

Compelling LOVE & Sexual Identity

An Interactive Study Guide for Small Group Discussion

Consider taking your viewing of the film to a deeper level by interacting with others in a small group. This guide will direct your reflections as you interact with each other about specific clips in the film. The guide will be structured in a modular format. Feel free to just use one clip alone, several clips back to back, or a continuing series of one or more clips. Also please exercise your freedom to select the questions that are most useful for you for each clip. Every question need not be used to create a significant small group experience.

As you interact with others, make it a special focus to honestly share your own personal thoughts, feelings, and responses rather than commenting on someone else's responses in the group. Everyone in the group should have the primary goal of understanding rather than agreement or even solution. It is also important to maintain the proper sequence of 1) to understand first, then 2) to be understood. As you interact over the different film clips of *Compelling Love & Sexual Identity*, you will have the opportunity to apply Paul Tillich's quote: "*The first duty of love is to listen.*"

The small group guide is designed to have the group leader's instructions in parenthesis and a sample statement of explanation or direction to the group in **bold black print**. Type appearing in **blue print** represents content that appears in the film clips. The timestamp is provided to help you locate the clip in the film.

1. Opening Reflection - 0:25

(Begin with 3 discussion starter questions before showing clip #1 to set the stage in a general sense. Then you may choose to continue to play from clip #1 right into Clip #2 NYC pod.)

Questions:

- 1. Have you ever been a part of a group where people were very different from one another in beliefs, values or practices? Examples?**
- 2. As people bump into their significant differences, can you give any examples of the two most common responses to one another of 1) intolerance, or 2) tolerance?**
- 3. What do you think it would look like for someone to respond with a 3rd option that went way beyond intolerance or tolerance?**

Now let's look at the film *Compelling Love & Sexual Identity* and begin to focus on this key question: *"How do you connect with someone who greatly opposes, distresses, or even offends you concerning sexual identity differences?"*

(Show Clip)

Film Intro Reflection Messages:

Sexual Identity is a polarizing topic.

There are many opinions on what is right or wrong.

Picture a table.

Across that table sits the person whose beliefs offended you.

Can you connect with that person?

What does it mean to receive that person beyond tolerance?

COMPELLING LOVE & SEXUAL IDENTITY

2. New York City, NY - 2:30

(The film contains 8 different cities with "person on the street" interviews of their own thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and practices. Listen closely especially to those identifying themselves as significantly different from you.)

(Show clip)

Questions:

- 1. Respond to this quote: "I think religion has interfered with man's ability to make choices and respect one another."***
- 2. Respond to this quote: "I think that tolerance is actually very superficial, it's shallow."***
- 3. What comment did you most agree with?***
- 4. What comment did you most disagree with?***
- 5. What person did you connect with the most? Why?***
- 6. What comment raised a new question in your mind about yourself or others?***
- 7. What would you like to understand more from this clip?***

3. Reflection - Rumi – 5:25

(Show Clip)

*“Out beyond the ideas of right doing and wrong doing there is a field, I will meet you there.”
–Rumi*

Who is it across the table that offends you?

How could you begin to receive them?

You can start by listening to their story.

Questions:

1. *Do you have a response to Rumi’s quote?*
2. *Do you have any ideas at this point about who may be sitting across the table from you right now?*

4. Debrah Goodman – 6:35

“I’m an out and proud lesbian...”

(Show Clip)

Questions:

1. *What chair does Debrah represent?*
2. *Who sits opposite her?*
3. *What is her greatest fear?*
4. *What is your natural response to her?*
5. *What do you need to learn from her?*

5. Reflection - Paul Tillich – 10:35

(Show Clip)

“The first duty of love is to listen.” – Paul Tillich

Questions:

1. *Do you have a response to Tillich’s quote?*
2. *What tends to get in the way of you loving by listening?*

6. Donald Wright -10:55

"I'm a survivor...It was brutal...For twenty plus years I've struggled with my identity. I'm a believer in Christ that has same sex attraction...I'm going to live a life of celibacy."

