

Daughters of the Culture

'...to dwell in His house all
the days of our life, is our
one desire...'

Daughters of the Culture

Prepared by Julianne Hamilton in discussion and fellowship with the Christian Women's Fellowship leadership group for the August 2006 meetings.

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This text is interspersed with lyrics of a number of original songs of restoration written in response to the word we have received.

All Scripture references are taken from the New King James version unless otherwise noted.

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The Same Road

*We travel the same road
To the city of our God
With the ones we call our brethren
And as we journey on
As pilgrims of the risen Son
We know we're already in heaven*

*To bear the burden, hearts in one accord
To have our mouths filled with the word of the Lord
To dwell in His house all the days of our life
Is our one desire*

*Until we see His body joined as one
Until the bride is spotless before the Son
Until the mystery is fully revealed
And we see Him in His glory.*

*We know we're already in heaven
With the ones we call our brethren*

Amy Sweet

INTRODUCTION

In recent months, we have spoken a great deal about relationship, and about being ‘*sisters together*’ in the family of God. However, we are still finding that there is a hindrance to our entering into full and complete relationship with one another.

Our question is, ‘How can we relate as true sisters together, in the family of God?’ The answer is a simple one. We will never be able to relate as true sisters together, in the one generation of the culture of godliness, unless we are first *daughters of the culture* in the family of God.

In the natural and in the spiritual

In the natural realm, we are born first into a family through the unique process of procreation, and then we grow up and mature in relationship, by proper parenting intervention, to be able to relate in our family with our brothers and sisters.

So too, in the spiritual sense, there is a maturing and a growing which we must experience, growing past being babes, into *the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*, as it says in Ephesians,¹ ‘till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.’

1. Eph4:13-16

No matter what our age or stage in life, before we can enter into an understanding of what it means to be *sisters* or *mothers* in the body of God's people, we must mature in our Christian stature and in our relational capacity to participate as *daughters* within the culture of godliness.

Growing and maturing

In this culture, God requires that we grow and mature as Christians. We know that Christianity is a life that grows, and is not a static set of religious ideals.

As we grow and mature beyond the phase of milk,² our senses are then exercised to be able to discern both good and evil. We are then able to resist the *cunning craftiness of the enemy, who seeks to carry us away, and toss us about with every wind of doctrine*, concerning the nature of our work as women.

We are all daughters of someone. Whose daughter are you?

- Are you maturing in Christian grace, or are you maturing in the ways of the flesh?
- Are you a novice, led captive by Satan to do his will, or are you a true daughter of Abraham, a virtuous woman, able to overcome the wiles and works of Satan?
- Are you a true daughter of Sarah in godly submission and in doing good without fear or terror?

2. Heb 5:12-14

WHOSE DAUGHTER ARE YOU?

The question, “*Whose daughter are you?*” was asked of Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, and the mother of Jacob and Esau. She was the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham’s nephew,³ and therefore of Abraham’s household.

In the unfolding story, Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son from Abraham’s native country and his kindred. This servant went to the city of Nahor, and stopped by the well outside the city at the time when the daughters of the city came out to draw water.

The servant then prayed to Jehovah as it records in Genesis, ‘Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, “Please let down your pitcher that I may drink”, and she says, “Drink, and I will also *give your camels a drink*” – let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.’⁴

Rebekah did just what the servant had prayed. She offered to water the camels. So Abraham’s servant asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ Rebekah answered, ‘I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah’s son, whom she bore to Nahor.’⁵ It was confirmed to the servant, by the demonstration of her nature, and by the confirmation that she was of the household of his master, that Rebekah was indeed chosen of the Lord to be the wife of Isaac. The servant’s response to the Lord for the testimony of this woman was ‘as for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master’s brethren’.⁶

And so, Rebekah followed the servant of Abraham immediately, out of the house of Bethuel and to another land. For this, it has been

3. Gen 22:23

4. Gen 24:14

5. Gen 24:24

6. Gen 24:27

accounted to Rebekah, that she was one *who followed*. She became a true daughter of Abraham.

A daughter, a disciple

This is an illustration of what it means to be a daughter. A daughter is one who follows in the ways of the household. In essence, a daughter is a disciple of the household to which she belongs. The word 'daughter' is a relational term, in that a daughter does not walk alone, or independently. As Rebekah testified, she was related to a family and was a female descendant of that household.

Think on this for a moment. Quite obviously, you cannot be a daughter of yourself, although some may have tried. If you are truly a daughter, then you are the daughter of another. You are trained by the one to whom you belong, whether or not you are actively or passively trained. You belong to the other and are not your own. You *follow on* in the ways of *the one to whom you belong*, and do not live according to your own independent ways. This is *discipleship*.

Legitimacy, adoption and culture

To be a legitimate daughter in a family, you are a daughter of that *house*. The word *house* is often used in Scripture in the sense of lineage or family. For example, the natural father of Jesus, whom we know as Joseph, was of the house of David.⁷ So, as a daughter of the house, you are of the lineage of that house. As a daughter of the house, you then exemplify the culture of that house. You are the fruit of that house.

If you were to be adopted into a family then you would also need to adopt the culture of that family to be a legitimate daughter within that household, and a part of the lineage of that household. Then you are no

7. Luke 1:27, marg.; 2:4. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois, © 1988.

longer *illegitimate*, because you have been trained in the ways of the house and are submitted to them.

We have been adopted into the *household of faith*,⁸ and desire to be a part of the lineage of that household. We desire to be legitimate in the ways of faith.

Galatians 3:26-29 says, 'For you are all sons [and daughters] of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ ... and if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'

Growth, training and maturity

As legitimate daughters, and heirs of the *household of faith*, we need training as we grow and mature. Growth itself does not give us maturity. Growth, with training, leads to maturity. If we are without training, of which chastening is a part, then we are illegitimate, and not sons and daughters.

The Bible does not call us sons and daughters just because we are born into God's house. The Scriptures teach us that we are sons and daughters when we are trained, and live as His offspring, manifesting His culture of godliness. We are not our own; we belong to Him.

We note that this truth is powerfully illustrated by Paul in Hebrews chapter 12.

Again, whose daughter are you?

- Are you born and adopted into the house of God as a legitimate daughter?
- Have you accepted His culture of godliness?

8. Gal 6:10

- Are you growing, maturing and accepting training with chastening, to be that daughter?
- Or are you resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in your life to bring forth change?

