

Lord

save us from
YOUR FOLLOWERS

Bible Study Guide

Kindling for Enlightening Conversation

Why is the Gospel of Love Dividing America?

**"No one ever converted to Christianity
because they lost the argument."**

**- Phillip Yancey,
*Rumors of Another World***

DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Thanks for joining the conversation. I'm thrilled you are here. After sharing *Lord, Save Us From Your Followers* with a startlingly wide range of believers and non-believers, conservatives and liberals, sports fans and non-sports fans, I have some idea of the powerful, challenging and fruitful discussion coming your way. I expect that you'll find unfair stereotypes as well as firmly held perceptions about people melt away – and not just your perceptions about *them*, but also their perceptions about you. The powerful response to this film among those who follow Jesus has been particularly exciting for me. I've met so many Christians on this journey who have redoubled their efforts in understanding what they believe and why they believe it. People are and even finding new, beautiful ways to live out their faith more fully. And, uh, yeah, you can count me among those Christians who has learned much and is now trying harder to represent Jesus better by trying to see those in my life as He sees them.

At a recent church screening of the film a pastor told me, “We could watch five minutes of the movie, hit the pause button and talk for an hour. There is just so much there.” Right about then I thought, “Well, duh, we need to put together some questions and prompts to help folks push the conversation forward.” I know there is a lot of ground covered in *Lord, Save Us...* and different stories and segments carry different meaning and weight depending on where you are in your personal travels, so that's one reason we've gone so in depth with this study guide. Feel free to use the guide as it best suites you and your group. You may prefer to hop around the guide and hop around the movie - just go with the flow. I do hope you find this study guide a useful tool in jump-starting the dialogue. So, thank you for caring enough to dig in and connect with those around you in a meaningful way, thanks for caring enough to try and figure out what Jesus meant with that whole “Love One Another” thing.

All the best,

Dan Merchant
Writer/Director
Lord, Save Us From Your Followers



FACILITATOR TIPS

There is no answer key to this study guide so don't waste your time looking for it. However, we do have a few suggestions for the discussion facilitators that can encourage the conversational flow:

- 1) Watch the movie together and take 15-20 minutes to cover a couple questions in the "Introduction" section. Just enough to whet people's appetites. Figure out when you can return to the conversation together two more times.
- 2) Get everyone's info. Shoot them an e-mail a few days before and give 'em a call a day before telling them that you look forward to picking up where you left off and that you'll have FOOD. That's right: Don't underestimate the reconvening power of food!
- 3) Also...you can invite them to bring friends. Remind everyone that people who weren't at your first gathering can go online to lordsaveusthemovie.com and STREAM IT if they want to see the film before diving into a discussion about it!
- 4) Pray for God to meet you in your gatherings and for people to get a clearer picture of who Jesus Christ really is.
- 5) Don't feel like you have to have all the answers...allow the group to work it out together. Let people raise questions and voice perspectives. Share scripture not to correct, but to inform, and to carry the conversation to

new places. God is the real expert at enlightening people who are genuinely seeking Him.

- 6) This is going to be a challenge for all you overachievers out there, but don't feel like you have to get through all the questions. We put enough questions in each section for you to CHOOSE from.
- 7) Speaking of not having time to get through everything...we suggest you preview the questions. There may be some you just know right off the bat won't connect with your group. You have our permission to cross 'em out with a marker...tear a page out, rephrase questions, whatever makes you happy! Seriously, select the ones you think will work best for your group. Go with your gut. This will help the conversational flow once everyone is together.
- 8) There's no agenda here. If there's energy in the conversation and people have grabbed onto a talking point, let it be. If there isn't momentum, move on to another section.
- 9) Guide the conversation. Resist the temptation to teach. (We know deep down you want to!) Let silence be silence. This doesn't have to be a gabfest. Give people time to reflect and for the conversation to go a different direction. Let it ride!
- 10) The more the merrier! If people want to invite friends to the next gathering, let them! It's okay if they didn't see the movie. Again, they can stream it or you can lend them the DVD.



INTRODUCTION

1. What was your initial reaction to the title of this movie? Why do you think you responded that way?
2. What's your understanding of "The Gospel"?
 - Where do you think you got that view?
 - In what ways have you seen people "use" the Gospel in divisive ways?
3. Share about a time when you heard or saw the Gospel communicated in either a healthy way or unhealthy way. How did that affect your own spiritual life and faith?
4. What's your earliest memory of:
 - Christianity?
 - Christians?
 - The Church?
 - How did these 'first impressions' influence your own spiritual progress?
5. How would you summarize the Christian message?

