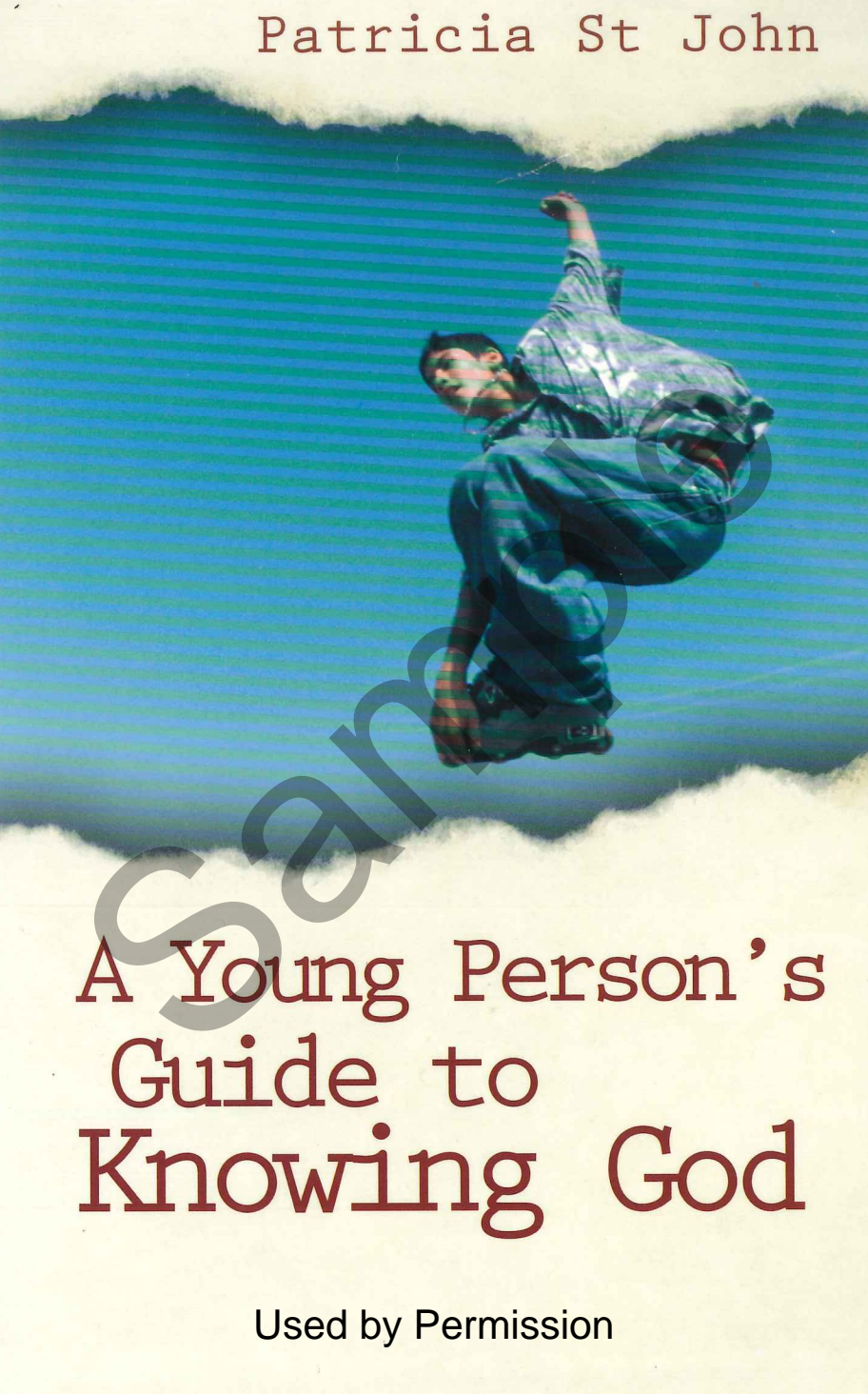


Patricia St John



A Young Person's  
Guide to  
Knowing God

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**A Young Person's  
Guide  
to  
Knowing God**

