



Love

Fights
Back

3 Stories to Save the World

Patrick Johnson



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God is love – we sing it, preach it, and powerfully proclaim it, but for some people the question remains: ***‘Does God really love me?’***

The unequivocal answer is an emphatic ‘YES!’ answers Dr Patrick Johnson, a long-serving minister of the Gospel well-versed in Scripture, who has also been on his own faith journey and taken a long, hard look at this vital question for himself.

The question is, ‘What is God really like?’ Do the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 show Him to be an angry, vengeful God, a God to be scared of? Or do they rather portray a God we can run to, a God who longs to protect us and save us . . . a God we can trust?

This question is of crucial significance, and the correct answer to it will have eternal ramifications for your own life.

Extending Love – Trans-European Division

The first key strategic aim of the Trans-European Division is to ‘extend love to the whole person’. Why we may ask, would this ever need to be articulated as a key value, for an organisation thoroughly grounded in the teachings of scripture?

For many and varied reasons, it is sometimes the case that as the teachings of scripture are communicated, error creeps in subtly – not so much as doctrinal error, but at a deeper level, tipping people off balance on the most important matter of all - what God is really like.

“Is it possible”, asks Patrick Johnson, “that as we have communicated and shared the Three Angel’s Message of Revelation 14:6-12, we may have inadvertently, and innocently, tipped our picture of God off balance?”

In this “Love Fights Back” study guide, take a Spirit-filled journey of discovery, with a hope and prayer that a vital message given to first-century Christ-followers, has the same relevance and power for 21st century Christ-followers today, with the overwhelming and liberating message - ‘God is Love’.

The system is broken

01| ‘God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathisers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan’s government. The Lord’s principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God’s government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power’ (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 759). What does this imply about God?

02| If God had ‘dropped Satan like a pebble’ and allowed him to die, what would have happened in God’s universe?

03| Read 1 Samuel 8:1-9. What does it say about God that he would give the people a king even though this was against his will?

04| If God does not use fire forever, where does the idea of hell come from?



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05| All social reforms for equality need to be enforced by law in order to make them effective. Is it possible for the church to exemplify descriptive principles of equality without needing to rely on prescriptive rules? How?

06| Read Exodus 19:16-19; 20:18-19; 24:3; 32:1-6. What do these verses illustrate about the limits of using displays of power to ensure obedience?

07| How can church discipline be aligned with the laws of nature?

08| How would you describe the eradication of sin from a descriptive (natural law) perspective?

09| Think of an Old Testament story that portrays God as arbitrary and vindictive. How might defining God’s anger as letting people go put the story in a more positive light?



The end of sin

- 01| Read Isaiah 33:14-16; Malachi 4:1-2. How do you react to the idea that the fiery presence of God is both destructive and healing at the same time?
- 02| If God's role in the final destruction of sinners is only a passive one, do you think this lessens His power and authority? Why? Why not?
- 03| What do you think of the idea that torment and death most often come from within us?
- 04| Based on this chapter, how would you define hell?
- 05| How do you react to the thought that we can choose only one of two options: life with God, or death? Why can there not be a third option?
- 06| Do you think that relationship damage is a strong enough motivator to turn people away from sin?
- 07| Read Revelation 14:9-11. Is there an appropriate use of 'fire and brimstone' preaching? How can we avoid falling into extremes?



The law of God



- 01| Read John 15:9-17. Is it possible to command someone to love? If not, how do you make sense of Jesus' command here?
- 02| Do you agree that God's Ten Commandments are based on descriptive principles? Why? Why not?
- 03| Is murder similar to creating an image? Why? Why not?
- 04| Review the texts that describe the law of worship (2 Corinthians 3:18; Hosea 9:10; Psalm 135:15-18). This law seems to have very wide-ranging effects. How might it help to explain some of God's seemingly harsh and uncompromising reactions to idol worship in the Old Testament (for example Deuteronomy 13:1-5)?
- 05| Read Matthew 12:22-32. Jesus connects the unpardonable sin with character misrepresentation. Do you find this to be a more scary prospect or less so? Explain.
- 06| What changes might you have to make in order to align your daily routine to harmonise with the rhythm of God's original design?
- 07| How might a descriptive understanding of God's law be a protection against perfectionism?



SCAN ME

Chapter

6