



The Father's Love

Robin M. Bertram

Robin M. Bertram

Copyright © 2010 Author Name

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 3891688

ISBN-13: 978-1477551882

Freedom Today Series

From Shadows Among Us and Shadows Among Us Study Guide

Copyright © 2012 by Robin M. Bertram. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any way by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the author except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture is taken from The New Oxford Annotated—New Revised Standard Version, Copyright © 1991, 1994 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked “NKJV” are taken from *The New King James Version* / Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. Copyright © 1982. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “NAS” are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “KJV” are taken from the *Holy Bible, King James Version*, Cambridge, 1769. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “NIV” are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The opinions expressed by the author Robin Bertram Ministries

Published by Robin Bertram Ministries

2 Plantation House Drive | Bluffton, SC 29910 USA

1.919.923.4137 | www.robinbertram.tv | www.freedomtoday.tv

Robin Bertram Ministries is committed to excellence in publishing. This division of RBM reflects the philosophy established by the founders, based on

Book design copyright © 2010 by Robin Bertram Ministries 501 3c not for profit

Published in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1475037364

1. Biblical Application-Exegesis
2. Spiritual-Biblical Studies

PREFACE

This course of study is an in-depth look at the Ministry of Deliverance. It is intended to reach those who are in need of personal deliverance and those who feel called into prayer ministry. It may be effectively used as a training tool for pastors and leaders who are interested in the development of a deliverance team. It may also be used in conjunction with teaching tapes, other books and resources, or as a stand-alone resource. The subject matter contained herein is addressed in the context of deliverance ministry, and is not considered an exhaustive study of the subject. It does, however, attempt to highlight topics that are frequently dealt with during sessions of deliverance ministry.

CONTENTS

Preface	iv
Acknowledgments	
1 The Father's Love	1
2 Facade and Forked Tongue	9
3 Where Do I Fit In?	14
4 Self Imposed Image	17
5 Family of Fellowship	22
6 The Study	26

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to each volunteer for Robin Bertram Ministries for their hard work and dedication and my dear friend Lucy Barlow who was there at the beginning of this journey. I would also like to thank my husband, Ken Bertram, for his editing work, Angie Mauer my Executive Assistant, her husband Bobby Mauer, Linda Clayton, Rev Wallace and Jewel Yarbrough, Rev Barbara Whitlow for their prayers and encouragement, and our children, Logan and Taylor, who so graciously supported us in this process. I would also like to acknowledge my dear precious father, Rev. Paul A. Maddy who went to be with the Lord one week before the submittal deadline for *Shadows Among Us*, the book from which these individual studies have been taken from. It is because of his love and dedication to the Lord, that I have been given this awesome privilege to serve.

The Father's Love

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God: if we love one another, God lives in us, and His love is perfected in us (I Jn 4:7-12).

The entire Christian faith is based on the spiritual principle that God is love and to truly know Him, we must walk in love. Without love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, not to mention the lost, we cannot know our Heavenly Father, and the opposite is also true. Without love for God, we cannot truly love others. We begin to love others more as we understand the love God Himself has for us. Often, however, due to life's circumstances, the love of God is blocked from us receiving what He has so graciously bestowed upon us. Either by choices we have made, or due to the poor choices of others that have been inflicted upon us, even as a child, blocks or barricades are frequently constructed. Frequently, in the Ministry of Deliverance, there is a barrage of blocks. These blocks must be removed to allow the flow of God and His love into an individual's life. Those who have been abused or ignored by their earthly father frequently cannot receive the fullness of the love of God. There may be a "head knowledge" of His love, but the fullness of His love does not reach the heart. Therefore, those who have blocks cannot experience the fullness of their inheritance as children of the one and only living God. A critical aspect of deliverance ministry is the ability to convey to others the relentless, unwavering love of God, the Father.

Do you know God as your loving Father? The love a person can receive is often filtered through a distorted image of how he or she was loved and accepted by their own earthly father. This relationship often sets the tone for all other relationships one experiences throughout their lifetime. A poor relationship between father and child establishes a precedent. A pattern of rejection, failure,

incompetence, and insignificance takes root. Strong mindsets are formed by years of twisted belief systems that hold people in bondage, making them captive to a faulty way of thinking. These lies of the enemy are played over and over in our minds until they look, sound, and feel like a part of us. Often, we believe it is our own character weaknesses that cause us to behave in certain ways, and sometimes it is. However, there are also spiritual aspects of our makeup that must be addressed in the spirit realm. The answer often lies in intense prayer, but it must first start with foundational truths of who we are as we relate to God, the Father. God, the Father, is perfect in every way. He is the ultimate role model for all earthly fathers to emulate. Our earthly fathers are often weak, broken vessels who are incapable of meeting all of our needs. Thus, we grow up looking for those needs being met in ways that are sometimes destructive, and often out of the plan our Heavenly Father has set up for us and our lives. A father's role is one of creating us, establishing our identity, protecting, guiding and leading us. He is pivotal in the development of who and what we are to become. There is hope. The good news of the Gospel tells us that once we have been redeemed and adopted into a new family, a heavenly family, we can experience the love of the perfect Father. This transformation takes place as we grasp the truth of the scriptures and replace our old way of thinking by putting on the new man in Christ Jesus that we have become through faith in Him. We must simply have a change of mind. It is through the process of renewing the mind by which an individual can put failures of an earthly father behind him, no longer being held hostage to the disappointments that life has had to offer, or the beliefs Satan has thrown his way! First and foremost, it is critical that a decision is made to forgive the biological father for all his shortcomings. In some cases, this may be a very painful road to walk. No matter how heinously one has been treated or abused, God is waiting with loving arms to show Himself and the fullness of His love. Therefore, with a decision of one's will, the change will begin. Take a walk down the path of ancient truths that has long been

established. Set your mind for transformation. Choose to accept the truth and forevermore reject the tormenting voices of the devil!

Once the decision has been made to forgive, the next decision that must be made is to trust. It is very difficult to trust others when there has been a breach in the relationship between father and child. Trust issues stem from broken promises, broken vows, or broken commitments. Recognizing the problem is the first step to rectifying it. Issues of distrust in relationships can stifle, hinder, or stop spiritual growth and development. If distrust has been prevalent in the life of an individual who is seeking healing and deliverance, it may stem from issues of intimacy, or the lack thereof. Intimacy within any relationship requires honesty and self-disclosure. Satan may be whispering in their ear, "You can't trust God, just look at your past, therefore you certainly can't trust people!" Trust is vital to intimacy, and to be intimate with God requires that one trust Him. Decide to trust Him because He is trustworthy. His words are true. He is steadfast and unchanging. People who have had a difficult past frequently find it very difficult to trust, and there is the possibility of fear associated with exposure. From birth, we all share in the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises. Other than these two, all other fears are learned behaviors. Fear of intimacy and fear of others can be overcome, but they require a certain amount of vulnerability. However, vulnerability may seem very threatening. Learning to trust is a process, and there are decisions that must be made to expedite the healing. Once again, simply decide to trust God. He is ready and willing to help with just a simple request. The establishment of healthy relationships is therefore critical. Those relationships that are healthy will exhibit validation of one another. If a relationship is one where validation is absent, it will not be edifying and the potential for distrust may arise.

