

to be **“just a mother”**. What little sense that makes! In Naomi, we see a woman who seemed powerless in the eyes of the world, but who was, in fact, powerful in a far more real way! And we can mimic that power, ourselves, when we place our trust in the kind of power found in Naomi—who most strongly showed that power in her trust in God.

**RH 2.20b-22** ~ Naomi also said to her, “The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.”<sup>21</sup> And Ruth the Moabite said, “Besides, he said to me, ‘You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’”<sup>22</sup> And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.”

Naomi stands as an example of faith—despite her struggles and pains. She ultimately looks at the **“coincidence”** of Ruth **“happening”** to end up in Boaz’s field as being anything but a **“coincidence”**. And we can follow her pattern! When we recognize the true **power** in our seeming **powerlessness**. By submitting in humility to God’s pattern and plan. Whether a mother, father, son, or daughter—we find grace and power when we trust in God’s power (rather than seeking our own)!

**RM 8.31-32** ~ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

## CONCLUSION

To some people, a **Mother-in-Law** is nothing more than a hassle—the butt of a joke. I hope that’s not the case in your house! It certainly wasn’t in Ruth’s. In her mother-in-law, Naomi, we see a **avored mother-in-law** and an example both of what a Godly mother should be, and ultimately, what we should all be!

Despite Naomi’s **broken** heart and life, her character and love had resulted in her being **beloved**—finding comfort and support from her daughter-in-law (a support she will need upon her return to Bethlehem). And we ought to seek the same: to show the love God calls for us to have for one another, and to provide that support for our beloved brethren during their own times of brokenness.

In Naomi, we see an example of the **power** that can be found even in the **powerless** when they place their trust not in their own wisdom and strength but in that of God, Himself.

The story of Naomi is just beginning—and there’s far more to see in the final two chapters of the book! It’s my hope you’ll return with us, tonight, to hear the last part of Naomi’s story.

**PS 46.1-3** ~ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, <sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

## INVITATION

#633 [EXP-OTH][1.2]  
05/05/2025

**Naomi: A Favored Mother-in-Law – Part 1**

RH 1-2

PC \_\_ Pchd

**QUESTION:** Can God restore a broken soul?

## TRN TO RH 1

### INTRODUCTION

**ILL—Types of Jokes** (love a good joke; lots of different types; when a child, “knock knock”; eventually, grew to love puns; now, I’m firmly into the realm of “Dad Jokes”) I have people from the office who constantly share **“Dad Jokes”** with me—Erin has an app she checks on a regular basis that just gives **“Dad Jokes”**.

One type of joke I never cared for, though, was **“Mother-in-Law Jokes”**. No matter their format or author, they all tend to have a similar theme: mean spirited, and based upon the idea of the **“Son in Law”** hating their **“Mother in Law”**. Thankfully, I’ve been blessed with a great set of in-laws with Erin’s family. So, one thing you will never hear from me is a **“Mother in Law Joke”**. But you’ll likely get many of them from others. Because, let’s be honest: most of us are trained to assume we won’t get along with our **“Mother in Law”**. Which is why I find it interesting that one of the most prominent examples of a **“Mother in Law”** in the Bible is such a favored one!

### BACKGROUND

When I told you to turn to the Book of **RH**, let’s all be honest: we likely all assumed that we’d be talking about Ruth today. For good reason! She’s the focus of the book—she’s its namesake for Pete’s sake! But as much as the book is about Ruth, it also spends a lot of time focused on Naomi—her favored mother-in-law. And in truth, you cannot tell the story of one without the other.

**RH 1.1-2** ~ In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. <sup>2</sup> The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.

**RH** takes place during a difficult time in the history of the Jewish people: the time of the judges, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (**JD 17.6**) In that age, we find ourselves focused not on the current judge or some priest or prophet. Instead, we find ourselves zoomed in on the life of a woman and her two daughters-in-law.

**ILL—Social Media Mommies** (we see them on Tiktok, Facebook, and Instagram; they present themselves as perfect parents; often, given enough time, the patina fades and the real person shines through) It happens time and time again: with many modern mothers being discouraged as they see these **“perfect parents”** and feel themselves to fall far short.

But not Naomi. In Naomi, we see a regular woman: a mother who was far from perfect. Yet despite that, we see that she’s presented as a **flawed, but favored mother**. And in her example, we can find guidance in how we can be the kind of mother, mother-in-law, the kind of Christian that God desires us all to be!

### BD1: RH 1 - Broken, but Beloved

**ILL—The Joy of a Mother Holding Her Child** (I’ve been blessed to be there for the birth of both Kara and Seth; in both cases, I was able to see the glow and joy in Erin’s face as I handed them both to her) It’s been a wonderful blessing to see our kids grow, learn, put on Christ in baptism, and show the hints of the man and woman they’ll both grow to be.