We note, and have been exhorted, that one who lives in the household of God, while still a slave of sin, is not a true child of God's house. And we know that the slave cannot abide in the house forever.⁹

We do not desire to be slaves of sin. Our desire is to abide in the house of the Lord forever. Let's draw near to the Lord, to hear His word, be trained by it, and be a daughter of the household of God.

Daughters, training and culture

As we have said, a legitimate daughter of a household submits to and is trained in the ways of the household to which she belongs.

She is trained in the entire way of life that the household lives. Her parents train her in the entire way of life that is cultivated in the home.

The term 'culture' simply means *the entire way of life that we cultivate* in our households.¹⁰ As a daughter of your household:

- you learn the culture of what your household believes a *woman* should be
- you learn the culture of what your household believes a *wife* should be
- you learn the culture of what your household believes a *sister* should be
- you learn the culture of what your household believes a *mother* should be.

9. John 8:35

10. *Reforming Our Culture*, p1

You are trained in this *image*. You are trained in this *culture*. You are trained in this *way*. Whether the training is active or passive, positive or negative, you are nevertheless trained by the image of womanhood that is esteemed within the culture of the household to which you belong. You will walk in the ways of your household, one way or another. This is why we are called to reform our culture from vanity to virtue according to the lessons of the Scriptures.

Proverbs chapter 31 teaches us of the ways of the virtuous woman, who demonstrated the culture of godliness in her house. She was one who '*watched over the ways of her household*'. She guarded the culture of her family, and sanctified the ways of her household. 'Many daughters have done well, but you exceed them all ... give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works, praise her in the gates.'¹¹

Therefore, a daughter of the house is inextricably linked to the culture and ways of the household to which she belongs.

SCRIPTURAL USES OF THE TERM: DAUGHTER

The Scriptures use the word 'daughter' in a number of ways. It can be a reference to a particular female descendant, a female branch of a particular family, a small township or community, or even a city.

Daughter - a female descendant

In the general sense, the Scriptures use the word 'daughter' to mean a 'born or adopted female descendant'. This is also extended to describe a step-sister, niece or any female descendant in a family.¹²

11. Prov 31:29

12. Gen 20:12, 24:48; Deut 23:17. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois, © 1988.

Daughter - a female branch of the family

We also see in Scripture the term 'daughter' used to define the female branch of a family.

In Luke it describes the lineage of Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias the priest, and mother of John the Baptist. She was called a '*daughter of Aaron*'. 'There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias ... his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.'¹³

We can see that being called a '*daughter of Aaron*' not only defined the family lineage of Elizabeth, but also defined the culture of her home as she walked with her husband, in righteousness before God in all commandments and ordinances. She was blameless before Him.

Daughter - a female branch of the community

More generally still, the word 'daughter' is used in Scripture to define the female portion of a community.

We see an example of the word 'daughter' being used to define the female portion of the community of the Philistines, in the book of Samuel. 'Proclaim it not ... lest daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.'¹⁴

You can see here also that being called one of the '*daughters of the Philistines*' not only defined where these women came from (they came from Philistia), but it also defines the culture that they lived. It was a culture of hatred – an uncircumcised and mixed culture.

13. Luke 1:5,6

14. 2 Sam 1:20

Daughters of mother cities

Throughout the Scriptures, small towns were called daughters of neighbouring larger mother cities.

- Surrounding villages of Heshbon were likened to daughters of Heshbon: 'Israel took all these cities and Israel lived in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all her daughters.'¹⁵
- Tyre is likened to the daughter of Sidon: 'He has said, "You shall exult no more, O crushed virgin daughter of Sidon. Arise, pass over to Cyprus; even there you will find no rest".'¹⁶

Cities personified as women

Cities, or centres of population, commerce and culture, were commonly personified as women and so women naturally had the designation given to them as daughters of the country to which they belonged; for example, 'daughters of Zion', or 'daughters of Jerusalem'.¹⁷

Daughters - belonging to another

But no matter what the use or employment of the word 'daughter' in the Scriptures, in each instance, the term is used to describe

- that female
- that female portion of a family
- that female branch of the community, or
- that city

as belonging *to* another, or being *of* another.

The 'daughter' – whether a city; a female branch of the community; a female branch of the family; or, indeed, even just a female herself – was not 'her own'. She was of another. Her culture was not her own – she belonged to another, and was defined by the other.

15. Num 21:25 NASU

16. Isa 23:12 NASU

17. Isaiah 37:22. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois, © 1988.

We are not our own

This is interesting in the light of our recent studies – that we are not our own!

1st Corinthians 6:19,20 says, ‘Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.’

The alternative from the beginning

Even those who walk according to their own ways and not according to the ways of God are not their own. They are of their father, Satan. The lie from the beginning, presented to the woman, was to be ‘*like God*’.¹⁸ Satan presented this as the alternative.

The woman believed that there could be another way of life – remember the word culture simply means an ‘*entire way of life*’. The woman believed that she could be like God, and make another acceptable culture, another ‘*entire way of life*’, that was her own. This was to be ‘*like God*’. To believe that we are our own, and can do as we please, is a lie, and has been a lie from the beginning. We cannot source anything in ourselves, and be ‘our own’.

It is a delusion, a lie and a snare, that has been presented to us, as the alternative from the beginning. Christ says, ‘Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.’

‘You are of your father Satan, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature,¹⁹ for he is a liar and the father of lies.’

18. Gen 3:5

19. Other translations – ‘source’.

I Belong to You Lord

*I am not my own
I have been bought
I am the Lord's
Life that's born in me
A life to love, a life to give*

*'Cause I belong to You, Lord
I belong to You
I belong to You, Lord
As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord.*

*You are not your own
You have been bought
You are the Lord's
Life that's born in you
A life to love, a life to give*

*'Cause we belong to You, Lord
We belong to You
We belong to You, Lord
As for me and my house, we will serve*

*With all that I am
I will serve you, Lord
Yes, all that I am is Yours
And nothing I have
I have without coming from Your hand.*

Joy Feilla

‘But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me ... he who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.’²⁰

Choose whom you will serve

Are we ‘of God’, and His household, or are we of ‘our father Satan’? The Scriptures are clear. The Lord says in the book of Jeremiah, ‘Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.’²¹ In other words, I set before you two cultures – the culture of life, and the culture of death. We are to choose which culture we shall live. ‘And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.’²²

This is our confession as Christians today. Joshua encourages us all the more. ‘Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away all other gods. Serve the LORD!’²³

Like mother – like daughter

Have you ever heard the saying, ‘*Like mother like daughter*’? This proverb is from the book of Ezekiel.²⁴ It teaches us that it is the mother of the household who teaches the culture of the household.

