

NATIVE SON
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A STUDY GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL THEMES

For each point, find scripture passages that back up your answers.

1. How did Elizabeth and Carleton individually react to Washington's unexpected opposition to their marriage?

2. Have you ever been faced with the indefinite delay of a dream that was dear to you? How did you react? What was the outcome of your response?

3. Knowing they might never have another opportunity to fulfill their love, both Elizabeth and Carleton were deeply tempted to seek temporary comfort in physical intimacy. Why did Carleton refuse to give in to it? How did he demonstrate his deepest love for Elizabeth and honor her by refusing to succumb to momentary desire?

4. When everything important to Carleton, even his very identity, was stripped away, what was his response?

5. Have you ever faced extreme suffering—whether it was physical or emotional, or both—similar to what Carleton faced during his enslavement by the Seneca? What carried you through your time of testing?

6. What do you think God's purpose is in allowing the kind of suffering Carleton experienced? Do you think it is ever God's will for his children to suffer? Would that be the action of a loving parent?

7. Does suffering only result when we are disobedient to God's laws and will? Does God ever make someone do what is wrong? When other people treat us unfairly, even persecute us, is it ever God's fault?

8. Do you think God sometimes allows us to suffer even when we are fully submitted to him and obeying his leading in our lives? If yes, why do you think he permits our pain when we are being obedient?

9. Explain what free will means. Should God keep someone from choosing to do what is wrong and hurting others? Should God have made us so that we have no choice but to obey him? Find scripture passages that support or contradict your opinions.

10. How did his own enslavement change his attitude toward the black slaves he held in bondage, though unwillingly? What did he resolve to do?

11. When months passed after Carleton's disappearance, and Elizabeth began to give up hope that he was still alive, she found herself being drawn to another man. Why was she attracted to him? In what painful dilemma did this attraction place her?

12. Tess counseled Elizabeth to wait for God's perfect will for her life. Have you ever gone through a painful time of doubt and of questioning what the Lord's will was for your life, when there seemed to be no answer? What did you choose to do? What was the result of your decision? What would you resolve to do today?