

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 30

Application 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 30, Application of the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This excerpt from Dr. John Walton's lecture on the Book of Job focuses on applying its lessons to modern life. **Instead of seeking actionable steps**, Walton emphasizes developing "**thinking points**" that reshape our understanding of suffering, God's nature, and our relationship with Him. He argues that Job doesn't offer comfort but cultivates **acceptance** of God's sovereignty and **trust** in His wisdom, even amidst hardship. Key themes include **rejecting the idea of a "picayune" God**, recognizing God's unaccountability to us, and cultivating **disinterested righteousness**. Finally, Walton uses 1 Peter 3:15 and Romans 11:33-35 to support the importance of faith and trust in God's plans.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 30 – 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
n30.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from John Walton's Session 30 on the Book of Job, focusing on application:

Briefing Document: Application of the Book of Job (John Walton - Session 30)

Introduction: Shifting from Action to Thinking Points

- Walton argues that the most valuable application of the Book of Job lies not in action points (specific behaviors to change) but in developing "thinking points" – ways to reshape our understanding of God, ourselves, and the world. He states, "Instead of thinking in terms of action points, I would rather talk of thinking points. How can we think differently?"
- He emphasizes the importance of allowing the Bible to "soak into our hearts and lives" so that we begin to think differently, which will then lead to different actions. The goal is not a "quick fix" but a deeper, more lasting transformation of perspective.
- The ultimate goal of engaging with the text is preparation for life's inevitable challenges, particularly suffering. As Walton says, "As we think differently, we will be prepared for whatever might come instead of just having a little strategy for one action point this week."

Preparation for Suffering

- Walton stresses the necessity of preparing for suffering *before* it happens. He uses analogies of a marathon runner and concert pianist who prepare for their challenges, and the example of learning to change a tire before an emergency. "We need to prepare for the contingencies of life, the things that come upon us without warning. If you wait until it's upon you, then you're not really going to be prepared for it."

- He suggests that the Book of Job is not a book to read *during* suffering because of the complexity of understanding it, and therefore the need to prepare beforehand. "I'm not sure it's a good book to read when you've actually begun suffering because you have to work through it so patiently, so almost tediously to get what it has to give. When suffering is flooded upon us, we just don't have the focus for it; we don't have the attention span."
- The goal is to "fill the reservoir of understanding" so we can draw upon it during difficult times.

Purpose of the Book of Job (Not Comfort)

- The primary intention of the Book of Job is not to offer immediate comfort but to help us adjust our way of thinking. "That's certainly not its intention. It's not trying to comfort you." He further states, "The book can help us to cultivate acceptance of what we encounter in life, as difficult as it might be."
- It aims to help us understand the terms of God's control and what to expect from them, rather than dwell on his limitations. Expectations are crucial, we should not expect explanations. "We should not expect to find comfort in explanations. We want acceptance of the way God made the world to work, acceptance that what we experience is not in vain."
- It is not about quick fixes or "marching orders," but about forming good thinking habits to build inner resilience and a foundation of faith.

Thinking Points About God

- **God is not picayune:** He is gracious, even when he disciplines those he loves. Walton shares an anecdote about a lifelong Christian who fears criticism from Christ, highlighting the tendency to view God as overly critical rather than a God of grace. "God is a God of grace."
- **God is not accountable to us:** We should not harbor suspicions or doubt him. "Never think that God is accountable to us."
- **God is not a chaos creature:** God is consistent, good, and characterized by grace, not arbitrary, mischievous or amoral. "God is not a chaos creature who is powerful, mischievous, arbitrary, amoral, driven by instincts and selfishness."
- **We should not vindicate ourselves at God's expense:** It is important to avoid justifying ourselves by making God seem lesser or unjust.

- **Manipulating God is a bad idea:** We cannot coerce God to fulfill our desires. "Any picture that we think we can create with God to coerce him to address our desires is bound to diminish him in the end." Attempts to manipulate him undermine his nature. We are not in a position to make demands of God. "We should never think that we can demand that God answer us by our specified mechanisms at our chosen times."
- **We cannot demand things from God:** God owes us nothing. We can pray, but we must recognize that "God must be free to be God." He may not answer in the way we expect. "Sometimes we need his strength to live with physical problems rather than his healing from those problems."
- **God delights in shaping us:** The prayers God loves most are those that ask him to shape us to serve him. "The prayers God most delights in answering are those that ask him to shape us into people who can serve and honor him wherever he places us."

Disinterested Righteousness

- Walton uses Job as an example of "disinterested righteousness"—faithfulness not based on benefits. He poses a hypothetical: if we lost all blessings and hope, would we still serve God? He asserts, "Do we serve him because he is worthy or because he is generous? It's a simple question. Would we serve him if there were no benefits?"
- Our relationship with God is not just about salvation but also about a calling and partnership in kingdom work. The focus should be on "being in Christ" more than "being heaven bound".