(Show Clip)

Questions:

1. *What chair does Donald represent?*
2. *Who sits opposite him?*
3. *What was the "game changer" for Donald?*
4. *What is your natural response to him?*
5. *What do you need to learn from him?*

7. Washington, D.C. - 14:45

(Listen closely especially to those identifying themselves as significantly different from you.)

(Show Clip)

Questions:

1. *Respond to this quote: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." -ML King Jr.*
2. *Respond to this quote: "A person isn't necessarily just their beliefs. There are things underneath those beliefs that you can love. The relationship doesn't have to be defined by the beliefs that you disagree with. The relationship can just be defined by human connection."*
3. *What comment did you most agree with?*
4. *What comment did you most disagree with?*
5. *What person did you connect with the most? Why?*
6. *What comment raised a new question in your mind about yourself or others?*
7. *What would you like to understand more from this clip?*

8. Reflections - William Shakespeare -18:30

(Show Clip)

"The course of love never did run smooth." – William Shakespeare

Questions:

1. *Do you have a response to this quote?*
2. *Do you have an experience of your course of love not running smooth and yet it was still love?*

9. Dianne & Wendell Merritt - 18:50

"Our youngest son Tim is gay..."

(Show Clip)

Questions:

1. *What chairs do Dianne & Wendell represent?*
2. *Who sits opposite them?*
3. *What is their "dilemma" regarding their faith and their son?*
4. *What is your natural response to them?*
5. *What do you need to learn from them?*

10. Dallas, TX - 22:10

(Listen closely especially to those identifying themselves as significantly different from you.)

(Show Clip)

Questions:

1. *Respond to this quote: "What troubles me most about how I love people is about how inconsistent I am and how selfish I am. Sometimes, literally I just want to win."*
2. *Respond to this quote: "I think truth and grace are both components of love, because you can't truly love someone without being honest with them, so you need truth, but also you do have to extend grace because they are not perfect, nor am I."*
3. *What comment did you most agree with?*
4. *What comment did you most disagree with?*
5. *What person did you connect with the most? Why?*
6. *What comment raised a new question in your mind about yourself or others?*
7. *What would you like to understand more from this clip?*

11. Reflections - Lao Tzu - 25:30

(Show Clip)

"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage." Lao Tzu

Questions:

1. *Do you have a response to Lao Tzu's quote?*
2. *Have you had an experience when... ?*

12. Dr. Robert Jeffress – 25:50

“I am the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas...I am often in debates with people who are opposed to my point of view.”

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. What chair does Dr. Jeffress represent?**
- 2. Who sits opposite him?**
- 3. What is his most striking comment to you?**
- 4. What is your natural response to him?**
- 5. What do you need to learn from him?**

13. Reflections - Jesus of Nazareth – 29:05

(Show Clip)

“But I tell you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.” – Jesus of Nazareth

Questions:

- 1. Do you have a response to Jesus’s quote?**
- 2. Do you have an experience when you have loved your enemy or they have loved you?**

14. Dr. Dawson Taylor – 29:25

“I am a gay man...and found my calling as a pastor...and I don’t want to be tolerated, I want to be accepted...”

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. What chair does Dr. Taylor represent?**
- 2. Who sits opposite him?**
- 3. What is his most striking comment to you?**
- 4. What is your natural response to him?**
- 5. What do you need to learn from him?**

15. San Francisco, CA – 32:15

(Listen closely especially to those identifying themselves as significantly different from you.)

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. Respond to this quote: “Can you love people who you really believe are wrong? Yes, that’s kind of what love is.”**
- 2. Respond to this quote: “Compelling love means to me that I have no recourse. I am just bent, hard bent to give it and to share it as much as I can.”**
- 3. What comment did you most agree with?**
- 4. What comment did you most disagree with?**
- 5. What person did you connect with the most? Why?**
- 6. What comment raised a new question in your mind about yourself or others?**
- 7. What would you like to understand more from this clip?**

16. Reflections - Zora Neale Hurston – 36:00

(Show Clip)

“Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place.” – Zora Neale Hurston

Questions:

- 1. Do you have a response to Hurston’s quote?**
- 2. Have you seen someone motivated by love to come out of their hiding place?**

17. Thoele Sarradet – 36:25

“Well to introduce myself, my name is Thoele and I’m here to raise hell. My story is filled with struggle...it’s never easy to bring up a transgender child...”

