

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 24

Job in 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 24, Job in the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from John Walton's "Walton_Job_Session24.pdf" analyzes Job's role in the Book of Job. **Walton argues that Job's primary function is to present the problem of suffering, not its solution**, illustrating flawed responses and inadequate wisdom. **Job's righteousness, though genuine, is not presented as a perfect model**, and his piety, while evident, is not the focus of the narrative's message. **Instead, the book uses Job's experiences to teach readers how to respond appropriately to suffering and how to view God correctly.** The lecture intends to guide listeners toward a better understanding of the Book of Job's ultimate message, emphasizing that Job himself isn't the central example to emulate.

2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 24 – 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
n24.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided source, "Walton_Job_Session24.pdf," focusing on John Walton's analysis of Job's role in the Book of Job:

Briefing Document: Job's Role in the Book of Job

Source: "Walton_Job_Session24.pdf" (John Walton's Teaching on the Book of Job, Session 24)

Overview: This session focuses on analyzing Job's role in the Book of Job. Walton argues that Job is not a model of how to respond to suffering but rather a character who illustrates incorrect responses and inadequate wisdom. Job's righteousness and integrity are recognized, but his understanding of God and his reactions to suffering are flawed, serving to highlight the book's true message about God.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Job as the Problem-Poser, Not the Answer-Giver:

- Walton emphasizes that Job's primary function is to present the problem of suffering and injustice. He does not provide the answers the book offers.
- "Job's role is to pose the problem of the book. His role is not to give the answer that the book has to offer."
- Job's responses to suffering represent "yet one more wrong way to respond to suffering."
- Job's perspective is one of inadequate wisdom.

1. Job's Righteousness: A Contrast to Benefits:

- Job's righteousness is not absolute, as "no one is righteous as the Psalms tell us," but it sets him apart from the world around him.
- His righteousness is contrasted with the concept of benefits, indicating that his righteousness is not motivated by potential gain.
- "Is Job ultimately interested in what he stands to gain by his righteous behavior, or alternatively, is his righteous behavior having independent value regardless of the benefits? And, of course, that's how he goes."

- The text focuses on establishing that benefit is not his motivator for righteous behavior.

1. **Motivation for Job's Righteousness and Piety:**

- The text explores what motivates Job's righteousness if not potential gain but leaves that question largely unanswered. "The text doesn't really say because it is mostly interested in establishing whether the benefit is the motivator or not if the benefit is not the motivator, it has made its point."
- Walton defines "piety" as ritual performance aimed at appeasing gods, "insurance against the fragile egos of the gods."
- Job's ritual piety is highlighted, especially his sacrifices on behalf of his children, suggesting a tendency toward over-conscientiousness.
- Job's meticulous ritual piety may stem from a suspicion that God is petty, leading him to perform rituals as protection. This potentially reveals that his righteousness might also be rooted in fear of an unreasonable God.

1. **Job's Integrity and Self-Righteousness:**

- Job's integrity is affirmed, demonstrated by his refusal to abandon his faith despite his suffering. "That one thing he gets right, he retains his integrity."
- His integrity is tied to serving God "for nothing."
- Job is also depicted as self-righteous, a trait highlighted by Elihu. This becomes a problem when Job elevates himself above God in the name of his own righteousness.
- "His self-righteousness is a problem because he uses it as a means of setting himself higher than God."
- "The problem arises when Job's view of his righteousness is so confident that he's ready to denigrate God's justice to maintain it."
- God's words in chapter 40, verse 8, confirm this.

1. **Job as a Flawed Character:**

- Walton makes it clear that Job is not a perfect figure in the book. "So, Job fails as a person on many counts in the book. He's a guy that's got a lot going for him, and he does certain important things right. But he also makes a lot of mistakes."

- Job's errors help emphasize that the book is ultimately about God and proper responses to suffering rather than Job.
- "Job is just another character in the book who gets things wrong."
- **The True Message of the Book:** The Book of Job's purpose is to lead us to better responses to suffering and, importantly, to a better understanding of God.
- "The book wants to tell us how to get things right."
- "The book wants to lead us to better responses when things go wrong, especially about how to think about God."
- Readers should not elevate Job as a role model for suffering but learn from his mistakes. "We need to learn the message of the book, not put Job on a high pedestal."