At the same time, I’ve also seen the opposite end of that blessing of life. When a dear friend of mine lost his son, I saw the pain in both his and his wife eyes. I saw the weight that settled on both of their shoulders—the strain it put on both of their lives, their marriage—everything. I’ve seen the pain that can come when a parent’s love is shattered. It **breaks** them.

**RH 1.3-5** ~ *But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. <sup>4</sup>These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, <sup>5</sup>and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.*

**EX:** I can only imagine the pain of Naomi: as first, she loses her husband. And then, ten years later, she lost both of her sons. She doubtless would have been **broken**—a fact made worse by her being far from her own home nation. And were that not bad enough, let’s not forget: *there was a famine in the land* (**RH 1.1**).

Suddenly, she had nothing—just her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth—two Moabite women. She’d have had no promise of food, shelter—anything. None of the promises she’d have had back in the land of Israel as a widow under the Law of Moses. And so, she elects to head back—figuring the young Moabite women could remarry and start their lives over. But knowing that there was no hope for her in Moab.

**Have you ever had that feeling of powerlessness? That feeling that your life is on the trash heap and there was little if anything you could do?** That certainly was what Naomi was feeling. So she took her daughters-in-law aside, and told them of her plans. But they reject it: they love her! For whatever Naomi was, she may have been **broken**, but she was also **beloved**. *And they said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.”* (**RH 1.10**) Naomi continues to make the case, broken-heartedly insisting they remain, and Orpah does! But Ruth does not.

There is so much beauty in this moment! Naomi was heart-broken, having learned first-hand the fragility of life **JM** talks about in **JM 4.14** ~ *yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.* Yet, despite that, she found strength and comfort in her daughter-in-law, who truly loved her. **And why?** Brethren, I doubt that Ruth loved Naomi solely because of how great Ruth was. Read again how Orpah and Ruth wept at the separation from their Mother-in-Law! She might have been **broken**, but she was still **beloved**!

**RH 1.16-17** ~ *But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. <sup>17</sup>Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”*

**AP:** In the example of Naomi, we see a woman **broken**—and perhaps, today, you’re feeling similarly broken. Perhaps you’ve also lost loved ones—perhaps you’re also feeling uncertain and abandoned (Naomi, herself, felt so broken that, upon return to Bethlehem with Ruth, she said to the women: *She said to them, “Do not*

*call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. <sup>21</sup>I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”* (**RH 1.20-21**)) But Naomi was provided comfort, strength, and a chance through the people who loved her: her love for her family was paying dividends through Ruth.

Brethren, today, we can feel **broken**. But, similarly to Naomi, we can find our way forward when we, similarly, show love and are **beloved** in return. In Naomi, we see an example of Godly motherhood: showing love even in the midst of brokenness. And God uses the result of that love to bring her back home to Bethlehem, and to prepare her for the next phase of His plan!

**1PT 4.8** ~ *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup>Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

**BD2: RH 2 – Powerless, but Powerful**

**MOTHERHOOD/Value/The Hand that Rocks the Cradle**

Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem to escape the famine. But when they arrive, they don’t exactly find a savings account waiting for them. But they did find something!

**DT 24.19-22** ~ *“When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. <sup>20</sup>When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. <sup>21</sup>When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. <sup>22</sup>You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.*

**EX: RH 2** shows Ruth being sent out to the fields to take advantage of Moses’ command in **DT 24**. And it *“just so happens”* that she finds herself in the field of Boaz, the next nearest relative to Naomi’s dead son who just so happens to be their one way out of this mess! He hears of Ruth’s love and faithfulness to relative, and he rewards her with prime opportunities for harvesting. See what happens when she returns to Naomi to tell her of her day in the field:

**RH 2.17-20a** ~ *So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. <sup>18</sup>And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. <sup>19</sup>And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.” <sup>20</sup>And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!”*

**EX:** Naomi’s position in the moment may have seemed powerless—after all, she’s just the mother-in-law. She’s just the hand that rocks the cradle! But in truth, why she might have been **powerless** in some regard, that didn’t change her willingness to use the power she had! She was **powerless**, yes, but she was **powerful** in another way! In her case, it was in her knowledge of her relation with Boaz—a close relative who could redeem their land and restore them: and her faith in the God who she knew had led her to this point!

**AP:** We often undervalue the impact of the role of the mother. Oh, we praise mothers at mother’s day, but we still seem to think the primary value of a woman is only found in the marketplace. We seem to sometimes speak as though it’s shameful