

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 30 – Podcast

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Welcome back to the Deep Dive. You know this time. We're taking you on this journey through the Book of Job, a text that's challenged and comforted people for centuries.

And we've got this lecture from John Walton on its practical application. And let me tell you, he goes way beyond those surface-level takeaways. Get ready for some thinking points, as he calls them.

That could seriously shift your perspective. Yes. So what? Jumped out at you first.

Well, it's interesting, isn't it, how we're so conditioned to seek out those immediate action steps? Right. But Walton's approach is more about wrestling with the deeper questions that Job raises. He's not giving us a to-do list.

He's giving us tools for understanding life's toughest challenges. Okay, so let's dive into that. One of the big ideas Walton emphasizes is this concept of preparing for suffering.

Okay. He uses the analogy of a marathon runner or a concert pianist. They don't just jump into those huge performances without serious prep, right? He's saying that facing life's difficulties, especially suffering, requires the same kind of foresight and groundwork.

Think about it. Job is a dense book full of complex poetry and theological arguments. It's not exactly a light read you pick up in the middle of a crisis.

So it's more like packing a toolkit for tough times before you actually need it. Exactly. Building that reservoir of understanding while things are relatively calm.

Yeah. We need those tools at the ready. Okay.

Because Walton's next point is that Job isn't about finding easy comfort or simple answers. Yeah. I think a lot of people turn to Job precisely for that comfort.

They're hurting, they're confused, and they want answers. But what Walton highlights is that the book pushes us toward acceptance, not resignation, but a shift in perspective about our pain, about ourselves, even about God. So instead of trying to escape or avoid suffering, we need to change how we think about it.

That's the key. And this leads to what I think is the heart of Walton's lecture: rethinking our assumptions about God. Okay.

He directly challenges this idea of a picayune God, one who's hyper-focused on every little mistake we make. He uses the example of a devout Christian who's lived a life of service, yet still worries about God's judgment. It's like picturing God with this giant scorecard, constantly tallying up our good deeds and bad deeds.

It can make grace seem pretty conditional, right? Yeah. And Walton emphasizes that God's grace is much bigger than that. He wants us to understand that God isn't some micromanager keeping track of every misstep.

So where does the idea of trust come in? Because if we're not supposed to be focused on avoiding mistakes to please God, what's the foundation of our relationship with him? Well, that leads to another key point. God isn't accountable to us. Okay.

We often try to hold God to our own expectations and timelines. Yeah. Like demanding explanations or quick fixes.

But Walton reminds us that God's wisdom and plan operate on a completely different scale. So we might not always understand the why behind our suffering, but we can still trust in God's ultimate goodness. It's like that saying: we can't see the whole tapestry, only the threads from the back.

A perfect analogy. And this leads us to the idea that God isn't some capricious chaos creature, as Walton puts it. He isn't driven by whims or reacting out of anger.

He's consistently good and gracious, which gives us a foundation for trust, even when life feels chaotic. It's reassuring to think that even when things feel random and unfair, there's a deeper order at play guided by God's unchanging character. Yeah.

It reminds me of a line from Job. He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. It's a picture of stability and sovereignty, even amidst the storms.

That's a beautiful connection. The bringing in specific verses like that really helps bring these concepts to life. And speaking of specific examples, I think it's time we unpack one of the most challenging aspects of Job's story, the relentless pursuit of his own innocence.

Yeah, that always stands out to me. He's so desperate to prove he hasn't done anything to deserve this suffering. It's like he thinks if he can just convince God of his righteousness, everything will go back to normal.

That's exactly it. And this highlights a really dangerous trap that we often fall into, trying to manipulate God. We think if we could just be good enough, follow all the rules, then we can control the outcome, earn God's favor, or avoid suffering altogether.

It's like we think we can force God's hand through our actions, almost like a cosmic vending machine. Precisely. But what Walton emphasizes is that our focus should be on aligning ourselves with God's will, not twisting it to fit our desires.

So it's about surrender, not control. But that raises another important point that Walton brings up: the idea of disinterested righteousness. Can you unpack that a bit? It's a phrase that might not be familiar to everyone.

Absolutely. It's a concept that really gets to the core of our motivation for following God. Okay.

Walton asks a very pointed question. Would we still serve God if there were no perceived benefits? If there were no promise of heaven, no reward for good behavior, would our faith remain? That's a challenging question. It really makes you examine why you believe what you believe.

And that's the point. Job, in a way, models this disinterested righteousness, even when he's stripped of everything: his wealth, his health, even the support of his friends. His faith doesn't completely crumble.