If we desire to be a mother in the household of God, we must first be a daughter of the household of God, so that we are strengthened to teach the ways of the Lord. How can we be a mother of the culture, unless we are first a daughter of the culture? The following Scriptures from Ezekiel,²⁵ in the Old Testament, liken Jerusalem, in her

20. John 8:43-47 NASU

21. Jer 21:8

22. Josh 24:15

23. Josh 24: 14, paraphrased

24. Ezek 16:44

25. Ezek 16:44-60

disobedience, to a harlot worse than her *'elder sister Samaria to the north, and to her younger sister, Sodom to the south'*. Jerusalem was indeed *'her mother's daughter'*. Who was her mother? She took on the culture of the nations which surrounded her, and which are likened to the nature of Babylon, who is called *'the mother' of all harlotry*.²⁶

As a daughter of the ways of Babylon, eventually she is taken captive to Babylon, from whom she received her motherhood. These Scriptures read as follows.

'Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use this proverb against you: "Like mother, like daughter!" You are your mother's daughter, loathing husband and children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children; your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite.'

Here we have the fruit of an ungodly culture defined. It is a culture of mothers, daughters and sisters who loathe their husbands and children. This had become the culture of Jerusalem, who in these Scriptures, is portrayed as a harlot.

'Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters. You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways.

'"As I live," says the Lord GOD, "neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done ...

'You who judged your sisters, bear your own shame also, because the sins which you committed were more abominable than theirs; they are

26. Rev 17:5

more righteous than you. Yes, be disgraced also, and bear your own shame, because you justified your sisters ...

‘For thus says the Lord GOD: “I will deal with you as you have done, who despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an Everlasting Covenant with you”.’

These Scriptures from Ezekiel are quite confronting. If we are disobedient in the same way as Jerusalem, then we too can expect nothing less from God. There will be no special treatment. We shall eat the fruit of our ways.

RETURNING TO THE HOUSE OF BREAD

The book of Ruth gives us the story and faith of a true daughter of God. It is ‘the story of a Moabite woman who forsakes her pagan heritage in order to cling to the people of Israel and to the God of Israel. Because of her faithfulness in a time of national faithlessness, God rewards her by giving her a new husband, Boaz, and a son, Obed, and a privileged position in the lineage of David and Christ.’²⁷

The book of Ruth was probably written several generations after its events. Many believe it to have been written during the time of Ruth’s great-grandson, King David. It shows us a clear picture of the responses of a godly woman, and how she chose the way of life, or ‘*life everlasting*’,²⁸ which was her inheritance through obedience and faith.

Famine, the result of rebellion

At the start of the book of Ruth, we see the history of the family of Elimelech, her father-in law, and their response to a famine in the land

27. *The New Open Bible*, p311

28. Gal 6:8

of Israel. The book of Leviticus gives us the direction for sustaining life and blessing.²⁹

We read, 'If you walk in My statutes, and keep my commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing. You shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid.'

Now, if there was a famine in the land, then the people of Israel had clearly departed from the ways of the Lord, and followed their own ways. Famine always speaks of God's judgement and process because of rebellion. At the close of the book of Judges, it says that every man did what was right in his own eyes.³⁰ This rebellion, in doing what was right in their own eyes, led to the famine recorded in the book of Ruth.³¹ Disobedience to God's word always produces a famine.

Praise and fruitfulness in the house of bread

Elimelech, Ruth's father-in-law, was an Ephrathite, which means *fruitful*, and he was of the household of Bethlehem-Judah. Bethlehem means 'house of bread', while Judah means 'praise'. The culture and heritage of the household of Elimelech was named to indicate *praise and fruitfulness in the house of bread*. Elimelech's wife's name was Naomi. Her name means 'the pleasant one'. His sons were called Mahlon, which means 'song, mild, sick', and Chilion, which means 'perfectness, ornament, and pining'.

It is obvious that the famine had its effect upon the household of Elimelech. The famine had impact upon his sons, who were sickly and

29. Lev 26:3-6

30. Judg 21:25

31. Ruth 1:1

pinning. In naming their children *sickly* and *pinning*, Elimelech and Naomi showed their lack of faith and trust in God that He would restore, heal and strengthen their children.

The culture of Elimelech's family is manifested in this. The fruit of his household was constriction. Famine speaks of starvation, malnutrition, disease and death.³² This was the state of his household at that time, as it was also the state of the house of God. Praise and fruitfulness had become criticism and constriction. In this mode, Elimelech and his family left the household of God, and went to Moab to avoid famine and process.

Why was it that Elimelech, whose name meant *my God is king*, sought to leave his place of provision, in the *house of bread*? He preferred to go to Moab, which signified another religious tradition, idolatrous but kin to Israel, than to call on God for the fulfilment of his promise. He did what seemed right in his own eyes, and walked according to his own ways. In his despair and lack of faith for God's provision in the midst of famine and judgement, he rebelled and chose his own way, which led to death.

The result of rebellion

The results of the rebellious decision of Elimelech were

- his own death
- the further backsliding of his sons in their marrying the daughters of Moab³³
- the death of his two sons, married to Ruth and Orpah
- the cutting off of headship provision to Naomi, and her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah – all of whom were then widows, and destitute.³⁴

32. *The Book of Ruth*, Rev C.J McKnight, Seattle, pl

33. Deut 7:3

34. *A Study of the Book of Ruth*, David W. Hall, Calvary Bible College

Faith comes by hearing

Now let's look at the response of Naomi to the judgement of God in her family. This was a woman who brought mixture into her household. She did not stand as a sister to her husband, by strengthening him in the ways of the Lord. She did not watch over the ways of her household. She left the household of God with her husband and moved her dwelling, to a city that was a daughter of the ways and motherhood of Babylon, called Moab. In this, she was disobedient.

The Lord judged Naomi. She lost her husband and her two sons, because of her disobedience. Because of the discipline of such a tragedy in her life, she was able to hear and believe the word of the Lord in a foreign land!

We read that *'then she arose ... for she had heard'*.³⁵ After the death of her two sons, the next statement begins with *'Then'*. This could suggest to us a period of time for mourning and reflection on her ways before her response to arise and return. It was a time of knowing that she must return again, but with no capacity to find her way back. She had to wait until the Lord returned again to His people.

