

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON SEVEN: RUTH 1:4a

By Sandy Harber

"And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the other Ruth...."

The Bible doesn't give us any details about these marriages other than the names of the brides. Mahlon married Ruth. Chilion married Orpah. Since Ruth will declare her commitment to the God of Israel it seems reasonable to assume Naomi's family continued to worship God while in Moab and introduced Ruth and Orpah to Him. Ruth embraced the God of her husband. Since Orpah will eventually return to the home of her parents it seems likely she remained an idolater.

God's law did not forbid marriage to a Moabite, as it did the various inhabitants of Canaan (Dt. 7:3). But the danger was the same: a pagan spouse who could draw you into idolatry.

Scripture warns us repeatedly to separate ourselves from unbelievers. The danger is clear: we will be drawn away from our Lord. Example after example appears in the Old Testament illustrating the idolatrous results of Jewish individuals or the nation as a whole allying themselves with idol worshippers.

As Christians, we point out the wisdom of not being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Cor. 6:14) in the state of marriage. And what closer human relationship is there? There is a whole part of our lives - the spiritual part - that we cannot share with an unbelieving spouse.

Did Mahlon and Chilion introduce Ruth and Orpah to their God before they married? It isn't likely Ruth and Orpah converted to Judaism before the wedding, while they were still living in the homes of their parents. After they were married, the new wives may have converted to please their husbands and mother-in-law.

Too many Christians fool themselves into believing their significant other will get saved after they get married. If their partner was not willing to be converted before the wedding what makes the Christian believe things will be different after the ceremony? They fool themselves with wishful thinking. Thus they end up in a relationship that is not healthy for them or pleasing to God.

We often miss the context of II Cor. 6. Paul was discussing the Christian ministry. His warning is to separate ourselves from the rituals, doctrines, and people who do not share our beliefs. I know of people who do not agree with the whole doctrine of the church they attend, but they continue to worship there hoping they can change things by being on the inside. Sadly, that rarely, if ever, happens. God's clear command is to come out from among them and be separate (II Cor. 6:17). If your church has strayed from the doctrines and practices once found there, it's time to find a new church where you feel at home.

Christians can not, and should not, separate themselves from unbelievers completely. We need to be witnesses for Him. We are in the world, but not of the world. However, we are commanded to gather together with like-minded believers when we worship the Lord: singing praises, studying His Word, and praying with a common purpose. We need to be connected to other believers who can encourage us, build us up in the faith, and share insights and concerns. This is what the Naomi - Ruth Connection is all about: believers with a common faith just being available to listen to, pray for, and help one another.

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2