He continues to wrestle with God to seek understanding, even in the face of unimaginable suffering. So it's not about what we get from the relationship with God, but about the relationship itself. It's about who he is and who we are in relation to him.

That's it. Our relationship with God isn't transactional. It's about partnering with him in his work in his kingdom.

It transforms faith from a passive belief system into a dynamic, purpose-driven life. It's not about sitting back and waiting for rewards. It's about actively participating in something much larger than ourselves.

Now, to illustrate this idea of trust, even when we don't understand everything, Walton brings in a powerful excerpt from *The Shack*. Oh, yes. I love that book.

What part does he use? He quotes the section where the God figure speaks of humanity's tendency to judge, based on a limited view of reality. It connects directly to Job's experience. He's only seeing a tiny sliver of the larger picture, so he assumes the worst.

So true. It's like we're looking through a tiny keyhole at this vast unfolding story and thinking we know what's going on. Precisely.

And the key takeaway from both Job and *The Shack* is this. Trust is built on knowing we are loved, not on understanding everything God does. This echoes Job's eventual restoration of relationship with God, even without all the answers.

It's not about getting a detailed explanation. It's about resting in the assurance of God's love. It's about moving from demanding answers to seeking understanding.

And that shift, that change in perspective, is incredibly freeing. You know, it's striking how Walton connects this idea of trusting in God's wisdom. Back to that earlier point about God not being accountable to us.

We so often want explanations, reasons, justifications for why things are happening. We want God to fit neatly into our understanding of the world. We want to put him in a box.

But Job's story and Walton's interpretation of it shatter that box completely. Right. God operates on a different level with wisdom that surpasses our own.

And that can be frustrating. I get it. But I think there's also something incredibly liberating about letting go of the need to control and understand everything.

It allows us to simply be, to rest in the knowledge that we are loved and cared for, even when life throws us curveballs. And that's what makes Job's story so enduring, so relevant to us today. It speaks to that universal experience of suffering and offers a way forward, a path toward deeper trust and acceptance.

What really stood out to you in this first part of Walton's lecture, you know, it keeps coming back to me, is this image of the marathon runner and the concert pianist. Walton uses that analogy to talk about preparing for suffering, but I think it applies to our spiritual lives in general. Interesting.

Well, we often think about faith as this static thing, like we either have it or we don't. But those performers, they don't just show up on stage without years of dedicated practice. They train, they discipline themselves, they push through setbacks.

And I think our faith requires that same kind of ongoing effort, that constant preparation. That's a powerful insight. It's not about reaching a point where we've got it all figured out.

It's about a lifelong commitment to growing and deepening our understanding of God and ourselves. It's about developing those spiritual muscles so we can face whatever challenges come our way. Exactly.

It's like building that reservoir of understanding we talked about earlier. And for me, that's a much more compelling and hopeful picture of faith than just hoping we'll have all the answers when a crisis hits. I agree.

And I think that's what makes this deep dive into Job so valuable. It's not about finding easy answers or quick fixes. It's about equipping us to navigate the complexities of life with wisdom, resilience, and an unshakable trust in God's goodness.

That's a perfect way to sum up this first part of our exploration. We've only just scratched the surface, though. I can't wait to see where Walton takes us next.

As we delve deeper into Job's story, it's hard not to feel the weight of his pain. He's lost everything. Right.

His family, his possessions, his health. And yet in the midst of his suffering, he keeps coming back to this vow of innocence. It's like he's clinging to it for dear life.

It's almost as if proving his innocence is the only thing keeping him afloat. But why is that so important to him? I mean, if he truly believes in God's goodness, shouldn't that be enough? That's a question that cuts right to the heart of the matter, doesn't it? It reveals a very human instinct to try and make sense of suffering by finding a cause. We want to believe that if we're good, if we follow the rules, then bad things won't happen to us.

It's that if-then mentality, right? If I do this, then God is obligated to do that. But as Job's story shows us, life just doesn't work that way. Right.

Suffering can strike anyone, regardless of their righteousness or piety. And that's where the idea of acceptance comes in. Acceptance, as Walton emphasizes, isn't about liking what's happening or pretending it doesn't hurt.

It's about acknowledging the reality of our situation, but choosing to trust God even in the midst of it. So it's about finding that place of surrender, even when our circumstances are incredibly difficult. But how do we reconcile that with Job's desperate need to prove his innocence? Well, I think it's important to remember that Job is a human being grappling with unimaginable pain.

