

IN-LAWS, FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. (Ruth 1:1-2)

The book of Ruth is quite a short book, but has enormous lessons for marital relationships today. In less than 15 minutes you could read the entire book, and guided by the Spirit of God, you could discover some of the gems that this book contains for your personal development and understand of good marital relationship.

- **Foreigners in another country**

Elimelech travelled to another country because of the famine in his country of Israel at the time. Since creation people have never stopped travelling from one place to another for various reasons: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and even the earthly father of Jesus Christ did travel and became foreigners in another country. Being a foreigner does not make you lose your dignity; unfortunately, many foreigners face a lot of challenges the world over. If you find yourself as a foreigner in a country like South Africa, you will have to endure both racism and xenophobia simultaneously from whites and blacks respectively. However, it will be unwise to allow these two devilish treatments to overshadow your sense of beauty and appreciation of the magnificent diversities that God has placed in South Africa.

Elimelech travelled with his whole family, and this is very important; that is also true in the case of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (the earthly father of Jesus Christ).

The unity of the family must be maintained, and that is exactly what all these people did.

Never allow any situation to cause your family to live apart in difference places. That will not be in support of the unity of the family.

- **Disaster or Prosperity**

As much as we all wish for the best, sometimes things go the other way. Due to circumstances that cannot be explained, disaster struck the family of Elimelech. He and his two sons died leaving his wife and daughters-in-law. Since the dead does not know anything, it was Naomi who bore the pain of this disaster. But the strange thing was that one of these daughters-in-law, Ruth, would not let go of Naomi. The bond between Ruth and Naomi really defied the normal perception or outlook of ladies of today. Ruth looked beyond the absence of her husband; she looked beyond the material things which most women see as the ultimate reason for marriage; and she saw what ordinary eyes cannot see. She had the eyes of faith:

...faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1).

Ruth could not have had faith in a devilish mother-in-law! Naomi could not have given in to go with Ruth to her country if Ruth was a devilish daughter-in-law! Indeed Ruth must have seen some unique and extraordinary attributes of her husband and in-laws which were absent from her own pagan country of Moab! It must have been this desire and longing that created the bond between Ruth and Naomi which made them inseparable; so much so that Ruth could say this to Naomi:

Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be

buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

This was the voice of a woman who had a lot of sense of value for God and godly things rather than material things.

We can share the same outlook with Ruth; to look ahead with the eyes of faith; the kind of active or living faith which goes with works. Our faith must be invested in God, associated with God's people and related to godly things.

- **Reward of the faithful**

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb 11:6).

Ruth was greatly reward for her faithfulness; and so was Naomi. What more could a woman wish for? All that she lost in Moab and more was restored to her in Israel. She was blessed with a husband who was both rich spiritually and materially. She was blessed with the fruit of the womb; and most importantly, she became one of the vessels to carry the lineage of the Saviour of the human race. The genealogy of Jesus Christ cannot be outlined without the mentioning of the name of Ruth, and the Holy Bible will not be complete without the book of Ruth.

- **Conclusion**

Yes family is important, and family is built on marriage. Marriage is the model which depicts the beauty of the relationship between the Church and Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ being the groom and the Church being the bride (Eph 5:22-33). Marriage is the God's own and first institution to be establish. Children grow and develop best within the confines of a family: to learn to be loved and to love, to develop proper senses and

good values. If the family is in trouble, the community of human beings is also in trouble.

No wonder the devil has made marriages his number one target. The rate at which marriages are falling apart is all time high, and the rate is even increasing. As more and more children are being brought up outside proper family homes, the earth is being populated by people of questionable characters and attitudes. Violence and immorality are escalating, and for such people aggression, cheating, lying and stealing are all ways of survival.

The principles of God for marriage are being pushed aside, and new ones formulated by politicians are being used to regulate and control marriages, whereas God being the originator of the marriage institution is being push aside. How can this work? It does not work because it does not make any sense! Marriage has become one of the means by which some people make wealth; the real purpose of marriage being lost completely in the eyes of these people.

If you follow the principles of God for marriage, and you invite Him to be involved in your quest for better marriage, He will never disappoint you if you are prepared to wait on Him. I am waiting on the Him, and if I may ask: will you join me in waiting on the LORD?

May God bless you for your attention, and may you be blessed as you share this with others. Amen.

Brother James