Implications:

- Walton's analysis suggests that Job is not intended to be a figure to be emulated in his responses to suffering.
- The focus of the Book of Job is not on human suffering alone but more so on the nature of God and the need for correct understanding in the face of life's hardships.
- Job's struggle highlights how even those with righteousness can have flawed understandings and reactions when confronted with adversity.

Next Steps (as outlined in the source):

- The next part of Walton's analysis will explore the role of the world in the Book of Job.

This briefing document provides a comprehensive summary of the key themes, ideas, and quotes from the provided source, focusing on John Walton's interpretation of Job's character and function within the Book of Job.

4. Job Study Guide: Session 24, Job in the Book of Job

Job in the Book of Job: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is Job's primary role in the Book of Job, and why is it important to understand this role?
2. According to Walton, what kind of righteousness does Job demonstrate?
3. What is the great symbiosis, and how does it relate to Job's piety?
4. How does Job's ritual piety potentially make him vulnerable?
5. What is the "Challenger's" suggestion regarding Job's motivations?
6. What does Job get right in the story, according to Walton?
7. How is Job's self-righteousness problematic?
8. Is Job intended to be a model for how to respond to suffering? Why or why not?
9. According to Walton, what is the main focus of the Book of Job, and how does Job relate to that focus?
10. According to Walton, what is the ultimate goal of the Book of Job?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Job's role is to pose the problem of suffering in the book. It is important because he does not offer the book's answer, and his responses to suffering are, in many ways, inadequate.
2. Job demonstrates a righteousness that distinguishes him from the world, not absolute righteousness in God's eyes. It is righteousness that is not tied to the benefit it may bring.
3. The great symbiosis is the system of ritual actions used in the ancient world to "pamper" the gods. It relates to Job's piety because it was the traditional motivation for ritual performances.
4. Job's ritual piety highlights his potential fear that God is petty and may punish based on technicalities. This indicates that he might be motivated by fear of God's anger and not true faith.

5. The Challenger suggests that Job's righteousness and piety are motivated by a desire for benefits from a capricious god, placing him squarely within the great symbiosis.
6. Job retains his integrity by serving God for nothing and not forfeiting it based on bad advice from his wife and friends. This integrity shows that his loyalty is not dependent on reward.
7. Job's self-righteousness becomes problematic when he uses it to place himself in a higher position than God. This is problematic because he is willing to denigrate God's justice in order to maintain his righteousness.
8. No, Job is not a model because he makes mistakes in how he responds to his suffering. The book uses Job's character to demonstrate inadequate ways to respond to suffering in order to teach readers how to respond appropriately.
9. The main focus of the Book of Job is God and not Job. Job's character acts as an illustration of how not to respond to suffering and to demonstrate how someone, even a righteous person, can misunderstand God.
10. The ultimate goal of the Book of Job is to teach readers how to better respond to suffering, especially in their understanding of God. It intends to move the reader toward better thinking about God and His ways.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each question in essay format, citing specific evidence from the source.

1. Discuss the different ways Job's righteousness is portrayed in the Book of Job according to Walton. How does his view of righteousness contribute to his misinterpretations of his situation, and how does it compare to God's perspective?
2. Explain the concept of the great symbiosis in ancient Near Eastern thought and how it relates to Job's piety. According to Walton, how does this framework create a potential vulnerability for Job, and how does this impact Job's understanding of his situation?
3. Explore the nuances of Job's integrity. How does Job maintain his integrity throughout the book, and what would have caused him to forfeit it? How does this connect to the Challenger's perspective?