**Patricia St. John**

**CF4•K**

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To Rosy  
to whom these  
stories were first told

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Sample

... Who loves me as a Father  
Luke 15:11–32

## 1. THE WHITE HANDKERCHIEF

The man sat on the pavement beside the bus stop, and stared at the stones. A few people turned to look at him – his unshaven face, his slumped shoulders, and his broken shoes; but he was not aware of their glances because he was reliving his life. He was no longer a hungry tramp who had slept last night under a railway arch; he was a boy who lived in a small red brick house up the next street, more than twenty years ago now. Perhaps they had bulldozed over the house by now; he hoped they hadn't crushed the pansies. It was strange how well he could remember the pansies, and the swing his dad had made for him, and the path where he had learned to ride his bike. They had saved up for months to buy that bike.

He shrugged impatiently, for the brightness of those pictures hurt him, and his memory travelled on another ten years. The bike had been exchanged for a motor cycle, and he then began to come home less often. He had a job by then and plenty of friends. Mum and dad seemed a bit sad and grey, and the pubs were a lot more fun. He did not really want to remember those years, nor the day when the debts had piled up, and he had gone home meaning to ask for money. They had made him a cup of tea and he had not liked to mention what he had come for. But he knew exactly where his dad kept the money, and later on, when they went out into the garden, it was quite easy to help himself to what he wanted.

That was the last time he had seen them. He had not wanted to go home again after that, and they had lost track of him. He had gone abroad and they knew nothing about the years of wandering nor the prison sentence. But locked in

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his cell at night he had thought a lot about them. Sometimes when he tossed awake, and the moonlight moved across the wall, he used to wonder. Once free, he would love to see them again, if they were still alive, and always supposing they still wanted to see him.

When his time was up he found a job in the town but he could not settle. Something seemed to be drawing him home, with an urge he could not get away from. Every time he went for a walk something reminded him of the small brick house – a clump of pansies, a child on a swing, a little boy running home from school.

He did not want to arrive penniless, and he walked or hitched a good deal of the long journey home. He could have arrived earlier, but twenty miles away he was suddenly overcome with misgivings. What right had he to walk in like this? Could they ever reconcile the haggard man he had become with the boy they had loved and who had so bitterly disappointed them?

He bought some food and spent most of that day sitting under a tree. The letter he posted that evening was quite short, but it had taken him hours to write. It ended with these words – 'I know it is unreasonable of me to suppose that you want to see me, ... so it's up to you. I'll come to the end of the road early Thursday morning. If you want me home, hang a white handkerchief in the window of my old bedroom. If it's there I'll come; if not, I'll wave goodbye to the old house and go on my way.'

And now it was Thursday morning. He had arrived at the end of the street. It was still there! But having got there, he felt in no hurry at all. He just sat down on the pavement and stared at the stones.

Well, he could not put it off forever, and after all they might have moved. If the handkerchief was not there he would make a few enquiries before leaving the town. He had not yet had the courage to face what he would do if they were there and simply did not want him.

He got up painfully, for he was stiff from sleeping out, and the street was still in shadow. Shivering a little, he walked slowly towards the old plane tree where he knew he could see the old house as clear as clear. He would not look till he got there.

He stood under the boughs with his eyes shut for a moment. Then he drew a long breath and looked. Then he stood staring and staring.

The sun was already shining on the little red brick house, but it no longer seemed to be a little red brick house for every wall was festooned with white. Every window was hung with sheets, pillowcases, towels, tablecloths, handkerchiefs and table napkins; and white muslin curtains trailed across the roof from the attic window. It looked like a snow house gleaming in the morning light.

His parents were taking no risks. The man threw back his head and gave a cry of relief. Then he ran up the street and straight in at the open front door.

**Keynote:** As kind as a father is to his children, so kind is the Lord to those who honour him. Psalm 103:13

Let the wicked leave their way of life and change their way of thinking. Let them turn to the Lord, our God; he is merciful and quick to forgive. Isaiah 55:7

**Prayer:** Thank you Father, that you love me more dearly than any earthly father, for all love flows from you. Your love never forgets me, even when I forget you. You always welcome me back even when I have sinned. You love to forgive me even when I don't deserve it. Thank you for your everlasting love.

