

Naomi and Ruth: God's Non-Traditional Family

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Text: Ruth 1:1-18

Introduction:

- A. Leadership is not limited to government officials, elders, educators, and employers.
 - 1. Leaders and heroes are found among parents, grandparents, older Christians, big brothers and sisters, etc.
 - 2. They are leaders for the simple reason that someone else is following.
 - 3. Leadership involves responsibility.
 - a. Impossible to abdicate without harmful effects.
 - 4. Leadership results in both persons going in the same direction and arriving safely at the same destination.
 - 5. Since one is a follower, the other must therefore be the leader.
 - a. Even if de facto, he is accountable for his leadership.
 - b. James 3:1
- B. Ruth 1:18 - "When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her."
 - 1. Sometimes a family is not structured in the traditional manner, through no fault of their own.
 - a. One parent families through death or lawful divorce.
 - b. Children taken in by relatives, older siblings raising younger, etc.
 - c. No sin or stigma is attached, but it is necessary to follow God's family rules.

I. NAOMI FELT INADEQUATE TO LEAD THE FAMILY

- A. Vs 8 - "Go back to your mother's house."
 - 1. Vs 11-13 - Physical inadequacy.
 - 2. Vs 19-21 - Emotional inadequacy.
- B. None of this removed responsibility from Naomi.
 - 1. If God did not think we were physically up to the tasks before us, would He have given us stewardship of our abilities?
 - 2. We may not feel able to handle the pressure, but I know of no one who can be entirely objective about himself. Those who follow us have confidence in us.
 - 3. Can't just chuck it; make the best of it; lead your follower to heaven; strengthen your hands for this work.

II. RUTH HAD CONFIDENCE IN NAOMI AS A LEADER

- A. All that Naomi would do, Ruth would do.
 - 1. Her trust was based on something: Naomi's example of trustworthiness.
 - 2. Ruth wasn't afraid to trust Naomi, but Naomi was afraid of being trusted
 - 3. Ruth 1:16-17 - Not afraid to go where she would lead.
 - a. Not afraid to live as she would live.
 - b. Not afraid to follow her lead in religion.

- B. What if Naomi had been wrong? - Matt. 15:14; 1John 4:1
 - 1. Ruth would have paid for her carelessness if her trust had been misplaced; and Naomi would have paid for betraying it.
- C. Ruth's determination to follow Naomi was not something that could not easily be laid aside or passed on to another.
 - 1. Ruth 1:17-18, 3:1-5 - Good fellowship.
- D. As a result of Naomi's leadership, Ruth the Moabitess became a part of the lineage of David and an ancestor of Jesus of Nazareth
 - 1. Ruth 4:16-17; Matt. 1:1-17

III. RUTH'S TRUST WAS NOT MISPLACED IN NAOMI

- A. Her reputation remained virtuous.
 - 1. Foreign women developed bad reputations in strange lands; but Ruth was known for her virtue - Ruth 2:11-12
 - 2. Ruth followed Naomi's lead in protocols and proper behavior in potentially damaging situations and came out for the best - Ruth 3:8-13
 - 3. She trusted and did not question or presume to do it her way.
- B. She trusted Naomi with the customs and law
 - 1. Ruth 2:18-23, 3:18, 4:1-8; Deut. 25:7-9
- C. Naomi was praised for her leadership - Ruth 4:14-17

IV. WHY DIDN'T I USE A GREAT MAN TO TEACH ON LEADING A FAMILY?

- A. Anyone can find himself or herself in a position of leadership unsought.
- B. One does not have to be great in the view of others in order to lead.
- C. "Great Ones" do not always make the best leaders - Job 32:7-9

V. HOW TO PREPARE TO BE THE LEADER OF A NON-TRADITIONAL FAMILY

- A. Set the right example - Matt. 5:13-16
- B. Set your heart on serving God - Joshua 24:14-15
- C. Trust God that you will succeed - 1Cor. 10:13
- D. Pray - Phil. 4:6-7

Conclusion:

- A. Consider your own leadership over the ones following you.
 - 1. You are being looked to for an example. Set a worthy one.
 - 2. Take responsibility for your failures ("that's his fault for following").
 - a. Ever wonder why children "turn off" toward some adults?
 - b. The adult acted selfishly or callously, abdicating his leadership.
 - 3. Be humble enough to point out when praised that you are simply following another – Jesus Christ.
- B. When circumstances beyond your control change your family structure, you can still have a happy, healthy home and lead a fulfilling life together.