Frequently, due to past circumstances, those in need of deliverance ministry find it very difficult to trust in God, especially after major setbacks or tragedies in life. Sometimes tragedy will become an impetus for withdrawing from God. Henceforth, of those who experience such difficulties, there will be some who will develop a system of relying solely on self. Underlying dependence on self is the issue of pride, and also an inability to trust the Lord for one's needs, whatever they may be. God requires that His children trust in Him for everything: security, finances, identity, safety, direction, health, and even one's own death. Trust means to make someone a refuge, and the Word tells us that God is our refuge. Self-protection, self-promotion, and self-preservation are acts that speak loudly. They confirm a lack of trust in God. God is trustworthy and so are His precepts. In healthy relationships there is an allowance for differences. Differences do not have to be obstacles in a relationship, they can be building blocks. There are many strengths and weaknesses in the best of relationships and it is important to focus on the strengths. Intimacy offers the understanding that one is valued. They are valued emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and physically in healthy relationships. God offers that value for His children. He establishes them. Our true self image is not determined by the world, the church, and not even our biological family. It is determined by God and God alone. It is established on what He has already said about us in His Word. As an individual determines to trust again, they should start with trusting God and what is written. This is, without a doubt, the biggest hurdle.

It is better to trust in God than put confidence in man (Ps 188:8).

Once a decision has been made to trust, then determine to be your true self. When there has been a breach in the relationship with an earthly father, individuals will quite frequently establish a false identity. They do so because they have not felt loved or accepted. Therefore, as a coping mechanism is birthed, a false identity emerges. False identities or facades can often keep people from the healing process. They are used as ways to protect and disguise the true self, and become a stumbling block in and of themselves. The true self, once uncovered, is the part of an individual where God can, and will, work. It is important as one is learning to uncover the true self, that they be committed to following God, and be connected with those who belong to Him. Connection is essential in the healing process. The local church is a good place to start. Those who project a false image of self must be cautious as they establish connections. It is common to see, in the Ministry of Deliverance, those individuals seeking out others who will feed the false identity, giving credence to it as being acceptable. Thoughtful investigation and clear discernment will alert ministers to the false identity rather quickly as the prayer sessions take place. Those with a false identity should be encouraged to become who the Lord wants them to be, instead of wearing a persona that they have created. Exposure of the true self must take place in a safe environment, and a safe environment is one where the individual feels no judgment, only the truth presented in love.

Facades, or false identities, are in direct opposition to the plans and purposes for which an individual is created. Therefore, those in need of deliverance ministry must ultimately be willing to let go of what is false. False images of self can be found in those who are perfectionists, those who have found identity in their success, or it may be a false identity with things such as sympathy, self-pity, weakness, sickness, or pride. Whatever the facade, it must be broken

down for true healing to take place. False images that are projected are done so as a means of protection, escape, disguise, or self-exaltation. The false self is often found being projected by the individual who has inner turmoil about who they really are. They prefer to be something or someone that they are not and, instead of accepting truth, they create a lie. The lie can become such a stronghold that they themselves begin to believe the lie that they have constructed. Frequently such fabrications are built on the premise of shame. Shame becomes so unbearable that the only option that seems to make sense is to create a "self" that is acceptable, or one that will gain potential benefits. Facades are also built in an effort to live life according to another's blueprint. These blueprints may stem from a desire to conform, or one imposed on another through unreasonable expectations. The false identity must be demolished. False identities hinder the ability to truly receive love. At times, those who function under disguise are doing so as a means of gaining some type of control. These techniques of covering the true self are designed and birthed in fear and thrive in a place of illusion. Therefore, rooted in most false identities are fear, control, and deception. There may be preoccupations of the thought process that engage in one particular aspect of the false image they are trying to display. Moreover, there tends to be a disconnection to those around them, or an extreme need for being overly involved in the lives of others. They may constantly put themselves in places or situations where they do not belong, therefore missing the plans God has for their own life. The destruction of false identities can be accomplished as one looks at the life and actions of Jesus. He came to reveal His Father. He knew His purpose for being created and His whole identity was established on God, the Father. Ours must be too! He did not seek approval of man, direction of man, or recognition of man. He did not submit to their ungodly pressures or demands. He submitted Himself completely to God and refused to be swayed by the circumstances that surrounded Him. He recognized and attributed His strengths and motivations to God alone. As an

individual begins to understand that God has a plan and a purpose for their life, they become more willing to lay down the attempt to cover up who they really are. They gain an understanding that they are truly valued. Many people, even Christians, can have difficulty in believing that they are a treasure to God, just as they are.

Our identities are established by God. Therefore, to veer from the true identity of who we are is to deny His role as Father in our lives. Those who operate in their true identity will have a capacity to love, not in pretense but in reality. Control is not a problem in those who are comfortable with themselves and who God made them to be. Power struggles so often seen in those who operate under the false self-image are not necessary for the individuals who know who they are and where they are going in life because they are focused on God's plan, not one of their own making. The individual who is content in himself acknowledges that he is created, loved and affirmed by God. Therefore, there is no need to seek out the affirmation of those around them. They have the capacity to develop deep relationships with lasting value. There is a connectedness in the spirit and, therefore, there is no need for manipulation and trickery so often seen in those who do not have a true image of self. Authentic image of self is essential to healthy living and those who seek deliverance ministry must start with the willingness to drop all that is false. Wholeness must be grounded in truth. Those with a healthy self-image will make clear statements of beliefs and values. Those with an unhealthy self-image will be wavering in their beliefs, or they will change their beliefs to fit the circumstances, especially if it is to their advantage to change.

FACADE AND FORKED TONGUE

I had prayed with Beverly numerous times. She had been an active member of the pastor's weekly prayer group which met to pray for the church, the staff, and the congregation. She seemed to have a heart for the lost, the broken, and the poor. Beverly was a bit quirky. One might assume she was a remnant of the sixties, a flower child at heart...frumpy attire, unkempt hair, and clogs were typical of her outward appearance. She had an uncanny ability to recall scripture. She often prayed, quoting verse after verse, without even taking a pause for thought. It seemed very natural for her. We had taken a trip together to attend a conference. It was on that trip that I discerned that Beverly was not who she had portrayed herself as being. She had been a longstanding member of this particular church and although most thought she was strange, she had the reputation of being a godly, prayerful woman, who truly loved the Lord. She attended a twelve week study course I had been teaching and seemed very interested in understanding deliverance ministry. She had also volunteered to be an intercessor for my ministry and prayed over each team member and their families weekly. Being new to the city and the church, volunteers were readily welcomed. However, I soon realized I had made a very grave mistake. I thanked her for her willingness to serve and explained that I had acted presumptuously and would no longer be using her in the role of intercessor. She was noticeably distressed and asked me if I would consider beginning prayer sessions for spiritual healing from the pains of her past. I agreed. As I sought the Lord for direction for the first session, He said, "false things, false things, false things!" My prayer partner and I joined in prayer and I explained to Beverly what I had heard in my

spirit. She began to cry. “Everything in my life is false. I hate to pray. I hate my mother. She was never there for me. I hate my husband for not loving me.”

