

DIFFICULT DECISIONS



Aim: To live by godly values so that we make wise decisions

Can you remember that decision which changed your life forever? Perhaps it was accepting a marriage proposal or rejecting one, applying for a job that changed the course of your career or going on a missions trip and seeing the world through new eyes. Often we forget that those big decisions are made up of many smaller choices, choices that are determined by our values and principles. So even if we can't predict the future, life's not all a game of chance – we can choose the values that shape our lives.

Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, 'Come over here, my friend, and sit down.' So he went over and sat down.

Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said 'Sit here,' and they did so. Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, 'Naomi, who has come back from Moab is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.'

'I will redeem it,' he said.

Then Boaz said, 'On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.'

At this the kinsman-redeemer said, 'Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.'

Ruth 4:1-6

TO SET THE SCENE

On an A4 sheet of paper take five minutes to list all the decisions you've made today from the time you got up until now. How many decisions did you make? Were they big or little decisions? To what extent was God central to your decision-making process?

READ RUTH 4:1-10

1 The author gives us the impression that Naomi is poverty-stricken, but in 4:3 we find out that she owns a field. Can you think of any explanation for this apparent mismatch?

2 Why did the closest kinsman-redeemer not want to buy the land?

3 What sacrifices was Boaz willing to make to marry Ruth?

4 The plot of the whole story and Ruth's future depends on this decision by the kinsman-redeemer.

- ▶ What values led Boaz to make the decision he did?
- ▶ What values led the other kinsman-redeemer to make the decision he did?



5 Boaz didn't know the consequences of his decision – he didn't know that he would be the great-grandfather of King David! How does this encourage you in your decision-making?

6 Share together examples of when you have put your own needs aside for the sake of someone else. What was the outcome?

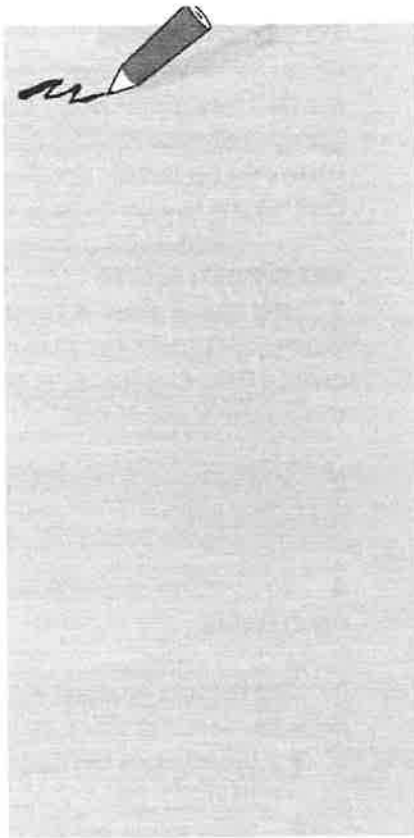


7 What are the big decisions you're facing?

8 What priorities and values do you want to guide these decisions?

9 How do we put God at the centre of our decision-making process?

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME? **10** Often it's hard to know God's will when we're faced with two options that are both good. How do we know what God's best is? What steps have you found helpful to discern God's will? Look at Isaiah 30:21.



WORSHIP

Praise God for his sovereignty, that even though we may be anxious about the decisions we have to make and their consequences, God is in control. Read Job 38 together. Then, if you're facing a difficult decision (your answer from question 7) write it on a piece of paper and put it in a bowl. Set the papers alight to symbolise relinquishing your will in the situation and asking God to have his way. Pray in twos, asking God for wisdom to help you make these decisions.

FURTHER STUDY

There have been lots of books written about how to know God's will. One place to start is Sinclair B. Ferguson's short book called *Discovering God's Will*.

FOR NEXT WEEK

Continue to pray for the person you prayed with during the study. If it is appropriate, meet together during the week to pray or encourage each other by phone or email. Many of the situations you'll share in the group will be long term concerns, so be committed to each other!

ACTIVITY PAGE

We often have great difficulty in making decisions, and in finding and following God's will. Look at the following scenarios. Discuss the various factors that need to be taken into account and try and come up with a group decision on how you would advise these individuals.

- D** You're a youth leader and a girl in your youth group wants some career advice. She is bright and enjoys studying but is uncertain as to what career God wants her to embark on. She feels God may be calling her to be a missionary and has been offered a place at a university to read French and Spanish. She has also been offered a place to do Business Studies at a university nearer home and, as her parents aren't Christians, wonders whether she should stay close by so that she can maintain contact with them. What do you think?
- D** You have a very good job but the hours are long and demanding. You need to commute an hour each way to work and are away on numerous business trips spending a significant amount of time away from your young family. Various jobs have been advertised that are closer to home but none of them as secure as your present job. People in the church have questioned whether such time away from the family can be 'God's will'. Should you try and get a job closer to home or stay where you are?
- D** Your son is experimenting with steroids to improve his sporting skills. You have taken him to a counsellor and spoken to his coach but both seem to accept that this is normal behaviour. Your son is becoming less and less willing to listen to you. No other parents in church seem to be dealing with this type of issue and you feel isolated. How should you tackle your son's problem and your own feelings?
- D** Your eight-year-old daughter comes home from church and says that her friend's family has 'conferences' where they discuss everything from holidays to moving house to the parents having another baby. Your daughter asks what you think. What's your opinion? Should there be any boundaries to these conferences? As your daughter gets older, what should her role in family decision-making be? What will your role be in the decisions that she has to make?