

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 3 – Podcast

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All right, let's dive in. Today we're tackling a real head-scratcher, the Book of Job. Trying to figure out, you know, how it can be this book of authority inspired and all that, when, well, the characters sometimes say things that are just plain wrong.

Yeah. And to guide us through this, we've got some excerpts from lectures by John Walton, the biblical scholar. Okay, yeah.

So get ready, folks, because we're about to explore how the Bible uses wisdom, how that's different from just like a straight-up history book, and how Job might actually be similar to, get this, Jesus' parables. Oh, wow. That's a really interesting way to frame it.

The Book of Job, it really does kind of mess with our ideas about truth, you know, and authority in the Bible. Right. Okay, so Walton, he defines inspiration differently, right? He says it's not like God was dictating word for word, more like God's the source, the origin of the message.

What do you think about that? I think Walton's making a crucial point there. It's about separating how the message, how it began, from how it was actually, you know, delivered. So inspiration, in that way, means God's the one behind the message of the book, like he's guiding the writer.

And because of that, because the message comes from God, the book has the right to, well, speak to us, you know, and it's right in what it says. And that's where the idea of authority comes. Okay, but see, here's where I get tripped up.

If we're supposed to, like, submit to this book's authority, how do we do that when, like, some characters in Job are just flat out wrong? I mean, their ideas about God and why we sell it are way off, right? Yeah, no, you're hitting on the same thing that's, well, it's puzzled people for ages, right? And that's where Walton brings up this really thought-provoking idea. He says that Job's authority, it doesn't have to be tied to, you know, if it all really happened or not. Instead of reading Job as, like, a strict historical account, he suggests we approach it as a wisdom book.

So it's focused on these deeper truths about how God works. I see. More about understanding God's character, how he does things, than just documenting, like, a specific event.

So, okay, so we're not getting bogged down in whether Job was, like, a real guy or if every single thing happened exactly as written. It's more about those deeper truths. Exactly.

Think of it like Jesus' parables. They teach truth through stories, right? Yeah. But they don't have to be, you know, actual historical events.

The power is in the message, the wisdom they're giving, not in, you know, if they happened exactly that way. This is, like, a whole new way to look at Job for me. Yeah.

So we're not trying to figure out dates and timelines or prove it all happened. Yeah. We're trying to get at the deeper meaning, right, about God and how he works in the world.

It's, like, almost a different genre of writing, right, inside the Bible. Yeah, that's a great way to think about it. And this difference, it's important because it changes how we, you know, how we come to the text.

Not everything said in Job is supposed to be, like, a literal, factual truth. We shouldn't just accept everything the characters say, you know, without thinking. How do we know what to take away then? If some characters are wrong, how do we figure out what the real message is? That's where, well, that's where the reader is challenged to really engage with the text more actively, you know? It's recognizing that there are all these different views presented.

Some are flawed, some have good insight. Even Job, he isn't always right. Really? Yeah.

The reader has to kind of sift through all that, you know, figure out what the wisdom, the message the book's ultimately saying is true. It's like we're detectives, right? Looking at all the evidence, all the different points of view, and then we have to figure out what the book's really saying about God. Exactly.

And that's where Walton's analogy of the Bible as a syllabus, that's where it comes in. Okay. He says the Bible, Job included, is more about showing us God's plans, his purposes, so we can, like, partner with him.

It's not about giving us, you know, a complete encyclopedia about God, who he is totally and completely. Hold on. Wait, the Bible's like a syllabus.

What class are we even in? That's a really interesting question to ask, right? What if we look at the Bible as God's way of, like, outlining his course, you know, for humans? What if the stories and the laws and the poems- what if it's all part of, like, a giant lesson plan to teach us about his character, how he does things, and how we fit into his story? Whoa, that's a pretty mind-blowing idea. Like, it means we have a much more, like, back-and-forth relationship with God, right? We're not just sitting there being told stuff. We're learning.

We're taking part. Right. It's amazing.

And it makes you think, you know, if it's a syllabus, what's God trying to teach? What's the goal, you know? And how does Job, where does it fit into all of that? It's like we're students in God's class, and Job is one of those, you know, one of those readings that's supposed to make us think, to help us understand more. Exactly. And like any, you know, like any tough syllabus, it's going to make us deal with stuff that's hard, wrestle with tough questions, and maybe even change how we think about things.