We had a great deal of work to do. Beverly had set up a false life, projecting a false image of herself, and took on a false identity based on what she believed would be acceptable to others. This loving facade, masked as an intercessor, was only used to cover the deep bitterness of her heart. Things got much worse, as her anger began to escalate. I asked her if she really wanted to be healed. Throughout the process, she began to confess her true nature. Beverly was a practicing witch. With the most intense evil on her face, she spewed, “I curse Christians. I curse married couples in the church who look happy. I curse anyone who looks innocent.” I knew when I heard the last statement that I was dealing with a very dangerous scenario. She was very manipulative, but her intentions were well disguised. She had taken on the persona of a little, old, weak woman, and although she was only in her mid-fifties, she had convinced everyone around her that she was totally helpless. My prayer partners and I met with her on several occasions and she went through a process of confession and claimed she would no longer be involved in witchcraft. She confessed that she had tried to kill her baby sister. As the confessions came forth, so did the demons. The *strongman*, we discerned, was a murderous spirit. She had bowed to it even as a child. The hatred she held in her heart toward her mother, her father, and husband acted as food and authority for the spirit to operate and witchcraft was its “out.” Beverly decided to truly give her heart to the Lord, however. My prayer partner then proceeded to cast out the spirit of murder. As it began to manifest, Beverly fell to the ground and literally crawled like a lizard. Her hands became web-shaped as her fingers were pressed tightly together, and slightly curved.

Her tongue moved in a supernatural movement, so fast that it was difficult to see. It looked as if it was a forked tongue like that of a lizard. She foamed at the mouth and there was a foul smell permeating the room, which is not uncommon for someone who has been involved in occult activity. Beverly started to bleed profusely from her nose and her mouth. We then commanded that the spirit come out without harming Beverly or anyone else who was present, in the name of Jesus. After a moment, the bleeding stopped. Beverly was quite shaken, but she knew she had been delivered. We met with the pastor of the church and explained what had happened. Beverly testified that had it not been for that prayer ministry, if she had died, she would have gone to hell. I strongly suggested to the pastor that we delay any more ministry until she had been examined by a physician, a psychiatrist, and we met with her husband to discuss any further ministry. As prayer ministers, we never counsel or diagnose medical or psychological issues, even if it is suspected. These evaluations must be left up to the trained professionals. We focus solely on the spiritual issues. Beverly was later baptized at that particular church, and the pastor then proclaimed her a child of God from the pulpit. Beverly committed to lay aside the pretence of a false identity and be what God had created her to be!

God establishes our identity. God, the Father, creates us, names us, and honors us. Frequently in the Ministry of Deliverance, there is an identity crisis. Those in need of healing have often had a poor relationship with their earthly father. There may have been a situation where the father was not present due to abandonment, divorce, or death. Individuals who cannot see themselves clearly have, almost certainly, suffered some type of estrangement. When this estrangement is revealed, it is critical that they are presented with scripture that pertains to their true identity in Christ. Names are

important and they are often a signal into the parent-child relationship. Throughout scripture God changed the names of His servants in order to point to their intended destiny. A change of names occurred throughout scripture to establish a new identity, to develop a new concept of character that is associated with the name change, to point to destiny, purpose and plan for one's life, or to be conformed to His image. Families offer a sense of identity, security, stability, trust and value, and fathers are to lead the way. Who are you? If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you are a child of God. Mindsets that oppose this truth need to be annulled. Past experiences with earthly parents can no longer define individuals who are seeking wholeness. Past failures cannot be blamed on others, or God, but must be accepted as learning tools for the future. Traumatic situations are a part of life and not the result of punishment from God. The Bible clearly states that it rains on the just and the unjust, therefore, blame and accusations are counterproductive. Also, mindsets which insist that God cannot love each and every one the same are spiritually unhealthy. Man cannot understand the depths of the love of God, but we can understand that He loves all of mankind, both sinners and saints, the same. We know that this is true because He died for us while we were yet sinners.

There is a healthy and unhealthy fear of God. Fear of God, as in being afraid of Him, is a hindrance that must be removed as one accepts their new identity in Christ Jesus. One must, however, stand in awe of His greatness and desire to please Him, understanding that it is His nature to be a just God. This is a healthy fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. Teachings which instill fear or terror, instead of love and grace, are clearly out of balance and can block the love of God from being received. Such stumbling blocks hinder individuals from receiving the love of God. Poor parenting, as well as experiences with authority figures, pastors, or elders who

have openly and blatantly used their position as a means of control or manipulation, can also be a stumbling block. Identify and place all these hindrances that have blocked you from receiving the love of God in their rightful place, at the foot of the Cross. God is so gracious and loving and He is well aware of bad experiences and situations. Ask Him to remove the blocks and barricades that have been a part of your past, open your heart to receive, and trust God to restore the godly image you've been given as part of your covenant promise.

Your Personal Notes:

WHERE DO I FIT IN?

As a tool of introspection, ask yourself these questions. Do you trust God? Does God like you? Do you feel polluted, corrupt, or unclean in the sight of God? Is God concerned with the small issues in your life? Does He know your thoughts, your desires, and your wishes? Have you been let down by God? Where and when? Do you wonder where God was when you were hurt, abused or rejected? He was right there! He sees all, knows all, and is all-powerful. Moreover, it is important to understand that He has structured life in such a way that spiritual authority within any structure is there for protection. He has given man free will and spiritual responsibility. When that authority or responsibility has been compromised, protection is no longer in place and an avenue for attacks of the devil opens. Many bad experiences occur due to the free will of man, and they will not be overridden by God. Countless detrimental circumstances can be identified as being the result of sin at the leadership level. Fathers who are out of the will of God cannot protect, guide, or lead their families properly, and they become easy prey for the enemy. A family offers a safe place to obtain a sense of who you are and gives a sense of achievement which is found through obedience, responsibility, and success or competence. Often in the dysfunctional family structure, low self-esteem arises. Low self-esteem is another type of false self, and it often results in a sinful lifestyle. Attempts to gain love are often provided by Satan with images that mimic real love, but have nothing at all to do with love. Pornography, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, molestation, and incest are Satan's tools to mimic what he will never be able to provide: true

love. Low self-esteem results in being undervalued. Individuals who are ignored, nagged, or belittled may fight issues of low self-esteem. Those who have been under-nurtured as a child will frequently show symptoms of low self-esteem. Low self-esteem is, quite simply, another false image of self, and it must be dealt with as such. Patience, love, and truth are essential elements in the healing process. Often, those who suffer with low self-esteem are overly focused on self. They also tend to think in the negative. They likely will exhibit insecure tendencies. Those with healthy self-concepts are those who grow up in an environment where they have been appreciated, disciplined, and valued. They have a voice and it is allowed to speak freely without fear of reprimand. Low self-esteem is changed by renewing the mind according to the Word of God.

