

READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

Love Wins

A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the
Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived

by

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CHAPTER 1:

WHAT ABOUT THE FLAT TIRE?

1. Before reading this book, how did you think of heaven and hell?
2. Do you believe God invites us, even welcomes us, to discuss and debate the big questions of faith, doctrine, and the Bible?

3. What messages have you heard about who goes (or how many go) to heaven? Or about how God can be both loving Father and Judge?
4. Of the questions Bell raises in this chapter, which did you experience as raising issues you have had before or issues you would like to discuss more?

CHAPTER 2: HERE IS THE NEW THERE

1. Bell remembers his grandmother's painting of heaven as a floating, glimmering city. What is your vision of heaven? What factors have shaped this vision?
2. How does the perception of our lives and our church change when we think of heaven as a restored Earth rather than as a faraway place?
3. If Jesus consistently focused on heaven for today, why do we so emphasize heaven after we die?
4. Bell describes the Christian life as our preparation to become the kind of people who can dwell in heaven; how does this reorient how we shape our lives?
5. What is the connection between our understanding of heaven and how we live our lives?

CHAPTER 3: HELL

1. See again the painting on page 20, where hell is represented as a dark, ominous abyss. How do you imagine hell? What factors have shaped this vision? Has your concept of hell changed over time and if so, how?
2. What changes in how you think of the gospel when hell is seen as perhaps temporary or time-limited?
3. What do you think of the idea that hell might be for correction rather than as punishment?
4. If the purpose of hell is for correction, then what do we think happens in hell?
5. If we remove the threat of punishment in our presentation of the gospel, why might someone be interested in the good news?

CHAPTER 4: DOES GOD GET WHAT GOD WANTS?

1. Do you believe human life is tragic or is it a romance?
2. Do you think an all-powerful loving God would allow the vast majority of human beings who have ever lived to suffer eternally? Why or why not?
3. Do you think God would say to someone trying to repent, “Sorry, too late. You had your chance”?
4. As Bell shows, the Bible does not spell out all the details of what happens after we die. What might be God’s purposes for not explaining everything and,

instead, promising that we will be “surprised”? Why do you think various church traditions have spelled out exactly what will happen?

CHAPTER 5: DYING TO LIVE

1. How would you describe to others what Jesus accomplished on the cross and how it affects us?
2. How meaningful to you are some of the words the Bible uses to describe Jesus’s work on the cross—*sacrifice, atonement, justification, redemption, victory*?
3. According to Bell, how does Jesus’s death and resurrection relate to the basic pattern of life, death, and rebirth we witness in all of life?
4. What changes if we accept a more “cosmic” or “grand” understanding of Jesus’s accomplishments and goals?
5. Why do Christians so often focus on questions of who is in and who is out of heaven?

CHAPTER 6: THERE ARE ROCKS EVERYWHERE

1. When you hear stories of people experiencing Jesus or a divine presence, how do you react? Is your tendency to believe them or not? Have you experienced God directly in this way?
2. In what sense do you think was Jesus in the rock Moses struck to get water?

3. How does seeing Jesus above all religions and cultures change how we approach people of different religions and cultures?
4. With this expanded view of Jesus, where might be some new places and ways we see him today? How does Bell's view of Jesus change how we explain the gospel to others?

CHAPTER 7: THE GOOD NEWS IS BETTER THAN THAT

1. What story do you think God is telling you about yourself?
2. When you describe what you believe, what picture of God do you think others perceive?
3. Do you believe God is fundamentally for you or against you? Have you ever found it difficult to love God?
4. If the gospel is mostly about "participation" and not about "entrance," why would this, as Bell argues, open us up to joy, happiness, and even throwing a good party? What role has joy played in your Christian life?
5. Bell claims that there "is a secret deep in the heart of many people, especially Christians: they don't love God" (p. 176). He says that some people have a distorted view of God where they think Jesus rescues us from God. Have you witnessed or experienced these feelings or thoughts?

CHAPTER 8: THE END IS HERE

1. Bell recalls the moment from his childhood when he decided to be a Christian. How have your early experiences of faith shaped your current faith life? What do you think of your earlier spiritual experiences today?
2. How does our spiritual outlook change when we think of God's invitation to us shifting from where we will go when we die to a relationship right here and now?
3. If your heavenly life begins now, how might that change your life, your goals, your focus, and your everyday life?
4. What do you think it means to trust God's love?
5. Why do you think Jesus so emphasizes the urgency of deciding today, now?
6. Do you believe that "love wins"?