

7. Paul says his suffering was *“for your benefit,”* so God’s grace would reach more people. How have you seen God use someone’s suffering to strengthen others?
8. Paul calls our troubles *“small,”* though he had been beaten, shipwrecked, and imprisoned. What does it look like for you to *“fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen”*?

READ: Hebrews 11:32–40 (NLT)

9. Some in Hebrews 11 shut the mouths of lions; others were tortured and killed, yet all *“earned a good reputation because of their faith.”* Have you ever felt an unanswered prayer meant your faith was too small?
10. Some *“placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection.”* Knowing the big picture of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration, how does the end of the story change how you walk through the middle?
11. None of these faithful people *“received all that God had promised.”* What prayers are you praying and what seeds are you planting that you may only see answered in your children or grandchildren?



CHAIR TIME TOOLS

Reflection Questions for Chair Time: think about the following questions and pray through them with Jesus.

- 1) Where have I been pressed or knocked down lately? Ask God to show you where He has kept you from being crushed.
- 2) Each morning this week, ask God to remind you of His faithfulness and to renew your spirit for the day.
- 3) Who am I praying for that I may never see the answer for? Write their names down and keep praying.

Where is God in the Middle of Suffering?

Dr. John Jackson | October 18, 2026

WHY SUFFERING? The Bible teaches...

Evil is evil (Psalm 97:10, Lamentations 3:33):

There is a difference between the perfect will of God and the permissive will of God. The Bible teaches 3 things about this:

- God is sovereign. Nothing happens that is outside of His control (Job 38-42, Ephesians 1:11, Lamentations 3:37).
- There are things that God does not want to happen that do happen (eg: death of the wicked, evil in the world, Ezekiel 18:23, 2 Peter 3:9).
- There are some things that God wants that do not happen (eg: killing of the prophets, Matthew 23:37).

There is a big picture: Creation (Genesis 1 & 2), Fall (Genesis 3), Redemption (Foreshadowed in Genesis 3, Gospels), Restoration (Revelation 21-22).

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, ‘I believed, and so I spoke,’ we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:7-18 NIV

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

Hebrews 11:32-40 NIV

Challenge:

- What prayers are you praying, what seeds are you planting, where you may not see the answer in your life, but in your children or grandchildren?
- Are you willing to sow seeds today for the future that you do not see?

For practical, cross-cultural Bible studies related to sermon topics, visit:



Homework

Where is God in The Middle of Suffering?

Fall 2026 | Week 6
Message Date 10/18/2026

MY STORY



1. What's the most dramatic you've ever been about a really minor injury or inconvenience? Think paper cut or stubbed toe?
2. What is your favorite movie trilogy of all time and why?

QUICK REVIEW



3. What caught your attention from Sunday's message?

DIGGING DEEPER / TAKING IT HOME



READ: 3:31–39 (NLT)

4. Verse 33 says God “*does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow.*” How does it help to know we don't have to call our suffering good, and that God takes no pleasure in our pain?
5. Verses 34–36 describe injustice and ask, “*doesn't the Lord see all these things?*” Sunday, we heard that some things God does not want still happen. How does that shape how you view your pain?

READ: 2 Corinthians 4:7–18 (NLT)

6. Paul says we are like “*fragile clay jars,*” pressed on every side but not crushed. Which line in verses 8–9 best describes where you are right now?