The Scriptures say that *she arose for she had heard*. Upon hearing the word of the Lord, she received sight and faith to arise again. *'So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.'*³⁶

The hearing of the news that God had again visited His people quickened something in Naomi that enabled her to undertake the journey home, alone if necessary. She received faith, and saw the rebellion of her ways.

35. Ruth 1:6

36. Rom 10:17

What had Naomi heard? It says that *'the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.'*³⁷ The sign of the Lord's visitation was in giving them bread. The people of Israel, in their distress, had obviously turned from their rebellion to the Lord. And He answered them. For us, a true visitation of God is marked by the opening of His word to us, and this is evident today.

Sanctification and separation

Naomi's response was to turn again to the house of the Lord. The verses read that she *'went forth out of the place where she was'*. For us to enter into anything of the Lord, we must put away all idolatry of the world,³⁸ depart from the culture of the world and return to the culture of godliness. There must be no mixture in our responses to God. We could compare Naomi's going forth with the calling of Abram in the book of Genesis. *'Get out of your country, from your family, and from your father's house, unto a land.'*³⁹ Like Rebekah, she heard a word, and followed that word. She wanted to be a daughter of Abraham.

Upon receiving sight and hearing a call to return again, Naomi gathered her daughters-in-law with her to undertake the journey to come unto the *house of bread*. This was before they had heard their own call.

It says that she took *her two daughters-in-law with her*. We can see obedience in both the young women, in their unquestioning response to go with Naomi. We can also see Naomi's accountability for the daughters-in-law, in making the decision for them to return with her. One could wonder what the foundation of the relationship was between these women, and could presume it to be one based in matriarchy. Matriarchy is the *obligation to take the issues on board, and carry the identity/accountability of another individual in relation to matters of life,*

37. Ruth 1:6

38. ie Moab

39. Gen 12:1

*culpability and warfare that they must themselves dispose before God. It removes the burden from others, and offers a religious order that accepts accountability and dispenses absolution from blame.*⁴⁰ This is the principle and sin of matriarchy.

From the outset of their journey, it may have been hard to tell the difference in the intentions of the women. But as the road became more difficult, the differences would have become more evident. As many issues pertaining to 'matters of life, culpability, identity and warfare' were raised on their way, Naomi would have felt bound to address the issues, and therefore use the law for her own gain, and be thrown into the position of matriarch. One, or even both, of the young women may have required of Naomi to carry them and their own accountability in returning to Bethlehem, the *house of bread*. In time, it is clear that Naomi made a choice to dispense with matriarchy as the foundation for their relationship. In a sense, she would no longer be patronised.

Naomi called for the girls to carry their own load, or to turn back to Moab. She made a breach on their relationship. She spoke to her daughters-in-law three times concerning separation. She made a distinction between how they were presently walking, and how they would have to change the basis of their relationship, to cope with the difficulties of life ahead. She also alluded to the mixture of their lifestyle, back in Moab, and how that now had to change.

In this, Naomi demonstrated true motherhood. She called for a standing up in identity and accountability, and a carrying of one's own burden. A true mother does not manipulate the law for her own gain, such as peace or power, but rather lives in a repentant attitude before the Lord, and calls others to culpability, and an owning of their own

40. *Reforming Our Culture*, p7

sin. Living in this way before the Lord requires an open-faced relationship, and a true meeting of one another.

It is evident that in making a breach upon her relationship with her daughters-in-law, she was also making a breach upon her own mixed culture. She was in mourning not only for her husband and sons, but also for the disobedience of her own heart, the mixture of her own culture, and for leaving the *house of bread*.

Naomi left Moab in the midst of mourning. Still grieving the loss of her husband and sons, still processing the judgement of God in her life, and while returning to the *house of bread*, Naomi brought a motherhood word to her daughters Ruth and Orpah. While Orpah, whose name means ‘stubborn’, ‘*kissed her mother-in-law*’,⁴¹ and returned to her own people, Ruth, whose name means ‘friend’, ‘*cleaved*’ to Naomi.

We could see Orpah’s kiss as a mark of respect and love towards her mother-in-law, but she was true to her nature. She was stubborn and unyielding on all points of culture. She chose to do what was right in her own eyes, and to follow her own familiar ways of life. When we compare Orpah’s action with that of her sister-in-law, we see a different response from Ruth, who desired to be a daughter of Naomi, and to follow her to the *house of bread*.

As Naomi and Ruth fixed their eyes on returning to the house of God, Naomi found the capacity to mother and to lead her daughter, even in the midst of mourning. In her mourning and repentance, Naomi became a daughter of God once again. She was a daughter of God, and so she was enabled to be a true mother in the household of God.

Naomi sanctified her house. The road home would have been a discipline for her, and a chastisement, as she dealt with the mixture in

41. Ruth 1:14

her life to become a true daughter of the culture. Naomi's faith was to return as a daughter of the *house of bread*. No more alternative ways. It was to be all or nothing. She desired to return to the household of faith.

We read that when Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem, ie when they had returned to *fruitfulness*, the whole city stirred. Was this Naomi?⁴² But Naomi said to them, not to call her Naomi, or 'pleasantness', but to call her Mara, which means 'bitterness'. She had gone from *pleasantness* to *bitterness* because of her disobedience. This was her point of full confession before her brethren. She had left the place of fruitfulness, praise and provision to find a better way, but now she had returned empty, and chastised by the Lord. Although now empty, she was a daughter of God, and of the household of faith.

Orpah

The Scriptures do not mention Orpah again, after she returned to her own people. One may guess what happened to her, as she sought to raise up her husband's name in the world. Orpah had married Naomi's son, Chilion. Here we should remember the meaning of the name of Chilion. It means 'perfectness, ornament, and pining'.

Dwelling on the word 'ornament', we could question: Was Orpah merely an ornament to Chilion? What was the depth of their relationship as husband and wife? If she had returned to the *house of bread*, Orpah would have found a *perfectness* of life. In returning to the culture of the world, we could conclude that she only found *pining*.

When Naomi says to Orpah, '*the Lord deal ... with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me*', we could assume that the Lord did deal with Orpah accordingly. She did not find rest in the house of her husband, but rather, found *pining*, in her independence. When we read that the Lord

42. Ruth 1:19

gives us the desires of our heart, we realise that He *does* return unto us, what has been in our heart.