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. What chair does Thoele represent?**
- 2. Who sits opposite her?**
- 3. What is her purpose in creating animations?**
- 4. What is your natural response to her?**
- 5. What do you need to learn from her?**

18. Reflections – Mother Teresa – 40:10

(Show Clip)

“I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.” – Mother Teresa

Questions:

- 1. Do you have a response to Mother Teresa’s quote?**
- 2. Have you witnessed an experience where someone loved until it hurt, and then there was more love?**

19. Marisa Sifuentes & Cynthia Culver – 40:40

“Up until about five years ago I was living a homosexual lifestyle...in that process a friend who was not gay, befriended me on the soccer field...”

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. What chairs do Marisa & Cynthia represent?**
- 2. Who sits opposite them?**
- 3. What is the most striking thing to you about their story?**
- 4. What is your natural response to them?**
- 5. What do you need to learn from them?**

20. Miami, FL – 45:55

(Listen closely especially to those identifying themselves as significantly different from you.)

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. Respond to this quote: “Compelling love is for me, someone who is putting their whole heart into doing something for unselfish reasons.”**
- 2. Respond to this quote: “Just because we have different beliefs, doesn’t mean we can judge you. It is possible to love someone who judges you.”**
- 3. What comment did you most agree with?**
- 4. What comment did you most disagree with?**
- 5. What person did you connect with the most? Why?**
- 6. What comment raised a new question in your mind about yourself or others?**
- 7. What would you like to understand more from this clip?**

21. Reflections – King Solomon – 49:30

(Show Clip)

“Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers all wrongs.” – King Solomon

Questions:

- 1. Do you have a response to Solomon’s quote?**
- 2. If you ever witnessed a situation where hatred was responded to with love? Tell how it turned out?**

22. John Carswell – 50:00

“I have a sister...she says there’s not verbiage for what she thinks she is.”

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. What chair does John represent?**
- 2. Who sits opposite him?**
- 3. What is his primary emotion about his sister?**
- 4. What is your natural response to him?**
- 5. What do you need to learn from him?**

23. Reflections – Fyodor Dostoyevsky – 54:25

(Show Clip)

“What is hell? I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love.” –Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Questions:

- 1. Do you have a response to Dostoyevsky’s quote?**
- 2. Have you ever observed someone suffering due to an inability to love? What was it like?**

24. Dr. Trista Carr – 55:00

“I am a clinical psychologist and I am also a sexual minority...It makes sense to me that I would get married to a woman. And I believe that there is grace for that... and I love Jesus a lot, a lot.”

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. What chair does Dr. Trista Carr represent?**
- 2. Who sits opposite her?**
- 3. What hurts her most?**
- 4. What is your natural response to her?**
- 5. What do you need to learn from her?**

25. Austin, TX – 58:40

(Listen closely especially to those identifying themselves as significantly different from you.)

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. Respond to these quotes: 1)“Tolerance is bullshit. I hate that word. It’s like a linguistic mask, a way to say you still have no respect for somebody else, but you’ll tolerate that. I hate that phrase.” 2) “Tolerance for me is just a lesser of acceptance, but the ability to be in my presence.”**
- 2. Respond to this quote: “A true friend stabs you in the front”**
- 3. What comment did you most agree with?**
- 4. What comment did you most disagree with?**
- 5. What person did you connect with the most? Why?**
- 6. What comment raised a new question in your mind about yourself or others?**
- 7. What would you like to understand more from this clip?**

26. Reflections – Edward Bulwer Lytton – 1:02:25

(Show Clip)

“If you wish to be loved, show more of your faults than your virtues.” - Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Questions:

- 1. Do you have a response to Lytton’s quote?**
- 2. What tends to get in the way of you showing your faults rather than your virtues?**

27. Julie Rodgers – 1:02:40

“I have faced tremendous challenges trying to figure out how do I walk with Christ, how do I flourish in the church as a gay Christian who didn’t choose my attractions or my orientation...My orientation hasn’t changed after 10 years of trying to change it.”

