

GOD LOVES UGANDA

Discussion Guide
for Christians



Introduction

Please introduce your screening by reading this paragraph to your audience.

God Loves Uganda examines the influence of American evangelical Christians in Uganda. Focusing primarily on the ministries of the International House of Prayer (“IHOP”), the film explores how the propagation of fundamentalist Christianity impacts African societies.

It challenges Christians in North America to evaluate the consequences of their international ministries and the potentially harmful effects that could result from their efforts.



Context

Consider using this section as an extended introduction to the film or as a way to frame the discussion following the screening. If you are short on time, you can print this out for your audience or email it to them in advance of the screening.

The growth of Christianity in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands, especially in the past forty years, has transformed the global face of Christianity. Today, a typical Christian is now a woman of color who lives outside of the West, is under the age of thirty, and probably worships at a Charismatic or Pentecostal church. These demographic and spiritual shifts within Christianity have forged new kinds of relationships between some Christians in North America and those outside of the West, as Christianity is now be more trans-national and global than ever before.

In these relationships, North American Christians often view African Christians as the vibrant preservers of conservative Christianity amidst a Western church that is in moral decay and numerical decline. Since the late 1990s, matters of sexuality in particular have often provided “the line in the sand,” demarcating differences between the burgeoning Christian churches of Sub-Saharan Africa and those of the “liberal” or “decrepit” West. As Lou Engle states in *God Loves Uganda*: “The West has been in a decline, but right now I think Africa is the firepot of spiritual renewal and revival.”

It is within this context that concerns over neo-colonialism (colonialism in a “new,” modern guise) have come to the fore. Through their missionary work, Christians in North America can exercise undue power and control over the state of their target country, via financial backing, political connections, and the provision of social services. Examining the role of the Church within these neo-colonial networks is therefore critical to investigations into Christianity’s contemporary global dynamics.

Opening up discussion

Give your audience a few minutes to collect themselves at the end of the screening and then begin your discussion. Below you will find suggested questions organized by theme to help guide your discussion.

You might start with personal questions:

- Which scene in the film best expresses your Christian convictions? Why?
- Did the film give you insight into your own or another Christian tradition? If your Christian tradition was depicted in the film, what are your reactions to the way it was portrayed?
- Were there any particular theological themes in the film that stood out to you? If so, which ones?

THEME 1: PRAYER (ISAIAH 56:7)

Prayer is an important way the American Christians in the film cultivate relationships and a sense of connection with Uganda and Ugandan Christians. One IHOP missionary, Louise, described her mission as “depositing her spiritual DNA” of prayer and worship in Uganda.

Discussion Questions:

- Based on the film, how would you describe that “spiritual DNA” and the consequences of that type of thinking?
- Compare the scenes of Lou Engle’s “The Call” in Uganda with that of Bishop Senyonjo’s benediction at David Kato’s funeral. How does each convey the power of prayer, for good or harm?
- If you have traveled overseas and joined with Christians in worship and prayer, how did your experiences compare with those depicted in the film?

THEME 2: “GOOD NEWS” OR CULTURE WARS? (MATT. 28:19-20)

The IHOP church, like many Christian churches, wishes to help fulfill the Great Commission by sending short-term missionaries and training local Christians to share the “good news” of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Kapya Kaoma, on the other hand, states towards the end of God Loves Uganda:

“For the majority of U.S. conservatives, sharing the good news has nothing to do with the Christian gospel, but American culture wars. That is what is driving their activities across the world. Where they can get, they will get there. Where they cannot get, they will send Africans.”



Discussion Questions:

- What is your response to the tension between these two perspectives?
- If you have been on mission trips, how does Rev. Kaoma’s statement compare to your experiences and relationships with the local people with whom you worked?
- How might your own understanding of the Good News/Gospel be influenced by the culture in which you grew up? Consider both positive/constructive and negative dimensions of this influence.

THEME 3: “RECRUITMENT” vs. “DISCIPLESHIP” (LUKE 18:15-17)

Uganda is one of the youngest countries in the world, with 50% of its population under the age of 15. The film explores the tensions surrounding the forces of change that are competing for the youth of Uganda. Consider some examples in the questions below.

Discussion Questions:

- A young Ugandan evangelist in the film described himself as “part of the army that IHOP is raising up.” Do you think there is a connection between this militant conception of Christianity and the anti-LGBT legislation and violence that were described in the film?
- What do you think of Pastor Ssempe’s claim about the alleged “recruitment” of children into homosexuality?
- How about David Kato’s statement that Ugandans have been “indoctrinated from when they are very young to hate these [LGBT] people”?
- How do various Christians featured in the film use language of “recruitment” and language of “discipleship”? How do you distinguish between these two concepts? Discuss the challenges, dangers, and possibilities of Christ’s “Great Commission” to “make disciples of all nations.”



Conclusion

At one point in the film, Rev. Kayanja states:

**“Whatever you see here
is the fruit of American
labor.”**



His words ominously foreshadow the film’s description of Dr. Scott Lively’s campaign against LGBT rights in Uganda. This campaign resulted in a lawsuit being filed against Dr. Lively in US courts for violating international human rights law by inciting hatred towards LGBT persons.

Discussion Questions:

- What is the relationship between your faith and your understanding of human rights? In what ways can you and your church community support efforts for human rights, particularly in Uganda?
- Has the film given you ideas for how to constructively engage those who have differing theological or ethical views on the issues discussed in the film? If so, how? If not, why?
- Has *God Loves Uganda* challenged how you or your congregation will engage international relationships, partnerships, or missions? In what way(s)?

Closing Prayer

We welcome you to conclude your discussion with this short prayer.

Christ, who was killed unjustly.

Christ, who is found among those we often scorn.

*Christ, who taught us that our own sin is a plank
in our eye.*

Christ, who calls us to put down our stones.

We confess that we are too often deaf to the cries of those who suffer.

We confess that we are too often blind to the pain of those we neglect.

We confess that we too often see only the speck in our neighbor's eye.

We confess that we are still holding on to our stones.

May we have our ears opened.

May we see with new eyes.

May we offer grace, as it has been offered to us.

May we grow in love, which binds all things together in perfect harmony.

Amen.

“We are different. Some are tall. Some are short like myself. Some are big, some are thin.

**But we should respect each other.
And we start this when we are still young.**

If you teach your child to love other people when he is young, he’ll grow up loving them.

But if you say he should not care about other people, he’ll also not care as he grows up.

So my friends, our school should build on working together with people although they may be different. Love one another, as God loves us. God bless you. Thank you.”

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER SENYONJO

in God Loves Uganda





Author

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