In the end of the book of Ruth, the existence of Orpah is not acknowledged. Boaz says, ‘*You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi.*’⁴³ Orpah is not mentioned. Although Orpah, as the widow of Chilion, was still living, no regard was paid to her in the disposal of her husband’s property. Because she returned to Moab she was considered to have either been married again (ie married to the world), or to have renounced all right to an inheritance with the family of Elimelech.

In that moment of response, when she chose to do what was right in her own eyes, and to follow her own *stubborn* ways, I am sure that she did not realise the inheritance that she had forfeited.

Ruth cleaved to her mother-in-law

We said earlier, that the name Ruth means ‘friendship’. The Scriptures record that at the moment of separation, Ruth cleaved. She grabbed hold of Naomi, and would not let her go. Where Orpah was blinded by her own stubbornness, Ruth’s eyes were opened.

How were Ruth’s eyes opened? What had taken place to cause such a reaction from Ruth towards her mother-in-law? Some would think that Ruth may have possibly been just a little emotional, by clinging to her mother-in-law at that time. Ruth obviously loved Naomi, and did not want to part from her. This is all quite true, but there is more to Ruth’s actions, than just overwhelming emotion. We shall understand this by examining another account of an outpouring of emotion, in the Gospels.

43. Ruth 4: 9

ADOPTION - ENTERING THE PROCESS

Do you see this woman?

The book of Luke gives an account of how a sinful woman was forgiven at the feet of Jesus.⁴⁴ When she heard that Jesus was at the home of Simon the Pharisee, she brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet, behind him, weeping.

She began to wash His feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hair of her head. Then she kissed His feet, and anointed them with the fragrant oil. It was an overwhelming outpouring of emotion. It was such an outpouring of emotion that Simon found it a little hard to bear and reacted quite badly in his heart, towards the Lord.

The Lord spoke to Simon saying, ‘Do you see this woman?’ He then went on to say, ‘I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.’ Then He said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven ... your faith has saved you. Go in peace.’

What did this woman find at the feet of Jesus? It says that she found forgiveness, faith and peace.

Sins forgiven

How were her sins, which were many, forgiven? Jesus said that this woman found forgiveness, because she *loved much*. This woman, whose sins were many, was able to *love much*. How was she able to love much?

44. Luke 7:36-50

She was at the feet of Jesus, the messenger. Beautiful were His feet. He was the Messenger who was sent to *preach the gospel of peace*, and to *bring glad tidings of good things*.⁴⁵

At His feet she had heard the word of salvation. She had heard the *good news*. Upon hearing it, she received it, and the *'love of God'* was *poured into her heart, by the Holy Spirit*.⁴⁶ In receiving Christ and His word, she received a love of the truth, by the Holy Spirit, so that she might be saved.⁴⁷ And so, she *loved much*. Because she *loved much*, she was *forgiven much*. She found forgiveness at the feet of Jesus.

Hearing and receiving

With a heart overflowing with the love of God and a love of the truth of His word, knowing that her sins were forgiven, faith began to arise in her heart. We know that faith *'works by love'*,⁴⁸ and comes by *'hearing the word of God'*.⁴⁹ This woman received faith, because she loved, and because she heard the word of God. God's grace was towards her, to see her saved. Ephesians says, 'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.'⁵⁰

There was nothing that this woman could do to save herself. Her salvation was not according to her good works – she had none. She received her salvation from the Lord, as a gift. She was forgiven much, and so she loved much. In hearing and receiving the word of the messenger, she found forgiveness and faith.

45. Rom 10:15; Isa 52:7

46. Rom 5:5

47. 2 Thess 2:10

48. Gal 5:6

49. Rom 10:17

50. Eph 2:8,9

Beautiful Are the Feet

*How then shall they call
On Him whom they have not believed
And how shall they believe
On Him in whom they have not heard
And how shall they hear without a messenger
Beautiful, beautiful are the feet.*

*Oh, faith cometh by hearing
Hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
Faith will come when you receive and believe the one
He has sent to you
Beautiful, beautiful are the feet.*

*Faith will come when you receive and believe the one
He has sent to you
Beautiful, beautiful are the feet
Beautiful, beautiful are the feet.*

Joy Feilla

Go in peace

Christ then exhorted her to '*go in peace*'. We know that we are to gird our feet with the '*gospel of peace*'.⁵¹ Christ was commanding her to continue on in the way of peace. She was to continue on in the word of the messenger – to continue on in the '*gospel of peace*' – walking in the ways of the Lord. The love of God, poured into her heart, was to be demonstrated by her relational obedience to the word of God. She was to continue on in relational obedience to the word of God. This was a major cultural change in her life. She once was *lost*, but then was *found* in Him.⁵²

This woman did not resist the Holy Spirit. Do you see this woman? By participating in the grace of God made available to her by faith, this woman was made *accepted in the beloved*. As the book of Ephesians says, this woman was *adopted* into the *household of faith*, 'by the glory of His grace, by which He made us [her] accepted in the Beloved'.⁵³ Being made *accepted in the Beloved* is the evidence of her cultural shift, by faith.

The gospel transaction

This woman's example to us is an example of the whole gospel transaction, by grace. Quite simply, hearing and receiving enables believing. Hearing the word comes by receiving a love of the truth, which has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to believe the word, which saves us, and our sins are forgiven.

Therefore, you can't believe until you love. You can't love until you have been forgiven, and you can't be forgiven until you receive the word of the messenger. In the end, there is nothing that we can do except say 'yes' to the Lord, and receive His word.

51. Eph 6:15

52. Luke 15:6,9,24,32

53. Eph 1:3-6

How are we able to receive His word? We are able to receive His word, when we cease to resist the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. Stephen says, 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.'⁵⁴

These men did not have a love of the truth, because they could not hear, and resisted the Holy Spirit. They were not of God. The book of Thessalonians speaks further of the ungodly, who would not receive a love of the truth, saying that God will send them 'strong delusion that they should believe the lie'.⁵⁵

When the messenger is sent to us, the Holy Spirit is also sent as the Helper to us, to receive the word. If we resist the Holy Spirit when the messenger speaks, and will not receive a love of the truth poured out into our hearts, so that we are saved, then God will send us a strong delusion, causing us to believe the lie so that we are condemned in unrighteousness.

But, by receiving the Holy Spirit, and saying 'Yes, Lord!' we are then enabled to receive a love of the truth. Then we are able to believe and to confess with our mouth a statement of faith, thereby entering the process of being *made accepted* in the beloved family of the Father, and a joint heir with the Son of the Father – Jesus Christ.

