

GOD LOVES UGANDA

Discussion Guide:
An Evangelical
Christian Perspective



About this Guide

The purpose of this discussion guide is for Evangelical Christians of any sexual orientation and with any religious conviction to view *God Loves Uganda* together, learning from and listening to those who have been made “other.”

We believe you can create a welcoming space for dialogue in which we all move towards hearing and understanding one another’s stories: Evangelical, gay, and Ugandan alike.

Our hope is for this discussion guide to help you facilitate dialogue rather than debate, community rather than divisiveness, and respect rather than defensiveness. Together, we can create a dialogue that will deepen the conversation for each of us, no matter our sexual orientation or religious conviction. This is a different, and we hope more productive, way to see the film and engage in an otherwise unspoken conversation in Evangelical Christianity.



Introducing the Film:

For the purpose of creating context and an open posture amongst your group, consider reading these first three sections aloud as an introduction to the film. If you are short on time, you can print this out for your audience or email it to them in advance.

I. What Evangelicals Can Learn from Film

*“Blessed are your eyes because they see... truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it.”
- Matthew 13:16-17*

Film can push, expand, and challenge our imagination, our faith, and our worldview. Instead of watching films with a religious, political, or even evangelical agenda, we can watch believing in the transformational power of learning to see (Matt. 13:11-17). We engage film as Jesus teaches us to engage the parables: to train our eyes for the practice of seeing and enacting God’s Kingdom on earth. In this light, film becomes fertile ground and sacred space for encountering the story and mystery of God.

II. Following God’s Example

*“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’”
- John 20:21*

The Bible is the divine story of God submitting himself to the human story. God emptied himself, became human, and took up a cross (Phil. 2:1-11). He then told us, his disciples, to go and do the same (John 20:21). Following Jesus begins from this place of submitting ourselves to the story of the “other,” those who are marginalized, rejected, and untouched in our communities and in the world (Luke 14:7-24, Matt. 25:31-46). As the dominant form of storytelling in our culture, film can inspire the Church to explore the stories of those whose voices and livelihoods are marginalized.

III. A Difficult Story

“Something frightening is happening in Uganda...”
- Rev. Kapyia Kaoma

“Africa is the fire-pot of spiritual renewal and revival.”
- Lou Engle

This film tells a difficult story for the Church to grapple with. Yet, as we learn from Stephen, a deacon in the early Church and the first Christian martyr, telling an honest story is often a difficult, and even dangerous endeavor (Acts 6-7).

In a country with deep wounds and a rich history of its own, *God Loves Uganda* tells one particular story: that of some American Evangelical’s influence on sexual intolerance in Uganda.

By tracing conservative Christian ideologies and American dollars to the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda (a bill that originally threatened gay people with the death penalty and continues to legitimize hatred and violence against them), the film is a cautionary tale about what happens when the Church allows its voice to be co-opted or usurped.

While the film is about homosexuality in Africa, it is also about the ways we, knowingly or not, are a part of a tradition that uses the Bible to hateful and violent ends.



Engaging With the Film:

Please use the rest of this guide to facilitate conversation after your group watches the film. As the film finishes, give people some space to reflect silently and transition into dialogue. When the group is ready, begin the discussion with these three initial questions. Then read the subsequent sections aloud and choose questions that most resonate.

Initial Questions:

1. Did you find the film uncomfortable, convicting, or upsetting? How?
2. If the film is a kind of modern-day parable, where do you see yourself in its story?
3. As a follower of Jesus, does the film portray the kind of teaching you would want the world to hear about your faith? Why or why not?

I. What's at Stake for Evangelical Christians?

*"We [the Evangelical church in Uganda] are creating an army of young people with Bibles."
- Jesse and Rachelle Digges*

*Evangelical Christians, not God, are putting
"the standard of who should be in God's Kingdom and who should be out."
- Kapya Kaoma*

God Loves Uganda exposes a thread of evangelicalism that all Christians have a stake in, regardless of our denominations or personal convictions. The Christians in the film speak a language that is familiar--safe even--for the Evangelical Church. Yet it may look, sound, or feel uncomfortable to watch on screen. In this way, the film calls on us to be wise as we discuss controversial and dangerous situations with love and unity.

The same story portrayed in *God Loves Uganda* that has led to deadly violence against a marginalized population in Africa is also happening, perhaps more subtly, in America. Our churches must unilaterally stand against such persecution, regardless of our opinions about sexuality. We must engage our own sexuality in a healthy, safe dialogue. And we must learn to read and live our Bibles better.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you believe is the purpose of Christian missions? Does the missionary work you see in the film surprise you? Why or why not? Do you agree with the statements quoted at the beginning of this section?
2. According to the film, how are Ugandan opinions regarding faith and sexuality being formed? How did this happen? In your own Christian community how are your opinions regarding faith and sexuality formed?
3. Do you know what and who your Church supports financially? As revealed in the film, what is the power of the Church's money in controlling ideology in our own country and abroad? What can we do about it?
4. Are you or your community involved with IHOP in Kansas City? Do you feel like this is an accurate portrayal of your community and its leaders? Why or why not?
5. Imagine yourself in the shoes of those in the film (Lou Engle, Bishop Christopher, Martin Ssempe, David Kato, Johanna Watson, the Digges, or others). How did they end up where they are? What is at stake for each of the characters?