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. What chair does Julie represent?**
- 2. Who sits opposite her?**
- 3. What helps Julie stay in the church and deal with the pain of remaining in the church as a “gay Christian”?**
- 4. What is your natural response to her?**
- 5. What do you need to learn from her?**

28. Chicago, IL – 1:06:35

(Listen closely especially to those identifying themselves as significantly different from you.)

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. Respond to this quote: “Tolerance: rules we live by so we don’t actually have to get to know each other.”**
- 2. Respond to this quote: “Tolerance: passive acceptance.”**
- 3. What comment did you most agree with?**
- 4. What comment did you most disagree with?**
- 5. What person did you connect with the most? Why?**
- 6. What comment raised a new question in your mind about yourself or others?**
- 7. What would you like to understand more from this clip?**

29. Reflections – Eleanor Roosevelt – 1:09:55

(Show Clip)

“It takes courage to love, but pain through love is the purifying fire which those who love generously know. We all know people who are so much afraid of pain that they shut themselves up like clams in a shell. And, giving out nothing, receive nothing and therefore shrink until life is a mere living death.” - Eleanor Roosevelt

Questions:

- 1. Do you have a response to Roosevelt's quote?**
- 2. What particular pain would possibly scare you off from loving through the "purifying fire" and leave you shut up like a clam shell?"**

30. Michael Albert – 1:10:50

"I was raised Jewish...I live as a though I'm an atheist...My brother also came out as gay...(others) believe that I am a force of evil in the world, and I am not."

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. What chair does Michael represent?**
- 2. Who sits opposite him?**
- 3. What does Michael wish?**
- 4. What is your natural response to him?**
- 5. What do you need to learn from him?**

31. Park County, CO – 1:14:55

(Listen closely especially to those identifying themselves as significantly different from you.)

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. Respond to this quote: "Don't get me wrong, I've known people that were gay, and I got along fine with them in business working with them, but that didn't make it right by me, or comfortable enough to hang with them, you know."**
- 2. Respond to this quote: "Do what you want to do, whether you like it or not. Do whatever you want. It's a free country. That's why we live here. Otherwise, what's the point."**
- 3. What comment did you most agree with?**
- 4. What comment did you most disagree with?**
- 5. What person did you connect with the most? Why?**
- 6. What comment raised a new question in your mind about yourself or others?**
- 7. What would you like to understand more from this clip?**

32. Reflections – Eric Hoffer – 1:18:15

(Show Clip)

“It’s easier to love humanity as a whole than to love ones neighbor.” Eric Hoffer

Questions:

- 1. Do you have a response to Hoffer’s quote?**
- 2. How have you seen it to be true that it is easier to love humanity than your neighbor? Examples?**

33. Lavonia Lewis – 1:18:35

“...so what, he’s God’s child just like you and me and I’m not going to condemn him...I’m 95 and I hope the few years that I have left that I can be more demonstrative in my love for others than I’ve ever been before.”

(Show Clip)

Questions:

- 1. What chair does Lavonia represent?**
- 2. Who sits opposite her?**
- 3. What is significant to you about a 95 year old church lady saying that “...I hope the few years that I have left that I can be more demonstrative in my love for others than I’ve ever been before.”**
- 4. What is your natural response to her?**
- 5. What do you need to learn from her?**

34. Reflections – Tim Keller – 1:23:50

(Show Clip)

*“To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God.”
- Tim Keller*

Questions:

- 1. Do you have a response to this quote?**
- 2. Which of these three experiences in the quote best describes your experience?**

35. Closing Reflections - 1:24:50

(Show Clip)

There are many more stories that need to be told.

Who sits across the table from you?

Do you speak with truth, but at the expense of grace?

Do you show grace, but at the expense of truth?

How are you receiving this person?

Do you connect beyond tolerance?

Are you living out both grace and truth?

COMPELLING LOVE

Questions:

- 1. Are there any stories that need to be told by you?***
- 2. Who sits across the table from you?***
- 3. Do you speak with truth, but at the expense of grace?***
- 4. Do you show grace, but at the expense of truth?***
- 5. How are you receiving this person?***
- 6. Do you connect beyond tolerance?***
- 7. Are you living out both grace and truth?***

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36. Closing Credits - 1:27:05