

In-Laws

In-Laws or Out-Laws?

After you get married there is now a whole extended family that becomes a permanent part of your life. It is better if the extended family, or all the in-laws are not out-laws against your marriage. In other words, we don't want the extended family to become a source of conflict in the marriage.

In the book of Genesis Isaac and Rebekah had a son named Esau and when he got married against the will of his parents it made for much conflict in the family.

[Gen 26:34](#)

At the age of forty, Esau married two Hittite wives: Judith, the daughter of Beerli, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon.

[Gen 26:35](#)

But Esau's wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.

Jacob however listened to his parents:

Gen 29:9 Jacob was still talking with them when Rachel arrived with her father's flock, for she was a shepherd.

Gen 29:10 And because Rachel was his cousin—the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother—and because the sheep and goats belonged to his uncle Laban, Jacob went over to the well and moved the stone from its mouth and watered his uncle's flock.

Gen 29:11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and he wept aloud.

Gen 29:12 He explained to Rachel that he was her cousin on her father's side—the son of her aunt Rebekah. So Rachel quickly ran and told her father, Laban.

Jacob found the girl of his dreams.

Gen 29:16 Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel.

Gen 29:17 There was no sparkle in Leah's eyes, [fn] but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face.

Gen 29:18 Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, "I'll work for you for seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife."

Gen 29:19 "Agreed!" Laban replied. "I'd rather give her to you than to anyone else. Stay and work with me."

Gen 29:20 So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

Jacob served his father-in-law for seven years tending flocks, to pay a dowry for Rachel to be his wife.

Gen 29:21 Finally, the time came for him to marry her. "I have fulfilled my agreement," Jacob said to Laban. "Now give me my wife so I can sleep with her."

Gen 29:22 So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast.

Gen 29:23 But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her.

Gen 29:25 But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! "What have you done to me?" Jacob raged at Laban. "I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?"

Gen 29:26 "It's not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn," Laban replied.

Laban had deceived Jacob. Jacob received a little of what he deserved for he was a deceiver himself. Jacob even though he was upset worked seven more years for Rachel and married her as well.

Keeping peace in a family can be very difficult. But with God nothing is impossible. God can give us love that can cross any barrier. The relationship with the in-laws ought to be a constant point of prayer to seek wisdom, guidance, and love for them.

Some parents find it very difficult to let go of their children and let them cleave to another person.

You will probably encounter many opportunities for conflict and disagreement when planning the wedding. There are so many decisions that are purely a matter of opinion, of which everyone seems to have a different one.

[Rom 12:16](#) Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

[Rom 12:17](#) Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.

[Rom 12:18](#) Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

We want to honor our parents and listen to what they have to say. They do have wisdom from experience. We need to tell them that they are appreciated and you are thankful for them. But, there will come a time when we need to cleave to your spouse and say "We appreciate your opinion, and we will take what you have said into consideration. We would like to pray about it and see what the Lord instructs us to do."

Moses and Jethro

God can give us wisdom through out parents and in-laws. That is why we need to be open to criticism and/or change. In the book of Exodus, Jethro went to visit his son-in-law to give him some advice.

Exd 18:13 The next day, Moses took his seat to hear the people's disputes against each other. They waited before him from morning till evening.

Exd 18:14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he asked, "What are you really accomplishing here? Why are you trying to do all this alone while everyone stands around you from morning till evening?"

Exd 18:15 Moses replied, "Because the people come to me to get a ruling from God.

Exd 18:16 When a dispute arises, they come to me, and I am the one who settles the case between the quarreling parties. I inform the people of God's decrees and give them his instructions."

Exd 18:17 "This is not good!" Moses' father-in-law exclaimed.

Exd 18:18 "You're going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself.

Jethro counseled Moses to get help governing the people.

Exd 18:22 They should always be available to solve the people's common disputes, but have them bring the major cases to you. Let the leaders decide the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you.

