

I Smell the Fresh Bread of God's Promises

So many people right now are dealing with loss. One woman I know from Alabama, Sharlene, lost her husband in late 2021. The same year, my friend Abdiel lost his mother to COVID. Another friend's daughter has walked away from God. A young married couple I know had a miscarriage recently. Others are facing financial stress, recurring health issues and family drama.

The pandemic is over, but the black clouds that came with the virus still linger. I wonder if some people still wear masks simply because they prefer to hide their sad expressions. Life seems more difficult because of the cost of food and gas, a crime wave in our cities, the threat of war and so much hateful rhetoric caused by political divisions.

My mother died during the pandemic, along with James, one of my closest friends. But the grief I experienced as a result of those losses was not as difficult as the heaviness I feel every time I check the headlines.

The moral and spiritual ground beneath us has shifted. Christian values that were once considered mainstream are now attacked.

Yet while processing my emotions and praying for answers, the Lord took me to the book of Ruth—and I have found so much hope from the story of Naomi. Along with Job, this godly saint deserves the award for endurance in the face of adversity. I encourage you to re-read her story.

When we first meet Naomi, she has lost everything: Her husband, both her sons and her financial security. She has no insurance benefit or Social Security check. She is drowning in despair.

Everything in Moab reminds her of her pain. Yet Ruth 1:6 says Naomi heard good news from her native Bethlehem: “For she heard that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.”

A drought had ended and it was harvest time back in her native Israel. Some people might have been skeptical about that news. But Naomi had a tiny grain of faith left, even though she was an emotional wreck. In spite of her grief she packed up her belongings and walked back to her homeland.

It would have taken Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, about 10 days to make the 30-mile journey.

Naomi didn’t have the best attitude after she made the trek. When she arrived in Bethlehem she told the people, “I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty” (1:21). Yet after seeing the harvest fields and smelling the fresh bread, Naomi realized that the God she thought was punishing her was actually preparing to bless her socks off.

Naomi encouraged Ruth to glean in the fields of Boaz. In fact, it was Naomi who realized that Boaz was her relative, and that he was an eligible bachelor who just might want to marry Ruth.

With hope restored, Naomi urged Ruth to stay near Boaz, and eventually to show up at his threshing floor to offer the most unusual marriage proposal in the Bible.

We tend to focus on Ruth when we read this story, but the book that bears Ruth’s name is written from Naomi’s perspective. It is as much about Naomi’s restoration as it is about Ruth’s.

In the end, we see a satisfied Naomi holding her grandson in her lap.

The sad, “empty” woman we met in chapter one is all smiles in chapter four. God used this powerful woman to accomplish His purposes—in spite of her frailty and weakness.

Naomi's grandson, Obed, became the grandfather of King David. And because of Naomi's faith, Ruth was inserted into the royal lineage of the Messiah.

If you've experienced a season of loss, take courage from the life of Naomi. No matter how much bad news you've heard, look up and you will see the hope of Christ. No matter how dark it is in your Moab, something fresh is stirring in Bethlehem.

You may have to make a move—geographically or just emotionally—to find God's new blessings. But God will lead you.

So many Christians today feel overwhelmed. Lift up your heads and trust God. He is for you, not against you. He will yet again visit His people.

Harvest time is here, and with it comes fresh bread and renewed hope. You will again see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

J. Lee Grady was editor of Charisma for 11 years and now serves as senior contributing editor. He directs the Mordecai Project (), an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest books are Follow Me and Let's Go Deeper (Charisma House).