4. Analyze how Job's self-righteousness leads to his errors in understanding God's justice. According to Walton, how does this self-righteousness impact his relationship with God and the book's message about God?
5. Considering Walton's perspective on Job's role, explore how the book is not about Job. What is the central focus of the Book of Job and how does Job's role and actions serve to support this larger message?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Challenger:** The figure in the heavenly court who questions Job's motivations for his piety and righteousness.
- **Great Symbiosis:** The ancient Near Eastern belief system that the gods were dependent on human rituals and sacrifices to maintain their strength and moods.
- **Integrity:** In the context of Job, refers to Job's commitment to God, demonstrated by serving Him for nothing, and unwavering even through immense suffering.
- **Piety:** In the ancient Near East, refers to the ritual performances meant to appease or please the gods; it is not necessarily tied to moral righteousness.
- **Righteousness:** In Job's case, it is not absolute righteousness, but a moral uprightness that distinguishes him from others in his community, and which is not rooted in a desire for benefits.
- **Self-Righteousness:** An excessive confidence in one's own righteousness, to the point of denigrating God's justice in order to maintain it.
- **Ritual Performance:** Specific actions or procedures carried out for religious purposes, often associated with piety in the ancient Near East, and meant to appease or "pamper" the gods.

5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 24, Job in the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Book of Job

- **What is Job's primary role in the Book of Job, and is he meant to be a model for us?** Job's primary role is to *pose* the problem of suffering and injustice, not to provide the solution. His responses to suffering, including his belief that God is unjust and his demand to confront God, are actually presented as incorrect ways to respond. He is *not* intended to be a role model for how to handle suffering; rather, he illustrates inadequate wisdom. The book uses him as a vehicle for exploring better responses.
- **What is the significance of Job's righteousness, and how is it viewed within the context of the book?** Job's righteousness is described as a righteousness that distinguishes him from the world around him; it's not absolute perfection. This righteousness is contrasted with the idea of benefits or reward, and it's primarily concerned with whether his righteous behavior has value independent of any gains he might receive. While his righteousness is genuine, it's not the focus of the book's ultimate message.
- **What is the "great symbiosis" mentioned, and how does it relate to Job's piety?** The "great symbiosis" refers to the ancient Near Eastern concept of ritual performance (piety) as a way to "pamper" the gods and maintain favor with them. In this system, piety is essentially insurance against the gods' potential volatility. Job, as evidenced by his ritual sacrifices for his children, is highly conscientious in this regard. The book, however, doesn't present piety as a solution or problem, indicating that the great symbiosis view of God and religion is not the primary focus of the book either.
- **How does Job's perceived "petty" view of God contribute to the Challenger's suggestion?** Job's meticulous ritual piety, seemingly based on a belief that God might punish even inadvertent offenses, suggests a view of God as petty. The "Challenger" in the story sees this as evidence that Job's righteousness might be motivated by fear of God's capricious nature, not by true devotion. This perception becomes the basis for questioning whether Job's piety and righteousness are truly selfless.

- **What is the importance of Job maintaining his integrity, and how is it demonstrated?** Job's integrity lies in his unwavering service to God even when he doesn't understand his suffering. He maintains his integrity by not yielding to the advice of his wife or friends, which would have demonstrated he was only serving God for benefits. The book highlights that he continues to serve God “for nothing.”
- **How is Job portrayed as being self-righteous, and why is it problematic?** Job is seen as self-righteous because his confident view of his own righteousness leads him to criticize God's justice. His self-righteousness becomes problematic when it leads him to place himself higher than God, essentially demeaning God to preserve his own sense of being right, as mentioned in God's rebuke.
- **What is the overall message of the Book of Job, and how does Job as a character contribute to that message?** The Book of Job is primarily about God and how to think about God in the face of suffering. Job's character is not a focus of the book in and of itself, and his responses to his circumstances should not be models to emulate. The book wants to teach us better responses to suffering than Job offers, particularly how to relate to God when things go wrong.
- **Why is Job not put on a "high pedestal" in the book?** Job, despite his righteousness and integrity, makes significant mistakes in his responses to suffering and his views of God. The book's purpose is not to glorify Job but to use his experiences as a means to explore the deeper questions of God's nature and our relationship with Him in the context of suffering. The reader is prompted to understand the message of the book, not to idolize Job.