II. The Bible and Sexuality

*“God doesn’t want it, he wants it stopped.”
– Joanna Watson*

We hear the Bible's message differently depending on the assumptions, concerns, and practices of the community in which we read it. In other words, it is difficult to separate the Bible from our particular context. There are few places in the Bible that mention homosexuality and even these passages are debated among theologians and biblical scholars (Gen. 19; Lev. 18 and 20; Rom. 1-2; 1 Cor. 6:1-11; 1 Tim. 1:8-11).

It has proven difficult for the Church to live fully and faithfully inside so few words. This means that as we work to develop a Christian ethos of sexuality, we must put these passages in dialogue with the greater story of scripture and of God's movement towards love, peace, and reconciliation. If you are interested in reading more about what the Bible says about sexuality, I have a list of resources that I'm happy to share with you.

*“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.
Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have
been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the
greatest of these is love.”
- 1 Corinthians 13:12-13*

Discussion Questions:

1. What is human sexuality? How is it portrayed in Evangelical Christian culture?
2. As Christians, what are some ways we reconcile our sexuality with our faith?
3. Where and how do you talk about sexuality in your relationships?
In your families? At school? In church?
4. Where does the LGBT community get to talk about sexuality? What is the Church’s role in this dialogue?

III. Conclusion: What now?

*“I assure you that what you have done for one of the least of these
brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.”
- Matthew 25:40*

Together as the Church, let us approach *God Loves Uganda* with an openness to hear the words of the Bible afresh and to consider the global and personal impact of how we read it.

Let us recognize and confess that Christians have often interpreted the Bible as saying whatever we wanted it to, in a way that has proven violent and deadly throughout history. And let us approach the Bible, this film, and the LGBT community with humility and repentance for the things that we do and have done in God’s name.

The Bible and our commitment to kingdom living calls us to protect the marginalized, to love our enemies, and to actively resist violence that is perpetrated against any human being or community.

Discussion Questions:

1. Relating to what Bishop Christopher says in the film, what do you believe is “the most loving thing to do” when our Christian ideologies become a matter of life or death for other people?
2. What have you learned from the film that you and your church could use to constructively engage people you know who have opposing views regarding the LGBT community?
3. What can you do, on an everyday level, to protect the lives of LGBT people in Uganda and in your own church or community?
4. Do you feel God’s Spirit moving you as you engage with the film? How?



Closing Prayer

We invite you to close your discussion with this prayer from William Temple (the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942-1944). As we seek to follow Christ's example in our communities and our churches let us remember and reflect on the ultimate and infinite reality that God is Love.

*God of Love,
we pray that you give us Love:
Love in our thinking,
Love in our speaking,
Love in our doing,
and Love in the hidden places of our souls.
Love of our neighbors, near and far;
Love of our friends, old and new.
Love of those whom we find it hard to bear,
and Love of those we find it hard to bear with us.
Love of those with whom we work,
and Love of those with whom we take our ease.
Love in joy, Love in sorrow.
Love in life and Love in death.
That so at length we may be worthy to dwell with you,
who are eternal Love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
forever and ever.
Amen.*

Further Resources:

Books

“Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate,” by Justin Lee

“The Children Are Free: Reexamining the Biblical Evidence on Same-Sex Relationships,” by Rev. Jeff Miner and John Tyler Connoley

“The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart,” by Peter Gomes

“Love Is an Orientation: Elevating the Conversation with the Gay Community,” by Andrew Marin

“The Christian Case for Gay Civil Rights,” by C.S. Pearce

“Growing up Gay in a Christian, Fundamentalist, Right-Wing, Conservative Family During the 1940’s – 1960’s,” by Bernard Martin

Films

For The Bible Tells Me So

Seventh-Gay Adventist

Wish Me Away

Online

The Gay Christian Network

Evangelicals Concerned



Author

OneTable began in 2012 as a student group at Fuller Theological Seminary, the largest Evangelical seminary in the world. Since then, OneTable has grown into its own organization that exists to create safe spaces for dialogue about faith, gender, and sexuality. We host the only LGBTQ, faith-based International Film Festival in the world and we specialize in facilitating shared dialogue through art, food, and film. If you’re interested in creating safe spaces for your community to dialogue, please visit their website weareonetable.com or email info@weareonetable.com.

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