

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 30, 6-min. Video Overview

BiblicalLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Welcome to this explainer. Today, we're diving straight into a massive paradigm shift in how we read and understand the book of Job. We're going to be unpacking some truly profound insights from Dr. John Walton.

Now, if you're familiar with this ancient text, you already know it deeply explores human suffering, but listen, we aren't here today looking for a quick band-aid for our pain. Instead, we are completely rewiring our underlying understanding of justice, of suffering, and ultimately of our relationship with God. So let's kick things off with a somewhat ridiculous question.

Think about this for a second. Can you sight-read a marathon? Obviously not, right? You wouldn't just wake up completely untrained and decide to go run 26 miles. In the same way, a pianist doesn't just sight-read a highly complex masterpiece at a sold-out concert.

And honestly, you really shouldn't wait until you're stranded on a dark abandoned road to finally learn how to change a flat tire. Life's contingencies absolutely require preparation. If we wait until extreme hardship hits to figure out how we view God, we just won't have the capacity to learn those lessons in the moment.

We have to prepare ourselves way before the storm actually hits. To actually do that preparation, we have got to stop treating the biblical text like a weekly checklist of action points. You know how it is.

We so often want these quick fixes to just change our behavior and solve our immediate problems. It's kind of like trying to pay your immediate bills during a sudden financial crisis. But instead of action points, what we really need are thinking points.

These are those deep long-term perspectives that fundamentally change our underlying mindset. By building really good habits right now about who God is, we're essentially opening up a robust inner savings account of strength, and that is exactly what we'll draw upon when a crisis actually arrives at our doorstep. Which leads us to a massive, incredibly counterintuitive question.

When life completely falls apart, we naturally turn to sacred texts like the book of Job, expecting, well, a warm embrace. We ask, does this book offer comfort? We desperately want it to soothe our wounds and just tell us that everything is going to be all right. But brace yourself because taking a truly honest look at this text reveals something pretty shocking.

Surprisingly enough, the text absolutely does not intend to comfort you. Seriously, think about it. Job receives zero comfort from his friends who actually end up blaming him.

He gets zero comfort from his family. And when God finally shows up in the whirlwind, he doesn't offer neat little explanations to answer any of Job's burning why questions. Even the

final restoration at the end isn't some tidy bow that magically makes all the suffering perfectly okay.

This book is simply not designed to bring you comfort. If we apply it looking for that warm hug, we're literally using the wrong tool for the job. So then if we aren't getting comfort, what exactly are we getting? Well, we have to make a huge shift.

We must move away from demanding explanations, which, let's be real, is exactly how we typically seek comfort. And instead move toward cultivating a radical acceptance of how God's world actually works. We find this acceptance by truly understanding the terms of God's control rather than endlessly fixating on what we perceive as his limitations.

Job teaches us to trust that our painful experience isn't just in vain, even when the explanation is totally, completely withheld from us. To reach that high level of acceptance, we've got to rapidly unlearn some incredibly flawed thinking points about who God actually is. First off, God is not pick Youn.

He's not this nitpicky micromanager standing by with a clipboard, just waiting to criticize all our little failures. Second, he is definitely not accountable to our demands or our personal timelines. He doesn't owe us an explanation for how he runs things.

And third, God is absolutely not an arbitrary chaos creature driven by mischievous or selfish instincts. He is perfectly consistent, and he is perfectly good. So the absolutely crucial point here is that trying to manipulate God is always, always a bad idea.

It's this massive trap we fall into when we suffer. We try to back him into a corner, right? We throw promises at him, promises we might honestly be misinterpreting in the first place. Or just like Job did earlier in the text, we throw our vows of absolute innocence right in his face, trying to force his hand.

We trick ourselves into thinking that if we can just coerce God to address our desires on our specific timeline, we'll finally get some relief. But any picture we create to manipulate God only diminishes him. A God who is simply at our beck and call is frankly no God at all.