Those who suffer with false identities frequently have difficulties establishing proper boundaries in their life. They will be the individuals who cross boundaries without seemingly being aware of what they did. Ideals, morals and boundaries help individuals with such issues set clear cut guidelines as to what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Ideals and morals will shape the future; therefore, it is absolutely essential to spend time in the Bible and with the Heavenly Father. Open communication is also essential as individuals are going through the healing process. As one heals from the false sense of self there are some givens. No one but Jesus is perfect and free of making mistakes. Therefore, giving some leeway is important as one ventures into healing. We are all products of a sinful world. We are all born into sin. We often use what we see modeled, unless there has been some spiritual intervention. Divine influence will bring about change. We all operate out of our own pain and wounds, thus, we often inflict them on those around us. We all fall short of being the perfect anything: mother, father, daughter, brother, or friend. Therefore, we should have a willingness of heart

to extend grace where grace is needed. Failure to acknowledge the power or the grace of God will keep individuals in the same place, stifling growth and spiritual advancement. God is, inevitably, the only one who can meet our needs. He meets our physical needs, our emotional needs, and our spiritual needs when we are in right relationship with Him. He offers a promise of stability.

Your Personal Notes:

SELF IMPOSED IMAGE

Our self-worth and self-image should reflect God in us. He and His Son, Jesus Christ, are the perfect role models. Through their relationship, God shows us the importance of father-child relationships. The grace He has extended to us, we must extend to others. Healing of false identities occurs when we first go to God, and then we remember who we are in Him. Ask God to help you change. Rely on the Christian community for guidance and relationships, and enjoy life and fellowship with God and with His servants in honesty and trust. Jesus came to restore the broken relationship between God and man. He came to bridge the gap, to light the path, and to remove every obstacle that stands in the way of close communication with our Father. As one begins on the road to healing, they may receive a name change. Let that name change come from God, and erase any self-imposed names or false identities! Gideon's name was changed to Jerubbaal, which meant "let Baal contend with him" because he pulled down the altars of Baal. Abram's name was changed to Abraham, meaning "the father of many nations." Sari was changed to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, Saul to Paul, Simon to Peter, just to name a few. However, there is an example in scripture where someone changed their own name. Let's look at the story of Ruth, whose mother-in-law, Naomi, took on a false identity and gave herself a new name.

The story of Ruth is a story of grace and glory. It gives us a picture of love that is found within the family structure. It displays an image of the circle of fellowship found amongst the people of God. Ruth

was written during the period of Judges, possibly between 1350 BC—1100 BC. The land of Judah was in a time of spiritual confusion, compromise, and apostasy. This story, as are so many stories of the Bible, is rich in figurative images and prophetic implications. It foreshadows the marriage of the Lamb of God to His Bride, the Church. There is, however, another message for us today that pertain to God's sufficiency, His grace, His mercy, and our ability to see Him at work in the midst of a trial. It is also reflective of the attitudes we are to display toward others who are also part of the family of God. What starts out to be a story of pain, loss, famine, death and despair, quickly becomes a story of protection, provision, redemption, and restoration. The characters are exemplary in portraying the depth of loyalty, commitment, and servant hood that should mirror the life and walk of every dedicated Christian. The story of Ruth begins in Bethlehem. The land was in the midst of famine. Elimelech, whose name means "God is King," was the husband of Naomi and son of the harlot, Rehab. Naomi, whose name means "pleasant, delightful, and lovely" and Elimelech, along with their two sons, left Judah and moved to the land of Moab. Naomi experienced great loss there. She lost both her husband and her sons to illness. She then decided to leave Moab and return to her homeland. Upon reaching this conclusion, Naomi told her daughters-in-law and graciously released them from all obligations to stay and care for her. She requested that they return to their homes in an attempt to rebuild their lives. The daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, wept bitterly. Orpah kissed Naomi goodbye, but Ruth desperately clung to Naomi and solemnly stated:

"Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die---there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and

so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you” (Ru 1:16-17)!

Naomi had graciously canceled all obligations to past ties. Grace, release, and freedom occurred, but Ruth, because of her devout love for Naomi, stayed with her and refused to return home. Ruth displayed loyalty to the relationship over personal advantage. In this one verse we hear the sound of the family of faith, the fellowship of believers, and we see the picture of the unified Body of Christ. Let's look at Naomi's response, however, when they enter her homeland of Bethlehem. Naomi overlooked God's grace. She saw her situation through a distorted image, an image of lack when God had provided her with a companion of love. So much so that she even changed her name to declare her overwhelming emotions and twisted self-imposed identity.

So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, “Is this Naomi? She said to them, “Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty; why call me Naomi when the Lord has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me (Ru 1:19-21)!

Notice the nature of her words. They were bitter. They were harsh and empty. Naomi chose to operate under a false identity. She took on the very image of her feelings, and renamed herself Mara, meaning “the Lord has dealt bitterly.” Wallowing in self-pity and emptiness, she gave herself a new name. It was not given to her by

God. It was a self-imposed false identity that left her bitter and resentful toward God. Naomi chose to not see the grace which God provided in a faithful daughter-in-law who vowed to stay with her unto death! What has God provided for you that you might be overlooking? Are you overlooking His grace? In her vulnerability, Naomi chose to blame God for all the misfortunes in her life. We cannot overlook that misfortunes are a part of life. They can be caused by the fallen nature of man which introduced sin and sickness into the world, but they are also caused by decisions to be disobedient, selfish and fleshly. Additionally, they can be caused by the devil. Each of these causes brings destruction and chaos. God is not man's opponent, or an adversary, but his Deliverer! Not only did Naomi fail to see the grace of God in the midst of her trials, she blamed the Lord for her loss. As you take a mental inventory of your life, be sure to not blame God for misfortunes that you may have experienced. The root of bitterness can grow and the Word of God says it will defile many. God is not your adversary, but He is your Savior and Redeemer. The Apostle Paul teaches us the proper attitude we are to have in times of distress, difficulty and weakness. After pleading before the Lord for him to remove the thorn in his flesh, he learned that the proper attitude is critical. His thorn was a means of relying on the divine strength of God instead of his own strength. It was an instrument used to keep him humble. His thorn was a tool the Lord used to teach him to find comfort in the midst of pain. Paul refused to walk in an attitude of defeat, but chose to rejoice in his very weakness. He understood God's grace.

Grace is unmerited favor, undeserved blessing, a free gift, and it stems from the root word meaning "to rejoice." Paul found grace in his weakness and infirmity, and Ruth found grace in her lack as she was soon to be blessed with a man who would tenderly care for her! Naomi, now in Bethlehem, encouraged Ruth to go to "glean the

fields.” There she would find Boaz. Gleaning was a method whereby farmers would leave the corners of their plots to be harvested by the poor for food. There, Ruth found favor in the sight of a wealthy land owner who was of the family of Elimelech. It was the custom of the day for the closest relative to redeem possession of land and the wife from one who had died. There was one man who was in line before Boaz, but he forfeited his rights and allowed Boaz to take Ruth as his wife, and redeem her father-in-law’s land. Grace, the favor of God, had been extended. Merciful and compassionately, He had rewarded her for her devotion and love. She had been redeemed, bought back with a price. This is the cry of the Father for the Church today: conviction, repentance, and sanctification. He provides grace to bring us to a point of conviction, grace to bring us to true repentance, and grace to refine us in the process of sanctification. Where do we find the grace of God? We are saved by grace. We are kept by grace. We abound or flourish in grace, and we are refined because of it! It is in this place where we will ultimately find our true identity.