Whose woman is this?

Boaz (a type of Christ) said to one of his servants, '*Whose young woman is this?*'⁵⁶ We have just read that Jesus said to Simon the Pharisee, '*Do you see this woman?*', These two questions are a parallel, revealing that both women desired cultural change in their lives.

54. Acts 7:51

55. 2 Thess 2:9-12

56. Ruth 2:5

Ruth was a Moabite by birth and as such had to be forgiven much. The book of Deuteronomy states that a Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, and none of his descendants should enter the assembly of the Lord, forever.⁵⁷ This was the same judgement given to those of illegitimate birth. How then was Ruth made *accepted in the beloved*, and able to enter the assembly of Israel, being a Moabite by birth? It was by the process of adoption. She desired to make a cultural shift, into the household of God, by faith.

Ruth heard the word of the Lord, from Naomi, who was a messenger to her. Upon hearing it, she cleaved to Naomi, and to the word that she brought. Ruth received it wholeheartedly, and would not be parted from Naomi.

Upon receiving the word from Naomi, the Holy Spirit poured into her heart, a love of the truth, which enabled her to believe for a cultural change in her life. She did not resist the Holy Spirit, as did her stubborn sister, Orpah. She desired to make her dwelling in the house of the Lord. She did not want to turn back to Moab, and to live in unrighteousness. It was evident that there was much love in her heart, because she loved much. She loved the truth. Ruth was forgiven much, because she loved much.

God's grace was towards her, to bring her to the *house of bread*. She walked the road to Bethlehem with Naomi, and along the way, they shared together in the '*gospel of peace*'. The love of God poured into Ruth's heart, was demonstrated by Ruth's relational obedience to the word of God, and to the word of Naomi. We note that when she arrived in Bethlehem, she had a thorough understanding of the law of the Lord. With a change of heart, had come a change of culture. Ruth desired to love the Lord, to obey His voice and to cling to Him, as

57. Deut23:3,4

Deuteronomy exhorts.⁵⁸ She knew that she would find life and blessing in the house of the Lord.

Ruth did not resist the Holy Spirit. By participating in the grace of God made available to her, by faith, she was made *accepted in the beloved*. As Ephesians says, Ruth was adopted into the *household of faith*, 'by the glory of His grace, by which He made us (her) accepted in the Beloved.'⁵⁹ Being made accepted in the Beloved is the evidence of her cultural shift by faith. She was adopted into the *house of bread*.

Ruth was no longer a Moabite with a culture that could not be integrated into Israel. The confession of her faith enabled adoption into Israel.

Her confession of faith as a daughter is found where she says to her mother-in-law, Naomi, 'Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me.'⁶⁰

Upon her confession of faith, Ruth was adopted into the house of Israel.

58. Deut 30:20

59. Eph 1:3-6

60. Ruth 1:16,17

SEVEN STATEMENTS OF FAITH

Ruth's first statement of faith

'Entreat me not to leave you, or to
turn back from following after you'

In her first statement of faith, Ruth wanted to 'follow'. We have already stated that this is the faith of the daughter, *to neither leave nor forsake relationship*.

Ruth desired to follow the leading and direction of Naomi. We can see Naomi here, as a type of the Holy Spirit that '*leads and guides into all truth*'.⁶¹

As daughters of God's house, we are also likened to the sheep of God's pasture. John chapter 10 says that the sheep know the voice of the Good Shepherd. They hear and obey Him, and are named and known of Him. We can link these Scriptures with those in Psalm chapter 23, which we all know – 'the Lord is my Shepherd'. This psalm gives us an account of the benefits of those who follow the Lord.

No matter where the Lord leads, whether by the still waters, or through the valley of the shadow of death, those who know Him will follow Him. This is our faith too, knowing that our Great Shepherd will care for us. His rod and His staff will comfort us. And we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. This was the hope and faith of Ruth.

As a daughter of Naomi, Ruth followed as one of the sheep of Israel, in returning to the promised land.

61. John 14:6

Ruth's second statement of faith

'And wherever you lodge I will lodge'

Ruth's faith as a daughter, and her determination to be one, meant that she left her own people and even her own physical lodgings, or dwelling place, to follow after and dwell with the Lord's people. There were no qualifications here! She literally 'got out' of the culture. She left it behind. Ruth desired to '*dwell in the house of the Lord forever*'.⁶²

Paul says 'Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.'⁶³

Ruth's third statement of faith

'Your people shall be my people'

Who are God's people? This is very important to know, if we desire to be daughters in the household of God. We are to dwell with God's people. Then we can say, 'Your people are my people'.

God has only one people, and we don't qualify as His people by just attending church. Our lodging must be in God's house, among His people. We must also have the determination of Ruth in our hearts. We must be able to be met, and known, among God's people.

Any tendency to separate or to be independent in the midst of God's people, will eventually result in our missing God's best for us, as Orpah missed her own inheritance. We cannot choose to whom we shall relate – to this one or to that, or to whom we shall listen – to this one, or to that one.

62. Psa 23:6

63. Phil 3:13,14

We must lodge and dwell among God's people. And if we aren't comfortable participating among God's people, then where are we comfortable? Do we belong to another house? Are we illegitimate in our attitudes? If so, we need to be adopted by faith into the household of God.

Ruth's fourth statement of faith

'Your God, my God'

The Hebrew word used by Ruth here is *Elohim*. This plural word is used to refer to the three-person nature of God. In her special usage of this word, Ruth was saying that '*Elohim*' was a fellowship in which she as an Israelite would participate. In the next verse, Ruth reveals more of her revelation, by naming Naomi's God, to whom she was committing herself, as the Lord, 'Jehovah' – the 'I AM'.

This was the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. In speaking thus, Ruth put Naomi's God above all other idolatrous gods, in her life, and in the world. There was only one God.

Ruth is showing that she is making a conscious, knowledgeable decision, to follow and to commit to the God of Naomi.

Jacob made a similar declaration. He said, 'then shall "Jehovah" be my "*Elohim*".'⁶⁴ This means, the 'Lord shall be my God'. Ruth's statement means that 'this is my place of life and fellowship'. Ruth was saying, 'I will be a daughter of your house, and a daughter of your God'.

64. Gen 28:21

Ruth's fifth statement of faith

'Where you die I will die'

Ruth declared that she would die to her own idols, and follow after Naomi. This was Ruth's response to a crisis of lordship in her life. In the same manner, we die to ourselves, and our own ways – what we think is right in our own eyes – at the point of the cross, and submit to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. This is our crisis of lordship. We are conformed to His death, that we may have His life, everlasting.