So maybe instead of just reading Job for the story, we should be asking, like, okay, what's God trying to teach me here? How does this change how I see him, how I understand how he does things? That's exactly the kind of, you know, that engagement; that's what Job's asking us to do. It's not just a passive thing, you know, reading it. It's an invitation to really wrestle with it, ask those questions, and in the end, come to a deeper understanding of God.

Okay, so we talk about how Job is more about wisdom than, like, a strict historical account, and we touched on this whole Bible as a syllabus thing, but there's this big piece we haven't really dug into: submission. If we say the Bible has authority, we can't just pick and choose the parts we like, right? That's a really important point, and it's a tension that's, like, right there in Job. We're being asked to submit to this book that has, you know, complex ideas, sometimes even ideas that seem to contradict each other.

It makes us face tough questions and really grapple with how we understand God, you know, and his ways. So how do we balance that, you know, that call to submit with the fact that the book itself isn't giving us easy answers? It seems like it's almost saying, go ahead, question things, wrestle with what you read. I think that's exactly the point.

Submission, when we're talking about Job, it doesn't have to be, you know, blind obedience or just accepting everything. I think it's about engaging with it fully, with your whole heart, wrestling with the challenges and letting it, you know, let it change you. So it's not about shutting off our brains and just swallowing everything whole.

It's about bringing all of ourselves to it, you know, our questions, our doubts, even our desire to really understand. Exactly. Job invites us to think critically, question what we assume, and to go deeper in our understanding of, you know, God's character and how he works.

It's a book that, well, it rewards you for thinking about it, considering it carefully. And it's through that process of wrestling with what we read that we can really start to submit to its authority in a way that's meaningful. I'm starting to see how this way of looking at Job, and maybe the Bible as a whole, could lead to a faith that's like more alive, more engaging.

It's not about having every answer, but about being okay with asking the tough questions and embracing the mystery. Yeah, that's a beautiful way to put it. It's about understanding that our faith, it's a journey, a process of growing and discovering.

And Job, with all its, you know, its challenges and its complexities, it can be this incredible guide on that journey. Like that a lot. Yeah.

Okay. So we've begun to kind of unpack how Job is more about wisdom than just sticking to history. And we've played around with this whole Bible as a syllabus idea, but there's still this one big thing we haven't really fully explored: submission.

If we accept that the Bible has authority, we can't just cherry-pick, you know, the parts that we like. That's absolutely crucial. And it's a tension that's like right there in the heart of Job.

We're being asked to submit to this book, but it's a book that's full of, you know, complicated ideas, sometimes even ideas that seem to contradict each other. Yeah, that's true. It pushes us to confront those really tough questions and wrestle with how we understand God and how he does things, you know.

So how do we find that balance, right? Between being told to submit and the fact that this book doesn't give us simple answers, it feels like it's almost encouraging us to question things, to really struggle with what we're reading. I think that's precisely the point.

Submission in the context of Job, it's not about blind obedience or just passively accepting everything you read.

It's about engaging with the text fully, with your whole heart, you know, wrestling with the hard parts, the challenges, and allowing it to change you, to transform you. So it's not about just turning off our brains and accepting everything we read at face value. It's about coming to the text with everything we've got, you know, our questions, our doubts, and that desire to truly understand.

Exactly. Job, it invites us to think critically, to question what we believe, and to deepen our understanding of God's character and how he operates. It's a book that, well, it rewards you for really thinking deeply about it, for giving it your full attention.

I'm starting to get it. This way of looking at Job, and maybe even the whole Bible, it could lead to a faith that's much more dynamic, much more engaging. It's not about having all the answers neatly tied up, but about being brave enough to ask the tough questions and be okay with the mystery of it all.

That's a beautiful way to put it. It's about recognizing that faith is a journey, it's a process of growing and discovering new things. And Job, with all of its challenges and complexities, it can be this amazing guide on that journey.

You know, it's interesting thinking about how this idea of Job as like a wisdom book, not just a historical record, it makes those parts that are hard to swallow. You know, the stuff that makes you uncomfortable, it makes it a bit easier to deal with. Yeah, I think you're right.

That's a really important point. When we try to read Job like it's, you know, history, we get stuck on trying to explain why bad things happen to people who don't deserve it and why God lets it happen. But when we shift gears and see it as this book of wisdom, the whole focus changes, right? We're not looking for a literal reason why Job is suffering, but we're digging into these deeper truths about God, about humans, about good and evil, the whole thing.

