



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Discussion questions written by Jacqueline A. Bussie for *Love Without Limits*

INTRODUCTION

- 1 This book's introduction tells a tough story about how the author was asked to compromise her values, faith, and integrity. Name a time when you were asked to compromise one of these important things. What did you do or say in response?
- 2 Has anyone ever tried to silence you? What is the value of telling our stories? What is the power of telling the truth?
- 3 Take out a sheet of paper or your *Love Without Limits* journal. Take ten minutes. Write a short love letter to the world. Read your "Dear World" letters aloud to one another.
- 4 "Love's not a candle, it's the freakin' sun." Discuss!
- 5 Jacqueline confesses she's often pretty lousy at a love without limits. Assess yourself. Do an honest inventory. Where does your love without limits have room to grow?
- 6 "Love demands understanding, not agreement," Jacqueline claims. What's the difference? Identify a time in your life when you understood something another person did or thought or said, but didn't agree with it.
- 7 How has the recently intensified division and polarization in our country affected you personally? Take a few minutes to lament with one another.
- 8 In response to this polarization, Jacqueline vows to write in order to try to change hearts. What is one concrete thing you vow to do in the next month to help try to overcome the divide? Make a group list of your promises called **#LoveWithoutLimitGoals**.

CHAPTER ONE | GUS

1. Take a few quiet moments to reflect back on your first real love. Who (or what) was your first love? Did those around you encourage or discourage this love? Share those stories with each other.
2. What did your experience of first love teach you? About life? Love? Yourself?
3. Growing up, who were you taught was “different” or “not one of us”? How did that teaching affect you? How do you feel now about it?
4. Jacqueline says Gus was the first person in her life who made her “feel like a someone” (p. 5). Who was the first person in your life who made you feel that way? Have you thanked them? If not, reach out.

CHAPTER TWO | CHARLOTTE

1. Who’s the person in your life who’s taught you the most about a love without limits? Take a moment to celebrate them out loud. What batons did they pass you? (p. 9) [Group Leader: If you have a baton or cross or some other symbol of love’s legacy, pass it around and as each person shares, have them hold it.]
2. Ray Bradbury says love is giving people back to themselves, better than they dared hope or dream (p. 14). Name a time when someone treated you this way.
3. What does Jacqueline mean when she describes Jesus as “the master of accompaniment?” (p. 16). Do you find this idea comforting? During hard times in your own life, have you felt Jesus accompany you? Share examples.
4. The author names writing as how she “metabolize[s] life and its losses, and break[s] them down into useable nutrition” (p. 19). What do you do to help metabolize life and its losses? How can you carve out more time for that activity in your life?
5. Take out a sheet of paper or your journal. Write the name of a person who taught you how to love. Then, take ten minutes to list ten love lessons you learned from them. Read these aloud to the group.

CHAPTER THREE | FAMILY

1. Jacqueline writes, “Some of us are misfits in our families of origin” (p. 24). What is your relationship with your family of origin? Do you have religious, political, or social disagreements with them? How do you handle these?
2. Do you have a friend-family, or “framily?” Spend a few minutes swapping stories with one another about your awesome families.
3. Have you ever experienced “an-eleven-out-of-ten” love? If so, describe it. What was it that made it so amazing? After you’ve reflected on that for a few minutes, think about ways that you can pass along that kind of love and show it to someone else.
4. “Life writes its own poetry, but like all poetry, it’s sometimes hard to read” (p. 28). Discuss!
5. How can we as people of faith help one another not to feel guilty or ashamed if we have difficult relationships with our family of origin?
6. Read Luke 14 aloud as a group. What words or phrases particularly stand out to you? What does Jacqueline’s interpretation of this text help you to notice?
7. Get out some crayons or colored pens or pencils. Draw your family. What did you draw and why?
8. If Jesus drew a picture of his family, what do you think he would draw and why? What is Jesus’ definition of family, according to this book? What is one active step you can take as a group or a church to get closer to Jesus’ radical definition of family?
9. “If you annoy the heck out of the powerful, then you will know your love has dilated sufficiently” (p. 32). Give a real-life example of such dilated love—either from your own life or someone you know or have heard of.
10. Ask yourself if you welcome sinners and eat with them (p. 32).
11. “Love is like galaxies, not gasoline.” Ready, set, go—discuss. What does Jacqueline mean when she says a love without limits is “unsexy” (p. 36)?
12. Read the list of Joseph’s love lessons aloud as a group. Which one resonates with you or comforts you the most, and why?