Ruth's sixth statement of faith

'And there will I be buried'

At His baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus submitted to the hands of another, John, who took Him and 'buried' Him in the waters of baptism. This was indicative of the 'baptism' of death that He would accomplish at Calvary.⁶⁵

Full and complete salvation for us depends upon fullness of identification with Jesus Christ and His baptism. Christ says, 'He who believes and is baptised shall be saved'.⁶⁶

Baptism is foundational to the believer's experience, so it is not surprising that Ruth should allude to it so early in her walk with Naomi. For us, if we die to ourselves and what is right in our own eyes and are buried with Christ, then we are assured of the resurrection life that gives us power to walk in the newness of life.

65. Matt 20:22

66. Mark 16:16

Ruth's seventh statement of faith

'The LORD do so to me, and more also,
if anything but death parts you and me'

And finally, she left no way out! There was no room for an alternative here. Ruth would not believe the same lie which Satan presented to Eve, in the beginning, which was to try to make another way, or to live another culture, in an effort to be '*like God*', and to be successful.⁶⁷

Her commitment was to the death. She believed that the Lord would raise her up. She knew the righteous judgement of God, in the piercing of her own heart at the loss of her own husband. She was acquainted with grief, and with mourning. But her faith was that God would reveal himself to her, as her *Jehovah Jireh*. He would be her Provider. She was not afraid for the future. Nothing was impossible for God.

God would be her provision in a land and culture that she did not as yet know. And she submitted herself to Naomi, to teach her of this way. She would learn the culture of Naomi's house, in fellowship with her, on the road to Bethlehem.

So Ruth made seven statements of faith. Her commitment was full and complete, just as the number seven speaks to us of fullness and completion. As she spoke her commitment of faith, she became as one born into the *house of bread*.

67. Rom 8:11

Rejoice, Hope, Believe

*Lift up your eyes, behold
See the many brothers by
See the harvest ripe for reaping
Rejoice, hope, believe.*

*See lost ones now returning
Know brokenness yet restoring
Hear the Father calling
Rejoice, hope, believe.*

*Soon we will sorrow no more
For He will gather us from the nations
Our voices lifted up in praise
We his people shall return
We will rejoice
We will hope
We will believe.*

Sara Asamoah

We can parallel this last statement of faith, *'the Lord do so to me'*, with that of Mary, the mother of Jesus, when she said, *'Let it be to me according to your word.'*⁶⁸ We see a similarity of faith in both women. Both women found favour in the eyes of the Lord. Both women believed that nothing was impossible for the Lord. And finally, both women had a faith commitment that enabled them to belong to the motherhood of the line of Judah, the motherhood that brought forth Christ.

A TRAINED DAUGHTER OF THE CULTURE

We know that there must have been interaction between Ruth and Naomi, on the road back to Bethlehem. On their journey back, Naomi conformed Ruth to the culture of the *house of bread*. She was able to mother her daughter, even in the midst of her own mourning and process.

A desire to participate

The response of Ruth at the start of chapter two reveals a woman who desired to participate whole-heartedly in the household of God, and to return to the house of Elimelech. She desired to return to *praise and fruitfulness in the house of bread*. This was the heritage of Elimelech's household.

We know that Naomi and Ruth must have spoken of Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech. Ruth knew that he was a relative of her father-in-law, and of his household. She knew that he was one in whose sight she should find favour.

Ruth desired to participate in the barley harvest, which was the harvest of Passover time. *There could have been no better time than this to*

68. Luke 1:38

return to the house of bread, than during Passover, which speaks to us of the redemption of Christ. Christ is our Passover.⁶⁹

In her desire, 'Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain', Ruth was demonstrating her commitment of faith, that Naomi's people would be her people. Naomi's God would be her God. Ruth was also demonstrating her understanding of the law of the Lord.

The book of Leviticus states that the people were not to wholly reap the corners of their fields, but were to leave them for the poor and the stranger in the land.⁷⁰ Ruth was a foreigner or *stranger* in the land, and both Naomi and Ruth were returning empty and poor from the land of Moab. The fulfilment of this law was to be their only provision. In her understanding of the law, Ruth showed initiative towards the work of the harvest, and initiative towards seeing provision, salvation and fruitfulness come to their lives. She did not wait around for something to happen, but rather sought the fulfilment the law.

In doing this, Ruth was also a seeker of *him* in whose sight she may find favour. She wasn't just a follower, she was also a seeker. In this she desired to see a fruitfulness come to the household of Elimelech, and pleaded with her mother to let her go to the field and glean heads of grain after *him* – her kinsman, Boaz.

Here we see Ruth as a type of the bride of Christ. Her great example to us is her complete submission, faith and obedience to participate in the work of salvation, and to fulfil the law. In this too, Naomi is a type of the Holy Spirit. Naomi was a helper to Ruth. Ruth received her instruction and training, and was then able to be adopted by marriage into the house of Boaz, and then into the tribe of Judah.

69. *The Book of Ruth*, Rev C J McKnight, Seattle, p4

70. Lev 19:9,10

Naomi, as a mother, was a messenger to Ruth, bringing her into the culture of the household of Boaz. For us today, we truly *hear* the messenger when we are willing to be *trained* by the word of God and *conformed* to the image of Christ, as we are taught by the messenger.

In the story of Ruth, Boaz is a type of Christ, *a redeemer and kinsman who daily loads us with benefits from his riches in glory. His name meant son of strength, of enduring vigour. Boaz was accounted to be a man of considerable consequence, and of great wealth.*⁷¹

He is even further a type of Christ when we note that he dwelt and worked on the threshing floor, separating wheat from chaff. Remember that John the Baptist prophesied of Christ, saying, ‘His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His *threshing floor*, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’⁷² Boaz’ work was one of separation and sanctification in the natural, just as with Christ in the spiritual. His culture was one of sanctification and honour – a culture of godliness.

Sanctification and separation

We can see here the culture of the family of Boaz and Ruth being established. Boaz’s first direction to Ruth was one of sanctification. He set the boundaries and limits for her work. Boaz said to her, ‘You will listen my daughter, will you not?’. These were the first words of Boaz to Ruth. In them, he recognised her as a daughter and part of the extended family of Elimelech.

Boaz also recognised Ruth as a woman who followed instruction. She would not return instruction with an argument. He felt free then to proceed to instruct her on a number of points.