We declare the things we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ - (Jn 1:3).

FAMILY OF FELLOWSHIP

Boaz is to Ruth as Christ is to the Church. He is our kinsman, our redeemer, and the life-giver. He is the nourisher of our old age. He provides protection, provision, redemption and restoration. Ruth is a prophetic picture of the Church. Her name means “friend” just as Jesus said “I now call you friend.” She was the harvester in the field, just as the church is supposed to also be and do. She was a humble gleaner, obedient, quick to obey. There was a birth that took place in this union. The Book of Ruth is sometimes referred to as “The Crown Jewel of the Old Testament” because it is the root of the genealogy of Christ, our King. Bethlehem, the City of Bread, where the two became one, is the birthplace of the Messiah. The story took place at the beginning of barley season, which was the time of reaping, and foreshadowed the upcoming birth of Jesus Christ and the Church. Naomi is a picture of the Holy Spirit, gracious and tender, as He provides guidance toward the Lord, gently leading us to our accomplished purpose. Understanding that we all belong to this family of faith, the fellowship of believers, we are joined together as the unified Body of Christ. Truly, here are your brothers, your sisters, and your mothers! Embrace the fellowship of believers with which He has surrounded you. God has provided a circle of fellowship and all you have to do is simply join in. Jesus said:

And He replied, “who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (Mk 3:33-35).

The Lord called us before we were born. He gave us names. He bestowed on us a title of honor and redeemed us from darkness. He embraced us as part of the family of God if only we would believe. That may be hard to grasp in our finite mental capability, however, we have it recorded within the written Covenant that God has done these things for us. God, the Father, teaches us, protects us, and guides us. The Bible explicitly tells us that God will be our teacher. Not only that, but He will also guide us in the way to go. His way is perfect and he is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. He promises to counsel us, and to deliver us in the time of trouble or danger. These promises are promises we can trust. Individuals who have sought for a leader in their life have one. This is God Himself who will lead. Such communication requires listening. God speaks, we must obey. He promises to satisfy our needs in parched places, and protect those who know His name. God, the Father, disciplines us also. He has made it apparently clear that He reserves the right to correct those He loves. He will not ignore sin. He brings us to a place of repentance and change. Change will occur in the lives of those who love God.

“My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts” (Heb 12:5-6).

God, the Father, hears His children and answers them. He has promises in His Word that if we ask Him in His name, with correct motives, He will give to us the very things we request. It is His will that our joy be made complete in this way. He gave us the task of bearing fruit. Just as a good Father should, He has laid out

responsibilities that His children are to fulfill. He declares in His Word that those who are His will hear His voice. Rebellion blocks hearing. Lack of hearing is not because of God, it is because of our own shortcomings. However, God speaks to His servants. He did yesterday, today, and forever. Most importantly, as promised in the Davidic Covenant, God, the Father, will always love us. He will never leave us or forsake us. His love for us has been established in the heavenlies and it is firmly written. We must all forgive the shortcomings of our earthly father so that we may come into the fullness of knowing our heavenly Father!

Do you carry feelings of resentment or bitterness toward your earthly father? Do you feel you have received feelings of unworthiness because of your relationship with your father? Do you feel emotions arise when you discuss your father or your relationship with him? Do you feel that your childhood was in some way stolen from you? If you said yes to any of these questions, then remember, there is hope for you. You are well on the road to recovery. Jesus Christ came to this earth and taught us that there is no relationship more important than the relationship with God, the Father. If you have not known Him as Father, stop and ask Him now to become Father in your life. Ask Him to make the love of the heavenly Father so real to you that you will actually see Him as your real father, and your earthly father as an imperfect, fallible man who is to be honored and forgiven. God, the Father, is now your eternal Father who cares for you and loves you. He will be your protector, your shield and your guide. He will be your refuge, and your disciplinarian. He will give you a new image, one that reflects Himself, and in that He will bestow you with honor. Accept Him now as Father, and receive the fullness of His immeasurable love. Recognize the work of the Cross, the power of the Holy Spirit to change and forgive. Decide to put your confidence in God alone, not in man, and not in flesh. Pray for

release from generational patterns and ask Jesus to heal any painful memories. He may not take them away, but he will remove the sting of pain. Ask Jesus Christ to restore the image of God, the Father.

The Ministry of Deliverance will invariably involve the process of healing in areas of brokenness as it pertains to father-child relationships. Emotions often run deep as this issue is addressed, and it is of the utmost importance to handle such topics with great love and compassion. Characteristically, it is often looked at by the receiver as a done deal, a finished thing. But, as the Lord leads, one may uncover pains and hurts that stem from fractured relationships that are paramount to all other forms of healing through which an individual desires to walk. It is at the point of complete honesty and confession that healing will occur. In saying this, every prayer minister must be willing to allow the receiver the option of not dealing with the issue if they so choose, as is the case with every issue addressed in prayer. It is only to the extent of willingness on the part of the receiver that freedom will come. God Himself will only move under the free will of an individual and will never force or impose Himself on anyone, and prayer ministers must be of the same mind. As an individual starts the transformation process of accepting God in the role of Father, then the love for others will consistently increase. The walls or barricades that have blocked the receiving of God's love will be torn down and a stronghold of godly love will take that place, and those spirits who have held on to hurts and unforgiveness will be forced to leave with a simple command, "Go, in the name of Jesus!" Loving others will result in action and deed. One's prayer life will take on a new dimension as well. Rejoice in this, that God, the Father, is eternally your Father!

The Study

THE FATHER'S LOVE

The entire Christian faith is based on the spiritual principle that God is love and to truly know him, we must walk in love. Without love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, not to mention the lost, we cannot know our Heavenly Father. Therefore, we cannot experience the fullness of our inheritance as children of the one and only living God. We will look at the issues that will block the love of God from being received. *Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows Gods (1 Jn 4:7)*

Topics of Study

The Love of the Father
Distortion
False Identities
Family of Fellowship

Foundational Principles

God, the Father, is perfect in every way.
God is the ultimate role model for all earthly fathers to emulate.
Without love for God, we cannot truly love others or receive love.
Adoption into the family of God is the path to wholeness.
Often, due to life's circumstances, the love of God is blocked from us receiving what He has so graciously bestowed upon us. These blocks must be removed to allow the flow of God and His love into an individual's life. The love a person can receive is often filtered through a distorted image of how he or she was loved and accepted by their own earthly father. This

Reasons for Blocks

- How a child is loved by their earthly father
- Difficult life circumstances early in life
- Abandonment from either parent
- Dysfunctional family structure
- Abuse

The Father's Love

relationship often sets the tone for all other relationships one experiences throughout their lifetime. Those who have been abused or ignored by their earthly father frequently cannot receive the fullness of the love of God.

Do you know God as your loving Father? _____

The love a person can receive is often filtered through a distorted image of how he or she was loved and accepted by their own earthly father. This relationship often sets the tone for all other relationships one experiences throughout their lifetime.