CHAPTER FOUR | GRANDMA PERKINS

1. Do you have any nicknames? Did you have any growing up? How did/do you feel about them?
2. Have you ever been called by the wrong name? How did it make you feel? Have you ever called anyone else by the wrong name, either accidentally or on purpose?
3. According to Martin Luther, Christians are called to “call things by their right names.” Name something you feel we don’t call by the right name in today’s society.
4. “Right names save lives” (p. 49). Analyze this idea together.
5. Take out a sheet of paper or your journal and a pen. Think of something you really would love to talk to God about. Write a letter to God sharing your thoughts using the hand you always write with (your dominant hand). Next, write a letter to yourself from God, using your nondominant hand. If you feel comfortable, share these aloud.
6. Read together Julia Dinsmore’s poem titled “My Name Is Child of God, Not ‘Those People.’” Who do you believe gets treated as “those people” in the United States today? In the world? What can followers of Jesus do to show people we are all children of God, no exceptions?
7. How does Jacqueline define political correctness? Do you agree? How do you feel about the concept of political correctness?
8. Make available some sharpies and some blank paper nametags. Reread what the author shares on pages 53–54 about sacred names. Then, write down your own sacred name on the nametag. Take it home and keep it in a special place, and be sure to look at it when you need reminding that you are cherished.
9. Turn to page 56. Take a look at the story of Madison, who changed her name to Pam. Have you ever known someone who changed their name? Why? Have you ever changed your name or thought about doing it? Why or why not? If you have ever changed it, how did people respond?
10. “Love lets us release the outworn” (p. 57). Unpack.
11. What’s your favorite example in the Bible of a name change?
12. If you are a Christian, what does it mean to you to learn that the mother and father of the Christian faith—Sarah and Abraham—were immigrants? How should the church treat immigrants? How should we respond as God’s people to the refugee crisis?
13. After reading this chapter, how would you answer the age-old question from William Shakespeare: What’s in a name?

1. How did you react to the story of Jim and Jennifer and Elijah? Did anything change for you when you learned that Elijah's parents were two men? What do you make of the fact that Jacqueline's original publisher demanded she cut every word of Elijah's story? Would you have responded as she did?
2. Discuss a time you stopped talking about love and did something about it.
3. What do you think about the story of Jess McCorkin? Who is a person you feel you have hurt or failed to love enough in life? Can you do anything about it? Be brave in your response.
4. What resonated most with you in this chapter? What resonated least?
5. If you are not yourself a member of the LGBTQ community, do you have any close friends who are? What have they taught you? If you are LGBTQ, what is one thing about yourself that you wish everyone knew but doesn't?
6. Do you have family or friends who disagree with you on matters of sexuality? How do you handle these disagreements? How can we best love without limits members of the LGBTQ community? How can we best love without limits folks who disagree with our perspective? Is it possible to do both? How?
7. How does the Bible guide your ethics and conduct? Your views on sexuality? Your politics?
8. Reread Romans 1 in its entirety. What strikes you?
9. Jacqueline writes, "If our sins make us people who aren't 'real Christians,' then no one in this world is a Christian" (p. 73). Reactions?
10. What does Jacqueline mean by the term *selective literalist*? Do you find this term useful or not? Are you a *selective literalist*?
11. Write your own six-word memoir. If the people in your group feel comfortable, display them on the wall and try to guess whose is whose.
12. Take ten minutes to do a writing exercise. The prompt: What's one thing you used to believe fiercely but now disbelieve just as fiercely?—GO.
13. "A genuine apology is like an eleventh-hour rain on a dusty crop. Grossly overdue, but miraculously just in time" (p. 81). Identify a time in your life when a genuine apology changed things or made a difference in a relationship.