71. *The Book of Ruth*, Rev C J McKnight, Seattle, 4

72. Matt 3:11,12

First, she was not to glean in another field, but to stay close to his maidservants. The lines of her work were defined by Boaz. He sanctified her to her place.

Second, she was to follow after the reapers, and to keep an eye on the fields which they reaped. Jesus spoke to us of the harvest. He said, 'Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!'.⁷³

Harvest is a time to separate that which is true, from that which is not. This is the work of sanctification in our lives. We are to participate in the harvest, by participation in the process of sanctification. First Thessalonians 5:23 says, 'Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Ruth was participating in the work of sanctification and separation, which was also the work of Boaz, and he had observed that she laboured hard in this work.

Third, Ruth was not to be afraid. Being a foreigner in the land meant that she was easy prey. Boaz had commanded that the young men were not to touch her. In this command, he established that while she was working in his fields, she belonged to him, and was not to be defiled. She was not her own, she was his maidservant, and she was safe.

And finally, she was to drink when she was thirsty, drinking from what the young men had drawn. Boaz is established once again, as a type of Christ, who said, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'⁷⁴

73. John 4:35

74. John 6:35

How Great

*Finding that it is of the Lord's mercy
That we are not consumed
Knowing that my deliverance
Comes from a word outside of me
Knowing my salvation
Is found in the body of His people*

*How great is the love
Of God for His people
Who do His good will*

*How great is His mercy
That He would deliver
The humble hearer
And set you free
If you would believe
And His word receive*

*Lord, let the bonds be broken
And praise You forever
For You have set me free.*

Amy Sweet

A virtuous woman

After Boaz's instructions were given, Ruth acknowledged this to be favourable treatment, especially for a foreigner. Boaz then answered her, speaking of the report of her friendship and commitment to her mother-in-law, and of her leaving the land of her birth, to find refuge in the house of the Lord. He then offered her a blessing, saying, 'The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.'

We see here a parallel between Ruth and the virtuous woman of the book of Proverbs. The last verse of Proverbs chapter 31 says, 'Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates'. Boaz confirms this all the more by saying, 'And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman'.⁷⁵

Although not born into the house of God, and being a foreigner, Ruth demonstrated godly virtue – this was evidence of the training of the Lord in her life. We see that she had grown in maturity and grace, fulfilling her vow that she made to her mother-in-law at the start of their journey to the house of the Lord.

She was a true daughter of God, manifesting His culture of godliness. As a daughter of God, receiving instruction and help from Naomi, in preparing herself for marriage, she is ultimately blessed with the headship provision of Boaz, and a son, named Obed. Fruitfulness was revealed in her life, and Ruth at last found rest in the household of God.

75. Ruth 3:11

RUTH ENTERS IN TO HER REST

At the conclusion of the book of Ruth, we see a woman who has entered into her rest. In ‘returning and rest’,⁷⁶ she was saved. The Lord fulfilled the desire of her heart, which was to dwell in the house of the Lord, forever. As Galatians expresses, she entered into this *household of faith*, because she ‘*did not grow weary while doing good*’, nor did she ‘*lose heart*’.⁷⁷

At this point, it is interesting to note the meaning of her deceased husband’s name, Mahlon. It meant, ‘song, mild, sick’. We could say that the whole process had put a new song in Ruth’s heart and mouth. Psalm 40:3 says, ‘And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God, many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.’ In returning to Bethlehem with Naomi, Ruth was trained in a new culture – she became a daughter of the culture. In a sense, her new *culture* was her new *song*. The result was that her song and her testimony caused many to fear the Lord.

A daughter of Zion

With a song in her heart, Ruth was now a daughter of the household of God. She was a daughter of Zion.

The song of fellowship in the midst of God’s people had now become her song. The Lord now dwelt in the midst of her people. There was a song in her heart, and the sound of rejoicing among God’s people, because the Lord had returned to them.

Indeed, the story of Ruth is a fulfilment of the words of Zephaniah.

‘Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your

76. Isa 30:15

77. Gal 6:8

judgements,⁷⁸ He has cast out your enemy ... the LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing ... I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will bring you back, even at the time I gather you; for I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth.⁷⁹

Fruitfulness in the house of bread

In returning to the *house of bread*, Ruth participated in the fruitfulness of bringing forth the seed of Christ. She participated in the full heritage of her father Elimelech's house. She entered into *praise and fruitfulness in the house of bread*.

In this, she was counted among the lineage of Christ, Himself. Christ was born in Bethlehem. He is our Bread of Life. As a daughter of Israel, Ruth became a mother of Israel; because as a mother of Israel, she was a daughter of Israel.

The parallel for us is that we become daughters of the household of God, and as daughters, we become mothers in the church. In this we participate in the ministry of the spirit of fruitfulness, bearing fruit for God. We participate in being mothers of the godly seed, Christ.

As mothers in the church, we are to live as daughters of the culture that brings forth Christ. We are to live the culture of Christ. And in this respect, women, both married and single, can participate in motherhood, and in seeing the life of God established in His people.

78. Deut 23:3,4 details the judgement of the Lord upon any Moabite.

79. Zeph 3:14-20

WHOSE DAUGHTERS YOU ARE ...

So, whose daughter are you? We are exhorted to be daughters of Abraham and of Sarah – daughters of the culture of godliness, participating in seeing the life of God established in the midst of His people.

We are exhorted to choose the way of life and fruitfulness, and to return to the *house of bread*, to be *legitimate* daughters, trained in the ways of God's house. Let our heritage be like that of Ruth's – one of *praise and fruitfulness in the house of bread*.

Finally, let's bring to remembrance the words of 1 Peter 3:5-6 which say, 'For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, *whose daughters you are* if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.'⁸⁰

80. 1 Peter 3:5,6

Sing, O Daughter of Zion

*Sing, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O Israel!
Be glad and rejoice with all the heart
O daughter of Jerusalem!*

*The LORD has taken away all thy judgements
He has cast out thine enemy
The King of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee*

*At that time I will undo all that afflict thee
And I will save her that halts
And gather her that was driven out
And get them praise and fame in the land
Where they've been put to shame
Saith the Lord*

*And at that time I will bring you again
Even in the time that I gather you
For I will make you a name and a praise
Among all people
When I turn back your captivity before your eyes
Saith the Lord*

*Sing, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O Israel!
Be glad and rejoice with all the heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!*

Jim McCrystal

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