

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 29 The Message 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 29, The Message of the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a lecture by Dr. John Walton summarizing the Book of Job. **The core message**, he argues, isn't about finding reasons for suffering, but about **trusting God even without explanations**. Walton contends that the book challenges us to consider **disinterested righteousness**, serving God without expecting benefits. He emphasizes that **we cannot presume to understand God's actions or improve upon them**, and that true faith endures even when faced with inexplicable hardship. Ultimately, the lecture highlights the importance of **trusting God amidst suffering**, a response that surpasses the search for reasons or explanations.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 29 – 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
n29.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of John Walton's "Session 29: The Message of the Book of Job":

Briefing Document: John Walton on the Message of Job

Source: Excerpts from "Walton_Job_Session29.pdf"

Main Theme: The book of Job does not primarily address the "why" of suffering but challenges us to consider "disinterested righteousness" – serving God regardless of personal benefit – and to trust in God despite the apparent absence of reason and justice in our experiences.

Key Ideas & Facts:

1. **Rejection of "Why" Questions:**

- The book of Job does not provide an answer to the question of why Job suffers. Walton argues that seeking reasons for suffering in the past is a flawed approach. "If your question is, 'Why?', probably not. Job has never told why he suffered. There's no reason or cause in Job's behavior for that suffering."
- He connects this to John 9, suggesting we should look for *purpose* in the future rather than *reasons* in the past.
- Walton goes even further, proposing that there might not *be* any reasons for some of our experiences. "It's not just that we don't know the reasons, and it's not even that we can't know the reasons; it is that there may very well be no reasons." He attributes some experiences to the "non-order and disorder" of the world, not a specific cause.
- The idea of finding all the answers in heaven is dismissed as a misinterpretation of the Book of Job; "Don't count on it."

1. **God is Not Obligated to Defend Himself:**

- The book does not present God as needing to justify his actions or defend himself, despite Job's attempts to call God into court. "We shouldn't expect God to defend himself. That's the Job mistake to call God into court, make him defend himself."
- Walton states the explanations of God's actions are beyond human comprehension. "The explanations of what God is doing are certainly way above our pay grade and beyond our discovery."

1. **Focus on Disinterested Righteousness:**

- The central question of Job, according to Walton, is not why Job suffers, but whether anyone serves God without expecting something in return. "Does anyone serve God for nothing? Do I? Do you?"
- Christians, despite receiving blessings like eternal life and salvation, should be willing to serve God for nothing. "We should be willing to serve God for nothing even if we have no such benefits that we receive."

1. **Acceptance of the Absence of Reason:**

- The book helps us see that there is no explanation for everything. It's not just that we can't *know* the reason; it's that there might not *be* one. "Again, there are no reasons... There may very well be no reason, and we have to be willing to live with that."

1. **Humility and the Limits of Human Understanding:**

- We cannot "out God, God." We shouldn't think that we could manage the world better than God. "We must not permit ourselves the illusion that, given the reigns of the world, we could do it better."
- The tendency to think we could do better puts us "precisely in Job's shoes, thinking too simplistically and mechanically about God and thinking too highly of ourselves."

1. **Trust as the Only Appropriate Response:**

- Given that experiences are beyond our understanding, the main message is that trust in God is the only possible response in the midst of suffering. "Key to the message of the book is that trust is the only possible response."
- "Trust comes in where reason has failed."
- This trust is not contingent on understanding God's actions. "God's justice is to be affirmed but cannot be expected to be evident in our experiences."
- Our partnership with God is of higher value than the benefits we may receive from Him. "Our partnership with God is foremost. He has made us partners in a great enterprise of his plans and purposes for the cosmos."

1. **Abraham as an Example of Disinterested Righteousness:**

- Walton uses the story of Abraham offering Isaac to illustrate disinterested faith. While Abraham initially received benefits from the covenant, he was ultimately asked to give up everything with no guarantee of anything in return. "In chapter 22, that is not the case. Abraham has nothing to gain... he stands to be giving up everything that he could have gained."
- God's affirmation, "Now I know that you fear God" is the result of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice everything. "The alternative to that word would have been. "Now I know that you're in it for yourself, that you're in it for the benefits..."
- Abraham's act demonstrates "disinterested righteousness: being willing to give up all the rest."

1. **The Application:** The Book of Job asks us: "Do any of us fear God for nothing?"

Implications:

- The Book of Job is not primarily about answering the "why" of suffering but about challenging our understanding of our relationship with God.
- We need to move away from the idea that God always owes us an explanation or that we are entitled to understand His ways.
- Serving God should be a matter of devotion, not of expecting a reward. Our relationship with God should be valued above any perceived benefits.
- Trusting God is not just for when things are easy, but essential, especially in the face of adversity and inexplicable experiences.

Conclusion:

Walton argues that the book of Job challenges readers to embrace a concept of "disinterested righteousness," where faith is not contingent on understanding, answers, or reward. It calls for a humble acceptance of the limits of our understanding and an unwavering trust in God, even when faced with seemingly unjust and incomprehensible situations.

4. Job Study Guide: Session 29, The Message of the Book of Job

The Book of Job: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Walton, what is the primary question the Book of Job poses?
2. Does the Book of Job provide an answer to the question of why suffering occurs? Why or why not?
3. What does Walton mean by "disinterested righteousness"?
4. Why should we not expect God to defend himself, according to Walton's interpretation of Job?
5. What does it mean to say, "We can't out God, God"?
6. In the context of the Book of Job, when is trust most necessary?
7. What is the relationship between reason and trust in the message of Job?
8. How does Abraham's story in Genesis 22 relate to the concept of disinterested righteousness?
9. What should be our primary motivation for partnering with God, according to the source?
10. According to the source, does the Book of Job propose that there are explanations for suffering, even if we do not know them?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary question the Book of Job poses is whether anyone serves God for nothing or if people are only motivated by what they can gain. This questions the nature of true devotion and righteousness.
2. The Book of Job does not provide an answer to the "why" question regarding suffering. Walton explains that some experiences occur due to the world's inherent disorder rather than a specific reason or cause.