CHAPTER SIX | KHADIJAH, RASHEED, AND JAMILA

1. Watch the TEDTalk “The Danger of the Single Story.” Have everyone in your book club share one word or phrase that best describes this TEDTalk.
2. Has anyone ever told a single story about you, your family, or your community? How did it feel? Share those experiences.
3. Who are some people in our world today that you’ve heard a negative single story about? As a group, make a list. Then, have each person pick one group on the list. Ask: what’s one thing followers of Jesus could do to stop this particular single story? Brainstorm ideas. No idea is too small!
4. Do you have a friend of another faith? What have you learned from them? “Introduce” them to the members of your book club by telling one of your favorite stories about them.
5. What did you know about Islam before reading this chapter? Would you say that at any point in your life you subscribed—or still subscribe—to a single story about Islam? Be honest.
6. What is one new thing you learned from this chapter about Islam? What fact in this chapter surprised you the most, and why?
7. “There are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, living on all continents. To think that they all belong to—or even agree with—ISIS or the Taliban is as outlandish as assuming that all Christians belong to the Ku Klux Klan or the Westboro Baptist Church” (p. 90). Exchange views on this controversial claim.
8. Read aloud the author’s contemporary retelling of the Samaritan parable on pages 102–3. How do you react to this? Don’t hold back—be super honest.
9. What are Krister Stendahl’s three rules of interfaith engagement? How are these helpful tools in a multifaith world?
10. Have you ever experienced holy envy? When? Where? Why? Share stories.

CHAPTER SEVEN | FARGO

1. Do you agree with Jacqueline that even places like Fargo have single stories? Provide examples from your own life.
2. Ponder the place where you live now or a place where you once lived. What did it teach you? List three things.
3. Why does Jacqueline believe Facebook should really be called Fakebook? Do you agree? Is the image you project of yourself online different from the real you? How so?
4. How does the author define privilege (p. 114)? What privileges do you possess? Which do you not?
5. Have any of your callings in life led you anywhere you didn't plan on going or didn't at first want to go? How did you learn to trust God enough to take the leap? What advice would you give to a younger person based on that experience?
6. Unpack what Jacqueline means when she says, "Most of us are Nathanaels" (p. 121). Have you ever been a Nathanael? What changed your mind?
7. The author encourages Christians to acknowledge the both-and nature of life. What's one both-and you see or feel in life? How can you "bravely inhabit" this particular both-and as a person of faith?

CHAPTER EIGHT | FEET

1. What were you taught about self-love growing up? About pride? Who taught you these lessons? If you are a Christian, what did your church teach?
2. Reflect on your life for a few quiet minutes. Do you have too little self-love, too much, or just the right amount? What changes, if any, do you think you need to make?
3. Have you ever known anyone who had too little self-love? How did you treat them?
4. How would you define pride? Did this chapter nuance or change your views on pride? If so, how?

CHAPTER EIGHT | CONTINUED

5. For centuries, male Christian theologians defined agape as selfless love. How would you define agape after reading this chapter?
6. Have you ever thought of humility as “sadly corrupt”? What does Jacqueline mean when she claims this? Do you agree?
7. “To love without limits does not mean to live without limits” (p. 142). Unpack this important assertion.
8. Why is pride healthy and necessary for some communities and individuals? Why must some folks reclaim their pride? How can people of faith best support them in this endeavor?
9. Do you have a person in your life who has taught you (intentionally or unintentionally) not to do things the way they did? Share.
10. Read aloud together Jacqueline’s list of twenty things about self-love. Which most speaks to you? Why?
11. Do you know someone in your life who needs to read this chapter? Share it with them or come up with a plan to share its key ideas.