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

– Jesus (Luke 4:18-19)

I. DAN'S GOT A BONE TO PICK

[6-min]

"It's one thing to project our opinion from a bumper sticker...it's another thing to have a conversation." Complex ideas are being reduced to simple bumper sticker slogans and that seems good enough for people."

– Dan Merchant

6. Do you relate with Dan's observation about complex ideas being reduced to simple bumper sticker slogans...and worse than that...that people actually seem satisfied with them? What bumper sticker slogans have you seen that have made you laugh or almost resulted in you being cited for road rage?

7. Christians get mixed reviews from the average American. While interviewing people, Dan heard these answers: "to be holy, forgiveness, going to church, fanaticism, killing off of non-Christians, crusades, warfare, trying to get other people to be Christian, being good people, love-thy-neighbor-type things, compassion, theatrics, loving Jesus, following Jesus Christ, being really snobby, being hypocritical, trying to live the right life and do the right thing, appearing to be holy and being buck ____ wild behind closed doors."

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

– Jesus (John 13:35)

- What impressions have you heard?
- Do you think what Dan or you have heard are "fair" assessments?

**II. DID DR. CAMPOLO REALLY SAY "WHORE"?**

[11:30]

"The Church is a whore...and she's my mother."

– St. Augustine

8. What point was Tony Campolo making with reference to St. Augustine's quote above?
9. How has your perception affected your relationship with the Church?
10. How would you describe your relationship with the Church?
 - Do you see her more as a whore or as your mother?
 - What has the Church "done" for you?

[14:00]

11. Later in the interview, Dr. Campolo shared this insight: “A movement can exist without a god. But never without a devil. There has to be an enemy to be destroyed.” How has the discussion about faith in America gotten confused by this truth Campolo shared?

“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.’”

– Revelation 19:6-8



Camera Operator, were able to sit down together and talk with each other in the same way they talked with Dan, where do you think the discussion would have ended up? Why?

13. How are Christians different from non-Christians? Is one hypocritical while the other one isn't?

- What's the same?
- What's different?

[19:50]

14. Ron Luce, Founder of Battle Cry, said “Here we live in a ‘Christian nation’ but we have a very unchristian culture. We have a culture that is violent...violently opposed to Christian values and part of that is because people that have faith and values haven't spoken up very much. So people without faith and without biblical values have spoken up. Whoever speaks up...they get to shape the culture...they win.” To what extent do you agree or disagree with Luce's argument?



III. THE ANGRY NUN

[18:30]

12. If Sister Mary Timothy of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and Naomi, Battle Cry's

hyp·o·crite -

a person who pretends to have virtues, moral or religious beliefs, principles, etc., that he or she does not actually possess, esp. a person whose actions belie stated beliefs.

IV. FRANKENCHRIST

[21:30]

“The Church is the Body of Christ, and for the last fifty years, the hands and the feet have been amputated, and all we’ve been is a big mouth.”

– Pastor Rick Warren

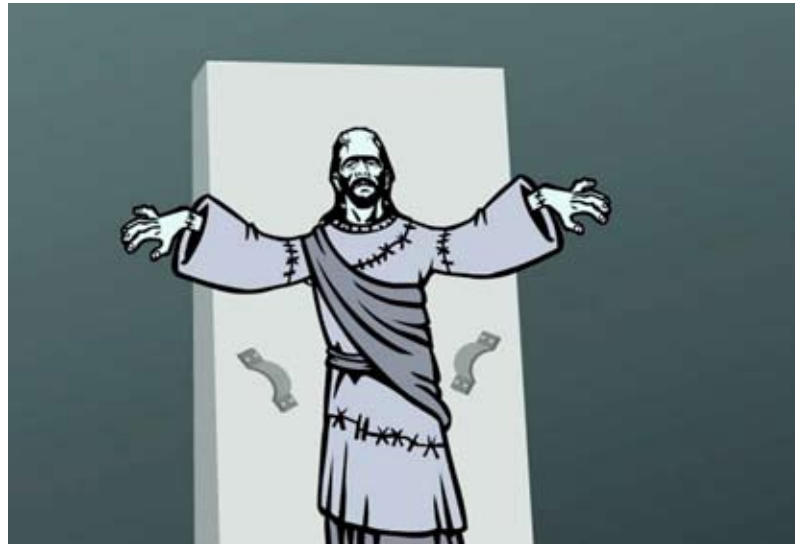
15. What is meant by the phrase “Body of Christ”?