1 Peter 3:15 - Hope in Suffering

- Walton provides a unique interpretation of 1 Peter 3:15. He argues that "giving a reason for the hope you have" is not about apologetics (defending faith) but about explaining the source of our hope in the midst of suffering. "When they see you responding with hope, they're going to want it now. They're going to ask, how can you remain full of hope when your life is in such a shambles? And Peter says, have a ready answer." It's about articulating how we think about God, the world and suffering, not a canned apologetic response.

God's Wisdom and Our Trust

- If we accept God's wisdom as higher than ours, we can trust him even when we don't understand. "If we really believe that God is wise and we are not, then we can turn over control to him in spite of our lack of understanding." We should focus on the purpose of the future, not causes in the past. "When we look to the past, we're seeking causes; we should look to the future seeking purpose."
- The only appropriate response is to trust God. "Trust is the only possible response."

The Shack and the Nature of God's Goodness

- Walton uses excerpts from William Paul Young's "The Shack" to illustrate how our limited perspective can lead to distrust in God. The character in the book reflects that lack of trust by saying, "The real underlying flaw in your life is that you don't think I am good. If you knew I was good and that everything that means, the ends, and all the processes of individual lives is all covered by my goodness, then while you might not always understand what I'm doing, you would trust me, but you don't."
- Trust is a fruit of relationship based on knowing that you are loved.

Romans 11:33-35 and the Depths of God's Wisdom

- Walton concludes by focusing on Romans 11:33-35 as a summary of what has been discussed. He emphasizes the unsearchable nature of God's wisdom and judgment, that we cannot fully know the mind of the Lord, nor should we think we can advise him. We deserve nothing and God owes us nothing. "Who has ever given to God that God should repay him."
- The passage emphasizes that all things are from God, through God, and to God, which calls for a response of trust.

Key Takeaways:

- The Book of Job provides thinking points, not action points.
- Preparation for suffering is essential and best done *before* it occurs.
- Job does not offer easy comfort, but a deeper understanding of God and his ways.
- God is not accountable to us. We cannot make demands of him.
- We are called to a disinterested righteousness, motivated by God's worthiness, not the benefits we receive.
- Suffering is an opportunity to explain the hope we have, based on our understanding of God.
- Trust in God's wisdom is the appropriate response when we don't understand his actions.
- Our perception of God's goodness and our trust in him is crucial, especially in the face of suffering.

This detailed summary should provide a good understanding of the key concepts from Walton's session on the application of the Book of Job.

4. Job Study Guide: Session 30, Application of the Book of Job

Application of the Book of Job: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Walton, what is the primary focus of applying the Book of Job to our lives: action points or thinking points?
2. Why does Walton suggest that the Book of Job might not be helpful to read during times of acute suffering?
3. What does Walton mean when he says that we should seek "the terms of God's control rather than the limitations of God's control?"
4. What is the thinking point about God that warns against viewing him as "picayune"?
5. Explain the concept that "God is not accountable to us," according to Walton.
6. According to Walton, what is the problem with trying to manipulate God?
7. What does Walton suggest we should do instead of demanding specific responses from God based on our faithfulness?
8. What does "disinterested righteousness" mean in the context of the Book of Job?
9. How does Walton interpret 1 Peter 3:15, emphasizing the context of suffering?
10. In light of Romans 11:33-35, what does Walton say is the appropriate response to God's wisdom and unsearchable judgments?

Answer Key

1. Walton emphasizes that applying the Book of Job to our lives should primarily focus on **thinking points** rather than action points. He believes it is more important to change how we think, which will then lead to changes in behavior.
2. Walton suggests that the Book of Job might not be helpful to read during acute suffering because it requires a patient and tedious approach to glean its insights, and we often lack focus when overwhelmed with suffering.
3. When Walton says that we should seek "the terms of God's control rather than the limitations of God's control," he is saying that we should try to understand

how God operates in the world, rather than questioning why he doesn't act the way we would expect him to.

4. The thinking point about God that warns against viewing him as "picayune" suggests that God is a God of grace and is not hyper-critical of our shortcomings, especially for those who have lived in selfless service to him.
5. When Walton says that "God is not accountable to us," he means that God does not have to justify his actions to us, nor should we suspect him of acting unjustly or wrongly. God is not in any way obligated to us.
6. Walton states that manipulating God is a bad idea because it ultimately diminishes God by making him seem like he can be controlled by us, and it shows a misunderstanding of who God is.
7. Instead of demanding specific responses from God, Walton says that we should be free to pray for the things we desire, but we must also allow God to be God; sometimes, we need his strength and encouragement to endure, rather than a change in our circumstances.
8. "Disinterested righteousness," in the context of the Book of Job, means serving and remaining faithful to God not for any perceived benefit but simply because he is worthy, even when all apparent blessings are removed.
9. Walton interprets 1 Peter 3:15 as a call to be prepared to explain how we can maintain hope in the midst of suffering, not as a general invitation to explain all of our beliefs. It's a readiness to offer an explanation rooted in our understanding of God's character.
10. In light of Romans 11:33-35, Walton says that the appropriate response to God's wisdom and unsearchable judgments is trust, acknowledging that God's ways are beyond our full understanding and that He owes us nothing.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each question in essay format (3-5 paragraphs).

