

# **“Naomi Her Mother-in-Law”**

## **“Thy Daughter-in-Law, Which Loveth Thee”**

### **Ruth 3:1**

When I was younger, and started showing any serious interest in a girl, Dad would remind me what he was taught growing up, and what he was counseled by others: “If you want to know what a girl will be like in 20 years, look at her mother; if you want to know what she will be like in 40 years, look at her grandmother.” Now, maybe those numbers aren’t as accurate today as they were then, but the principle is still the same. We are going to look like, act like (in many ways), and be like our parents (sons like their fathers, daughters like their mothers). We may not like that, but that is part of life.

There are exceptions of course, and Ruth and Naomi may have been two exceptions to several “rules,” or preconceived ideas that we have of the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. I believe that the greatest picture in the Bible (and the only one, for that matter) for how a God-fearing wife is to treat her mother-in-law is found in this little book. But it is more than that – it is a picture and illustration of how God intends for us to treat others in a very basic manner.

If you, as a mother-in-law, or potential future mother-in-law, want the respect and love of your daughter-in-law then you need to consider what your life is like. Naomi, Ruth’s mother-in-law demonstrated some very important attributes that give an example of what God would expect out of

any mother-in-law (and out of any of us, for that matter). There is the principle in life of “cause and effect,” and that principle is seen in the life of Naomi and Ruth. Naomi, as the cause, shows by her life something that should be emulated in others; Ruth, as the effect, shows by her life something that should be emulated in others.

Much has been written and preached on Ruth herself, and much has been given on her gracious dealings with her mother-in-law, but not much has been given on Naomi as the mother-in-law. That will be the focus of this “Mother’s Day” message. There is actually a “Mother-in-Law Day” – it’s the fourth Sunday in October – but since not many really know that, I figured today would be a good day to celebrate the “other mom” many have.

This Hebrew word for mother-in-law (תַּמּוּלָּה) is only used eleven times in the Old Testament and all but one of those are found in the book of Ruth, used for Naomi. There is another Hebrew word (תַּתִּי) that is used for mother-in-law in the Old Testament, but it is a less definitive word, and can be used for anyone related by marriage. The significance of the use in Ruth is to show, by illustrative method, what God intends a godly mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship to be. The only other time it is used is in Micah 7:6 and it is used in a negative way in that text, showing what happens in a society where relationships are outside the biblical mandates.

#### Micah 7:6

<sup>6</sup> For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.

The words “mother in law” (and “wife’s mother”) are found three times in the New Testament – Matt.

8:14; 10:35; and Luke 12:53. The Greek word used in those three verses (πενθερά) is how the Septuagint translates the word for “mother in law” in the book of Ruth.

I give all this background to the use of the word to show that it was not a common occurrence in the Bible – not because people didn’t care about their mothers-in-law in society, but simply because there was not the stigmatism attached to them in the culture of the times (nor is it the same in the East today as it is in the West). So, the fact that it does occur in Ruth with frequency shows the significance of the relationship between Naomi and Ruth.

The distance between Bethlehem and Moab would have been 50-70 miles, depending on route and where they were in Moab.

## **I. SHE WAS GOOD – 1:1-15**

***A. Everything about the life of Naomi recorded in the Bible points to her being a good, righteous woman – a model for anyone to follow, and especially her daughters-in-law.***

***B. She was good enough for them to follow her (at least for a distance) from their home in Moab to Naomi’s home in Bethlehem (of Judah) – 50-70 miles, depending on what route they traveled. This is significant considering the history of hostility between the Israelites and the Moabites.***



<https://leonmauldin.blog/2014/11/15/ruth-the-moabites/>



<https://meetinggodinthemargin.com/2017/07/11/first-reading-of-ruth-1-this-is-what-love-looks-like/>

**C. Vs. 8-15 – Her goodness is seen in how the two women responded to Naomi’s plea that they return to Moab – to all they knew as normal. They responded with love and compassion – traits only made possible by the goodness of Naomi, their mother-in-law.**

