

March 1, 2026 – 2nd Sunday of Lent

Let Me Tell You About My Mother-in-Law

Ruth 1

“Let me tell you about my mother-in-law...” What stories does that phrase bring to your mind?

Stories of the mother-in-law who can't let her son go? Who can't stay out of your life?

Who thought you didn't live up to her standards? Who came to your home and re-arranged your closet?

Who thought your children were always dirty, not fed the right food, didn't get enough of your attention ... ?

Who thought you were a poor cook? Who thought you should stay home with the kids?

Who thought you should go out and get a job?

Or, do stories like mine come to mind?

I had 2 moms-in-law ...

First, I had Jeannie - who is no longer my mother-in-law, but I still feel like I belonged in her family. She always spoke highly of me, she always greeted me with a hug and a kiss and she would tell everyone what a great mom I am. She gave me good advice, taught me to bake delicious Scottish shortbread ... and then told me I made it wrong – lol! She died last year

Then I was blessed with Toby's mom, Lorraine. She was a great mother-in-law, too. God called her home more than 20 years ago. Toby's mom taught me the strangest things: She taught me to carve a deer – right on the kitchen table. She taught me a few of her old home remedies. She gave me great guidance. She taught me that it is okay for a woman to open her mouth, to question authority and to even question her minister ... oh my – that was a shocker for me. She loved my girls like they were her blood.

I couldn't have asked for better mothers-in-law.

Ruth was pretty lucky in the mother-in-law category, too. For those of you who don't know the story of Naomi and Ruth ... Naomi was a Jew married to Elimelech. She had two sons who were married to Orpah and Ruth – both Moabite women. All three of the men died and the three women were left alone in Moab.

Naomi realized she should head back to Bethlehem, but gave her daughters-in-law the opportunity to return to their families and to their god. Neither of them wanted to at first, but Naomi told her daughters-in-law that she had no other sons for them to marry, so they need not feel required to stay. Orpah chose to return to her family, but Ruth stayed with Naomi, as we heard in the first reading.

When they returned to Israel, Naomi sent Ruth out to the fields to get them food and to find Ruth a husband. God was with Ruth, and she ended up in Boaz's field – a relative of her father-in-law. God continued to be with them, and Boaz took her as his wife. They had a son named Obed.

Ruth respected Naomi. She listened to her advice. She accepted and loved her God. The two women had bonds of loyalty, friendship and commitment to each other and to God.

We live in a society that values, even worships, individualism, but in the book of Ruth, we know more about Ruth and Naomi's relationship together than we know about them individually.

We do know that they came from different cultures, they were of different nationalities, backgrounds and ages, but they were bound together.

In their widow-hood, Naomi and Ruth had no one to depend upon – so they depended on each other and on God. They trusted that through their sorrow, they were not abandoned. Naomi shared her life with Ruth by allowing her to see, hear and feel the joy and anguish of her relationship with her God.

We need to follow Naomi's example and be willing to share with each other. We should all have that special someone or several special someones that we can go to - whether it be a mother, mother-in-law, or friend. We need that special

person we can confide in, work through our questions, our thoughts about and our relationship with God. It feels so good to have someone to join with us in prayer.

We also need to be willing to share our lives. By sharing with our family and friends, three important things are realized ... our relationship with those people changes and grows; we introduce these special someones to a God they may not know; and our lives may be enriched and lengthened ... as James Lynch, in his book "The Broken Heart," says - lonely people live significantly shorter lives.

We need friends – God created us to need each other, to be dependent on relationships rather than our own individualism.

As I read the book of Ruth, I saw great traits for us to copy and to exemplify to others.

We should always remember that people are watching us. Reminds me of a story I heard recently:

A woman was driving her car over the speed limit. A man pulled out in front of her and she pressed long and hard on her horn, she made motions out her window at him and she sped up, passed him and cut him off. A policeman pulled her over. Asked her if she knew why he was stopping her. She didn't say anything. He told her that he saw her "What would Jesus do," "Protect Life" and "Honk if you're a Christian" bumper stickers and thought for sure she had stolen the car she was driving. Hmmm

Anyways, Naomi's traits – traits I've seen in many of you ...