**Think:** Can you say for yourself that God loves you? In what ways are you aware of his love?



... Who made me and bought me back ...  
Genesis 1:26–31 and 3

## 2. THE LOST BOAT

John had spent many Saturday afternoons in the garage, building that boat. He had carved the hulk out of a solid block of wood, chiselling it out and sand papering it. His mother had helped with the sails but he had a model and knew exactly what to do about the rigging. It was a beautiful model sailing ship, and the best of it was that he had made it all himself.

Now it was finished, and it sat in state in the living room, admired by all. His father was especially impressed. 'I am proud of you for being so clever with your hands, John,' he said. 'What are you going to make next?'

But John had not thought about what next. His boat was enough for the present.

It was a lovely spring day when he took the boat to the canal to sail it, and he headed for the best place – a little sandy beach, hidden by rushes where he had once found a moorhen's nest. It was perfect sailing weather, sunny and windy, and as he launched his boat, the breeze caught its sails and bore it out into the amber water of the current. He squatted at the edge and gave play to the string. In a few minutes he would climb the bank and run along the towpath, but first he would just stay there to admire its beauty. So absorbed was he, that he never heard voices just behind him, and he jumped when three boys a good deal older than himself slid down into the rushes and squatted beside him. He clutched the string tightly, for these were not boys he knew. He thought they probably came from one of the barges that travelled up and down the canal.

'Here, give us a go,' said the oldest.

'Well, only for a minute,' said John. 'I'm just going to pull her in.'

## A Young Person's Guide to Knowing God

He felt nervous and alone, for these boys looked thoroughly rough types. The biggest lad had already snatched the string from his hand, and was hauling in the boat, pulling it over on its side and drenching the sails. As it approached the bank John found himself suddenly tipped into a bed of nettles and rushes. His hands squelched in the soft mud and dirt flew into his eyes blinding him for a moment. When at last he struggled to his feet, spitting out moss and mud, there was neither boy nor boat to be seen – only the trampled reeds and the weeping willows.

He scrambled up the bank but the boys had disappeared behind the hedges, and he could not even see in what direction they had gone. Besides, if he did catch them, there was nothing he could do against the three of them, so he wiped his hands and turned home. He knew that his parents had gone out to tea, and he doubted whether the police would be very impressed if he phoned up and told them.

When his parents returned, his father set out at once to make enquiries, but no-one in the locality had seen three strange boys. John was very quiet at suppertime, and when he was alone in bed he found himself crying. His father had offered to help him make another one, but it would not be the same. This was his first, his very own. He would never forget it.

The weeks passed and John and his father made another boat and sailed it in the river, but John did not forget the first one. Sometimes he would lie awake and remember the shine of the paint and the billowing of the sails, and wonder where it had got to.

One afternoon he cycled into town to buy a birthday present for his mother, and having found what he wanted he took a short-cut home through the narrow back streets. He loved the pokey little second-hand junk shops, and dawdled along gazing in at the windows. Suddenly he stopped dead; for there in the centre of a shop window, along with an old guitar and brass coal scuttle, stood his boat.

God . . . who is he?

What does he do?

How does a person get to know God these days? Do you just sit around waiting for him to pop in? Where does he hang out? Do you have to go out and find him in church or other 'God' places like that? It would help if he told you a bit about himself - perhaps even given you a guide to help you along the way...

Well, God is prepared, and ready, with the best guide book ever made . . . the Bible. Written by himself, with the clever use of human beings as messengers, God's book is relevant, life-changing, life-giving, adventurous, challenging...

Patricia St. John realised this early on in her life. Here she has written her own guide book to encourage and help you to get into God's ultimate guide book - his Word.

Read this alongside God's book, the Bible. Look up the verses. Think it all out for yourself and see what wonderful things God does when a young person gets to know God.

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*Because you're never  
too young to know Jesus*



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