

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 6 – Podcast

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Welcome to another deep dive. This time we're tackling the book of Job. You know, the one that grapples with those big questions about suffering and whether we can really trust God when things get tough- pretty intense stuff.

But thankfully, we've got some excerpts from lectures by a leading biblical scholar, Dr. John Walton, to help us make sense of it all. It's amazing, isn't it? How a text that's thousands of years old can still feel so relevant to what we're going through today. Right.

You'd think we would have figured it all out by now. Yeah. But, uh, here we are still asking the same questions.

So one of the points that Dr. Walton makes is that we often misunderstand the whole point of Job. We tend to think of it as a trial with Job on the stand, so to speak. But Dr. Walton says it's not about that at all.

It's really not. It's more about trying to understand God's ways of working in the world, especially when people are going through really difficult times. So less about Job messing up and more about trying to figure out this bigger picture of God's actions.

I think I see what you're getting at. Yeah. And it's about God's policies too, which might sound like a strange way to put it.

But policies, you mean like a cosmic rule book or something? Okay. I'm intrigued. What exactly do we mean by God's policies here? Well, imagine this.

If God's running the universe, then he must have certain principles or guidelines that he follows, right? These policies might involve things like divine justice, the idea that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people, or, you know, that God protects those who are righteous. Okay. So the book of Job is saying, hold on a minute.

Are these policies always fair? Does God actually stick to them? You got it. And it explores this idea through a couple of accusations against God. But what's interesting is that both of these accusations target how God runs things, not who he is.

So it's like critiquing God's management style, not his character. Exactly. So the first accusation comes from, well, Dr. Walton calls him the challenger.

And this challenger asks God this really pointed question. He says, does Job serve you for nothing? The implication being that Job is only being good because God's always rewarding him. Whoa, that's pretty bold.

It's like he's saying God is creating a system that rewards spiritual mercenaries, people who are only in it for the benefits. And this is where it gets interesting. Dr. Walton's point is that this isn't really about Job's motivation.

It's about what can happen when God's policies are maybe taken too far. Like, is it actually wise to always bless good people? Doesn't that create this, I don't know, this transactional kind of faith where the focus is on the rewards and not on genuine goodness? I see what you mean. It's like arguing that too much prosperity can actually weaken real faith.

It makes people prioritize their comfort over doing the right thing. It's thought-provoking, especially for those of us who might see blessings as a sign that God is happy with us. It makes you think: if good things are always happening to you, how can you even know if your faith is the real deal? Right. Like, are you just doing it for the perks? That's a question a lot of us grapple with.

How much of our faith is rooted in a genuine love for God and how much is driven by this desire for blessings and protection? Yeah, it's easy to be good when things are going great. But what about when life throws you a curveball? That's when it really counts. Right.

And that brings us to the second accusation. This one comes straight from Job himself. So Job is going through unimaginable loss and suffering, and he cries out to God, why is this happening to me? I've been faithful.

Shouldn't I be protected? So it's the flip side of the argument. The challenger says it's bad policy to reward the righteous too much. And Job is saying, well, it's bad policy to let them suffer at all.

Poor God. Exactly. And that tension is at the core of the entire book.

It forces us to confront how complicated faith and suffering really are. And it asks, does God always protect those who are faithful? And if not, well, why? It's a question that people have been asking for centuries. We all want to believe that if you're good, good things happen.

And if you're bad, well, then bad things happen. But life doesn't always work that way, does it? It really doesn't. And that's where the book of Job pushes us to really think hard about God and how he works.

It's not about getting easy answers or neat explanations. It's about wrestling with this mystery of suffering and figuring out how to trust God, even when we don't have all the answers. This is really fascinating.

So we've got these two big accusations against God's way of doing things. But how does God respond? Does he just say, hey, I'm God. End of discussion.

You'd think so, wouldn't you? But that's not what Dr. Walton points out at all. He says that God's response is way more, I don't know, nuanced and even compassionate than that. All right.

You've got me hooked. Tell me more. He doesn't pull rank.

Instead of going with the, um, because I said so kind of response, God kind of flips the script. He focuses on showing Job and us his wisdom and power. Like he's giving us reasons to trust

him, even if, you know, we can't wrap our heads around why things are happening the way they are.

So it's more like, look, I know you're hurting and confused, but trust that I've got this. Not so much a power move, but a trust me move. Exactly.

And Dr. Walton points out how God, when he finally does speak, talks a lot about creation, you know, about how he commands nature and how vast his knowledge is. So not just bragging about how great he is. Not at all.