- A poor relationship between father and child establishes a precedent.
- A pattern of rejection, failure, incompetence, and insignificance takes root.
- Strong mindsets are formed by years of twisted belief systems that hold people in bondage, making them captive to a faulty way of thinking. These lies of the enemy are played over and over in our minds until they look, sound, and feel like a part of us.
- Often, we believe it is our own character weaknesses that cause us to behave in certain ways, and sometimes it is. However, there are also spiritual aspects of our makeup that must be addressed in the spirit realm.

The Answer often lies in intense prayer, but it must first start with foundational truths of who we are as we relate to God, the Father. Our earthly fathers are often weak, broken vessels who are incapable of meeting all of our needs. Thus, we grow up looking for those needs being met in ways that are sometimes destructive, and often out of the plan our Heavenly Father has set up for us and our lives.

The Father's Role: He is pivotal in the development of who and what we are to become.

- Creating us
- Establishing our identity
- Protecting us
- Guiding us
- Leading us
- Valuing us

What does the term “adoption” mean as it relates to the Gospel?

The good news of the Gospel tells us that once we have been redeemed and adopted into a new family, a heavenly family, we can experience the love of the perfect Father. This transformation takes place as we grasp the truth of the scriptures and replace our old way of thinking by putting on the new man in Christ Jesus that we have become through faith in Him. We must simply have a change of mind. It is through the process of renewing the mind by which an individual can put failures of an earthly father behind him, no longer being held hostage to the disappointments that life has had to offer, or the beliefs Satan has thrown his way!

Is Forgiveness a feeling or a choice?

Forgive: It is critical that a decision is made to forgive the biological father for all his shortcomings. In some cases, this may be a very painful road to walk. No matter how heinous one has been treated or abused, God is waiting with loving arms to show Himself and the fullness of His love. Therefore, with a decision of one’s will, the change will begin. Take a walk down the path of ancient truths that has long been established. Set your mind for transformation. Choose to accept the truth and forevermore reject the tormenting voices of the devil!

Why is it sometimes difficult to trust?

How do you overcome these difficulties?

Trust: Trust is vital to intimacy, and to be intimate with God requires that one trust Him. Decide to trust Him because He is trustworthy. Stand on His word. His words are true. He is steadfast and unchanging. People who have had a difficult past frequently find it very difficult to trust, and there is the possibility of fear associated with exposure.

Have you ever experienced a tragic situation which left you open and vulnerable? _____

Tragedy: Frequently, due to past circumstances, those in need of deliverance ministry find it very difficult to trust in God, especially after major setbacks or tragedies in life. Sometimes tragedy will become an impetus for withdrawing from God. Henceforth, of those who experience such difficulties, there will be some who will develop a system of relying solely on self. Underlying dependence on self is the issue of pride, and also an inability to trust the Lord for one's needs, whatever they may be. God requires that His children trust in Him for everything: security, finances, identity, safety, direction, health, and even one's own death. Trust means to make someone a refuge, and the Word tells us that God is our refuge. **Do you struggle with one of the areas below?**

Self-protection-----Self-promotion-----Self-preservation

These are acts that speak loudly. They confirm a lack of trust in God. God is trustworthy and so are His precepts. In healthy relationships there is an allowance for differences. Differences do not have to be obstacles in a relationship; they can be building blocks. There are many strengths and weaknesses in the best of relationships and it is important to focus on the strengths. Intimacy offers the understanding that one is valued. They are valued emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and physically in healthy relationships. God offers that value for His children. He establishes them. Our true self-image is not determined by the world, the church, and not even our biological family. It is determined by God and God alone. It is established on what He has already said about us in His Word. As an individual determines to trust again, they should start with trusting God and what is written. This is, without a doubt, the biggest hurdle. *It is better to trust in God than put confidence in man (Ps 188:8).*

Who are you according to the word of God?

Your True Self: Once a decision has been made to trust, then determine to be your true self. When there has been a breach in the relationship with an earthly father, individuals will quite frequently establish a false identity. They do so because they have not felt loved or accepted. Therefore, as a coping

mechanism is birthed, a false identity emerges. False identities or facades can often keep people from the healing process. They are used as ways to protect and disguise the true self, and become a stumbling block in and of themselves. The true self, once uncovered, is the part of an individual where God can, and will, work. It is important as one is learning to uncover the true self, that they be committed to following God, and be connected with those who belong to Him.

False Identities: Facades, or false identities, are in direct opposition to the plans and purposes for which an individual is created. Therefore, those in need of deliverance ministry must ultimately be willing to let go of what is false. False images of self can be found in those who are perfectionists, those who have found identity in their success, or it may be a false identity with things such as sympathy, self-pity, weakness, sickness, or pride. Whatever the facade, it must be broken down for true healing to take place. False images that are projected are done so as a means of protection, escape, disguise, or self-exaltation. The false self is often found being projected by the individual who has inner turmoil about who they really are. They prefer to be something or someone that they are not and, instead of accepting truth, they create a lie.

Strongholds of Lies: The lie can become such a stronghold that they themselves begin to believe the lie that they have constructed. Frequently such fabrications are built on the premise of shame. Shame becomes so unbearable that the only option that seems to make sense is to create a “self” that is acceptable, or one that will gain potential benefits.

Blueprints: Facades are also built in an effort to live life according to another’s blueprint. These blueprints may stem from a desire to conform, or one imposed on another through unreasonable expectations. The false identity must be demolished. False identities hinder the ability to truly receive love. At times, those who function under disguise are doing so as a means of gaining some type of control. These techniques of covering the true self are designed and birthed in fear and thrive in a place of illusion.

Have you experienced a time when you had no control and felt you were in danger?

Roots of False Identities: Rooted in most false identities are fear, control, and deception. There may be preoccupations of the thought process that engage in one particular aspect of the false image they are trying to display. Moreover, there tends to be a disconnection to those around them, or an extreme need for being overly involved in the lives of others. They may constantly put themselves in places or situations where they do not belong; therefore missing the plans God has for their own life.

The destruction of false identities can be accomplished as one looks at the life and actions of Jesus. He came to reveal His Father. He knew His purpose for being created and His whole identity was established on God, the Father. Ours must be too! He did not seek approval of man, direction of man, or recognition of man. He did not submit to their ungodly pressures or demands. He submitted Himself completely to God and refused to be swayed by the circumstances that surrounded Him. He recognized and attributed His strengths and motivations to God alone. As an individual begins to understand that God has a plan and a purpose for their life, they become more willing to lay down the attempt to cover up who they really are. They gain an understanding that they are truly valued. Many people, even Christians, can have difficulty in believing that they are a treasure to God, just as they are.

God-established identities offer:

- Capacity to love and be loved
- Confidence in who you are
- No need for power struggles
- No need for manipulation or trickery
- No need to be pretentious

- God establishes our identity.
- God, the Father, creates us, names us, and honors us.
- God gives us the ability to love ourselves.
- God frees us from the need for others affirmation and people pleasing.

