would a believing Jewess encourage two pagan women to worship false gods?" Answer his inquiry.

He concludes: Perhaps it was "because they were living proof that she and her husband had permitted their two sons to marry women from outside of the covenant nation."^v

Perhaps it was because she knew what awaited a childless Moabite widow among the Ephrathites and concluded that temporal happiness outweighed a lifetime of pain and suffering.

Perhaps it was because Naomi's view of God had been altered through her experience.

15. Based on his reasoning, how would Naomi benefit from returning alone? How would it disadvantage her?

Keep reading: Ruth 1:16-18.

16. What choice did Ruth make? What determined her decision?

17. Ruth's resolution to follow Naomi resembles the commitment made by Christ's disciples to follow Him.

Match Ruth's declaration of devotion with the corresponding verses and explain how Ruth demonstrated each concept:

Matthew 4:18-22

Entreat me not to leave you,

Matthew 10:37-39

nor turn back from following you.

Luke 5:11, 28, 18:28

Wherever you go, I will go.

Luke 9:23-26

Wherever you lodge, I will lodge.

Luke 9:57-62

Your people shall be my people.

Luke 22:33, Acts 21:13

Your God shall be my God.

John 6:68, 15:13

Where you die, I will die.

How does Ruth's commitment challenge your idea of what it means to love one another and what it means to follow Christ?

18. Return to Ruth. With few words, Ruth committed her life to one who could offer her nothing. In the same breath she gave her life to the One who could give her everything. What will God do for the one whose heart is fully surrendered to Him? (Consider 2 Chronicles 16:9a; use additional verses to support your answer.)

19. Why did Ruth's statement silence Naomi? (v.18)

In closing, Luke 18:29-30 says, *“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”*

ⁱ Murray, A. (5 April 2004). Absolute Surrender by Andrew Murray. Retrieved from https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/murray_andrew/surrender/surrender01.cfm

ⁱⁱⁱ Return means “To go or to come back to a condition, place, or activity where one has been before.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Reed, J. W. (1985). *Ruth*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 420). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} Rest denotes a place where peace, quiet, and trust are present. (Also used in Psalm 23:2.)

^v Wiersbe, Warren. (2003). *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament History*. (p. 181). Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications.