

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 6 The Purpose of the Book of Job Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Walton, Job, Session 6, The Purpose of the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. John Walton's lecture on the Book of Job explores the book's purpose, focusing on how it helps us understand God's actions during times of suffering. The lecture examines two accusations leveled against God: one questioning whether it's good policy for the righteous to prosper, and the other questioning why the righteous suffer. Walton argues that the book's resolution isn't simply "I'm God, you're not," but rather an invitation to trust God's wisdom and power, even amidst hardship. Ultimately, the lecture aims to help listeners develop a more nuanced understanding of God's actions and policies in the face of adversity. The lecture concludes by emphasizing the importance of trusting God, even when his ways are mysterious.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 6 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms & Wisdom → Job → Walton).



**Walton_Job_Session
n06.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of John Walton's lecture on the Book of Job:

Briefing Document: John Walton on the Purpose of the Book of Job

Source: Excerpts from "Walton_Job_Session06.pdf"

Date: Not specified in source

Speaker: Dr. John Walton

Topic: The Purpose of the Book of Job

Main Theme: The core purpose of the Book of Job is to help us understand how to think about God, particularly his policies and actions, when faced with suffering and disaster. The book explores this through a rhetorical structure of competing accusations against God's policies, and ultimately resolves by encouraging trust in God's wisdom and power.

Key Ideas and Concepts:

1. **The Book is About God, Not Just Job:** The lecture emphasizes that the book isn't primarily about testing Job's faith, but about exploring the nature of God and his ways of working in the world. As Walton puts it, "This is more about God than about Job."
2. **Purpose: Understanding God's Policies:** The central question the Book of Job addresses is, "How does God work in the world, especially when we're suffering?" The book is designed to help readers think well and appropriately about God when disaster strikes and to explore the apparent contradictions between God's goodness, power, and the existence of suffering. According to Walton, "This book is to help us learn how to think well about God when disaster strikes."
3. **Two Competing Accusations Against God:**
 - **The Challenger's Accusation (Satan):** The challenger questions God's policy of rewarding the righteous. He argues, "Is it a good policy, God, for you to bring prosperity to righteous people?" This suggests that rewarding righteousness might create mercenary motives, leading people to pursue righteousness for the benefits rather than for its own sake. The challenger's point is that God's policy of blessing the righteous "corrupts a person's motivations."

- **Job's Accusation:** After enduring immense suffering, Job challenges God by asking, "Is it really a good idea for you to let righteous people suffer?" He questions why those who are on God's side experience pain, which seems to be a poor policy. He essentially asks if it's appropriate to inflict suffering on the righteous.
1. **The Conflict:** These two accusations against God create a paradox for God's policies, as one accuses him for blessing the righteous, and the other accuses him for allowing them to suffer. "The challenger is saying, 'It's not a good policy for righteous people to prosper.' Job is raising the point: 'It's not good policy for righteous people to suffer.'" The book frames God's policies as being under scrutiny.
 2. **The Test of Job's Righteousness:** The challenger's aim is to reveal if Job's righteousness is genuine, not merely a result of God's blessings. As Walton clarifies, "The only way we can tell whether Job is righteous or not is to take away the benefits...the book is not about suffering. The book is about righteousness." The removal of prosperity serves as a test of the true nature of Job's character.
 3. **Misinterpreting God's Response:** Walton addresses the common misinterpretation that God's response at the end of the book is simply a power play ("I'm God, you're not, so shut up"). He disputes this idea, stating, "Some people think that by the time you get to the end of the book, you've got a statement more along the line of 'I'm God you're not.'"
 4. **God's Response: A Call to Trust:** Instead, Walton argues that God's response is a "trust card" based on his supreme wisdom and power. "It's rather along the line of, 'I am God who is supremely wise and powerful. And so, I want you to trust me, even when you don't understand.'" God is asking for trust even in times of despair.
 5. **Suffering and Blame:** The book helps us to not immediately blame God for suffering. Walton notes, "It's easy to think that because when things are going wrong, we look for somebody to blame, and God's the easiest one to blame." The purpose is to understand God's work in the world so we can trust Him, even if we don't understand His policies.
 6. **God's Explanation:** God's actual explanation to Job in the final chapters of the book provides insight into the workings of the world. The book is designed to help us to think well of God and understand His policies, especially when disaster strikes.