16. What was the “Frankenchrist” cartoon depicting about Christians?

- Do you think that accurately represents the perspective non-Christians have about the Church?
- Did you identify with this animated feature or was it upsetting or disturbing to you? Why do you think?

[23:35]

17. Speaking about the ‘Christian behavior’ he’s seen, Bill Maher made this statement: “If they would call themselves ‘Christ-likes’ instead of ‘Christians’ maybe it would remind them to act like Jesus Christ.” Do you, like Dan Merchant, think he’s got a great point in his critique?



“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

– The Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 12:27)

18. Do you believe “The Gospel of Love” has, generally-speaking, been turned into “The Gospel of Being Right” by American Christians?

V. CHURCH & STATE...WWJD

[28:20]

“American society, as we’ve known it for the longest time, is under attack.”

– Lars Larson, Syndicated Radio Host

19. In his interview with Al Franken, Dan framed the conversation by saying, “‘Religious liberty’ and ‘Christian country’ are two different things...” Al responded by saying “They’re the actual opposite.” If somebody asked you your view on the relationship between “Church & State” how would you respond?

20. Do you care if “under God” is kept in the pledge of allegiance? Why or why not?

21. Do you feel like it’s a mistake to rely on the government to have prayer in school? Why or why not?



[30:10]

22. While speaking about faith and politics, Senator Rick Santorum said: “How do you determine what’s right or wrong without looking at some sort of moral code whether it’s from the philosophers or whether it’s from bubble gum wrappers? You get it from somewhere and most people in America, not all... but most, get it from faith.” What extent do you agree or disagree with the Senator’s statement? Using the following questions, explain:

- If you disagree, how would you rephrase this point?
- Do you agree that we need a “moral code” in order to determine right from wrong?
- Do you believe most people in America get it from “faith”?

Separation of church and state is the political and legal concept that government and religion should be separate, and not interfere in each other’s affairs.

In the United States, separation of church and state is often identified with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

– Wikipedia.org

VI. GOD VS. UNCLE SAM

[31:20]

23. In response to Dan saying, “It seems as though Christianity has become the sovereign territory of the Republicans,” Lars Larson said, “Only because we embrace it. Democrats don’t embrace it.” If Jesus came back today, do you think he’d be a Republican or a Democrat?



24. Every Sunday, 4 out of 10 Americans attend church and 9 out of 10 believe in the existence of God. In fact, 75% of people in America (or 125 million) identify themselves as “Christian.”

- Does this mean that we’re a “Christian nation”?
- What do you think of the idea of a Christian nation”?
- Is it a comforting or an unsettling idea to you? Why?

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

– The Apostle Paul (Romans 13:1)

[36:00]

25. In Dan’s conversation with Al Franken about his experience at Christian Coalition events, Al shared about his encounter with a man who confronted him on his belief about Jesus as the Messiah. The man challenged Al with an argument similar, though less articulately, as the one C.S. Lewis presents in the classic *Mere Christianity*: “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached

egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a mad-man or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” Al’s experience was less than positive to say the least. Do you think the essence of this excerpt above can be shared in a non-condemnatory fashion? Share how.



26. What do you think of “The Jesus Fish?” Do you have any kind of Christian bumper sticker or other religious paraphernalia on your vehicle? (Come on...be honest! This is a fun question!) Have you ever had a ‘driving moment’ when you wish you didn’t have it on your vehicle?

[40:00]

27. Do you agree with Dan that some Christians are “more concerned about being right than demonstrating humility, love, and compassion”? What imprint did Jesus make on the people He interacted with? How do you think somebody who just encountered Jesus would describe their first impression of Him?

VII. CHICKS, BUNNIES...EVERYBODY'S MAD

[41:00]

28. In an effort not to offend, many of the ‘powers that be’ have decided to use the more generic “holiday” in place of Christmas. For example, instead of Christmas Tree a “Holiday Tree”, no nativity scenes, etc. Do you believe it’s “your choice” on whether or not you’re going to be offended?

[43:00]

29. The Human Rights Director of Saint Paul, Minnesota, thought that non-Christians might be offended by an Easter Bunny display in

City Hall so he ordered to have it removed. Why do you think people would get offended by “bunnies”?