It's more about giving Job and us a glimpse of this, well, bigger picture. Like God's saying, look, I'm working on a scale you can't even imagine. Things are under control, even if it doesn't feel that way to you right now.

That really makes me think about, well, those times when I'm so focused on my little problems, I totally forget that there's this whole universe out there, right? Operating on a level I barely understand. It's kind of humbling when you think about it. Humbling.

Yeah. And maybe even a little comforting because it reminds us that our perspective is, well, limited. We're only seeing a tiny sliver of what God is doing, and that's where trust has to come in, doesn't it? We have to trust that God's got it, even when it doesn't make sense to us.

Which is way easier said than done, right? Right. Especially when you're the one going through something awful. Absolutely.

And the book of Job doesn't try to sugarcoat that. It pushes us to that point of surrender, you know, where we have to admit that we don't have all the answers and learn to live with the mystery of God's ways. It makes me think about how much we want to have an answer for everything these days, but maybe there are just some things we're not supposed to fully understand.

Maybe faith is about being okay with not knowing it all. That's a really good point. I think the book of Job is telling us to be okay with that tension.

The tension is between wanting answers and accepting that there are mysteries about God we'll never fully grasp. So it's not about figuring everything out, but more about the journey of faith itself, even when it takes you to some really dark places. You got it.

It's about building a deeper, stronger faith, the kind that can handle anything life throws at you. It's no wonder people have been drawn to this book for so long. It touches on something really deep inside us, right? That need to find meaning and purpose, especially when things are falling apart.

It shows us that we're not alone in that struggle. Job's story in a lot of ways is everyone's story. We all face hard times, loss, doubt.

We all ask those why questions. But the book of Job also offers hope, doesn't it? Like even in the darkest times, we can find comfort in knowing that God is there and that we can trust in his goodness. Definitely.

And it reminds us that faith isn't about avoiding suffering. It's about finding God in the middle of it. It's about letting those difficult times refine us and bring us closer to him.

That makes me think about how often we try to avoid pain or discomfort, but maybe, just maybe, those tough times are actually chances to grow and change if we let ourselves go through them. I think so. There's something about the book of Job that's just so, well, raw and honest.

It's refreshing. It doesn't try to dodge those tough questions. It faces them head-on.

And it's like, it's giving us permission to do the same, to wrestle with our own doubts and fears, to really talk to God about the things that are bothering us. It's not about pretending everything's okay. It's about being real about the pain and searching for meaning in it.

That's the second important message, especially now when we're always being told to avoid pain, to numb ourselves, to just, I don't know, slap on a happy face. But Job's story is saying that real growth happens when we actually face our struggles. It does.

It's a good reminder that faith is a journey, not a destination. And that journey often involves pain and struggle. So if we embrace that journey, if we let ourselves wrestle with the hard questions, what kind of changes can we expect? What can we learn from Job's story that we can apply to our own lives? That's a great question.

You know, Dr. Walton talks about how the book of Job can teach us to think differently about God, about suffering, and even about ourselves. Okay. I'm interested.

Let's break those down one by one. Yeah. Let's start with God.

How does Job help us see God in a new way? Well, I think it challenges us to move past this transactional view of God. You know, like he's some kind of cosmic vending machine, dispensing rewards if we're good and punishments if we mess up. So not the be good and get good things kind of thinking.

Right. The book of Job blows that whole simplistic view out of the water. It shows us a God who's far more complex and mysterious than that.

So what does that more complex and mysterious God look like? He's a God who's in control of everything, but he's also deeply involved in our lives. He allows suffering, but he's also right there with us when we're hurting. He doesn't always give us the answers, but he asks us to trust that he knows what he's doing.

That's a lot more nuanced than the God we often hear about. And honestly, kind of more challenging, don't you think? It is. It means letting go of our need to control everything and embracing the mystery of faith.

It's about accepting that we can't always fit God into a neat little box. It's like shifting from a God we think we can predict and control to a God who's ultimately beyond our grasp. It's a little unsettling, but also, you know, kind of exciting in a way.

It is. It opens up this possibility of having a much deeper and more genuine relationship with God. One that isn't based on trying to manipulate him or make deals, but on trust and surrender.

Okay. We've talked about how the book of Job changes how we see God. What about suffering itself? How does it help us look at pain and hardship differently? Well, one thing it does is it normalizes suffering.

It shows us that it's a universal human experience. It's not necessarily a sign that God is unhappy with us or that we're being punished. It's just part of being human in a broken world.

So we can let go of that idea that suffering is always our fault. Like we're being punished for something we've done. Exactly.

