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Job Overview (Q&A)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this Q&A, Steve Gregg delves into the question of why good people suffer and how it relates to the fundamental value of the universe, God's glory. He looks at the story of Job, who saw God's actions as just despite the suffering he endured. Gregg also discusses the importance of having a relationship with God, which is made possible through the Holy Spirit in Christians. Overall, the message emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's ultimate goodness, even in difficult times.

Transcript

Now there's a whole lot more in the book of Job, but we don't have more time. And I did promise someone that I'd give a chance for some Q&A. Thank you for explaining this very profound and very complicated... Okay, let me address that.

Let me restate it for those who couldn't have heard it when it was read. He said he thinks the book of Job, no matter how you justify it, is an injustice. Because God had this thing going on between him and Satan, where God's trying to prove that he's right and Satan's wrong.

And Job's kind of the innocent bystander who gets knocked around. It's not very just. Now, see, Job disagreed with you.

Job said the Lord gives and the Lord takes away. He saw that as completely just. That if God makes him wealthy and comfortable, well, Job doesn't deserve that.

If God takes that all away and now Job's miserable and uncomfortable, well, God has just taken away what he gave that he didn't deserve in the first place. Job didn't feel that he had some innate right to be exempt from hardships. And he felt like the exemption he previously had was a special gift from God, which God, in his legitimate sovereignty, withdrew.

But let me say something else about this. I'm just saying Job would not agree with you that this was unjust. He saw that as just.

He didn't understand why it was happening, but he felt it was just. And he spoke rightly of God and didn't blaspheme God. But I think that sometimes we think that the question of the book of Job is why do good men suffer? Because that's the that was the debate on Earth.

Job and his friends were having a debate over why would a good man suffer? They were saying a good man wouldn't. And Job says a good man does, but he doesn't know why. Now, but what was going on in heaven was not answering the question of why does a good man suffer? But why does a good man serve God? Does a good man serve God because God is feathering his nest and making him happy and comfortable? Or does he serve God because God is innately worthy to be served? And so it's like humans were debating one question and that's the one we want to we want to relate to.

Yeah. Why does a good person suffer? And in the heavenly level, there's a more important question. Why do good people serve God at all? Can they be made to not do so by making them by giving them fewer blessings? You know, are people mercenaries only or is God lovable for himself? Now, I think that we could say the answer to the book to the question of the book of Job, which is not given in so many words, but it's certainly the summary of the book of Job is suffering is the price.

The good man may have to pay for the glory of God. Now you're saying it seems immature of God to do all this in order to just say, see, I was right. But this was for the glory of God.

Now, we might say God's immature to want glory. God's immature to want to be thanked, to want to be praised, to want to have us live for his glory. But I wouldn't say that's immature.

I'd say that God's in touch with reality. I'd say that God is the ultimate good and the ultimate reality in the world. And for people to recognize that and give him the honor due to it is simply for them to be in touch with reality, as opposed to living in some blindness that that alienates them from the truth and from all good.

God's glory is the ultimate good. Not because God is an egotist, but because God is glorious. And those who don't recognize that God is glorious are living in a false world and in blindness.

And you travel around in blindness, you're going to bump into things and hurt yourself. When people don't give God the glory that is appropriate, they end up serving gods that hurt them. They end up going ways that are harmful to humanity.

God made man to glorify him and to know his glory. And therefore, for God to be glorified in all things is the goal of every Christian. Jesus said, let your light shine before men so men will see your good works and glorify your father, which is in heaven.

In other words, I want to do good works, not so that I can get credit for it, not that I'll even be rewarded for it, but that people see those good works and they'll glorify God. Because the Christians' only concern is that God should be glorified in my life, in my death, in my comfort, in my discomfort. That God to be glorified is the fundamental reality of the universe.

It's the fundamental value of the universe. And so for God to say, I'm going to let Job glorify me here, and Job will, you know, the devil is basically saying that I'm not worth worshipping unless I'm bribing people to worship me. But that isn't true.

And I know it's not true. So we'll find out. We'll stop bribing Job and see if he worships me still, you know.

And what will it do if he does? It'll prove that God is lovely and lovable and capable of being appreciated, quite apart from paying people off. He doesn't have to pay for his friends. People who know him know he's wonderful.

