

The Book of Job

Session 30: Application of the Book of Job

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Abstract

In this final session, Dr. John Walton discusses how to practically apply the theological lessons of the Book of Job by shifting from behavioral "action points" to foundational "thinking points." He emphasizes that the book is not designed to offer immediate emotional comfort or logical explanations for pain, but rather to cultivate a deep acceptance of the way God wisely ordered the cosmos. Walton highlights key theological truths, including that God is not a petty or malicious chaos creature, He is not accountable to human demands, and He owes humanity nothing. Ultimately, the session calls believers to foster a disinterested righteousness and unshakeable trust in God's goodness and sovereign wisdom even when suffering is inexplicable.

Outline

- **I. Introduction to Application**
 - **A. Thinking Points vs. Action Points**
 - 1. Action points represent short-term, immediate behavioral changes that are useful but limited.
 - 2. Thinking points represent deeper theological shifts that soak into hearts and prepare believers for future circumstances.
 - 3. Right action is a natural byproduct of established right thinking.
 - **B. Preparation for the Contingencies of Life**
 - 1. Preparation is vital to success; a marathon runner or concert pianist does not perform without prior training.
 - 2. Analogy of teaching children to change a flat tire in a safe driveway rather than waiting for a roadside crisis.
 - 3. The Book of Job requires slow, meticulous reading, making it difficult to digest during active crisis.
 - 4. Believers must build a reservoir of theological understanding to draw on before suffering strikes.

- **C. Acceptance Over Comfort**
 - 1. The Book of Job does not intend to provide emotional comfort, simple answers, or logical explanations.
 - 2. Acceptance is defined as gaining a revised perspective on pain and understanding the terms of God's control.
 - 3. Moving from paying outstanding bills (remedial coping) to opening a savings account of inner spiritual resources.
- **II. Proper Thinking Points About God**
 - **A. God is Not Picayune (Petty)**
 - 1. Discipline notwithstanding, God's relational posture toward humanity is defined by grace.
 - 2. Rejecting the obsessive fear that God is waiting to harshly criticize or condemn believers for minor, accidental deviations.
 - **B. God is Not Accountable to Us**
 - 1. Humans have no right to put God in the defendant's box or demand He account for Himself.
 - 2. Believers must avoid harboring suspicions that lead to doubting God's integrity.
 - **C. God is Not a Chaos Creature**
 - 1. A chaos creature is powerful, mischievous, arbitrary, amoral, and selfishly driven.
 - 2. God's character is consistent, good, and characterized by active grace rather than the abuse of uncontrollable power.
 - **D. Do Not Vindicate Ourselves at God's Expense**
 - 1. Job's fundamental error was defending his own innocence by accusing God of injustice.
 - 2. Preserving our personal integrity must never come at the cost of God's reputation.
 - **E. Manipulation of God is Always a Bad Idea**
 - 1. Attempting to back God into a corner or coerce Him to address personal desires is a critical theological failure.
 - 2. Throwing divine promises or utilizing legalistic vows to manipulate Him diminishes His sovereignty.
 - 3. A God who is at our beck and call is no God at all.
 - **F. We Cannot Make Demands on God**
 - 1. Righteousness does not buy divine compliance, and God owes humanity nothing.
 - 2. While prayer is open for any desired outcome, God must remain completely free to be God.
 - 3. Sometimes believers need His strength to live with chronic problems rather than His immediate deliverance from them.
- **III. Disinterested Righteousness in Practice**
 - **A. The Core Question of the Book**
 - 1. Posed by the Challenger: 'Does anyone serve God for nothing?'

- 2. Job proves that disinterested righteousness is indeed possible for humans.
- 3. Question: Would we remain faithful if we lost all earthly blessing and had no hope of future benefits, heaven, or eternal life?
- **B. Redefining the Relationship**
 - 1. Faithfulness is not a ride with a prize at the end, but a relationship carrying responsibilities.
 - 2. Being in Christ is far more than being heaven-bound; it is an active calling to partner in His kingdom purposes today.
- **IV. Biblical and Literary Illumination**
 - **A. Contextualizing 1 Peter 3:15**
 - 1. Commonly utilized as a proof-text for apologetics and intellectual defense.
 - 2. The actual context is physical and psychological suffering.
 - 3. Peter exhorts believers to have a ready explanation when others observe them responding to extreme pain with unexplainable hope.
 - **B. Insights from William Paul Young's Novel 'The Shack'**
 - 1. Human suffering is viewed through a tiny, incomplete 'knothole of hurt.'
 - 2. Sufferers judge God and deem Him untrustworthy because they do not truly believe He is good.
 - 3. Trust cannot be forced; it is the natural fruit of a secure relationship in which you know you are loved.
 - **C. The Doxology of Romans 11:33-35**
 - 1. Headlines the depth of the riches of God's transcendent wisdom and knowledge.
 - 2. Declares His judgments unsearchable and His paths past finding out.
 - 3. Confirms no human has known the mind of the Lord, counselor to Him, or deserves repayment.
- **V. Conclusion: Sovereign Wisdom and Trust**
 - **A. Releasing Control to the Creator**
 - 1. If we believe God is wise and we are not, we must yield control despite a lack of understanding.
 - 2. Looking to the past seeks only causes, whereas looking to the future seeks constructive purpose.
 - 3. When reason completely fails and explanations are unavailable, trust in God's goodness is the only viable response.