



Shattered Mom's Club

Session Four

Naomi: Empty and Alone

We find the story of Naomi in the book of Ruth. Most people are probably more familiar with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, than Naomi. She's usually mentioned in studies of Ruth but not always dwelled on. Today we are going to put our focus on Naomi not on Ruth.



Who is this shattered woman?

We always seem to associate Naomi with Ruth because she was Ruth's mother-in-law, but in reality, Naomi's core connection was with her husband and her sons. We will see that this connection is broken by death and our shattered mom becomes a widow. Then on through the story she loses her sons.

Her shattered life seemed to be heading for a bleak existence.

With the loss of her husband and sons, Naomi was all of a sudden placed in a total different category of women. Her life wasn't the same anymore.

Naomi's family was going through hard times in the neighborhood.

When Nomi's story starts she was living with her husband and sons in Judah, but there was a famine in the land because of the drought. Food was scarce. Life was hard.

This forced Naomi's husband, Elimelech, into the decision to move his family to stay in another country because he needed to feed his family. They moved from the land of Judah over to Moab.

“Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.” Ruth 1:1-2

My husband and I have moved a lot in our married life and it is not something I enjoy doing. Moving is hard! Not just the move itself, but settling down in a strange place is so uncomfortable. I'm sure it wasn't easy on Naomi. Moving is never easy.

Naomi was so lonesome she could cry.

It says in verse 3 of that same chapter that Elimelech, Naomi's husband died. We don't know how long they were living in Moab before he died, but Naomi found herself widowed and without her spouse in a strange land. How hard that must have been for her.

“And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.” Ruth 1:3

Are you familiar with that old Hank Williams song, “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry”? When I was a kid and got upset about something or when I was older and had a break up with a boyfriend or something, my dad would sing that song in a funny way to me. He would always cheer me up because of the twangy way he sang it.

Part of that song says the following:

*Did you ever see a night so slow
As time goes draggin’ by
The moon just went behind the clouds
To hide its face and cry*

I think that is how Naomi must have felt — like time had slowed down all of a sudden or even stood still. Her husband was gone. The man she had spent her life with and raised her two boys with had left her. Being lonesome is a hard place to find yourself. Being lonesome is so empty.

I have known several women who have lost their husbands. I used to teach a weekly Bible study to an older group of women and several of them were widowed. For some it had been a while since they lost their husbands. For others it was closer and fresher. What I noticed was that each of these ladies had a different outlook on life, but they all had the common bond of being lonesome without their husbands.

Naomi’s sons were the marrying kind.

The Bible doesn’t say how much time went by from the time their father died until Naomi’s sons found wives in the land of Moab and married them. We just know that they both found women in Moab to take as their wives. One was Ruth and one was Orpah.

“And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.” Ruth 1:4

I beg your pardon. Naomi wasn't living in a rose garden.

What I see about Naomi's life is that it wasn't perfect. Life usually isn't. Life can sometimes be so hard. Life struggles can help build up strength in us. Our shattering can propel us into motion and other things, but let's face it, the struggle of life is real...and real hard.

Naomi is over there in Israel in her homeland when the drought came. Can't be very fun to be without food where nothing will grow. Then she gets over there in Moab and her husband dies.

Then life seems to be going along. It says the sons got married and about ten years passed. Then boom! Both the sons die.

“And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.” Ruth 1:5

We don't know how Naomi's sons died. It isn't spelled out, but losing children no matter if they are small or grown hurts a mother's heart. I imagine Naomi wasn't any different than any other mother. She had to be in pain. She had to be shattered. First her husband. Then her sons. All gone.

Grief and pain from the loss of a loved one can cause so many emotions to go through you. It digs at one's very heart strings. I can just imagine how this widowed mother must have felt.

There's no place like home! There's no place like home!

Naomi had some tough decisions to make after her husband and then her sons died. She heard that the famine was over in her homeland so she decided to pack up and go home.

Making life decisions is hard for most of us. We have to weigh and balance what is best for us, our family, and for everything involved. It's hard to make life decisions when you are worn down and stressed too, and I think this is probably where Naomi was at this point. She had lost both her husband and her sons, yet she had to keep

living. She had to make some kind of decision what she would do now that there wasn't anyone to take care of her. She decided to go home.