1. Discuss how the Book of Job challenges conventional notions of applying biblical texts and what a "thinking points" approach involves.
2. Explore the concept of "disinterested righteousness" as presented in the Book of Job and its implications for the believer's relationship with God.

3. Analyze how the study guide's interpretation of the Book of Job contrasts with the idea that the Bible is meant to offer simple answers and comfort in times of suffering.
4. Evaluate Walton's thinking points about God, focusing on those that address God's control, accountability, and nature. How do these points shape our view of God?
5. Explain the connection between trust in God, suffering, and the concept of God's goodness as presented in the study guide, drawing upon the passages from both "The Shack" and Romans.

Glossary of Key Terms

Thinking Points: A concept emphasized by Walton as the primary way to apply the lessons of the Book of Job. It involves changing our perspective and understanding rather than seeking immediate action steps.

Picayune: A term used to describe a petty, small-minded, or overly critical person. Walton argues that God is not picayune and does not focus on our minor shortcomings.

Terms of God's Control: This phrase references understanding how God operates in the world and the nature of His governance rather than trying to find limitations in his power or actions.

Disinterested Righteousness: This concept involves serving God and remaining faithful to him because of his inherent worthiness, not because of any personal benefit we might receive.

Apologetics: The practice of defending and explaining the Christian faith. In the context of 1 Peter 3:15, Walton differentiates this from the text's call to explain our hope in the midst of suffering.

Doxology: A short hymn or expression of praise to God, as seen in Romans 11:33-35.

5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 30, Application of the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Book of Job

1. **How should we apply the lessons of the Book of Job to our lives?** The primary application of the Book of Job is not about identifying specific action points, but rather cultivating new "thinking points." The goal is to develop a deeper understanding of God, suffering, and our relationship with Him, which will ultimately change our actions and responses. It's about building inner resources for future challenges rather than just seeking quick fixes for current problems.
2. **Does the Book of Job provide comfort during suffering?** No, the Book of Job is not intended to provide immediate comfort. It doesn't offer easy explanations or solace in the face of pain. In fact, it may be difficult to engage with when actively experiencing suffering. The book aims to help us understand the terms of God's control and to accept the way the world operates.
3. **What does the Book of Job teach us about God's nature and character?** The Book of Job reveals that God is not picayune (petty or overly concerned with minor details), that He is a God of grace. He is not accountable to us, and we shouldn't harbor suspicions or doubts against Him. God is consistent, good, and characterized by grace. He is not a chaotic, amoral, and arbitrary power. Furthermore, we cannot manipulate God or demand specific answers from Him based on our own timelines.
4. **What does "disinterested righteousness" mean, and how does it relate to the Book of Job?** Disinterested righteousness is serving God because He is worthy, not because of any potential benefits or rewards we might receive, either now or in the future. Job's example illustrates that true faithfulness endures even in the absence of blessings or hope of future gain. The point of our relationship with God is to be in a relationship and to be partners in kingdom work. It's not solely about salvation or having a prize at the end.

5. **How should we respond to suffering in light of the lessons from the Book of Job?** The Book of Job encourages us to prepare ourselves mentally and spiritually for suffering *before* it occurs. This involves building a reservoir of understanding so that when it hits us, we can draw from this reservoir. We should not seek comfort in explanations, but rather cultivate acceptance of God's wisdom, trusting that He has a purpose, even if we don't understand. Instead of looking for the cause of our suffering, we should look for God's purpose.
6. **Why is it important to understand that God is not accountable to us?** Understanding that God is not accountable to us helps us avoid harboring suspicion or doubting His goodness during difficult times. God doesn't owe us an explanation or an answer on our own terms. We must recognize that we are not in a position to make demands on God, even when we consider ourselves faithful. God is free to be God.
7. **How does the Book of Job challenge the common idea that we can "test" or "manipulate" God?** The book strongly cautions against attempting to manipulate God by trying to coerce Him to act according to our desires. We cannot back God into a corner or attempt to force His hand with promises or demands. Trying to manipulate God through our own actions ultimately diminishes our view of Him. He needs to change us, not the other way around.
8. **What is the "hope" that 1 Peter 3:15 refers to, and how does it relate to the Book of Job and suffering?** The "hope" in 1 Peter 3:15, often cited as a call to apologetics, is actually about having an internal readiness to explain *why* we can maintain hope in the midst of suffering. It's about demonstrating how we think about God, the world, and suffering to those who witness our resilience. It's not about giving a comprehensive defense of our beliefs, but demonstrating that we've built a well of understanding. This aligns with the message of Job, which encourages having a strong basis of faith that endures during hard times.