30. The ACLU seems to want no religious imagery in the public square and now nobody is sure what’s OK and what’s not. The proposed renaming of the town from Saint Paul, a major religious figure, to the religious-neutral, less-offensive “New Leningrad” is a satire pointing to how we can go too far with trying to be sensitive to everyone. Commenting on this extreme-PC, Dan says, “Us against them is fun and it’s easy to play. It gets the voters out, raises money, drives ratings, and outrage is way more exciting than humility. This country is polarized and we’re loving it!” Share an example of how you see Dan’s observation played out in the media or real life.

[49:00]

31. Dan became a game show host to highlight the so-called “culture war” in America today. Why do you think the “liberals” dominated the “conservatives” in this Family Feud-style game? What did this contest between the “Young Conservatives” and the “Liberal Media Elite” reveal to you?

32. After the taping of the Culture Wars game show, the two teams hung out for two-hours and began to appreciate one another even though they held opposing points of view. The conclusion was liberals and conservatives need to reach out to one another on major issues in America and be compassionate to one another, be less defensive, to have the



courage to act in public like they do in private and give one another respect. In other words, the conversation sounded a lot different back stage than it did out front. Describe how you think Christians ought to engage in meaningful dialogue with people who have different views than their own?



The culture war in American usage is a metaphor used to claim that political conflict is based on sets of conflicting values. The term frequently implies a conflict between values considered traditional or conservative and those considered progressive or liberal.

– Wikipedia.org

VIII. TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND “THE AMERICAN WAY”

33. Some say Hollywood’s agenda is “money” while others say Hollywood follows

trends and fashions. Do you believe Hollywood is corrupting America?

[1:01:00]

34. What do you think is the major problem of our culture? Dr. Tony Campolo shared these insights: “The major problem of this culture is not the gay issue, is not the abortion issue – as important as these are. The thing that’s going to destroy evangelical Christianity in the next 25 years – and it will – is its willingness to be at home with the commercialism and with the consumerism of our society...Our kids are growing up as consumers, not as people who are committed to the mission of God in the world.” Dr. John Perkins agreed with this by saying, “Prosperity is the biggest part of our faith right now.”

- If you agree with Drs. Campolo and Perkins, share why.
- What evidence of this do you see at home?
- What evidence of this do you see at church?

35. Most people who have a problem with Christians don’t have a problem with Jesus. Most people have a positive view of who Jesus is and what He stood for: Grace, sacrifice and reconciliation. What do you think most influences people’s view of Christians? How about Jesus?

IX. THANKFULLY...NEW PROPHETS AND NO FLOOD

[1:10:00]

36. The ONE Campaign aims to make extreme poverty history. Bono said, “Stop asking God to bless what you are doing. Get involved in what God is doing because it’s already blessed...But the one thing we can all agree – all faiths, all ideologies – is that God is with the vulnerable and the poor. God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor lay, God is in the silence of the mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives. God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war. God is in the debris of wasted opportunity and lives. And God is with us if we are with them.”

- What do you think about what Bono shared?
- Do you believe the divisive political voices are being replaced at the microphone with people who want to unite, uplift, and help others?

“Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”

– St Francis of Assisi, Founder of the Franciscan Order of Monks

[1:12:00]

37. During an interview with Meet The Press, Pastor Rick Warren shared the truth that changed his life: “The purpose of influence is to speak up for those who have no influence.” In response to these words, he repented and

chose to use the rest of his life to using whatever influence he has for those who have no influence. What influence do you have? How have you used it or how would you like to use it to help those who have no influence?

“It’s not about you.”

*– The Purpose Driven Life,
Pastor Rick Warren*



38. Tony Kriz (a.k.a. “Tony the Beat Poet”) was inspired to create a confessional booth for Christians to confess to non-Christians during Reed College’s post-final exam debauchery. He knew there was a lot to be gained or loss depending on how he chose to engage others. Picking up on this same belief, Dan decided to set up a confessional booth in Portland’s Waterfront Park for the festivities at Pride NW. Gay people were invited into the confessional booth to hear his confession, where Dan quickly realized that small talk is easy but apologizing is hard. What impacted you about the way people responded to Dan’s confessions?

Respond to one of the next two points:

39. Dan learned from his ‘confessional booth experience’ that life and people are complicated. That compassion should be given and not earned. And that everyone has a “rest of the story.” Share a time when you felt like you were being judged and you wished people knew “the whole story” about you.

