WHERE WAS GOD?

He was slated to be the first man to break the four-minute mile at the Olympics. When he was twenty-six years old, however, Louis Zamperini boarded the Green Hornet, a wobbly B-24 bomber, in late May 1943, during World War II. The plane went down over the Pacific, forcing him and his pilot to travel 2,000 miles on a tenuous raft with no water or food.

What followed is a series of events that went from bad to worse. This great Olympic athlete spent nearly fifty days at sea, battling starvation, dehydration, and battles with sharks and enemy planes. After surviving the most trying of circumstances, he became a prisoner of war and endured torture beyond human imagination, disease, and psychological trauma. Although he survived the war, he did so with a difficult re-entry that included hatred, nightmares, flashbacks, and alcoholism.

When evil is unleashed and has its own way with people full of so much promise—when morality is overcome by evil—how is it possible for an all-loving God to exist at the same time, in the same place? To answer these questions, God points to sacred history, where the lives of great men and women who learned the value of true education changed the world.
Write out Hebrews 11:23–29 from the translation of your choice. You may also re-write the passage in your own words, outline, or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Hebrews 11:23–29. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

What inspires you most in Hebrews 11’s vignette of Moses?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/edu12-3

THIS MIND

The Faith of Moses

Moses’ suffering was different from that of others. Whereas Joseph was sold as a slave and Daniel taken captive, Moses was taken from his parents while he was still a child. Only for the first twelve years of his life was Moses able to spend time with his people before his departure to the court of Egypt. His parents were enslaved, making him a son of a humble background. And yet he was to move into Pharaoh’s palace to live among Egyptian royalty and became the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. The life of Moses is outlined in Hebrews 11:24–28 by some decisions he made.

1. Not Her Son

The first of Moses’ decisions that Hebrews records is the choice to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. A careful student of Scripture and history should be immediately alarmed at Moses for this choice. This woman saved his life. While Moses was floating on the Nile River with reeds as his only anchor and a small ark as his single source of safety from the elements or predators, it was Pharaoh’s daughter who rescued him. Knowing that he was a Hebrew boy, “she had compassion on him” (Ex. 2:6). To Jochebed, she said, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you wages” (Ex. 2:9). What a great person this woman may have been! She saves the life of a slave, has compassion on him, pays a slave to ensure his proper care, and then takes him as her own. In most cases, it would not be a sign of disrespect for Moses to adopt this woman as a second mother. However, Moses refused the closeness of this connection.

2. Choosing to Suffer

The second decision Moses made was to choose suffering. Suffering is often simply endured, not chosen. No one wakes up in the morning and, given the option, chooses suffering and affliction. For some honorable cause one might choose to suffer, but not typically for the people who are the cause of the suffering. Yet, Moses was of a different breed—he not only endured affliction, but he chose it.

3. The Mathematics of Faith

The third choice Moses made is one of value. Given the simple mathematical problem to solve, Moses was asked if the riches of the greatest country in the world were less than, greater than, or equal to the reproach of the cross. For Moses, the reproach of Christ was greater than the greatest riches of the wealthiest country in the world up to that time.

The narrative states that Moses didn’t fear the king. Fear is intelligent. In many cases, fear keeps us alive. Fear prevents us from doing things that are unreasonably dangerous. A person who has no fear is not safe to be around. But in Moses’ case, he was not afraid of the most powerful person in the world.

There was a reason for the unreasonable actions of Moses. Rather than fearing, Moses was a man of faith. He “endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). Faith opened his eyes to see what sight and reason are incapable of understanding. Yet he did not arrive at this place on his own. By example, his parents had educated and instructed him. Because “they were not afraid of the king’s command” (v. 23), “he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king” (v. 27). In the highest sense, this is true education—instilling in others our own faithfulness to God.
THE FAITH OF JOSEPH

“By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones” (Heb. 11:22).

The life of Joseph speaks to faithfulness to God in all things—the little as well as the big matters of life. He was sold as a slave at the beginning of his adulthood, committing his future to God and never taking it back regardless of the challenges he encountered.

“In the bitter life of a stranger and a slave, amidst the sights and sounds of vice and the allurements of heathen worship, a worship surrounded with all the attractions of wealth and culture and the pomp of royalty, Joseph was steadfast. He had learned the lesson of obedience to duty. Faithfulness in every station, from the most lowly to the most exalted, trained every power for highest service.

“At the time when he was called to the court of Pharaoh, Egypt was the greatest of nations. In civilization, art, learning, she was unequalled. Through a period of utmost difficulty and danger, Joseph administered the affairs of the kingdom; and this he did in a manner that won the confidence of the king and the people” (Education, 52, 53).

Speaking of Joseph, the Bible says that he was a fruitful bough by a well (Genesis 49:22). He may not have been planted on favorable soil, but the external source of water provided through a well allowed him to grow. The implication is that the well was the reason why his branches flourished—so much so that they ran “over the wall.” His mission was not to be contained to the place where the tree belonged. It was to cross over to the other side. He was hated and shot at, yet he “remained in strength” (Genesis 49:24).

This mission of Joseph was not a common one. He was the source of the salvation of an entire nation. In order to accomplish this, the young man had to first become a slave and a prisoner. There was a high price to his usefulness. In God’s wisdom and love, Joseph was prepared through trial and difficulty. Yet these experiences were not wasted.