It's almost like the book is saying, look, you're not going to get this nice, neat answer for why bad stuff happens. Yeah. But hang in there and you'll learn something really important about, you know, how to handle those questions.

Yeah, exactly. And that's where this idea of trust comes in, right? All through the book, Job's trusting God; it's being tested. His friends come with these simple answers, trying to make his suffering fit into like these neat little theological boxes. But the book pushes back against those easy answers.

It's like, it's urging us to move beyond that, to embrace the messiness, you know, the complexity of faith. It's kind of refreshing, you know, most religious writings, they try to give you all the answers, tie everything up with a nice bow. But Job is like, nope, life's messy.

Faith is messy. And sometimes you just don't get easy answers. Like what I'm getting is it's okay to be uncomfortable, to wrestle with that mystery.

I think that's why Job speaks to people so deeply across different cultures, all through history. We've all been through tough times, you know, suffering, loss, moments where our faith is shaken. Job, it gives us a way to talk about those doubts, to grapple with those questions.

And to find hope, even when things are painful. It's like the book's giving us permission, right? To deal with God, to ask those questions, to doubt, to even be angry with him. And somehow that's incredibly freeing.

You've hit on something really important there. You know, Walton talks about how Job is part of God's inspired word, and we're supposed to submit to it, to its authority. Right.

But I don't think that means blind obedience. I think it's more about, you know, really engaging with the text, taking on those challenges, and letting it change us. So not blindly accepting every word, but more like actively thinking about the ideas and figuring out what it means for us, for how we live.

Exactly. Job, it's inviting us to think critically, to question what we assume, and to go deeper, you know, in our understanding of God, his character, and his ways. It's a book that rewards you, you know, for really reflecting, for thinking carefully.

This whole conversation, it keeps making you think back to that syllabus idea. If Job really is like a syllabus for God's class, what kind of grade do you think humanity is getting? It's a bit sobering, don't you think? It is. And I think it's a question we should all be asking.

Are we actually paying attention to what's being taught? Are we learning from the mistakes, you know? Are we taking part in God's plan and what he's doing? Job, it challenges us to look at not just our own lives, but our collective responsibility as humans as a whole. It's like a progress report for the whole human race. And maybe reading Job, grappling with its ideas, that's one way we can start to, you know, bump that grade up a little.

I like that way of looking at it. It's not just about understanding the book for its own sake, but about taking that wisdom and using it in our lives and the world around us. This deep dive is making me want to go back and reread Job with fresh eyes, you know? There's so much depth there, so much complexity to discover.

Yeah, and that's what's so great about studying the Bible. It's a journey, you know, a lifelong one. And there's always something new to learn, something new to understand.

Yeah, it feels like we've only just scratched the surface with Job, but I think we've covered some really important stuff today. All right, let's do a quick recap for everyone listening. Make sure we've got those key takeaways, you know, really hammered down.

First thing, we're looking at Job through a new lens here. We're focusing on the wisdom it offers, instead of getting stuck on whether it all lines up perfectly with history. Right, yeah.

It's not trying to give us like a blow-by-blow historical account. Exactly. It's more about those deeper truths, you know, about God and how he works.

And even with all those different voices in the book, some giving bad advice, some wrestling with their own doubts, we're supposed to figure out the message, the big picture, the wisdom that the book itself is, you know, pointing to. Yeah, that's where that active reading comes in, right? That wrestling with the text, that's what brings out like the richness of Job. And maybe the most important thing we've talked about, we might never fully wrap our heads around God, you know, but Job gives us these glimpses into his ways, how he does things, and how we can be a part of that.

It's like that syllabus idea, right? We're getting a sneak peek at God's lesson plan for us, for all of humanity. It's a lesson plan that needs us to, you know, actually participate. We're not sitting here watching.

We're called to engage, to learn, to grow. I like that. So to leave you with one final thought, remember that picture of Job as like a syllabus for God's classroom.

What grade do you think we're getting, all of us, humanity? What kind of grade are we earning? That's a pretty big question, isn't it? It is, yeah, a really profound one. And it makes us think about, you know, what our role is in all of this, in God's story. Absolutely.

And hey, remember, this deep dive is just the beginning. There's a whole lot more to uncover in the book of Job. It's incredible.

So keep asking those questions. Keep thinking. Keep digging into that wisdom it offers.

Until next time, folks.