He needs to change us. We do not change him. We have to actually let God be God.

Just think about how beautifully this connects to the Lord's prayer. We pray your kingdom come, which implicitly means not mine. We pray your will be done, meaning not mine.

We have earned nothing, and God owes us nothing. Now, while we are completely free to passionately pray for healing or to change circumstances, we also must acknowledge that sometimes God's answer looks very different than what we asked for. Sometimes we actually need his strength to live with our problems rather than his immediate healing to just remove them entirely.

And this brilliantly illustrates the core philosophical challenge of the entire book of Job, the concept of disinterested righteousness. The adversary basically bets God that Job only serves him because of the protective hedge and all the blessings he receives. So the ultimate penetrating question becomes this.

Would you serve God simply because he is worthy, entirely independent of any benefits, any prizes, or any blessings? If you lost all tangible evidence of blessing today, would you still be faithful? We aren't just on some theme park ride waiting to get a prize at the end. We are called to kingdom work right here, right now. And you know, when we fully grasp this concept, it actually changes how we read the rest of the Bible entirely.

Take 1 Peter 3.15, for example. This verse is so often used as a generic debate tactic for apologetics. But look at the actual context here.

It's suffering. When Peter says to be prepared to give an answer for your hope, he's talking directly to people whose lives are visibly in shambles. The people around you see you're suffering.

They see you clearly aren't getting any benefits from your faith. And yet, you respond with this incredible, unshakable hope. That is the exact moment when they ask you for the reason.

To really highlight our limited human perspective in all of this, consider a wonderfully poignant thought from the novel, *The Shack*. It compares our view of reality to peering at a grand, magnificent parade through a tiny, restrictive knot hole in a fence. That knot hole? It's framed by our own hurt, our own pain, and our own self-centeredness.

Through that incredibly tiny hole, we try our hardest to make sense of the universe and judge God's actions. But we are looking through a microscopic lens, making it literally impossible to see the vast interwoven reality of God's actual goodness. Because we are looking through that tiny knot hole, we fall into a completely devastating trap, as God states in that exact same story.

The real underlying flaw in your life is that you don't think I am good. When we are deep in pain, we look through our little knot hole and falsely conclude that pain is the ultimate evil in the world, which inevitably makes God the ultimate betrayer. But if we truly, deeply knew he was good and that all the messy processes of life are covered by that goodness, we would inherently trust him, even without a clear explanation.

But here is the massive catch. You cannot manufacture trust. You can't just grit your teeth, clench your fist, and decide to trust.

Any more than you can force yourself to be perfectly humble on command. Trust is the organic fruit of a relationship in which you deeply, securely know that you are loved. Because we start to doubt we are loved when life falls apart, we naturally fail to trust.

Overcoming that desperate burning desire for a mere explanation requires us to lean all the way back into that foundational relationship. We have to absolutely know we are loved in order to trust the goodness we cannot currently see. Let's move over to the Apostle Paul's famous doxology in Romans chapter 11 and see how this builds our final thinking point.

Paul writes so beautifully about the rich depth of God's wisdom. He states incredibly plainly that God's judgments, his justice, are completely unsearchable and his paths are just beyond tracing out. We cannot fully discern what he is doing.

No one can be his counselor to sit down and offer him a better way to run the universe. And ultimately, who has ever given to God that God should repay him? Literally no one. He owes us absolutely nothing.

The profound bottom line takeaway here is that we simply cannot outdo God. Because God's wisdom ultimately prevails, and we humanly cannot grasp the entire picture. I want to leave you with this final provocative thought to really summarize what we've learned from the book of Job.

If there is no explanation coming for your suffering and literally no guaranteed immediate prize for your faithfulness, will you still choose to trust? Building this specific thinking point right now today is truly the only way to be prepared for the marathon of life. Thank you so much for joining me on this explainer, and whatever you do, keep cultivating that deeper perspective.