

DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOREWORD BY Kevin DeYoung, author of *CRAZY BUSY*

COMPASSION *without* COMPROMISE

How the Gospel Frees Us to Love
Our Gay Friends Without Losing the Truth

Adam T. Barr and Ron Citlau

DISCUSSION GUIDE PREPARED BY RYAN KIMMEL



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INTRODUCTION

We Understand.... It Would Be Easy to Panic

In the introduction, Adam and Ron open us up to the realities of the changing world before us. Our authors call us to examine ourselves and our preconceived notions regarding our attitudes toward the LGBT community. In addition, we are introduced to our authors as they give us their background and motives for writing such a book.

1. Adam and Ron list a series of instances that demonstrate the changing culture in relation to LGBT people. Which of those experiences have you already encountered, and how did you react?

2. Before reading this book, how would you justify the affirmation that homosexuality is a sin?

3. With which part of Adam's and/or Ron's story do you identify or connect?

4. In the introduction, Adam and Ron say, "We will be encouraged to choose between two equally unattractive alternatives: Either 'join the team' that is open and affirming or sit on the sidelines, be labeled a bigot, and shut up. It is already happening" (p. 19). Have you experienced or felt the truth of this claim? What was your response?

5. Why have you decided to read this book, and what do you hope to glean from it?



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CHAPTER 1

Something Beautiful: *Why did God make sex?*

In chapter 1, Adam and Ron start at the beginning of Creation and the Bible to give us the framework for which God has designed and purposed human relationship and sexuality. They show their cards by saying they believe the Bible is God's Word from which and on which they make their stances moving forward in this book.

1. When your parents/guardians first gave you "the talk," was it in response to a situation like Adam's or was it just time? How did it go?

2. Read Genesis 2:19–25. Our authors draw an important conclusion from this section of Scripture: God's first humans were designed as a complementing pair (p. 26). If Adam needed a partner,

the question is not, Why didn't God just create another Adam? The question is, Why did God create Eve?

3. Seeing that God created Eve as a complementing partner to Adam, our authors highlight two more foundational principles for human sexuality: the principle of *reproduction* and the principle of *union*. Describe what those are.

4. In this chapter, we also see that sin is much more than breaking rules: It's our trying to take God's place in our lives. How do you see that happening in our world with the ways culture is rewriting the rules for human gender and sexuality?

5. Our world pushes back on many Christians' response to homosexuality by claiming they are "just picking on one sin." Adam and Ron show us the reason this issue gets all the attention is simply because we are being told it *isn't* a sin (p. 31). Why do Adam and Ron say that is such a serious issue?

6. In closing, re-read Genesis 2:24–25 and reflect on the beauty of God's design for man and woman.



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CHAPTER 2

Two-Faced: *How can a bunch of hypocrites cast the first stone?*

Chapter 2 is a disarming chapter for many. It states a simple and profound truth: Jesus came to save sinful people. Everyone who calls on the name of Christ for their salvation does so because they are in need of saving and unable to save themselves. Ron opens his heart in this chapter to confess that this subject matter is not just textbook theology; it's a daily reality for him as a pastor and as a person.

1. As a parent, Ron says that it's not so much what he says, but who he is that shapes his children (p. 36). The same is true for how the church relates to the world. Knowing that both are needed, do you think the church does a better job of *declaring* the love of Christ, or *demonstrating* the love of Christ?

2. Ron reiterates a revealing argument: “The LGBT community has a point. Why should they take what Jesus says seriously if his followers don’t?” (p. 36). As a Christian, when your life is examined, how seriously do you take that which Jesus commands?

3. On page 37, Ron makes a poignant statement: “Any serious follower of Jesus must decide how he or she views the Bible.” The underlying question is, Do you believe what the Bible says about itself? (See 2 Timothy 3:16–17.) How would you answer that question, and what proof in your life would you use to back up your answer?

4. Our authors remind us that Jesus did not come to make life easier, but to take it from us; faith in Jesus means that “anyone who would follow him must die to self” (p. 40). How is this message both comforting and challenging?