He's not a perfect theological model. He's a man struggling to make sense of his world. And his vow of innocence, while ultimately futile, is part of that struggle.

It's a reminder that faith isn't about always having the right answers or perfectly understanding God's ways. It's about holding on to that trust, even when we're wrestling with doubt, confusion, and pain. Exactly.

And that's why that excerpt from *The Shack* is so powerful. It reminds us that we're often judging God based on a snapshot, a limited view of reality. We're like Job looking at a tiny piece of the puzzle and thinking, we know the whole picture.

And that limited perspective can lead us to question God's goodness, his love for us. It's like we're saying, if you really loved me, you wouldn't let this happen. But if we can step back, as Walton encourages us to do, and remember that we are loved, that we are part of a much grander narrative than we can fully comprehend, then we can begin to cultivate that trust, even in the face of suffering.

It's about choosing to believe in God's love, even when we don't understand his plan. This whole conversation about trust and acceptance leads us back to that point about God not being accountable to us. We so often want explanations, reasons, justifications for why things are happening.

We want God to explain himself, to make it all make sense to our limited minds. But as Job discovered, that's not how it works. God operates on a different level, with a wisdom that surpasses our own.

And that, I think, is where a lot of people get stuck. They want certainty, control, a guarantee that if they do things right, life will be smooth sailing. And when that doesn't happen, when suffering enters the picture, their faith is shaken.

But Walton seems to be suggesting that it's precisely in those moments of uncertainty, of not understanding, that our faith is truly tested and refined. That's a great point. It's in those moments that we have to choose to trust, to surrender to a wisdom that we may never fully comprehend.

It's about letting go of our need for control and embracing the mystery of God's plan. And that can be incredibly difficult. Yeah.

But it's also incredibly liberating. It frees us to simply be, to rest in the knowledge that we are loved and cared for, even when life throws us curveballs. It's like we're finally able to breathe, to relax into the unknown, knowing that we're not alone, that we're held in God's loving embrace.

You know what's striking is how Walton connects this back to the idea of disinterested righteousness. If we truly believe in God's ultimate goodness and wisdom, then our service to Him shouldn't be contingent on receiving blessings or understanding His every move. It's about serving God, not out of fear or obligation, but out of love and a genuine desire to participate in His work.

Exactly. And that brings us back to Job's struggle with his vow of innocence. He's so focused on proving he deserves a different outcome that he misses the opportunity to simply be present to God in the midst of his suffering.

It's like he's trying to bargain with God, to negotiate his way out of pain. And Walton reminds us that true faith isn't about manipulation or control. It's about surrender, about trusting that even when we don't understand, God is working all things for good.

So how does this idea of disinterested righteousness play out in our lives today? I mean, it's a powerful concept, but it can feel a bit abstract. Well, I think it challenges us to examine our motivations for following God. Are we serving Him out of a sense of duty or out of a genuine love and desire to partner with Him? Are we clinging to a checklist of rules or are we open to the transformative power of His grace? It's about moving beyond a transactional faith, where we're constantly trying to earn God's favor, and into a relationship of love and trust.

And you know, it's interesting how Walton connects this back to the idea of God not being a chaotic creature. He reminds us that God is not driven by whims or random impulses. He's consistent.

He's reliable. He's good. And that knowledge, that trust in God's unchanging character, can anchor us even in the midst of the storm.

It's a reminder that even when things feel chaotic and out of control, there's a deeper order at play guided by God's loving purpose. And that brings us to another important point that Walton highlights: the danger of trying to manipulate God. Job, in his desperate attempts to prove his innocence, tries to bargain, to reason, to almost force God's hand.

He wants to dictate the terms of his relationship with God to control the narrative. It's like he's saying, if I do this, then you're obligated to do that. Exactly.

And that kind of thinking, Walton argues, misses the point entirely. It diminishes our understanding of God's grace and power because it reduces our relationship with Him to a transaction, a tit-for-tat exchange. Instead of recognizing that His love and grace are freely given, not earned or coerced.

Right. And when we try to manipulate God, we're essentially putting limits on His ability to work in our lives. We're saying, I know better than you, or I know what I deserve.

And that kind of pride can actually hinder our ability to experience His grace and grow in our faith. So it's not about trying to control the outcome, but about surrendering to God's will, even when we don't understand it. And that's where that concept of disinterested righteousness comes in again.

It's about serving God, not because we expect something in return, but because we love Him and trust His goodness, even when our circumstances are difficult. It's about recognizing that our relationship with God is a gift, a privilege, not a burden or a set of rules to be followed. And that freedom that release from the need to manipulate or control can be incredibly liberating.