## **II. SHE WAS GODLY – 1:16-22**

**A. Naomi must have lived a godly life for Ruth to not only treat her with the kindness that she did, but to consider making the God of Naomi her God – she saw something in her mother-in-law that she wanted to emulate.**

1. Verse 16 uses the word אֱלֹהִים for “God,” which would have been a common way of putting this, but then in verse 17 she uses the name for God that the Israelites used, the name of God that He Himself gave to Moses to give to the Israelites as His name – יְהוָה – Yahweh, the “I Am.”
2. This is a wonderful demonstration for all of us, as believers, to use on how effective our testimony and life for Christ can really be.

**B. Vs. 19-22 – In her attribute of godliness, Naomi demonstrated to her daughter-in-law that she could still maintain her testimony even during severe trials.**

1. Naomi responds to the people of her hometown that recognized her with truthfulness – she showed she was

burdened because of the trial, and rightfully so, but there is no indication given in Scripture to show that she blamed God in a negative way.

2. One point to make here is that her return was one that followed the Levitical Law, showing she understood what God had said – also shows her godliness (the point in this message is not to go into this subject but a further study of the book of Ruth would reveal this law).
3. God used the circumstances in Naomi's life to bring her back to her home town so that His ultimate plan would be accomplished – Ruth, the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, would be one of only four women mentioned by name in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).

Matthew 1:5

<sup>5</sup> And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

### **III. SHE WAS GRACIOUS – 1:8; 3:1**

***A. 1:8 – Naomi wanted what was best for her daughters-in-law, even if it meant a sacrifice to herself – she demonstrated graciousness in time of difficulty.***

***B. 3:1 – Again we see the graciousness of Naomi in wanting Ruth to have "rest," and for life to "be well" for her. In a day of self-serving principles guiding people's actions, this attribute stands out even more.***

### Proverbs 31:27–29

<sup>27</sup> She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

<sup>28</sup> Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

<sup>29</sup> Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

### Titus 2:3–5

<sup>3</sup> The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

<sup>4</sup> That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

<sup>5</sup> To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

1. In the two words, “My daughter,” Naomi says much more than that. Ruth would now, if not before, truly understand her relationship with her mother-in-law, and vice versa. Naomi refers to both her daughters-in-law by the term “my daughters” in 1:11 and 12, also pointing to this relationship.
2. “Shall I not seek rest for thee...?” – this simple question, rhetorical though it may be, shows how gracious Naomi really was. Ruth was in a position where she could not help herself – she was a stranger from a foreign country among a people where she would have been considered an enemy, and because of Naomi’s kindness and grace she was not only made to feel

welcome by others, she was helped by others.

3. "That it may be well with thee?" – that Ruth have a good, pleasant life. That was her mother-in-law's desire AFTER (perhaps quite a while after) her sons had died. Again, pointing to her grace.

#### **IV. SHE WAS GUIDING – 2:17-23; 3:3-5**

**A. *I suppose if there is any area that failure occurs in the relationship of mother-in-law and daughter/son-in-law it is with this. Many (if not most) mothers-in-law want to dictate to their in-laws how they are to live and what they are to do rather than guiding them with grace and godliness. There is a way to give direction without being unkind and that is the point here.***

**B. *2:17-23 – guided her with wisdom in finding the place she needed to be to gain as much as she could. This shows the wisdom and intelligence of Naomi – something she wanted to show to Ruth.***

**C. *3:3-5 – guided her in dealing modestly and appropriately, within the confines of the society in which they lived, in order to gain the recognition from Boaz. Ruth would not have been familiar with this particular cultural practice so Naomi guided her – showing Naomi's practical wisdom, as well as her desire for Ruth to be happy.***

Conclusion: The book ends with a genealogy, but in that genealogy is a precious truth that demonstrates the kind of woman Naomi was, and the truly remarkable relationship she had with her daughter-in-law.

#### Ruth 4:13-17

**13** So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.

**14** And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

**15** And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

**16** And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

**17** And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.