Exd 18:24 Moses listened to his father-in-law's advice and followed his suggestions.

Jethro gave Moses great counsel, that was from the Lord. Jethro had genuine concern for the well-being of Moses.

There will definitely be times when we should listen to the wisdom and insight of our parents, but there need to be a balance. Are they giving Godly counsel or do they just want it their way? Remember Proverbs 3:5-6 - *Pro 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Pro 3:6 Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.* We don't blindly obey or disobey our parents, we listen and seek the Lord.

The Story of Ruth

Another great examples found in the book of Ruth. Ruth is a story of love, loyalty and redemption. It is also a story about a strong relationship between a mother in-law and her daughter in-laws during difficult days.

Naomi and her husband Elimelech moved to Moab during a famine. Shortly after they arrived Elimelech died.

[Rth 1:4](#) The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later,

[Rth 1:5](#) both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her two sons or her husband.

The famine ended and Naomi decided to move back to Bethlehem. She told her daughter-in-laws to go back to their homeland. Orpah did go back to her homeland, but Ruth said:

Rth 1:16 But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

Rth 1:17 Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"

Ruth loved her mother-in-law so much she was willing to go to a land she had never seen, and was willing to commit herself unto death. This is a very poetic vow. We need to remind ourselves of our marriage vow to our spouse.

God Will Reward Us

God does not take lightly the decisions we make for Him. God rewards us for sacrifices that involve our obedience to His will.

Luk 18:29 "Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God,

Luk 18:30 will be repaid many times over in this life, and will have eternal life in the world to come."

The Lord will bless us just as He blessed Ruth. Ruth married a wealthy businessman named Boaz. He was a relative of her husband, a kinsman redeemer. Boaz said:

[Rth 2:11](#) "Yes, I know," Boaz replied. "But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father

and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers.

[Rth 2:12](#) May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done."

God rewarded her faithfulness to her mother-in-law. She became a great-grandmother of King David, and in the lineage of Jesus Christ. God is good, and He will honor our godly choices as well.

There Will Be Challenges

There will be challenges ahead, and we will have to make sacrifices. The Bible says a friend loves at all time (Proverbs 17:17) We need to think of our in-laws as friends, whether they are Christians or not. God can use you to be a witness to them. The Bible says a man who wants friends, must be friendly also (Proverbs 18:24) If you want kind in-laws make sure you are kind to them. If we want them to be flexible, we must be willing to be flexible. Good relationships take work and time to cultivate.

In-spite of the challenges we are called to love people unconditionally. We need to ask ourselves:

Do we respect our future or current in-laws?

Do we treat them kindly, or do we have an attitude?

Do we try to do all we can to make for peace in our relationship with them?

Do we pray for them?

Moses and Ruth were humble and did not demand their own way, they received instruction and were open to change, they responded to their in-laws and sacrificed their own desires. Many blessings can arise from a good relationship with your in-laws. Think about what might have happened if Moses or Ruth chose a different response to their in-laws. Don't be quick to burn bridges, even in the midst of set-backs. Always try to make amends. we will

only have a richer relationship with our in-laws, and peace in our homes if we do.

1. What does the word "in-law" mean to you?

2. After reviewing the stories of Moses and Ruth, what are some of the key ingredients we need with regard to our relationships with our in-laws? (See Ephesians 4:32)

3. Describe the ideal in-law from your perspective.

4. What has been the response of your parents concerning your plans to get married?

5. What opinion do you think your future or current in-laws have of you?

6. How much time do you plan to spend with your parents or in-laws?

7. Describe the plans you have for your first Thanksgiving and Christmas as a married couple.

8. List some attributes you appreciate about the parents of your fiance or spouse.
a.
b.
c.
d.

9. Becoming a part of a family of your fiancé can be wonderful, and at the same time it can be overwhelming. List your concerns and share them with one another.

10. What are some ways you can express the love of Christ to your parents and future in-laws?

a.

b.

c.

d.