It's saying that suffering doesn't reflect whether we're good or bad. It's just something that everyone has to deal with at some point. That's a huge weight off.

Because so often when we're going through tough times, we think we're being punished or that we did something wrong, and that can lead to so much shame and guilt. Absolutely. But Job's story reminds us that suffering isn't always a direct result of our choices.

It can be random. It can be senseless. It can feel totally unfair.

But if that's true, if there isn't always a reason or a purpose behind our suffering, how do we make sense of it? How do we find meaning in the midst of all that pain? That's where trust comes in again. We may never understand why we're suffering, but we can trust that God is with us in it and that he'll use it for something good in the end, even if we can't see that good right now. So it's less about finding a logical reason for our suffering and more about like finding God in the middle of it.

Exactly. It's about shifting our focus from, why is this happening to me? To, God, where are you in all of this? That's a powerful shift in perspective. And it seems like it takes a lot of humility to get there.

Being willing to let go of our need to understand everything, to be OK with the fact that there are some things we may never fully grasp. That's it. It's about surrendering to the mystery of how God works and trusting that he has a plan, even when we can't see it, even when it feels like our whole world is falling apart.

OK, so we've talked about God and suffering. What about ourselves? How does the Book of Job change how we see our own identity and purpose? One of the things it teaches us is the importance of integrity. You know, Job stays faithful to God, even though he doesn't understand what's happening to him.

He doesn't curse God or turn away in anger. So it's about staying true to what you believe in, even when it's hard, even when you're hurting and confused and don't really feel like being good anymore. That's it.

It's about living with integrity, even when you're going through really difficult times. It's about being the same person on the inside and the outside. It's about living a life that reflects what you believe.

That's a high standard. But it's pretty amazing to see someone like Job living that out. It makes you wonder, what would it take for me to hold on to my faith, to keep my integrity if I were in his shoes? That's a really good question to ask ourselves.

Job's story challenges us to take a look at our own lives and ask, am I living with integrity? Am I being true to myself and to God, even when no one's watching? Those are tough questions, but important ones. And I think the Book of Job gives us the courage to ask those questions. And to try to live more authentically.

Absolutely. It reminds us that true righteousness isn't about putting on a show for other people or trying to win their approval. It's about what's going on in our hearts and minds.

It's about the choices we make when no one else is around to see them. It's about who we are when no one's watching. That's a really powerful thought.

It is. And that's what matters to God. So the Book of Job isn't just a story about suffering, is it? It's about faith, integrity, and this search for meaning in a world that can feel totally chaotic and random.

And it's a story that still speaks to us today, thousands of years later. It challenges us to think differently about God, suffering, and even ourselves. And it invites us to embrace the mystery of faith, to trust that God is bigger than any pain we might go through.

Wow. There's a lot to unpack there. But I'm really grateful for this deep dive.

It's definitely given me a whole new perspective on the Book of Job. And on my own faith. I'm glad to hear that.

The Book of Job is, well, it's a gift. And the more we wrestle with it, the more we get out of it. So as we start to wrap up this part of our look at the Book of Job, what's the one thing you'd want our listeners to remember? What's the most important lesson we can learn from what Job went through? I think the most important lesson is this.

Suffering isn't the end of the story. Even when it feels hopeless, God is working. He's there with us in our pain, and he'll bring us through it to the other side.

That's a message of hope that we all need, don't we? It reminds us that even when we feel lost and alone, God is there. He's holding on to us, and he'll never let go. And that's what's so beautiful about faith.

It's not about knowing all the answers. It's about trusting in God's love and faithfulness, even when we don't understand what he's doing. So even when we have doubts, even when we're asking tough questions, we can still find peace in knowing that we're held in God's love.

Exactly. And that's a truth that can carry us through anything. It's a truth that Job eventually discovers for himself.

That brings up another important question, doesn't it? What about how the book ends? Does Job get a happy ending after everything he's been through? Well, yeah, in a way he does. God restores his fortunes. He gives him back his wealth, his health, and even more children.

So it's like the classic happily ever after. God makes everything right in the end. It's not quite that straightforward.

Dr. Walton says that the point isn't just that Job gets all his stuff back. It's not about God saying, oops, sorry about all that suffering. Here's a bunch of stuff to make up for it.

So it's not about the material things. Right. The real restoration happens in the relationship between Job and God.

Job comes to this deeper understanding of who God is and how he works. And that's what truly brings him peace. So it's more about spiritual growth than material gain.

Exactly. The book of Job is ultimately about spiritual transformation. It's about learning to trust God, even when we don't understand his ways.