There are perhaps mercenaries. There are probably people who don't know God and they'll do the right thing if they think it's going to make them rich or keep them out of trouble or keep them out of hell even. But there are people who really know God for who he is.

They say for him to be glorified is all that matters. And that is really what the saints of all times, that's been their motive. May God be glorified.

And I think that from our point of view, we might think, you know, if God's going to make me hurt, he better have a very good reason that he can explain to me. Well, God had a really good reason for what he did, but he didn't explain it to Job. Though Job turned out pretty good in the end.

He was twice as wealthy. He lived 140 more years. He saw his grandchildren and great-grandchildren for several generations.

And, you know, he did suffer a lot. But, you know, you could suffer a lot and never turn out better. You know, I mean, God was pretty good to Job, actually, because many people live in dire poverty and they're born ill and they die young.

And, you know, we have an American frame of reference where health and comfort and prosperity are kind of the norm. And we always feel like anything other than that has to be explained. Worldwide, poverty, sickness, misery, war, children being seen, their parents hacked to pieces by invading armies and things like that.

That's kind of normal. It's not good, but it's pretty much the norm. And, you know, we have to realize that some people live very miserable lives and it never turns around for them in this life like it did for Job.

I mean, God let Job suffer in ways that people all over the world sometimes suffer. But he at least because God was glorified in Job's response and because God wanted to do so in his case, he made him better off in the end. But what about what if what if God allowed me or you to go through that kind of suffering and didn't have time to turn things around in our lifetime? And we died miserable.

Well, that's God's prerogative. But he's a just God. We can be quite sure that he will settle the score and make all things right in the end, because that's what he that's what he is.

He's just and righteous. So, I mean, in saying this was unjust from the point of humanistic point of view, like, you know, God has no right to take things from me unless I've done something bad and deserve to have them take it from me. That's not the worldview that the Bible teaches.

The worldview is that God is the center of all things. His glory is all that the universe exists for my life included. I exist for the glory of God.

If he's more glorified by letting me go through trials or by giving me wealth and comfort, that's his to do. If when my former wife was killed, it didn't seem like a good thing because she was a good wife. She was ministered to people.

She was very faithful to the Lord and a blessing to the church. And she was taken. It just didn't seem just didn't seem to make sense.

But I knew that God could have prevented it, but he didn't prevent it. And if he didn't prevent it, he must have had reasons not to want to. And if I can't understand those reasons, then that's for him to understand.

You know, not for me. We have to be really, in a sense, like children, Jesus said. You know, when when my daughter was three years old, I took her out to Baskin Robbins.

I'd get two scoops and she got one. And she'd say, that's not fair. I remember distinctly.

That's not fair. You got two and I only got one. I thought, I'm not going to explain this to her.

I'm more than twice her size and I'm the one buying it. You know, she doesn't deserve one at all. But from her point of view, it just didn't seem fair.

Now, a child in that situation would be wise to just say, I know my dad's good. I know he loves me. I don't know why I only get one scoop and he gets two.

But he probably has reasons that are better than I can think of right now. You know, that's been a child like a child. That's what it'd be like toward God.

You know, I mean, I know he loves me. I know he's good. He must have reasons for this.

I don't know what they are, but he knows. And I don't. Some people say, well, since God knew that Abraham would go through with it with Isaac, why even ask him to? Why even test him? Well, because if he didn't ask him to, he wouldn't do it.

And God wouldn't know that he would do it. The point is, we sometimes say, well, at the end of life, each of us either dies faithful or unfaithful. God knows before it happens whether we'll die faithful or unfaithful.

So why even go through the whole thing? Why not just reward us? Well, because if we don't go through it, we won't be either faithful or unfaithful. He doesn't know any future that isn't going to happen. You see, the event has to happen.

That God knows its outcome doesn't change the fact that it has to happen in order for it to be real. If I'm not tested, I'm not going to pass any tests. And God can't know that I'm going to pass any tests that I'm not going to pass.

He knows. You might say, well, he knows that you would pass the test if you were tested. But then we're getting into the realm of really esoteric stuff outside of the reality of history.