It allows us to approach God with open hearts and minds, ready to receive His love and guidance, even when we don't understand it. You know, as you're talking, I'm thinking about that passage in Romans 11.33-35 that we touched on earlier, one that talks about the depth of God's wisdom and knowledge. That's a beautiful passage.

What part are you thinking of specifically? Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable His judgments and His paths are beyond tracing out. It just strikes me that this passage is a powerful reminder of our limitations, but also a celebration of God's infinite greatness.

It's like a vast ocean, and we're just dipping our toes in the water. That's a perfect analogy. We can't possibly comprehend the vastness of God's wisdom or the intricacies of His plan.

And yet, even in those glimpses that we do get, there's a sense of awe and wonder. And it's that awe and wonder, I think, that can sustain us through the challenges of life. It's about trusting that even when we don't see it, even when we don't understand it, God is working all things for good.

And that trust, that surrender, can be a source of profound peace and strength, even in the midst of suffering. It's what allows us to find meaning and purpose, even when life throws us curveballs. It's what empowers us to live lives of genuine disinterested righteousness, not for the rewards, but for the joy of serving a God who loves us unconditionally.

You know, it's incredible how all these threads from Walton's lecture weave together to form such a rich tapestry of understanding. I agree. And I think that's what makes this deep dive so powerful.

It's not just about acquiring information, but about transforming our perspective. It's about looking at the book of Job and at our own lives through a new lens. A lens of grace, of trust, of surrender.

It's like we're putting on this new pair of glasses, and suddenly the world looks different. We see God differently, we see ourselves differently, and we see suffering differently. And that shift in perspective can be truly transformative.

It can free us from the fear, the doubt, the need to control that often holds us back from experiencing the fullness of God's love and grace. You know, as we've been discussing these thinking points from Walton's lecture, I've been struck by how they all seem to connect back to this idea of surrendering control, letting go of our need to understand everything, to manipulate outcomes, to force God to fit into our limited perspective. That's a brilliant observation.

It's about recognizing that we're not in charge, that there's a bigger plan at play, and that we can trust the one who's orchestrating it all. It's about embracing the mystery, the unknowability of God, and trusting that even when we don't understand, he's working all things for good. It's a radical shift for sure, but it's also incredibly liberating, isn't it? Absolutely.

It frees us from the burden of trying to figure everything out, of trying to control the uncontrollable. It allows us to simply be, to rest in the knowledge that we are loved and cared for, even when life is messy and confusing. And you know that kind of surrender, that willingness to let go, is what makes space for true growth and transformation.

Because it's in those moments of letting go that we open ourselves up to God's grace and guidance. It's like we're finally able to hear his voice, to see his hand at work in our lives, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. It's like we're finally able to breathe, to relax into the mystery and beauty of life, knowing that we're not alone, that we're held in God's loving embrace.

And you know, this whole conversation reminds me of something that Walton said toward the end of his lecture. He talked about how when we look to the past, we're seeking causes, but when we look to the future, we should be seeking purpose. That's such a powerful distinction.

It's about shifting our focus from trying to understand why things happen to discerning God's purpose in our lives, even in our suffering. It's about trusting that even our pain can have meaning, that it can be used to shape us, to refine us, to draw us closer to God. And that's a message of hope, a message that can sustain us through even the darkest of times because it reminds us that we're not defined by our circumstances, that our story doesn't end with our pain.

There's a bigger picture, a grander narrative that we're a part of. And that narrative is one of redemption, of healing, of ultimate victory. It's a story that's still being written, and we each have a role to play.

And you know, as we wrap up this deep dive, I want to encourage you, listener, to keep seeking that purpose, to keep asking those tough questions, to keep wrestling with these ideas. Because the journey of faith is not about arriving at easy answers. What about continuing to explore, to grow, to deepen our understanding of God and ourselves? It's about embracing the mystery, the unknowability of God, and trusting that even when we don't understand, He is working all things for good.

And that trust, that surrender, is what will ultimately lead us to a place of peace, joy, and lasting fulfillment. So as you go about your day, your week, your life, hold on to these thinking points. Let them challenge you, inspire you, and guide you toward a deeper, more authentic faith.

Because the world needs people who are willing to wrestle with the tough questions, to seek truth, and to live lives of courage, compassion, and unwavering trust in God. And we believe that you, listener, are one of those people. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive into the Book of Job.

We'll be back soon with another thought-provoking exploration. Until then, keep diving deep.