5. “What Christ did on the cross *works* for every man and woman—no matter the ailment” (p. 40). In closing, reflect on how profound and paramount that statement should be to our world.



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CHAPTER 3

Not the Same: *Why is sexual sin different from any other?*

The big idea of chapter 3 is that because God designed us to be sexual beings, sexual sin is stronger than other sin. As our authors describe, sexual sin is idolatry of the heart and mind and can be destructive to our bodies. The authors also point to the defeating results for our souls: “Unrepentant homosexual sin, along with a host of other sins, will keep people out of God’s Kingdom” (p. 49).

1. The authors say on page 44, “We write from the humble perspective that our lives have been touched by grace. We know that without Christ we would be living a life of misery or be dead. The same is true for you.” Share for a moment how your life has been touched by the grace of Jesus Christ.

2. Ron speaks to the experiences and truth that his wife's "otherness helps make me whole" (p. 47). How does the nature of heterosexual relationships differ from homosexual ones insomuch that the former completes and the latter doesn't? (For example, think of the lock and key analogy from chapter 1.)

3. Have you "heard well-meaning men and women who embrace their gay desire as their identity and say that they are gay Christians"? (p. 49). If so, what has led them to allow for such a conclusion?

4. In this chapter, our authors make a very unpopular claim: "One cannot embrace his or her broken sexuality and at the same time seek to embrace Jesus" (p. 50). Knowing there are more to come, what passages have already been cited to support this assertion?

5. In closing, reflect on this theme that is already so prevalent in this book: Salvation is for everyone. As Adam and Ron say on page 52, "God, in and through Christ, has made a way for redemption for any person who wants it and asks for it."



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CHAPTER 4

Jesus Is My Homeboy: *If he didn't care, why should we?*

Adam and Ron help us to deconstruct the broken image of Jesus in our culture—the Jesus that we've fashioned in our own image who affirms our desires and votes for our politicians. Our authors give us the biblical, the historical, the real Jesus: The Jesus who calls all people to himself and yet the same Jesus who calls people to die to themselves.

1. What would you conclude is the god of our culture from the ads and marketing you see in public?

2. Adam recounts from his youth a strategy he employed to get his way that is a common, yet faulty philosophical approach in debate. What is it and how is it being used to re-envision the message of Jesus?

3. Our authors write, "For Jesus, when Scripture speaks, God is speaking" (p. 57). This highlights that it's impossible to separate what Jesus said and taught from what the Bible truly says and teaches. How does this or should this affect the way the Bible is read?

4. "In that simple act of sharing a meal, the Lord was giving us an example of what it means to be inclusive" (p. 63). Given this definition, when was the last time you were inclusive toward a member of the LGBT community or a non-Christian?

5. In closing, reflect on this: Rather than being our homeboy, our authors state that, "If we want to be part of his kingdom, we must make him our King" (p. 65). What's the difference between having Jesus as our "homeboy" and having Jesus as our King?



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CHAPTER 5

Ban All Shrimp:

Shouldn't conservatives be consistent in their reading of Scripture?

Our authors share the objective of chapter 5: "In this chapter, we want to make it clear that the Bible consistently presents this message [that homosexuality is a sin] in both the Old and New Testaments" (p. 67). In this chapter, Adam and Ron, citing context and language, specifically interplay Leviticus and Romans to carefully, contextually, and convincingly confirm this message of Scripture: God's design for human sexuality prohibits homosexuality.

1. Adam and Ron dive right into the heat of the culture debate by asking on page 70, "Is it possible to distinguish between strands of [the Holiness Code from Leviticus] that have been discontinued now that we are in Christ, and parts of it that still provide moral guidance for today?" How did they

answer their own question, and what have you learned?

2. At the center of the debate surrounding the Bible's teaching on homosexuality is the Greek word *arsenokoites*. Where does this word come from, who said it, where is it found, and most important, what does it mean?

3. The argument to include homosexuality among normative practices for Christians includes three primary points to reinterpret the teaching in the book of Romans. Using the clues from pages 72–74, what are the arguments and what are the responses?