Naomi wasn't the *monster-in-law* type.

What I see about Naomi in this part of the story is that she wasn't one of those *monster-in-laws*. We are told when she decided to go on her journey home that her daughters-in-law started off with her. And as they started Naomi told them to go back. Naomi was a widow without any sons. She knew she had nothing and wouldn't have a way to take care of herself, let alone her daughters-in-law.

Naomi was hurting but she wanted the best for her daughters-in-law. Look what she says to them and how she treats them.

“And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.” Ruth 1:8-9

I see in these verses that even though she was shattered, Naomi reacted to her daughters-in-law in kindness and love. They were even from different countries but I don't see her throwing that in their faces. I don't see her blaming them for her son's deaths.

Sometimes that's what we do as humans. When we are hurt and shattered, we lash out at people. We say the meanest things. We act in the most unkind ways. Here I see that Naomi didn't do that. She treated her daughters-in-law with love, care, and respect.

We don't always look at ourselves with the right perspective when we are hurting.

As the verses in this chapter go on, we see that Naomi thought her life was over and that she had nothing to offer. She felt like she wasn't the right age to be married

again. She knew she couldn't offer more sons.

Orpah ends up staying in Moab, but Ruth journeys with Naomi back to Judah. Ruth stuck close to Naomi.

“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.” Ruth 1:16-18

We see as the story unfolds throughout the book of Ruth that Naomi did have something to offer. She became more than a mother-in-law to Ruth. Naomi became a mentor and a friend to Ruth. She guided Ruth and gave her advice.

Naomi was under the wrong impression that her life was over.

Next in our story we see Naomi and Ruth arriving back in Judah, Naomi's homeland. Naomi wanted everyone to know that she knew her state in life. Naomi even told people to start calling her “Mara”, which meant *bitterness*. She knew the hand that God had dealt her in life. She knew she had left home with a husband and two sons and had come back broke and alone. Look what she says when she and Ruth got to Bethlehem.

“And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?” Ruth 1:20-21

Because of Naomi's journey back to Judah and the fact that Ruth came with her all played a part in Ruth marrying Boaz and continuing the line which eventually

produced Jesus. Ruth is even mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:5. What a plan God had!

It *ain't* over till it's over, my friends. There will be times when we may feel useless and all used up, but we never know what plan God has laid out for us.

Sometimes a little sunshine falls among the shadows of life.

I love it when God sends those blessings to us when we feel used up, alone, and useless. Look how in the midst of her shattered life, God blessed Naomi. In the end she gets to enjoy a grandson. She even gets to care for him. After Ruth's baby was born, look what all the women said to Naomi.

“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. 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. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. 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.” Ruth 4:14-17

Naomi found out that just because the culture at the time was that sons were the thing to have, God could still bless through just one daughter-in-law. I love what those women said to Naomi about Ruth.

“..for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons...” Ruth 4:15

Talk about a statement of girl power! These were probably the same women that saw Naomi come back dejected and hurting that day in Bethlehem when she returned with Ruth. These women were happy for Naomi.

We can learn from this shattered woman's story.

A lot of things can be good lessons for us from Naomi's shattered life. The one thing though that stands out the most to me is that we sometimes have to change our perspective and the way we look at ourselves. Naomi had to get her eyes off the fact that she was a widow. She had to get the idea that she was useless out of her head. God had a plan for her life. He wasn't finished with her yet even though she felt empty and alone.

God used Naomi in Ruth's life to carry out the line that led to Jesus. We never know how we are affecting another person's life and path like Naomi did with her relationship to Ruth. We never know what an impact we have on people. We have to be willing to step in and allow the Lord to use us even when we feel we are used up. God can use us no matter how shattered we are or how shattered we think we are.



What shattered Naomi?

What emotions do you think a widow goes through at the loss of her husband?

How did Naomi feel about herself after her husband and sons had died?

How did God use Naomi's life in the end?

What lesson (s) did you learn from studying about Naomi?

*Dear Lord,
Help me to be willing to see the value of my life in regard to Your plan for me.
Help me not to give up on my usefulness because You never have. I give my
talents and gifts over to You to be used for Your glory.
Amen*