

HOMEWORK

Using a memento from your past, such as an older Christmas ornament, tell someone this week how God used your circumstances at that time for your good or His glory.

RAISE THE QUESTION

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still,
The dear Christ enters in.

—Bishop Phillips Brooks, "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

What is your favorite Christmas song?

Over the course of our series on the book of Ruth, we have looked closely at the book's characters and their traits of faith, hope, and gracious love. We have seen how God uses imperfect people for His perfect plan. This week, we'll finish our study of Ruth by seeing how the story fits into the larger Biblical story. What we will find is that in every loss we endure, God is at work plotting our good and His glory.

SEEK THE ANSWER

Read Ruth 4:1-12

1. The situation at the beginning of Ruth 4 is a dramatic cliffhanger. As readers we worry that Boaz and Ruth will not end up together because this other closer relative has legal claim to her. And at first, it looks like this relative is going to claim the entire estate of Naomi's husband—including Ruth. **Talk about a time when you had a "cliffhanger" moment and were not sure of the outcome.**

2. Ruth's other relative lost face when he decided not to take the responsibility of caring for Naomi and Ruth, part of his family. In a not so subtle way, the author of Ruth diminishes the role of this relative by leaving out his name in a chapter otherwise full of identified people. **What obligations do Christians find difficult today?**

Read Ruth 4:13-22

3. Naomi discovered that her observation in 1:21 was wrong—her life was full of blessings. God brought her back to her homeland, He provided her with food, shelter, and financial security, and He blessed her with a lasting legacy. **Why do we find it sometimes easier to focus on what we do not have than what God has given us?**

LIVE THE TRUTH

4. When we arrive at the end of chapter four, the people *still* do not know the impact of their actions on the rest of history. They never knew that their seemingly ordinary lives would be directly connected to the coming Messiah. **In what ways does the story of Ruth encourage you to live for Christ?**

5. Ruth illustrates that God's purpose for His people is to connect us to something deeper than ourselves. **How can you better connect to God's Kingdom purposes?**