4. In closing, reflect on this: "Every single person who comes to the Bible has some kind of agenda" and so the question for us is, "Am I willing to let the Bible rewrite my story, or will I attempt to rewrite the Bible?" (p. 75). How are you going to answer that question?



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CHAPTER 6

Perception and Reality: *How can homosexuals trust Christians when they act like a bunch of homophobes?*

This chapter is a challenge to Christians. The ending summarizes the focus nicely: “We can care more about people even when their lives are contrary to the gospel; we can make sure that our religion propels us to love; we can be unafraid of blessing the good that we see in the LGBT community; and finally, we can build real friendships with our LGBT neighbors. And when opportunity arises, we can share the hope that burns within us” (p. 84).

1. Do you know any homosexuals who have either left Christianity altogether or sought a congregation that affirms their sexuality? If so, what precipitated that decision?

2. The authors use the famous story of the Good Samaritan to draw out four principles that Christians can utilize when seeking to love and do good to and for the LGBT community. After summarizing those four principles, detail which one is the most challenging to you and describe (or confess) why that is.

3. On page 83 it says, "I think it is true that people are more willing to hear our opinions when they truly think we care for them." Would you say your gay friend/neighbor/relative believes you truly care for them? Why or why not?

4. In closing, reflect on this: "Our gay and lesbian friends . . . are bearers of the image of God" (p. 83). Spend some time praying for them and about how you can love them by doing good for them.

CHAPTER 7

Here's the Church, Here's the Steeple: *How should my church deal with this issue?*

In this chapter, Adam and Ron engage real questions about real scenarios that the church is facing. Their biblical responses are as challenging as they are encouraging for Christians. The questions are not so much about if these situations will occur, but when. And so it's important for Christians and the church not only to be kind, but clear in a confused world.

1. Adam and Ron bring out one of the most important issues regarding the question of homosexuality and the church's response: Dismissing or ignoring this issue isn't an option because our differences produce "diametrically opposed visions for gospel ministry" (p. 86). How and why is this the case?

2. With many of the answers in the Q&A section, our authors point to the importance of churches having clear statements on these issues that would be helpful when having difficult conversations. Does your church have such statements? Do you know what they are and where to find them?

3. Of the questions asked in the Q&A section, with which have you or your church had to deal?

4. Our authors make a prediction: "Over the next five to ten years, the American church will move through a 'sorting.' Every pastor and local congregation will have to engage this issue and deal with it" (p. 87). Has your church felt the reality of this yet? How has your church leadership responded?

5. In closing, reflect on this: Adam and Ron tell us that the changing attitude toward and increased acceptance of homosexuality "shouldn't cause too much anxiety. . . . This is our Father's world. . . . He will use it for our good, for the pursuit of those he loves, and most of all for his glory and fame (p. 97).



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CHAPTER 8

Spots on the Leopard:

Can the gospel transform someone's sexual orientation?

Chapter 8 brings a clear message: The cross of Jesus not only changes people, it transforms them. Saturated in Scripture, this chapter brings to light a subject surrounded by much confusion and disagreement. But we are left with this: "The gospel does change lives" (p. 100).

1. Ron testifies that in the midst of his brokenness, "all that remained was a catastrophe. This is where Jesus met me" (p. 100). What's your story? Where were you when Jesus met you?
2. The assumption in today's world is that "a person with a homosexual orientation must embrace a gay identity if he or she is to be true to himself or

herself" (p. 103). What do the call of Christ and the work of the cross have to say about such an assertion?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–11. What does the description of the Corinthian church members' former way of life have to say about the transforming work of Jesus? What sort of hope does this give you?

4. This chapter outlines three "GPS markers" on the road to transformation: 1. Turning to Jesus, 2. Denying the self, and 3. Connecting with church (108–112). Re-read the cited verses and quotes for each marker. In which of these markers do you have the most room for growth?

5. In closing, reflect on this: Our authors state a beautiful truth on page 105 when they say, "We are no longer the sum of our actions, desires, biological inclinations, or cultural pressures. We are his."