Authentic image of self is essential to healthy living and those who seek deliverance ministry must start with the willingness to drop all that is false. Wholeness must be grounded in truth. Those with a healthy self-image will

make clear statements of beliefs and values. Those with an unhealthy self-image will be wavering in their beliefs, or they will change their beliefs to fit the circumstances, especially if it is to their advantage to change. Frequently in the Ministry of Deliverance, there is an identity crisis. Those in need of healing have often had a poor relationship with their earthly father. There may have been a situation where the father was not present due to abandonment, divorce, or death. Individuals who cannot see themselves clearly have, almost certainly, suffered some type of estrangement. When this estrangement is revealed, it is critical that they are presented with scripture that pertains to their true identity in Christ. Names are important and they are often a signal into the parent-child relationship.

A New Name: A change of names occurred throughout scripture to establish a new identity, to develop a new concept of character that is associated with the name change, to point to destiny, purpose and plan for one's life, or to be conformed to His image. Throughout scripture God changed the names of His servants in order to point to their intended destiny. Families offer a sense of identity, security, stability, trust and value, and fathers are to lead the way.

- Points you toward your destiny
- Offers you direction and purpose
- Offers a sense of identity and security
- Offers a sense of trust and value

What does your name represent to you?

If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you are a child of God. Mindsets that oppose this truth need to be annulled. You have a new Father, a perfect Father, a loving Father. Past experiences with earthly parents can no longer define individuals who are seeking wholeness. Past failures cannot be blamed on others, or God, but must be accepted as learning tools for the future. Traumatic situations are a part of life and not the result of punishment from God. The Bible clearly states that it rains on the just and the unjust, therefore, blame and accusations are counterproductive. Also, mindsets, which insist that God cannot love each and every one the same, are

spiritually unhealthy. Man cannot understand the depths of the love of God, but we can understand that He loves all of mankind, both sinners and saints, the same. We know that this is true because He died for us while we were yet sinners.

What does it actually mean to fear God?

Do you fear God and in what way?

- There is a healthy and unhealthy fear of God.
- Fear of God, as in being afraid of Him, is a hindrance that must be removed as one accepts their new identity in Christ Jesus.
- A healthy fear of God means to stand in awe of His greatness and desire to please Him, understanding that it is His nature to be a just God.
- The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom.

Teachings, which instill fear or terror, instead of love and grace, are clearly out of balance and can block the love of God from being received. Such stumbling blocks hinder individuals from receiving the love of God. Poor parenting, as well as experiences with authority figures, pastors, or elders who have openly and blatantly used their position as a means of control or manipulation, can also be a stumbling block. Identify and place all these hindrances that have blocked you from receiving the love of God in their rightful place, at the foot of the Cross. God is so gracious and loving and He is well aware of bad experiences and situations. Ask Him to remove the blocks and barricades that have been a part of your past, open your heart to receive, and trust God to restore the godly image you've been given as part of your covenant promise.

As a tool of introspection, ask yourself these questions:

Identify your blocks

Where do you fit in?

Do you trust God? Does God like you?

Do you feel polluted, corrupt, or unclean in the sight of God?

Is God concerned with the small issues in your life?

Does He know your thoughts, your desires, and your wishes?

Have you been let down by God? Where and when?

Do you wonder where God was when you were hurt, abused or rejected?

God, the Father: He was right there! He sees all, knows all, and is all-powerful. Moreover, it is important to understand that He has structured life in such a way that spiritual authority within any structure is there for protection. He has given man free will and spiritual responsibility. When that authority or responsibility has been compromised, protection is no longer in place and an avenue for attacks of the devil opens. Many bad experiences occur due to the free will of man, and God will not override them. Countless detrimental circumstances can be identified as being the result of sin at the leadership level. Fathers who are out of the will of God cannot protect, guide, or lead their families properly, and they become easy prey for the enemy.

Low Self-esteem: A family offers a safe place to obtain a sense of who you are and gives a sense of achievement, which is found through obedience, responsibility, and success or competence. Often in the dysfunctional family structure, low self-esteem arises.

The Father's Love

- Overly focused on self
- Another type of false self
- Results in a sinful lifestyle
- Attempts to gain love in an ungodly lifestyle
- Results from being undervalued.
- Results from being ignored, nagged, or belittled.
- Results from being under-nurtured as a child
- Tend to think in the negative
- Will exhibit insecure tendencies
- Have difficulties establishing proper boundaries in their life.

The Answer

- The Word of God
- Prayer
- Renewing the Mind
- Discipline and obedience to the word of God

Ideals and morals will shape the future; therefore, it is absolutely essential to spend time in the Bible and with the Heavenly Father. Open communication is also essential as individuals are going through the healing process. As one heals from the false sense of self there are some givens. No one but Jesus is perfect and free of making mistakes. Therefore, giving some leeway is important as one ventures into healing.

Acknowledge: We are all products of a sinful world. We are all born into sin. We often use what we see modeled, unless there has been some spiritual intervention. Divine influence will bring about change. We all operate out of our own pain and wounds, thus, we often inflict them on those around us. We all fall short of being the perfect anything: mother, father, daughter, brother, or friend. Therefore, we should have a willingness of heart to extend grace where grace is needed. Failure to acknowledge the power or the grace of God will keep individuals in the same place, stifling growth and spiritual advancement. God is, inevitably, the only one who can meet our needs. He meets our physical needs, our emotional needs, and our spiritual needs when we are in right relationship with Him. He offers a promise of stability.

Self-Imposed Image: Let that name change come from God, and erase any self-imposed names or false identities! Our self-worth and self-image should reflect God in us. He and His Son, Jesus Christ, are the perfect role models.

Through their relationship, God shows us the importance of father-child relationships. The grace He has extended to us, we must extend to others. Healing of false identities occurs when we first go to God, and then we remember who we are in Him.

Ask God to help you change: Rely on the Christian community for guidance and relationships, and enjoy life and fellowship with God and with His servants in honesty and trust. Jesus came to restore the broken relationship between God and man. He came to bridge the gap, to light the path, and to remove every obstacle that stands in the way of close communication with our Father. As one begins on the road to healing, they may receive a name change.

Name Changes: Gideon's name was changed to Jerubbaal, which meant "let Baal contend with him" because he pulled down the altars of Baal. Abram's name was changed to Abraham, meaning "the father of many nations." Sari was changed to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, Saul to Paul, and Simon to Peter, just to name a few. However, there is an example in scripture where someone changed their own name. Let's look at the story of Ruth, whose mother-in-law, Naomi, took on a false identity and gave herself a new name. Ask God to give you a new name.

The story of Ruth is a story of grace and glory. It gives us a picture of love that is found within the family structure. It displays an image of the circle of fellowship found amongst the people of God. Ruth was written during the period of Judges, possibly between 1350 BC—1100 BC. The land of Judah was in a time of spiritual confusion, compromise, and apostasy. This story, as are so many stories of the Bible, is rich in figurative images and prophetic implications. It foreshadows the marriage of the Lamb of God to His Bride, the Church. There is, however, another message for us today that pertain to God's sufficiency, His grace, His mercy, and our ability to see Him at work in the midst of a trial. It is also reflective of the attitudes we are to display toward others who are also part of the family of God. What starts out to be a story of pain, loss, famine, death and despair, quickly becomes a story of protection, provision, redemption, and restoration. The characters are exemplary in portraying the depth of loyalty, commitment, and servant hood that should mirror the life and walk of every dedicated Christian. However Naomi took on a self-imposed image.