The truth is, the omniscience of God about the future is not a major theme of the Bible. In fact, there are many evangelicals who believe in what's called openness theology because the Bible is somewhat ambiguous on some of these points. They feel like there are some things God doesn't know about the future.

But I'm not one of those. But the point is, the Bible does not lay heavy emphasis on God's foreknowledge of the future except in the case of the prophets where God says he's going to do a certain thing and he does it. But it does lay emphasis on the fact that life is real and there are real issues, real moral issues and real eternal issues.

And those eternal issues are determined by the moral choices we make. When God tells us to do this and the temptation is to do that, we're being tested. Will I be loyal to God or will I be loyal to myself? My own urges.

And if I go with my own urges, I failed that particular test. There will be more. I'll have a chance perhaps to redeem myself.

There will be a final one someday, but probably the one I failed today isn't the final one. But I'd like there to be more successes than failures. In fact, I would like it to be always successes.

I'd like to have straight A's. You know? If I don't have straight A's, I still may pass if I do okay on the final. But the point is I'd like to be on the Dean's Honor Roll, you know?

When I stand before God with the judgment.

And anyway, you're asking a philosophical question that's hard for us to grasp. Why does God have to test us if he knows how we're going to do? Well, he only knows it because we're going to. If we're not going to do it, he doesn't know that we're going to do it.

I appreciate your questions. There are some more people who had questions. Yes, I want to say first of all, I really appreciate what you shared today.

It gave me a greater – it helped me understand the book of Job better. It really helped me a lot. I want to say thank you for that, even though that's not a question.

But I have a couple of questions. The thing is – No thanks permitted. Only questions.

All right. But anyway, I want to say that what I thought of when you were sharing all these things, it made me think of Isaiah. Somewhere in Isaiah 44 it says, as heaven are higher than my ways, so my ways are higher than your thoughts.

And, you know, I can't quote the scripture, but you know what scripture I'm talking about, and I don't know what it's at. But it made me think of that, that we just have to not lean on our own understanding, but acknowledge God in all thy ways, and he will direct thy path. Right.

And then the other thing, too, is Romans 11, 33. How unsearchable are the debts and the riches and the knowledge of God? So I think what our problem is as frail human beings is that we try to lean on ourselves, and we start doubting God, we start not trusting ourselves. And I would say to my shame that when I do that, that I have failed God millions of times.

And, you know, right now my faith is being challenged because of what I'm going through in my own personal life, because of the apostasy of the churches, which has grieved my heart tremendously. But the thing is that what I learned tonight as a foundation is we just got to learn, no matter what we face, is to trust God. And that should motivate us, though, to, you know, because my prayer life is not that good, to start praying more to God, to start believing in God, stop doubting, stop listening to Satan.

And I would say in my own life that I have pleased Satan more than I have pleased God. And I want to get out of that trap, like what you shared about getting a Dean's A, and want to be on the Dean list. That's what I like, too.

And it also reminds me of 2 Corinthians 5, 10. I don't know if it's called the Vicious Seed, but I know that we're going to have to face God, and he's going to know what our motives were. It is called the Vicious Seed.

Yeah, okay. And so the thing is that what carries me, I'm kind of afraid of that, but if I'm afraid of that, why don't I start trusting God more? Amen. Amen.

One last question? Well, there were a lot of hands. Let's see if anyone else has one before you have a third one, okay? I don't mind taking a third one for you. Other people should get a chance, too.

Were there some more questions? Yes, brother. Okay. Is it fair to say that Job was somewhat wishy-washy because he makes these great statements, Lord, give it to me, Lord, take it away, and when I've tried to purify it, but then it's like, well, it's not fair.

So is it fair to say he's somewhat wishy-washy? Well, you know. What's that? He was. Yeah.

I don't see him being wishy-washy. I think he's very strong in the face of the trials, but when he and his friends are discussing what it all means, he's not seeing their answers as acceptable because he says, you know, you're making it sound like there's a complete equality in the scales between the way a man acts and the way God blesses him, and that's just not the way it is. It's not that even because I have been acting well, and the blessings I have, or what seems to be curses I now have, don't seem to balance out.

