

A Prophetic Word in This Dark Season: God Offers Fresh Hope

Read Time: 3 Minutes 41 Seconds

I know so many people right now who are dealing with loss. One woman 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. I don't recognize my country anymore. 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 am finding 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 and dismissed it. But Naomi had a tiny grain of faith left, even though she was an emotional wreck. In spite of her depression 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 settling in her new house, seeing the harvest fields and smelling the fresh bread, Naomi realized that the God she thought was punishing her was actually getting ready to bless her socks off.

Naomi encouraged Ruth to glean in the fields of Boaz. In fact, it was Naomi who quickly realized that Boaz was her relative, and that he was an eligible bachelor who just might want to marry Ruth. With hope restored, and a growing faith, 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 actually written from Naomi's perspective. It is as much about Naomi's restoration as it is about Ruth's. And in the end, we see a proud Naomi holding her grandson in her lap.

The sad, "empty" woman we met in chapter 1 is all smiles in chapter 4. 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 distance yourself from the pain. But God will lead you.

So many Christians today feel empty, overwhelmed by loss and struggling to regain their bearings in this troubling season. 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.

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