[1:26:00]

40. Tony Campolo shared a personal story about a boy named Roger. Roger was outted with his homosexual orientation while attending a high school with an unkind climate in West Philadelphia. This became known through his school and during physical education, he would wait to enter the showers only after his classmates finished theirs. Students would take their wet towels, spin them, and whip Roger with them. One day, after stinging him with their towels, five boys urinated on Roger as he was curled up in the shower stall. That day he went home, went to bed at about 10:00pm, and about 2:00am he woke up, went down to the basement, and hung himself. After Tony heard this, he knew he wasn’t a Christian. He knew that if he was a Christian, he would have been Roger’s friend. Tony then shared this thought: “You don’t have to legitimate somebody’s lifestyle in order to love that person, to be a brother or sister to that person, and to stand up for that person.” Dan commented how we’ve all judged, hated, and feared and then asked this question, which you can use in your conversation: “Who are we going to be in this life and when are we going to start being it?”

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” (John 8:3-11)

X. PEOPLE OF ‘THE TOWEL & THE BASIN’

[1:27:40]

41. Sheila Hamilton, News Director at Portland Rock Station KINK FM, traveled to Ethiopia with Christian Relief Organization, World Vision. It was the first time World Vision had ever teamed up with secular radio station. Sheila was appalled at why they hadn’t done it sooner sharing, “They’ve never

done it with secular radio station because they didn't think they would care." She was skeptical of the Christian world and was afraid of the prospect of seeing Christians proselytizing. Instead, she saw their love and care expressed by helping the poor communities with farming and food. She saw the demonstration of what was powerful and true: Volunteers wiping flies from the eyes of babies and dressing their wounds because they were given AIDS by their mother – "The kind of work that I don't know who else steps forward to do it," she said.

- What kind of work do you see as being that which not many others step forward to do?
- What do you feel ready or able to do to address it?
- How can we live in Jesus' vision, in Jesus' eyes?



The success of the KINK radio station and World Vision pairing proved again that you don't have to agree on everything to work together to help others.

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

– Jesus (Matthew 9:12-13)



[1:32:00]

42. Dan summed up another 'truth bomb' that hit him this way: "We can talk all day, argue all night, and get nowhere. But the good news is...loving kindness actually works." He then pointed to the example of Bridgetown Ministries that provides an opportunity for the Body of Christ to come be the Church rather than just "go to church" on Sunday. They do this by helping Christians organize under the Burnside Bridge in Portland every Friday night to tend to the needs of the city's homeless by providing for their basic needs (food, clothing, toiletries, respect, tenderness, etc.). Tom Krattenmaker, member of the USA Today Board of Contributors, witnessed the people who were reaching out through this ministry and noted how they were not judging

the moral worthiness of the homeless. Judgmental questions about the people they were serving – some of whom were drunk or high on drugs – became, as he put it, “completely irrelevant in the face of radical compassion.” He saw the example of this outreach as being “the best face of religion.”

- Share an example of when you were the giver or receiver of “radical compassion”. What impact did it have on you?

“You can tell you’ve created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.”

– Anne Lamott,
Grace (Eventually)

- What would you say is “the best face of religion”?

43. Dan’s feet were washed during his visit to Night Strike under the Burnside Bridge. He was struck by how difficult such an act was for both the giver and the receiver, noting how “It’s a risk to be open to someone else... to be vulnerable and to accept the gift that you feel that you don’t deserve.” Dan concluded that it’s not the Gospel of love that’s dividing America after-all.

- Did you arrive at the same conclusion as Dan?
- What do you think is dividing America?
- What can you and I do to change that?

The conversation starts now.



**“COME HOME SWEET CHILD”
WRITTEN BY SAM MARTIN**

*I know what your soul looks like/After all I designed it myself
I created the sky above/And everything you can and can't see*

*Come Home My Child/I've loved you all your life
Come Home Sweet Child/I've never left your side...all this time
I want to give you that peace you're looking for/
Even if you've been knocking on the wrong doors*

*I love you the way you are/No matter what you have done
Fall back and depend on me/And my love will set you free*

*Come Home My Child/I've loved you all your life
Come Home Sweet Child/I've never left your side...all this time
I want to give you that peace you're looking for/
Even if you've been knocking on the wrong doors*



**ORGANIZATIONS WHOSE GOOD WORKS
ENCOURAGED AND INSPIRED THIS JOURNEY:**

- one.org
- compassionfirst.org
- eape.org
- missionyear.org
- bridgetownministries.com

- worldvision.org
- fermiproject.com
- burnerswithoutborders.org
- palau.org
- glide.org

**To connect with churches and volunteer organizations in your area,
to find small group resources or to join a Lord Save Us...Street Team log on to:**

LORDSAVEUSNATION.COM

