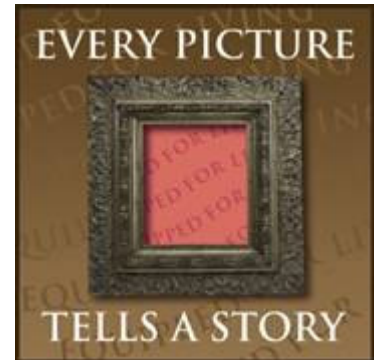




... when you need a break from the daily grind



EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

#3 of 8: *Naomi: a picture of survival*

➤ **READY TO GO**

Although the mountains of the Scottish Highlands are not very high, they are very dangerous because of the rapidity with which the weather can change. In the mountains there are small survival huts known as 'bothies', and shelters dug into the ground. Last winter an elderly man became lost in deteriorating weather on the mountains, sparking a major search for him. He survived, and was eventually found alive and well having spent the night in one of these tiny shelters. Such shelters can help with surviving adverse weather, but what about surviving the hard circumstances of life? How do we cope? Naomi, who features in the Old Testament book of Ruth, got through a very dark period of her life. She is a picture of survival.

➤ **READ**

- Read Ruth 1:1-22. What hard experiences did Naomi suffer in her family (verses 3-5)?
- What further trial did Naomi have to suffer (verses 11-14) and to what extent can you identify with her experience?
- What challenge or encouragement do you derive from Ruth's attitude towards Naomi (verses 14-18)?
- To what extent do you think Naomi's attitude was justified (verses 19-21) and when have you ever responded in a similar way?
- What encouragement do you derive from details stated in verse 22?
- Read Ruth 4:13-22. What practical lesson do you learn from the conclusion of Naomi's life story?

➤ **REFLECT**

I don't think it's possible to read Naomi's story without sensing some of her pain. She emigrated to escape from famine and lived in a foreign land for about 10 years. But during that time she lost her husband and her two sons. She became bitter, so much so, that when she returned home she told the people in the town not to call her Naomi, which means pleasant, but Mara, which means bitter although she never really lost her faith. While we can understand the circumstances which made her bitter, it's important to remember that bitterness is always a choice. We don't have to become bitter in the face of difficulties. The best way to avoid bitterness is to see all of our trials through the perspective of the cross of Jesus Christ. At the cross He replaced bitterness with forgiveness, focused our minds on eternity and showed how a perspective can be radically changed – by turning his death into the victory of the resurrection!

Naomi became bitter but that didn't mean God didn't still have a plan for her. She eventually became the virtual mother of great King David's grandfather, Obed, and so nursed one of the ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ. For her and for us too the victorious Christian life is, in the words of Scottish minister, Alexander Whyte, "a series of new beginnings."