And it's about finding real joy and fulfillment in our relationship with him, not in the stuff we own. That's a really powerful message. It reminds us that the things of this world don't last, but our relationship with God does.

And that's where true happiness is found. So even though Job suffers so much, he ends up with a stronger faith and a closer relationship with God, which, you know, is a kind of happy ending, just not in the way we usually think about it. That's the real victory, isn't it? It's not about escaping suffering.

It's about finding God in the middle of it. It's about letting that suffering refine us, bring us closer to him. I think that can give hope to anyone who's going through a hard time.

No matter what we're facing, we can take comfort in knowing that God is with us. He gets it, and he will never leave us alone. Exactly.

That's the beauty of Job's story. It doesn't offer easy answers or quick fixes. It invites us to have this honest conversation with God, to wrestle with the tough questions and to trust that even in the darkest times, his love and faithfulness will get us through.

It's a powerful message, and I'm really glad we got to explore it together today. Me too. It's been great to dive into this incredible book and see all the wisdom it has to offer.

So as we wrap up this deep dive into the book of Job, what's the one thing you hope our listeners will take away from our conversation? I hope they remember that suffering isn't the end of the story. Even when things seem hopeless, God is at work. He's with us in our pain.

And he will bring us through it to the other side. That's a message of hope that we all need to hear. And it's at the heart of Job's story.

So no matter what you're going through today, know that you're not alone. God is with you, and he'll never let you go. We'll be back soon to finish up our deep dive.

We're back, ready to finish up our deep dive into Job. You know, it's easy to get kind of bogged down in all the heavy stuff. You know, the suffering, all the questions, that whole debate about God and how he runs things.

But there's another side to Job's story that I think is really interesting. Dr. Walton talks about it, too. It's about how wrestling with these tough questions can actually change you.

It's true. The book of Job doesn't try to, like, smooth over the rough edges of faith. You know what I mean? It actually encourages us to lean into those parts that feel uncomfortable, the places where doubt and belief kind of bump up against each other.

And what it's saying is that by struggling with those things, we can actually grow and understand God better. It's like how we try to make our faith look all perfect and polished on the outside. But maybe there's something more, I don't know, real and even stronger in admitting that we struggle sometimes.

Job certainly doesn't hold back, does he? He's angry. He's grieving. He's totally confused.

And it's that honesty, that raw emotion, that makes his story so relatable even thousands of years later. Absolutely. The fact that Job is willing to challenge God, to demand answers, to just pour out all his pain.

It's part of what makes him such a powerful character. He doesn't just sit there and take it. He pushes back.

He wrestles with it. And through that whole process, he ends up with this totally new understanding of God. It's like he's showing us how to have a real, honest relationship with God, one where we don't have to pretend that everything's okay or bottle up all our doubts and questions.

He's saying, bring it all to God. Lay it all out there and trust that he can handle it. And the amazing thing is that God doesn't shut Job down for being honest.

He listens. He responds. He meets Job right where he is and all that vulnerability.

And through those conversations, Job's faith actually gets stronger, even though he's still suffering. It makes you think, what would it look like for us to approach our faith that way? To be real about our doubts, to ask the hard questions, even to kind of push back against God when we don't get what he's doing. I think it would lead to a faith that's, I don't know, more genuine, more alive.

The kind of faith that isn't afraid to grapple with the tough stuff, the kind that's not just blind acceptance, but a real relationship with God. A faith that can weather any storm because it's been through the fire and come out stronger. That's what I want.

That kind of faith that's based on honesty, not on pretending or being afraid to ask questions. Yeah. And Job's story gives us this blueprint for how to get there.

It shows us that it's okay to question, to doubt, to even get angry with God. He can take it. In fact, he wants us to bring our whole selves to him.

The good, the bad, all of it. Because it's in those messy, vulnerable places where real change happens, right? It's in the wrestling, the questioning, the searching that we discover something deeper, a more profound understanding of God and who we are in relationship to him. So as we wrap up this deep dive, what's the one thing you want our listeners to walk away with? What's the message you hope will stick with them long after they've finished listening? I hope they'll remember that the book of Job is about so much more than just suffering.

It's about how powerful faith can be. It's an invitation to go deeper with God, to wrestle with those tough questions and to come out of that struggle with a faith that's stronger and more real. It reminds us that even when we're in pain and we don't know what's going on, God is there.

He hears us, and he's using every experience, even the hard ones, to shape us into the people he created us to be. We hope this deep dive has given you a new way of looking at the book of Job and that its message of faith and resilience will stay with you. Thanks for joining us.