

## “Gain Through Loss”

Profiles of Faith #8: Naomi  
Read Ruth 1-4

Have you ever experienced the pain that comes through deep loss? If you haven't yet, chances are you will. It is a tough reality of our humanity. Naomi experienced incredible loss, and by persevering and obeying the voice of God through difficult times, she left us an enduring legacy: **By God's grace, we can see incredible gain through life's greatest losses.**

In just five short verses (1:1-5), Naomi loses almost everything she knows. It was the period of the judges, marked by unparalleled spiritual desolation, bloodshed and hopelessness. Israel was in a terrible state. A famine hits her homeland, and it's so severe that her husband decides moving to Moab is a matter of survival. She had to abruptly uproot her family from her home, a painful loss for any mother. To complicate things, they were moving to the land of the Moabites, a people with very strained and tense relations with the Israelites. Since she was taking her two unmarried boys with them, she no doubt feared they would fall in love with Moabite women, which wasn't forbidden, but certainly not ideal. No Moabites or any of their descendants were able to enter the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:3). Her family's spiritual heritage was in jeopardy! If Naomi didn't think her situation could get any worse, she surely felt like she hit rock bottom when her husband and two boys died. She was alone in a foreign country with no husband to support her and no boys to continue her family line. She literally lost everything.

This level of loss is simply too much for most people, and the decisions they make during these times can and will define the rest of their lives. I am positive Naomi was wrestling with God over this. I think wrestling with God is ok, it's natural. She was open about how she felt, even referring to herself as "Mara," which means bitter. She felt like God allowed her very full life to become empty in a very short time (1:20-22). When she decided to move back to her homeland, she probably felt like she had no other choice. I know Naomi was a good mother-in-law, so the fact that she had to leave her two beautiful daughters-in-law only added to her pain. How could there be gain after such loss?

As I study the Bible and observe the lives of heroic people today who go through such pain, I've realized that any gain after loss like this is the result of a resolute faith, a godly character, and unwavering obedience to God despite the feelings of the moment. I know Naomi had a very godly character through this time. How am I so sure about that? There is no way Ruth would decide to follow her back home if she wasn't deeply spiritual. Ruth was totally inspired by Naomi's faith, and wanted to be with her at all costs! She held onto faith in God's promises, because when Ruth meets Boaz, Naomi feels like God could very well be at work. That's an amazingly faithful and optimistic viewpoint for someone who could have gotten cynical towards God through her trial. She still held out hope, and that takes a lot of work! Her obedience to God allowed Him to work on her behalf, and she ends up marrying Boaz, a man of noble character, who also ends up being her kinsman-redeemer. Her family line isn't lost after all!

Naomi sees one more amazing blessing through all of this. Her new grandson was Obed, the father of Jesse, who was the father of David! Not only did she see her family become full again, God used David to restore Israel spiritually. His kingship brought healing and a hopeful future to Israel, ultimately bringing the savior Jesus, who became the hope for all mankind (Matt. 1:1)! In whatever loss you are experiencing, stay devoted to God. You may not see it now, but by His grace you will see much gain through your deep loss.