But he's wrestling with the question. He doesn't really doubt that God is just, but he has a hard time understanding how this particular situation could be seen as just, and he's wishing he could talk to God and plead his cause like in a courtroom, he says. He'd like to plead it before God because he says, I know God would acquit me.

He says, I know God would see it my way if I could just explain it to him. So, I mean, he's a tormented man. He's wrestling with bigger trials than any of us have ever faced all at one time, and I think his soul is being wrung, lots of stuff is being wrung out of him, but throughout the whole thing he's still trusting God.

He's still saying, I'll trust him even if he slays me. So, yeah, I mean, he's not wishy-washy, but he's kind of seeing both sides of things, too. I mean, his friends are bringing out one side, and he says, I know that's true.

At least I always thought that was true, you know, but it doesn't look like it's true now because it seems like God being fair would do it the way you're saying, but he's not doing it that way, so I don't understand why that's not fair. But it must be somehow fair because God is trustworthy. So I think that he vacillates a little bit as he contemplates different aspects of his friends' criticisms and their philosophy, and he sees some validity in what they're saying and sees some deficiencies in it.

So it's a confusing book for us even when we read the first two chapters, and he didn't have that advantage. He didn't get to read the first two chapters. So I'd give him some slack for that.

God bless you guys. Is there a hands over here? Okay, brother. Yes.

This question is from my friend. I have a friend who's going through this situation, right? Okay. Oh, are all those 20 children in heaven? I think, I mean, I think the impression is given that Job covered them with his sacrifices and his intercession, which if we're to understand that those sacrifices have any power with God, then I'd say that, yes.

In fact, he seemed to indicate that his kids were good kids because he says, I'm going to offer the sacrifice in case they've, you know, they've sinned in their hearts against God. He doesn't think they'd sin outwardly. They're good kids, but you never know what's going to go on in their hearts.

So he covers that too. Sounds like he had kids that he thought were pretty good kids, but you never know what kind of sins may come into the heart. So he wanted to get that covered.

So my impression is his kids were probably fairly righteous kids, maybe a lot like himself, maybe not as mature and perfect as him. But, but, you know, insofar as people of faith and people who sought to please God could be said to have been saved in the Old Testament, like Abram and Isaac and Jacob were, then I think his kids probably without any direct information about it, I'd assume they are with the Lord. Yeah.

Not everyone has that guarantee, though, when their kids die. Yes. My question is that you said that he never had a Bible.

And that is, I believe that totally what you say. But he did have a relationship with God to help to go through this. So I think that he had a relationship with God.

We don't know if he'd ever heard a word from God as he did near the end there. Yeah. You know, God doesn't give the ability to since he had a relationship with him.

It seems to me like he was close to God. That's what I get the impression from the way God called him like this. Well, people who worship God in the Old Testament, as we say, had a relationship with him.

That relationship might not. We don't know what the subjective aspects of it were. I mean, people were simply called on to trust God.

We do know God appeared to some people, but they're pretty special people. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, people like that. The average Israelite who we presume believed in Yahweh and lived and died believing in Yahweh.

We don't know that they ever had any real encounters with Yahweh. I mean, the New Covenant adds a layer of advantage to the believer that was not in the Old Testament. That is that God's spirit comes to dwell inside us so that we actually have God revealing

himself to us.

Jesus said that in John, chapter 14, he says, he that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me and my father will love him. And we will come and make our home with him. And he says also, I will manifest myself to him.

So the advantage that we have as Christians that was not given in the Old Testament to everybody is that God does come to dwell in us. And we do have the witness of the spirit and so forth. In the Old Testament, without that, they might have just had to go on bare faith.

You know, I mean, there's a God out there. I figure he's a good God. So I'm going to do my best to obey him and please him.

You know, and that could be that might be the most relationship with God that people had, except for those few cases like Abraham and Moses who got to God appeared to them on occasions, you know. So whether God appeared to Job prior to Job, chapter 38 or not, is unknown to us. He may have.

Job might have had, you know, conversations with God or whatever. But he's saved nonetheless. Yeah, oh definitely.

He's saved. Yeah, we're saved, justified by faith like Abraham. All right.

I think the question has died down enough and it's gotten late enough we can turn this off. Thank you.