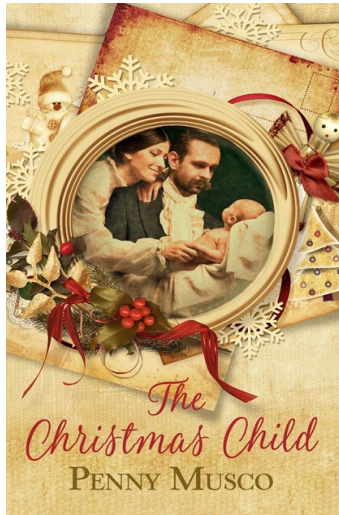


Discussion Questions



THE CHRISTMAS CHILD

Christmas Extravaganza 2018

Author: Penny Musco

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About the Book

Christmas is a time to celebrate Jesus' birth, but for Hannah and Robert Jessup, there is no joy, only the crushing sorrow of a childless marriage. Despite Hannah's newfound faith--another source of tension with her husband--she feels the pain of infertility keenly.

When their unmarried maid offers them her unborn baby, Hannah sees it as an answer to prayer, but Robert refuses and banishes Rosa from their home.

Will infertility and a wife's newfound faith crush Robert and Hannah's marriage? How will God answer Hannah's desperate prayers for a child and her husband's salvation?

TITLE: The Christmas Child

Discussion:

Question 1: Proverbs 30:15-16 says, “There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, ‘Enough!’: the grave, the barren womb, land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, “Enough!”” Christmas Child concerns itself with the second thing, the barren womb. How is it like the other three?

Answer 1: Not being able to give birth to a child is an ache that never completely goes away. Death (the grave) is an ongoing process; people are always dying, so “death” is never satisfied. Land constantly thirsts for water. Fire consumes greedily, always wanting more to feed upon.

Question 2: Christmas Child touches upon the theme of adoption. Adoption still carries a stigma in most societies. Why is that?

Answer 2: Answers vary. Possible ones include adopted children perhaps don’t look like their adoptive parents, there’s the element of the unknown in their background (as opposed to those born to parents), the idea that there’s something wrong with the parents because they can’t produce a biological child of their own.

Question 3: What does Scripture have to say about adoption?

Answer 3: Biblical adoption is a redemptive act of God that places the believer in His family and makes us His children and heirs (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 4:5-7, 26; Eph. 1:5; 1 John 3:1; Rev. 21:7)

Question 4: Rosa Angeleri, from an Italian immigrant family, mentions how others look them down upon. How do we see this in America today?

Answer 4: The controversy over immigration, racial tensions, etc.

Question 5: Christmas Child mentions Jacob Riis’ book, *How the Other Half Lives*, an exposé of New York City’s appalling tenements and their lower-class (and often immigrant) inhabitants. What modern day parallels can you think of between the haves and the have-nots?

Answer 5: Answers vary. Possible ones include the shrinking middle class, first versus third world countries and economies, different regions in the U.S.

Question 6: In Christmas Child, evangelist Dwight L. Moody speaks, in quotes taken from his book, *The Overcoming Life*. He says he find one of the “sweetest promises of all” is Matthew 11:28-30: “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” He then goes on to list places where he would not go to find rest—wealth, pleasure, politics, and learning. Why aren’t these areas conducive to the kind of rest Moody and the Scripture refer to?

Answer 6: Answers vary. Possible ones include the accumulation of wealth usually leads to thirst for more and wealth doesn't shield people for sorrow; the pursuit of pleasure is never completely satisfied, meaning it's a constant quest; politics means division; learning doesn't always lead to satisfaction; in other words, all involve a never-ending striving instead of rest.

Question 7: Robert Jessup's boss and his wife, the Duffs, regard church attendance as a duty, and dismiss Hannah's faith as perhaps just a passing fancy. How do we see this in today's society?

Answer 7: Answers vary. Possible ones include our society seems to be even less indulgent and polite about those who follow biblical Christianity, church attendance isn't a barometer of faith, Christianity is just one of many truths, those who believe Christianity as truth are intolerant.

Question 8: A minor character in Christmas Child, Elvira Murray, says, "[N]one of us is 'good,' none of us follows God's rules completely all the time. We are seeking quite the opposite, our own pleasures and comfort...And the Lord calls that sin." How have you seen this in your own life?

Answer 8: Answers vary.

Question 9: Hannah, Christmas Child's heroine, is amazed to discover the story of another infertile Hannah in 1 Samuel. She briefly wonders whether it's appropriate to pray for a child, but is encouraged by her biblical namesake's own petition. What kind of things do you struggle to pray about?

Answer 9 Answers vary.

Question 10: Romance novels usually have happy endings. In real life, though, not every difficulty is resolved satisfactorily, and therefore romances sometimes are knocked for being unreal fantasies. How would you counter that attitude? Why do you read romances?

Answer 10: Answers vary. Possible ones include fiction (even romances!) help us realize we're not alone in our problems; we enjoy reading about happy endings, especially when we're going through our own struggles; we learn about different times and places while being entertained; we're sometimes stimulated to see solutions for our own difficulties; most fiction reading is relaxing escapism, no matter what the genre!