Key Quotes:

- "This book is to help us learn how to think well about God when disaster strikes."
- "Is it a good policy, God, for you to bring prosperity to righteous people?"
- "It's not good policy for righteous people to suffer."
- "The book is not about suffering. The book is about righteousness."
- "I am God who is supremely wise and powerful. And so, I want you to trust me, even when you don't understand."
- "How do we understand our suffering so that we can feel comfortable trusting God?"

Conclusion:

The Book of Job is ultimately about exploring the nature of God and encouraging readers to maintain trust in God's wisdom and power, even when faced with suffering and apparent injustice. The book is not about punishing Job or proving a theological point. Instead, it is about helping us to learn how to think appropriately about God in the face of tragedy and to trust Him even when we don't understand His ways. Walton's interpretation encourages a view of God as compassionate and wise, rather than simply wielding arbitrary power.

4. Job Study Guide: Session 6, The Purpose of the Book of Job

The Book of Job: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. According to the lecture, what is the primary purpose of the Book of Job?
2. What is the "challenger's" initial accusation against God regarding Job?
3. How does the challenger's accusation relate to God's policy of rewarding the righteous?
4. What is Job's counter-accusation against God, and how does it differ from the challenger's?
5. How does the lecture suggest the book addresses the core issue of suffering?
6. How does the lecture describe the idea that God uses a "power card" at the end of the book?
7. What does the speaker suggest is the more appropriate understanding of God's response to Job?
8. Why is it difficult to trust God when things are going wrong?
9. How does understanding God's actions in the world affect our ability to trust him?
10. How does the book ultimately encourage believers to think about God's policies?

Answer Key

1. The primary purpose of the Book of Job is to help readers learn how to think well about God when disaster strikes. It aims to explore God's policies and how He works in the world, especially when suffering occurs.
2. The challenger accuses God of having a policy that is not good because it rewards the righteous, suggesting that such rewards create ulterior motives for righteousness. He asks if Job serves God for nothing.
3. The challenger believes that God's policy of rewarding the righteous with prosperity corrupts their motivations, training them to desire the benefits rather than true righteousness. This is seen as a flaw in God's policy.

4. Job's counter-accusation is that it's not good policy for God to allow the righteous to suffer. He questions why those who are on God's side face hardship, differing from the challenger who questions why the righteous prosper.
5. The lecture suggests the book uses suffering as a way to explore the nature and mettle of Job's righteousness. It is not about suffering itself but how suffering tests righteousness and the proper view of God.
6. The idea of God using a "power card" suggests that God ends the debate simply by asserting His power and authority ("I'm God, you're not"), which implies God can act however he chooses with no need to explain himself. This idea is presented as an inaccurate interpretation.
7. The speaker suggests the more appropriate understanding is that God's response is not a power card but a trust card. God asks Job to trust in His wisdom and power even when things are not understood.
8. It is difficult to trust God when things are going wrong because when people experience suffering, they tend to blame someone, and God is often the first target. If God is blamed for suffering, then people feel they cannot trust Him.
9. Understanding how God works in the world, according to the lecture, helps people to trust Him even when suffering occurs, as they can view his actions from a better perspective.
10. The book encourages believers to view God as trustworthy and reliable, even in the most desperate times, and to think about his policies as just, even when they are not understandable.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Choose one of the following questions and write an essay of appropriate length using your understanding of the source material.

1. Discuss the two accusations against God presented in the Book of Job, and analyze how they contribute to the book's central theme of questioning God's policies.
2. Explain how the Book of Job navigates the complex relationship between righteousness and suffering, and what conclusions can be drawn regarding divine justice.

3. Analyze the lecture's concept of "trust" as a response to suffering. How does this reframe the traditional idea of God using a "power card"?
4. Explore the purpose of the Book of Job in light of the question, "How do we think about God when disaster strikes?"
5. How does the Book of Job challenge traditional views of divine reward and punishment? Use the text to defend your position.

