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Many of you may remember the TV gameshow, “Let’s Make a Deal.” The show made its first appearance in 1963, and although the hosts and networks have changed through the years, the show continues airing yet today. Although I enjoyed watching “Let’s Make a Deal” as a kid, I haven’t seen an episode lately, but I think the same idea has continued throughout the show’s history: trading items and hoping to make an exchange to win a better deal.

Someone from the audience is offered a deal, such as trading their purse, shoe, or part of their silly costume for what’s inside a giant box on the stage. Lucky winners might win new appliances, televisions, motorcycles, or even cars. They might later trade their prize for another opportunity to make a deal, with prizes and risks getting bigger. Occasionally someone might trade their prize and get what’s called a “zonk,” something considered having low value, such as an donkey or pile of old clothes.

There’s always a risk when making a deal, and one is never quite sure of the outcome. I think the

show captures our imagination because it reflects our lives—we make choices all the time, and sometimes our choices work out well, but other times we find ourselves in a real mess—a giant zonk that leaves us frustrated.

We may face the deal of leaving one career for another job, with the risk that we don’t like the new job. We may then long for a return to where we had been.

Moving from one state to another may bring a life full of blessings, or we may feel as though we’ve been zonked into a place of misery.

Someone might offer us a great deal for an investment opportunity, and although some may make money in the long run, many schemes rip off investors who find themselves with a zonk instead of cash.

As we’ve discovered the past several weeks, the Book of Ruth begins with Naomi making a deal—trading a familiar home in a land with no rain or food for a strange land that had food and an opportunity to survive. Little did she know that the deal included her husband and sons dying. She then

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traded her life in a strange land for a trip back home, and her daughter-in-law offered her a surprising deal—to travel along with her.

When these two women found themselves searching for food, Ruth made a deal to gather barley in the fields of Boaz. Naomi made a deal to coach Ruth in how to win Boaz's affection, and then Boaz faced the biggest deal of all as he complied with an ancient law.

Back then, if a woman's husband died, it was the deceased husband's brother's responsibility to care for the widow. Since Naomi and Boaz were related, Ruth appealed to the ancient law for him to protect her and Naomi.

"Let's make a deal," he suggests. "Let's see if there's a closer relative who might try to offer you protection." Boaz gathered with other traders at the city gate, the main center where business transactions occurred. "Naomi has some land she's wanting to sell," he tells the crowd. "Anyone interested in purchasing it?" Relatives got to bid first to keep the land in the family, and someone came forward with an offer.

"Since you're a closer relative to Naomi than I am," Boaz said, "you get the first opportunity to purchase the land. Are you interested? If not, I'm the next in line to claim the land."

"Well, I could use a few more barely fields," the man might have replied. "I've been wanting to expand my crops. You have a deal."

And then Boaz expanded the deal. "If you take the fields, you also get what's behind door number one: claiming Naomi's land means you help care for Naomi. And not only that, you also get what's behind door number two: Ruth, the widow from Moab, a rival nation, for Ruth traveled home with Naomi. It's a package deal."

The potential buyer didn't accept the deal. "Are you crazy?" he may have objected, "I'll pass on the deal. You're next in line after me, and if you're crazy enough to take that foreign woman into your home and ruin your reputation just to get more land, go for it."

Some stories in the Bible reflect a fear of those from other lands, encouraging people to keep to their own kind. Other Bible stories welcome the

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strangers, offering hospitality and safety. Today we struggle with the same tension—do we welcome immigrants into our nation to create diversity and new opportunities, or do we limit the strangers to protect ourselves from the unknown?

As the Nazis expanded their power during WWII, some families tried to escape from the terror and find refuge in the U.S., as was the case with Otto Frank and his family. Documents show that Otto tried several times to leave Europe, and in one letter he wrote, “I am forced to look out for emigration and as far as I can see USA is the only country we could go.” After his first attempt at completing the paperwork, the consulate was bombed, and all the papers were destroyed. He applied again, only to discover that the U.S. imposed a quota on immigrant from Germany, which meant they would have to wait for several years. Family members in the U.S. wrote letters of support, but the family’s paperwork was never processed. With nowhere left to turn, they went into hiding in the German-occupied Amsterdam in an attic apartment behind

Otto’s business. There his daughter, Anne Frank, wrote a diary of their war-torn experience until there were captured and killed.¹

The fear of the “other” continues to echo in our nation even today. Some advocate for placing more restrictions on immigrants, while others refer to recent studies showing “that immigrants commit crimes at far lower rates than native-born Americans and contribute far more economy than they cost.”²

Just imagine what our life would be like if other immigrants had not been allowed in the U.S.:³

Marie Korbel escaped from Czechoslovakia ten days after the Nazi invasion and became a U.S. citizen in 1957. She changed her name to Madeleine and completed her education, eventually becoming the first female secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, and has helped to spread democracy across the Middle East.

You can thank Sergey Brin, an immigrant from Russia, every time you search for something on the internet, for he is a co-founder of Google.

Leslie Townes Hope passed through Ellis Island near New York and settled in Ohio, working as a

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butcher's assistant and shoe salesman where he would tell jokes in the park. He made it to Broadway and was also known for his entertainment of troops during WWII. We know him better by changed name, Bob Hope.

Successful business woman Indra Nooyi was born in India and came to the U.S. to study at Yale University and now "serves as the chairman and CEO of PepsiCo—one of the largest food and beverage businesses in the United States."

Just imagine what our lives would be like without Pepsi, Google, the laughter of Bob Hope, or an advocate of democracy. Without these immigrants, our lives would be much different, as would be the case if Ruth had never been accepted as an immigrant when she moved from the rival nation Moab to settle with Naomi in Bethlehem. After Boaz accept the deal to purchase Naomi's land and care for her and Ruth, he married Ruth. They

had a child, Obed. Even though the story ends happily-ever-after, the narrator makes another point by opening what's behind door number 3: a list of descendants who came after Obed's birth. Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David—the famous King David. If we continue the genealogy even further, we remember that from King David many generations later came the birth of Jesus. Just imagine what our lives might be like without the foreign immigrant Ruth. No King David. No Jesus. No Christianity. No church. No gathering here this morning.

Before becoming too quick to judge those who differ from yourself, think about from where you have come. God moves in the lives of people throughout history and around the globe, people who just might bring blessings to your life.

¹ "Anne Frank's Family Tried to Escape to the United States," *The Mishawaka Enterprise*, July 12, 2018, p. 5, and www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/anne-frank.

² Steve and Cokie Roberts, "The stench of hypocrisy," *The Elkhart Truth*, August 17, 2018, p. A4.

³ Robert Jimison, "Nine immigrants who helped make America great," June 20, 2018, www.cnn.com/2018/06/19/us/immigrants-who-made-america-great-cfc/index.html.