Naomi had a selfless attitude. Here she is in Moab and she sends her daughters-in-law back to their people. She's by herself with no one to protect her and she thinks of them!! This would cause her great hardship.

Naomi has a great faith in God. She wanted to go back to Israel to be with His people. Despite her grief and suffering, she didn't give up her faith in her Lord. This amazing faith is probably what had the most effect on Ruth. We should strive to have this type of an effect on others – don't be afraid to show our faith. True faith endures trials and temptations. True faith can not be destroyed.

Naomi had a strong commitment in what she believed. She sent Ruth out to the fields, believing that God will provide for them.

Naomi was kind, trustworthy and filled with moral integrity

Naomi endured hardships, but she had perseverance. We have to be aware that when we face difficult times that God welcomes our honest prayers BUT we must be careful not to overlook the answers to prayer our Lord has already placed in front of us.

Look to our parents, our children, to our family, to our friends. Look at the love, the strength and the resources that these relationships can provide. Don't let our sorrow or our fear blind us to the answers that surround us in these people. God provides!

We can learn so much from Ruth, too.

That first passage in Ruth that we read is often used at weddings ... "*Where you go I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.*" That's a very appropriate passage to be read at weddings, but realize that it was said by Ruth to Naomi – not by a man to a woman, or a woman to a man!

Of all human relationships, the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law has the greatest chance of being difficult, strained. We can learn something from them!

Ruth made her home in a foreign land. Instead of depending on Naomi for everything, she realized that she needed to take the initiative and provide for her mother-in-law.

She worked hard and through their sadness over their loss and their fear for where their lives would lead - God provided. Just as I said about prayers sometimes being provided for while we say them, if we are looking for God to provide for our needs, realize that our Lord may have already provided the resources – look to our friends, to our families and to our surroundings.

Ruth went out into the fields and worked, showing God how important providing for Naomi was to her. Ruth was a hard worker. She was loving, kind, faithful and brave. Everyone knew that Ruth loved her mother-in-law.

These qualities gave her a good reputation – but she had that good reputation because she showed these qualities consistently, in all areas of her life.

Our reputations are formed by those who see us at home, at work, around town and in church. A good reputation comes by consistently living out the qualities you believe in – no matter the group of people we are with.

It comes from returning the extra change you got by mistake at the grocery store, by holding the door open for the person behind you, by saying a kind word to a stranger or contributing to a food drive for the needy.

We should strive to show people that we love our God, that we care for the needs of others, that we are compassionate and loving. We should make sure that others can see the beauty and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in us.

Ruth was faithful to Naomi and both of them trusted in God to protect them when they had no one else.

Do we have faith that God will provide for our needs? Do we take care of each other like Ruth and Naomi? Do we trust in God in the good times and the dark days?

Have you had a parent, a relative or an older friend in your life who looked out for you? Were you willing to listen to the advice of someone who was older and wiser? Can you imagine what Ruth's life would have been like if she had ignored Naomi?

God brought great blessings out of Naomi's tragedy. She always trusted God. Even in our own sorrow, God can bring blessings.

Because of Ruth's faithful obedience to God and to Naomi, her life and legacy were significant even though she couldn't see all the results for herself.

Ruth was the great grandmother of David and an ancestor of Jesus! Can you imagine?

We are to remember and honor our heroes of faithfulness. We look back to Naomi and Ruth and draw encouragement and strength from their lives of trusting so completely in the goodness and mercy of God.

We should remember to celebrate all the heroes of today: especially those of this church - we remember the years of faithful service that all have given to our church, to our families and to God.

I personally remember my mothers-in-law, but I also remember my own mother. She was a woman of faith. She taught us to turn to God in times of trouble. But she also taught us to turn to God in times of great happiness, to always remember to thank God for everything. At an early age, we understood the importance of worshipping God – at church and in our hearts. My parents taught us the importance of prayer. We were taught to be honest and to have integrity. We learned from them that eyes are always on us.

Remember that you are a great example of how the Lord raises up godly people to keep the torch of faith alive and to pass it on to future generations.

As you leave today, reach out and thank someone for their example of faithfulness, give someone a hug to show your gratefulness and thank God for the steadfast love our Lord sends down to us.

Remember Naomi and Ruth and live in faithfulness to God, knowing that the significance of your life will extend beyond your lifetime!