3. "Disinterested righteousness" refers to serving God without expecting or requiring any reward or benefit in return. It is about devotion to God for God's sake, not for personal gain.
4. We should not expect God to defend himself because such an expectation is misguided and assumes we can comprehend God's actions and motivations, which are far beyond our understanding. We are not in a position to call God into court.
5. "We can't out God, God" means we should not think we could manage the world better than God or that we understand how the universe should be ordered better than God does. Such thinking reveals a prideful and simplistic view of God's work.
6. Trust is most necessary in the midst of suffering when we lack answers and explanations, when reason fails. The worse the situation, the more important it is to rely on trust.
7. Trust becomes important where reason cannot provide adequate answers or explanations. It is a response to the limits of human understanding and a reliance on faith in the absence of explanations.
8. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, giving up the very basis of the covenant, demonstrates disinterested righteousness. He served God with no earthly gain in sight, proving his genuine fear and devotion.
9. Our primary motivation for partnering with God should be a commitment to His plans and purposes, rather than focusing on what we might personally gain from that partnership. Benefits are secondary to the partnership.
10. No, the Book of Job proposes that there may very well be no explanation for suffering. It is not just a matter of us not knowing; some events are simply the result of the world's non-order.

Essay Questions

1. Explore the concept of disinterested righteousness, as presented in the Book of Job and the story of Abraham. How does this understanding of faith challenge conventional notions of reward and punishment?
2. How does the Book of Job reframe our understanding of suffering and divine justice? Consider the source's argument that there may not be a reason for suffering.

3. Analyze the idea that the Book of Job shifts the focus from asking "why" to embracing "trust." How does this shift impact our relationship with God during times of adversity?
4. Discuss the implications of the idea that we "can't out God, God." What does this suggest about human limitations, and how does it challenge a simplistic, mechanical view of God?
5. How does the Book of Job challenge traditional notions of divine retribution and human merit? In what ways can the insights from Job be applied to our modern spiritual lives?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Disinterested Righteousness:** Serving God without expecting or needing any reward or benefit; devotion for its own sake, not for personal gain.
- **The "Why" Question:** The human tendency to seek reasons and explanations for suffering, which the Book of Job does not attempt to answer.
- **Trust:** A response to the limits of reason, where we acknowledge that answers may not be available, and we rely on faith and God's character.
- **Non-Order/Disorder:** The concept that some events occur as a result of the world's inherent lack of complete order rather than having a specific reason or cause.
- **Out God, God:** The mistaken belief that humans could do a better job of managing the world than God or that we know more than God about how the world should be organized.
- **Partnership with God:** An understanding of our relationship with God in terms of a shared participation in His plan for the cosmos.

5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 29, The Message of the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Book of Job

- 1. Does the Book of Job provide answers to the question of why suffering occurs?**
No, the book of Job does not provide explicit reasons or causes for why suffering happens. It does not offer a "why" answer from the past; rather, it implies that the question is often irrelevant. The suffering experienced by Job is not a result of any particular actions he took. Some experiences may be due to the disorder that is inherent in the world and not a result of any reason at all.
- 2. Should we expect to find out the reasons for suffering, perhaps in the afterlife?**
The book suggests we should not expect to discover the reasons for our suffering, either now or in the afterlife. The lack of a reason may not simply be due to our inability to comprehend it, but because there might not be any reason to begin with. Some experiences may simply be a product of the way the world is, without any deeper, purposeful explanation.
- 3. Is it appropriate to demand that God explain or defend his actions in the face of suffering?** No, the Book of Job suggests that it is inappropriate to call on God to defend himself or to expect him to provide explanations that we can readily grasp. Trying to put God on trial, as Job did, is a mistake. God's actions are beyond our comprehension and, therefore, our judgment.
- 4. What is the central question the Book of Job poses?** The most important question the Book of Job poses is whether disinterested righteousness exists – that is, whether anyone serves God without expecting anything in return. It challenges the idea that people only serve God for the benefits they receive. The book seeks to establish if humans are capable of faithfulness even without reward.
- 5. What does the book of Job teach us about our ability to improve upon God's way of handling the world?** The book makes it clear that we cannot "out God, God." We should not presume that we could manage the world or its affairs better than God. The message is that our perspectives are limited and that we cannot do it better or do it as well as God does. Thinking otherwise is simplistic and indicates an exaggerated view of our own capabilities.

6. **If reasons for suffering are not always available, what does the Book of Job recommend as the correct response?** The book of Job promotes the idea that trust in God is the only appropriate response to suffering. When reason fails and we cannot understand the "why," we are called to trust even when it is difficult. Trust becomes even more crucial the worse the circumstances are.
7. **What does the book mean when it asks if we serve God "for nothing"?** Serving God "for nothing" refers to having a relationship with God that is not driven by the benefits or rewards we might receive. It questions whether we would still serve God if there were no personal advantages such as eternal life or forgiveness. This concept is demonstrated through Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac and the covenant.
8. **What does the story of Abraham and Isaac teach us about the concept of disinterested righteousness?** The story of Abraham is parallel to Job in that it provides a key insight into disinterested righteousness. Abraham was willing to give up Isaac and all of the covenant benefits associated with him, demonstrating a willingness to serve God even when he would not gain anything in return. His actions prove that he was motivated by genuine faith and not solely by the expectation of blessings, establishing the standard for disinterested righteousness.