Glossary of Key Terms

Challenger: The figure in the Book of Job who questions God's policy of rewarding the righteous, also sometimes referred to as the "adversary" or the "satan."

God's Policies: The ways in which God governs and acts in the world, particularly in relation to the concepts of reward, suffering, and justice.

Mercenary: A term used in the lecture to describe someone who acts righteously for personal gain rather than out of genuine conviction.

Mettle: The strength and resilience of a person's character. This term is used in the context of the book focusing on the "mettle" of Job's righteousness.

Power Card: The notion that God's response in Job is an assertion of divine power and authority, silencing any further questions or objections.

Righteousness: Moral virtue or integrity; in the Book of Job, it refers to the moral character of Job, a person described as blameless and upright.

Suffering: The experience of pain, distress, or hardship, particularly as it affects the righteous in the context of the Book of Job.

Trust Card: The idea that God's response to Job is an invitation to trust in His wisdom and power, even when His actions are not understood.

Ulterior Motive: A hidden reason or intention behind someone's actions or behavior, especially when not seen as morally right.

5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 6, The Purpose of the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Book of Job

- What is the primary purpose of the Book of Job?** The primary purpose of the Book of Job is to help us learn how to think well about God when disaster strikes and to explore God's policies. It encourages us to grapple with the question of how God works in the world, particularly when we or seemingly undeserving people suffer. The book seeks to foster trust in God, even when circumstances are dire and understanding is lacking.
- What are the two accusations or challenges presented against God in the Book of Job?** The Book of Job presents two opposing accusations against God's policies. First, the "challenger" questions whether God's policy of rewarding the righteous with prosperity is ultimately good, suggesting that such rewards might corrupt their motivations. Second, Job, after suffering intensely, questions whether it's a good policy for God to allow righteous people to suffer. Together, these accusations raise the question of what is an appropriate policy of God.
- How does the "challenger" or "antagonist" question God's policies?** The challenger argues that rewarding righteous individuals with prosperity creates a mercenary mindset, where people serve God for the benefits, not out of genuine righteousness. This suggests that God's policies inadvertently undermine true righteousness, leading people to seek rewards rather than genuinely valuing righteousness itself. This makes it impossible to tell if they are actually righteous.
- How does Job, after experiencing great suffering, question God's policies?** Job's challenge is the opposite of the challenger. Job, after suffering devastating losses despite his righteousness, questions God's policy of allowing the righteous to suffer. He struggles to understand why those who are "on God's side" experience such pain and hardship, suggesting it is not a good policy. This suffering seems contradictory to their righteousness.
- Is the Book of Job primarily about suffering, or is it about something else?** Although suffering is a central theme, the book is not primarily about suffering itself. Instead, the book focuses on righteousness and how to think appropriately about God. The book questions the nature and motivation of Job's righteousness. The suffering is used as a testing ground for Job, and for readers to think about God's policies.

- **What is meant by the phrase "power card" in relation to how God responds at the end of the Book of Job?** Some interpretations of the Book of Job suggest that God responds to Job's questions by simply asserting his power and authority, essentially saying, "I'm God, you're not, so don't question me." This interpretation suggests God is brushing off Job's complaints with the weight of divine authority rather than offering meaningful answers. But this interpretation is not correct.
- **How is God's response in the Book of Job better described than as a "power card"?** Instead of a power play, the book suggests that God's response is more of a "trust card." God is not saying "I am God, so be silent" but rather "I am supremely wise and powerful, so trust me, even when you don't understand." It is an invitation to trust in God's wisdom and goodness, rather than a demand for blind obedience, and this answer is more a "compassion card."
- **What is the book ultimately trying to teach us about God's nature and how he works in the world?** The Book of Job aims to teach us that God is trustworthy and reliable, even amidst the most challenging and confusing times of life. It encourages us to avoid blaming God when things go wrong but to seek a deeper understanding of how he operates in the world. The book guides us toward a belief that God's actions, though sometimes incomprehensible, are based on wisdom, goodness, and an ultimate concern for justice and righteousness. The book aims to make us comfortable trusting God even when we don't understand.