CHAPTER NINE | GRIEF

1. What does Jacqueline mean by the term “grief-shaming”? Why did she coin this term? Have you ever been grief-shamed? Do you agree with the author that grief-shaming is “definitely a thing”? Share.
2. Why do you think grief-shaming is so common in our culture? What can/should Christians do to stop it?
3. Read aloud Jeremiah 9:17–21. How can Christians better help people mourn? How can we create an intentional space for lament in our families and communities? Brainstorm specific strategies with one another.

CHAPTER NINE | CONTINUED

4. What does Martin Prechtel mean by unmetabolized grief? Name a grief in your own family or heart or community that is unmetabolized. What do you plan or hope to do to start metabolizing it?
5. “Church should be less like a palace and more like a dog park: a place where the truth bounds wildly about, off the leash at last” (p. 157). Discuss!
6. Read together Matthew 15:22–28. How do you react to this story? What do you think it means?
7. Do you find comfort in Jacqueline’s claim that “grief is eye-stinging, gut-wrenching, fist-clenching evidence that love speaks last” (p. 165). Why or why not? What does this mean?
8. Talk openly with one another about a time you experienced deep grief. How did you cope? In what spaces was your grief welcome? Where was it not?
9. Does your particular church or faith community carve out a time and space for grief to be expressed and losses to be mourned? Where and when? Provide examples. How can we be better at creating such spaces? (If you come up with good ideas, please send them to the author!)
10. Name one major takeaway about grief—a new idea, an interesting quote, a challenging insight—that you will carry forward with you from this chapter.

CHAPTER TEN | DIFFERENCE

1. Why is it so hard for us to love across difference?
2. What is something you believe hurts God? Do you participate in this hurt? What do you do that hurts God? What will you do to try to stop?
3. Who have you heard labeled as an enemy within your own family or community? Within our nation? Have you ever called someone your enemy? Why is this label dangerous?
4. How did you respond to Jacqueline’s story about the Battsons? Do you have an example from your own life when an “enemy” was simply someone whose story you did not yet know?
5. Have you ever been completely wrong about someone? What did that teach you about love?

CHAPTER TEN | CONTINUED

6. Has anyone ever labeled you (or a community you belong to) an enemy? How did this affect you? Ask everyone in your group to answer these same questions but replace “enemy” with “unknown” and “less-than.”
7. “To love God is to stop making exceptions” (p. 174). Who in your life right now are you treating as an exception to love? Who is your church treating as an exception? Who is our country treating as an exception or as less-than? What are you going to do about these exceptions?
8. Do you wrestle with the issue of how to be a good Samaritan in a violent world where we are taught to fear one another? What wisdom would you give a younger person looking to you for advice on this issue?
9. Have you ever had a time when people were loving toward you when they had every reason not to be? Exchange stories.
10. In your own life, do you have experiences of people who make your life less than perfect? Based on your reading of this chapter, what could you do to love them without limits?
11. Have you ever found yourself buying into the cultural lie that if we disagree or are different, we must dislike one another? How did you overcome it?
12. Take out a sheet of paper or your journal. Make a list of some awesome things people are doing in your community that make God do a “divine happy dance!”
13. As a book club, make a list of all your favorite rock-star teachers of a love without limits.
14. What do you think of the incredible story of how people on Facebook actually helped get Jacqueline’s book published after it was censored? How can social media be harnessed as a force for good?
15. What is the power of our stories? How can simply telling a story make a difference? Discuss real-life examples.
16. Reread the list of hope lessons on page 190. Have you ever been asked to compromise your integrity? How can we become people “who are not for sale,” as Cornel West encourages us to become?
17. Which of the personal stories Jacqueline tells in this chapter—the Battsons, Darren Rodeo, the man who crossed the road, and the South African women—means the most to you and why?