CHAPTER 9

When Push Comes to Shove: *How can we navigate the soon-to-be-everyday issues of living in a gay world?*

In chapter 9 we see Adam and Ron continue to hit real-life questions head on while affirming a solid and loving stance: “We should never reduce real-life people to ‘problems’ for us to solve” (p. 117). This chapter gives us examples of how to speak the truth in love, how to be compassionate without compromising.

1. Our authors remind us, “The good news is not ‘Jesus likes us just the way we are.’ It is ‘Jesus died so that we could live a whole new life’” (p. 116). How does this truth challenge popular notions of Christianity today?

2. Re-read Colossians 4:2–6. From this passage, Adam and Ron highlight five important applications on how to approach conversations regarding homosexuality (pp. 117–118). Review them and explain which ones have been the most informative to you.

3. In speaking about how to handle pressure to publicly support the LGBT agenda, our authors say, “In today’s climate we are going to have a lot of tests like this” (p. 120). How have you already been tested, and how has this chapter equipped you to handle more tests like this in the future?

4. Adam and Ron (and many other Christian pastors) advise against attending a gay “wedding” on the grounds that “we cannot celebrate what the Bible censors” (p. 122). What is your response to the reasons asserted in this counsel?

5. In closing, reflect on this: As you begin to frame your own response to this issue, and in light of what you have learned in this book, the question for you is, Do you tend to “shortchange love or to soft-pedal truth”? (p. 127). It’s vital to know this because, “a wise witness will understand these contours of their personality” (p. 127). Answering this truthfully about yourself will only make your dialogue more engaging and fruitful.



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CHAPTER 10

Don't Panic: *Things might get hard, but we're not alone.*

In chapter 10 we are reminded that opposition and persecution are part of being a Christian. Jesus guarantees them to anyone who would follow him. Our authors remind us that the church has been through similar cultural attitudes before, yet by God's grace it remains and grows. Adam and Ron say it's okay to be a little worried because we must be clear on what is ahead.

1. Read Romans 12:1–3. How do these verses comfort and challenge you in light of Adam and Ron's statement, "The fact is we are all under pressure to conform to our world. This is a perennial struggle of the Christian life" (p. 136).

2. Our authors give us a brief glimpse into the history of the gay rights movement and then say, “We believe it is impossible to live wisely in the here and now if we don’t understand what got us here” (p. 139). What facets of this movement have you experienced or witnessed?

3. We read in this chapter “There is a measure of Christlikeness that can only come when we suffer for it” (p. 141). How can we expect that standing for biblical truth on this issue will bring suffering, and how will that help us to be more like Jesus?

4. Our authors encourage us by reminding us that “whatever may be coming, Jesus has shown us the way” (p. 142). In light of that truth, what have you read and learned in this book that helps you to know how to love and serve the LGBT community with “Christlike compassion” and “Christlike courage”?

5. In closing, reflect on this last line from chapter 10, “Now, [Jesus] wants us to take up our cross so that the world may know that there is good news” (p. 142). Pray that you will be obedient to Jesus in taking up your cross, in standing strong, and in sharing the good news.

APPENDIX

The Watershed

The appendix of *Compassion Without Compromise* is not a section to be overlooked. In this closing section, our authors reveal for us the foundation of their treatise presented in this book: The Bible is God's Word. Adam and Ron give us a clear picture regarding the crux of this issue: If there is no agreement on what the Bible is and its purpose, there will be no agreement for Christians surrounding gospel ministry toward the LGBT community.

1. Our authors give us four reasons that they believe the Bible is God's Word. The first and primary reason is that Jesus believed this. Explain why our authors have concluded that Jesus taught that the Bible is God's Word.

2. Adam and Ron show us that the Bible itself claims to be God's Word. How and where does the Bible make this claim?

3. That the Bible is God's Word is not a new claim. Not only did Jesus believe this and the Bible reveal it, but Christians throughout the centuries have stood for this truth. What ancient Christians do our authors cite, what did they say, and in what centuries did they say it?

4. Finally, our authors make a bold, challenging, and intimate claim: Their own lives confirm that the Bible is God's Word. In closing, reflect on this challenging claim: How does your life confirm that the Bible is truly God's Word?