The course on suffering is not extracurricular in the field of success—it is the main subject. Through suffering, the heart of Joseph and the heart of God were bound together. One who suffered much was able to trace his life and conclude that God always stands by us. Among all the Bible narratives, Joseph’s circumstances would have given him good reason to confuse God’s preparation with abandonment. Instead he leaves behind the legacy of faith, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones up from here’ ” (Genesis 50:25).
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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Exodus 2:1–10
Genesis 49:22–26
Genesis 37, 39, 41–50

What other narratives come to mind, where the main character learned great life principles from suffering?

A LIFE OF DISSONANCE

The book of Esther is a book of dissonance. From a literary standpoint, it is deeply sober while also being humorous. For example, when Haman's plan of betrayal is uncovered at the end of the book, he pleads to the queen for his life. This is a solemn moment when life is at stake. However, while he pleads for mercy, he accidentally falls on the queen just as the king walks in upon the scene. His clumsiness might be very humorous were it not for its unfortunate timing and deadly consequences.

The narrative itself is dissonant. The story is structured around ten banquets. In the beginning, there is a banquet for Vashti, and in the end there is one for Esther. Each banquet forever alters the life of the woman hosting it. Their lives are impacted in opposite ways by the banquets they prepare. Even the plot is dissonant. Mordecai, a descendant of Kish, a Benjamite Jew, and Haman the Agagite are engaged in a continuation of a feud that existed between their ancestors, Saul, the literal son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin, and Agag, the previous king of the Amalekites, whom Saul failed to eradicate at the command of God.

Finally, the lead figure in the book, Esther, is herself a dissonant character. For some, she is a faithful woman who, at the risk of her own life, stood up to save God's people from certain death. Others have serious questions regarding her faith. Why did she hide her identity? Why would she marry an unbelieving king? Why would she partake of a pageant that might compromise her purity?

Some argue that she was a victim and was unable to escape things beyond her control as a young woman living in a male-dominated society. Others point to Daniel and his three friends, who, even at the prospect of death, were unwilling to sacrifice any of God's principles. Regardless of where we stand regarding the character of Esther, her story illustrates that God is not afraid of dissonance. Whether our faithfulness in Him is enduring and misunderstood, or whether we've had weak faith but decide to put it all on the line for Him in a particular moment of crisis, Esther's life shows us that God can use us when we are totally surrendered to Him.

A great dissonant reality that emerges in the life of Esther is the character of God. Out of all the books in the Bible, the book of Esther is the only one that doesn't mention God by name. When Esther and her entire people, who call themselves by God's name, are in the moment of greatest crisis, is God missing because He's absent? Esther's story demonstrates that the obvious answer is no. A hidden God is still a very present One. Although a casual reader of the book will not be able to see God, a careful reader cannot but see Him. He is orchestrating the salvation of His people with measures beyond anything they themselves could imagine.

Luke clarifies this very thing about God in the life of Jesus. When certain women went to the tomb of Jesus in search for Him, the angels responded, “He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24:6). True education prepares us so that in the hardest moments of our lives, when God is hidden, we might be able to see the Invisible.
**THE GREATEST WANT OF THE WORLD**

“In early life, just as they were passing from youth to manhood, Joseph and Daniel were separated from their homes and carried as captives to heathen lands. Especially was Joseph subject to the temptations that attend great changes of fortune. In his father’s home a tenderly cherished child; in the house of Potiphar a slave, then a confidant and companion; a man of affairs, educated by study, observation, contact with men; in Pharaoh’s dungeon a prisoner of state, condemned unjustly, without hope of vindication or prospect of release; called at a great crisis to the leadership of the nation—what enabled him to preserve his integrity?

“No one can stand upon a lofty height without danger. As the tempest that leaves unharmed the flower of the valley uproots the tree upon the mountaintop, so do fierce temptations that leave untouched the lowly in life assail those who stand in the world’s high places of success and honor. But Joseph bore alike the test of adversity and of prosperity. The same fidelity was manifest in the palace of the Pharaohs as in the prisoner’s cell.”...

“Loyalty to God, faith in the Unseen, was Joseph’s anchor. In this lay the hiding of his power.

‘The arms of his hands were made strong
By the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.’...

“By their wisdom and justice, by the purity and benevolence of their daily life, by their devotion to the interests of the people,—and they, idolaters,—Joseph and Daniel proved themselves true to the principles of their early training, true to Him whose representatives they were. These men, both in Egypt and in Babylon, the whole nation honored; and in them a heathen people, and all the nations with which they were connected, beheld an illustration of the goodness and beneficence of God, an illustration of the love of Christ.

“What a lifework was that of these noble Hebrews! As they bade farewell to their childhood home, how little did they dream of their high destiny! Faithful and steadfast, they yielded themselves to the divine guiding, so that through them God could fulfill His purpose.

“The same mighty truths that were revealed through these men, God desires to reveal through the youth and the children of today. The history of Joseph and Daniel is an illustration of what He will do for those who yield themselves to Him and with the whole heart seek to accomplish His purpose.

“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.

“But such a character is not the result of accident; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. A noble character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man.”

*Education, 51–57*
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What are some valuable life lessons that you have learned from enduring through suffering?

Why does God allow some suffering?

How can you make the same choices that Moses did?

How can we instill in others our own faithfulness to God?

How does the dissonance of the book of Esther resonate with you?

What are some moments when you “sensed” God’s providence even though you didn’t “sense” Him?

How have you fared in tests of adversity and of prosperity?

How does the education of character development help us endure not only through but during suffering?