The Father's Love

So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi? She said to them, "Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty; why call me Naomi when the Lord has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me (Ru 1:19-21)!"

Self-Imposed Images: Naomi chose to operate under a false identity. She took on the very image of her feelings, and renamed herself Mara, meaning "the Lord has dealt bitterly." Notice the nature of her words. They were bitter. They were harsh and empty. Wallowing in self-pity and emptiness, she gave herself a new name. God had not given that name to her. It was a self-imposed false identity that left her bitter and resentful toward God. Naomi chose to not see the grace, which God provided in a faithful daughter-in-law who vowed to stay with her unto death!

Have you taken on a self-imposed image?

What has God provided for you that you might be overlooking?

Are you overlooking His grace?

In her vulnerability, Naomi chose to blame God for all the misfortunes in her life. We cannot overlook that misfortunes are a part of life. They can be caused by the fallen nature of man, which introduced sin and sickness into the world, but they are also caused by decisions to be disobedient, selfish and fleshly. Additionally, they can be caused by the devil. Each of these causes brings destruction and chaos. God is not man's opponent, or an adversary, but his Deliverer! Not only did Naomi fail to see the grace of God in the midst of her trials, she blamed the Lord for her loss. As you take a mental inventory of your life, be sure to not blame God for misfortunes that you may have experienced.

The root of bitterness can grow and the Word of God says it will defile many. God is not your adversary, but He is your Savior and Redeemer. The

Apostle Paul teaches us the proper attitude we are to have in times of distress, difficulty and weakness. After pleading before the Lord for him to remove the thorn in his flesh, he learned that the proper attitude is critical. His thorn was a means of relying on the divine strength of God instead of his own strength. It was an instrument used to keep him humble. His thorn was a tool the Lord used to teach him to find comfort in the midst of pain. Paul refused to walk in an attitude of defeat, but chose to rejoice in his very weakness. He understood God's grace.

Grace is unmerited favor, undeserved blessing, a free gift, and it stems from the root word meaning "to rejoice." Paul found grace in his weakness and infirmity, and Ruth found grace in her lack as she was soon to be blessed with a man who would tenderly care for her! Grace, the favor of God, had been extended. Merciful and compassionately, He had rewarded her for her devotion and love. She had been redeemed, bought back with a price. This is the cry of the Father for the Church today: conviction, repentance, and sanctification. He provides grace to bring us to a point of conviction, grace to bring us to true repentance, and grace to refine us in the process of sanctification.

Where do we find the grace of God?

- We are saved by grace.
- We are kept by grace.
- We abound or flourish in grace.
- We are refined because of it.
- We simply receive it by faith.
- We will find our true identity.

Commit to memory: *We declare the things we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1Jn 1:3).*

Family of Fellowship: Understanding that we all belong to this family of faith, the fellowship of believers, we are joined together as the unified Body of Christ. Truly, here are your brothers, your sisters, and your mothers! Embrace the fellowship of believers with which He has surrounded you. God has provided a circle of fellowship and all you have to do is simply join in

The Father's Love

- **Boaz** is to Ruth as Christ is to the Church. He is our kinsman, our redeemer, and the life-giver. He is the nourisher of our old age. He provides protection, provision, redemption and restoration.
- **Ruth** is a prophetic picture of the Church. Her name means “friend” just as Jesus said “I now call you friend.” She was the harvester in the field, just as the church is supposed to also be and do. She was a humble gleaner, obedient, quick to obey. There was a birth that took place in this union.
- **The Book of Ruth** is sometimes referred to as “The Crown Jewel of the Old Testament” because it is the root of the genealogy of Christ, our King. Bethlehem, the City of Bread, where the two became one, is the birthplace of the Messiah. The story took place at the beginning of barley season, which was the time of reaping, and foreshadowed the upcoming birth of Jesus Christ and the Church.
- **Naomi** is a picture of the Holy Spirit, gracious and tender, as He provides guidance toward the Lord, gently leading us to our accomplished purpose.

Jesus said: *And He replied, “who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (Mk 3:33-35).*

- The Lord called us before we were born.
- He gave us names.
- He bestowed on us a title of honor and redeemed us from darkness.
- He embraced us as part of the family of God if only we would believe.
- He teaches us, protects us, and guides us.
- His ways are perfect.
- He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.
- He promises to counsel us, and to deliver us in the time of trouble or danger.

Promises: These promises are promises we can trust. Individuals who have sought for a leader in their life have one. This is God Himself who will lead. Such communication requires listening. God speaks, we must obey. He

promises to satisfy our needs in parched places, and protect those who know His name. God, the Father, disciplines us also. He has made it apparently clear that He reserves the right to correct those He loves. He will not ignore sin. He brings us to a place of repentance and change. Change will occur in the lives of those who love God.

“My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts” (Heb 12:5-6).

God, the Father hears His children and answers them. He has promises in His Word that if we ask Him in His name, with correct motives, He will give to us the very things we request. It is His will that our joy be made complete in this way. He gave us the task of bearing fruit. Just as a good Father should, He has laid out responsibilities that His children are to fulfill. He declares in His Word that those who are His will hear His voice. Rebellion blocks hearing. Lack of hearing is not because of God, it is because of our own shortcomings. However, God speaks to His servants. He did yesterday, today, and forever.

Can you hear the voice of the Lord?

Do you carry feelings of resentment or bitterness toward your earthly father? _____

Do you struggle with feelings of unworthiness because of your relationship with your father?

Do you feel emotions arise when you discuss your father or your relationship with him?

Do you feel that your childhood was in some way stolen from you? _____

The Father's Love

If you said yes to any of these questions, then remember, there is hope for you. You are well on the road to recovery. Jesus Christ came to this earth and taught us that there is no relationship more important than the relationship with God, the Father. If you have not known Him as Father, stop and ask Him now to become Father in your life.

- **Ask Him** to make the love of the heavenly Father so real to you that you will actually see Him as your real father, and your earthly father as an imperfect, fallible man who is to be honored and forgiven.
- **Accept Him** now as Father, and receive the fullness of His immeasurable love.
- **Recognize** the work of the Cross-, the power of the Holy Spirit to change and forgive.
- **Decide** to put your confidence in God alone, not in man, and not in flesh.
- **Pray** for release from generational patterns and ask Jesus to heal any painful memories. He may not take them away, but he will remove the sting of pain. Ask Jesus Christ to restore the image of God, the Father.

Become transformed by accepting the word of God as final authority. As an individual starts the transformation process of accepting God in the role of Father, then the love for others will consistently increase. The walls or barricades that have blocked the receiving of God's love will be torn down and a stronghold of godly love will take that place, and those spirits who have held on to hurts and unforgiveness will be forced to leave with a simple command, "Go, in the name of Jesus!" Loving others will result in action and deed. One's prayer life will take on a new dimension as well.

Rejoice in this, that God, the Father, is eternal.

Your Notes:
