

SMALL GROUPS

This week's message introduced the Book of Ruth and laid the foundation for a five-week study. Using the opening chapter, the sermon explored how one family's decision to leave Bethlehem for Moab led to devastating consequences — and how one woman's decision to leave Moab and return to Bethlehem changed her life, her legacy, and ultimately the course of history. The central challenge for all of us is this: Are there areas of our lives where we are still living in Moab?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- When times get tough, Moab looks tempting. Difficulty has a way of making the wrong path look like the most reasonable one. Elimelech had understandable reasons for leaving Bethlehem, but understandable reasons are not always God-directed ones.
- We often prioritize economic provision over spiritual protection. The desire to provide for our families is good, but not when it leads us away from God's presence, God's people, and God's protection.
- To get to the right place, you have to leave the wrong one. You cannot occupy two places at once. Moving toward God requires turning away from what is not of God.
- One decision can change the trajectory of your life and your legacy. Ruth's choice to leave Moab and declare "your God will be my God" (Ruth 1:16) changed not only her life but the lineage through which Jesus Christ was born.
- Repentance is not just sorrow — it is a turning. The word "repentance" carries the idea of turning from a lower place back to a higher calling. It is an active, directional choice.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- Ruth 1:1-16 — The foundation of the story: famine, loss, and a return
- Judges 21:25 — Everyone doing what is right in their own eyes
- Psalm 60:8 — God's perspective on Moab
- 2 Corinthians 6:14 — The warning against being unequally yoked with unbelievers
- Genesis 19 — The origin of the Moabites

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions to guide your group into honest, meaningful conversation. Not every question needs to be answered — let the Spirit lead.

Opening Question

1. When you hear the word "Moab" used as a metaphor for a place or habit or relationship that pulls you away from God, what is the first thing that comes to mind for you personally? You do not have to share specifics, but what emotions does that stir up?

Digging In

2. The sermon pointed out that Elimelech's name means "God is my king," yet he made a decision that did not reflect that truth. Have you ever claimed God as king in one area of your life while quietly doing things your own way in another? What does that tension feel like?
3. Pastor Mack said, "We often prioritize economic provision over spiritual protection." Can you think of a time — either in your own life or in someone you love — where a decision that seemed financially wise ended up costing something spiritually? What did you learn from that?
4. The two sons married Moabite women, likely reasoning that they could "convert" them. The sermon called this "missionary dating." Why do you think this kind of thinking is so common? What does Scripture say about it, and why does God set that boundary?
5. Ruth's declaration in Ruth 1:16 is one of the most well-known statements of loyalty and faith in all of Scripture. She commits not

only to Naomi but to Naomi's God. What do you think it cost her to say those words? What did she have to walk away from?

6. The sermon made the point that repentance means turning your back on one direction in order to face another. Is there a difference between feeling sorry for something and actually turning away from it? What does genuine repentance look like in everyday life?
7. Pastor Mack shared a personal story about his own family and how one decision, even one made with good intentions, led to painful consequences. How does that story challenge the idea that good intentions are enough when making major life decisions?

Going Deeper

8. The sermon ended with the reminder that Ruth — a Moabite woman who had worshiped a false god — became part of the lineage of Jesus Christ. What does that tell you about the nature of God's grace and what He can do with a single moment of surrender?
9. Pastor Mack asked this application question: "What is one decision or action you can take that would change the trajectory of your life and legacy?" Take a moment as a group to sit quietly with that question. Is anyone willing to share what came to mind?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of the following to commit to this week:

- Identify your Moab. Spend time in prayer this week and ask God to show you honestly if there is an area of your life where you are doing what is right in your own eyes rather than what is right in His. Write it down.
- Take one concrete step away from the wrong place. The sermon offered several examples: ending an unhealthy relationship, cutting up a credit card, confessing an addiction, blocking a contact, apologizing first, or surrendering a burden you have been carrying alone. What is your one step?
- Do not look back. Lot's wife looked back because her heart was not fully turned. Commit this week to not revisiting or romanticizing whatever God has called you to leave behind.
- Memorize or meditate on Ruth 1:16. Let Ruth's declaration of loyalty and faith become a personal declaration of your own. What would it look like for you to say, "Your God will be my God"?

- Invest in community. Ruth did not make her journey alone. She walked alongside Naomi. If you are trying to leave a Moab in your life, do not try to do it in isolation. Tell someone in this group what you are walking away from and ask them to hold you accountable.