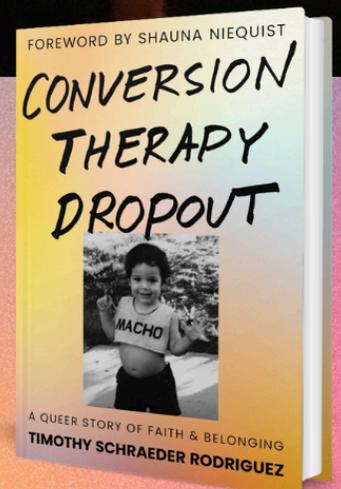
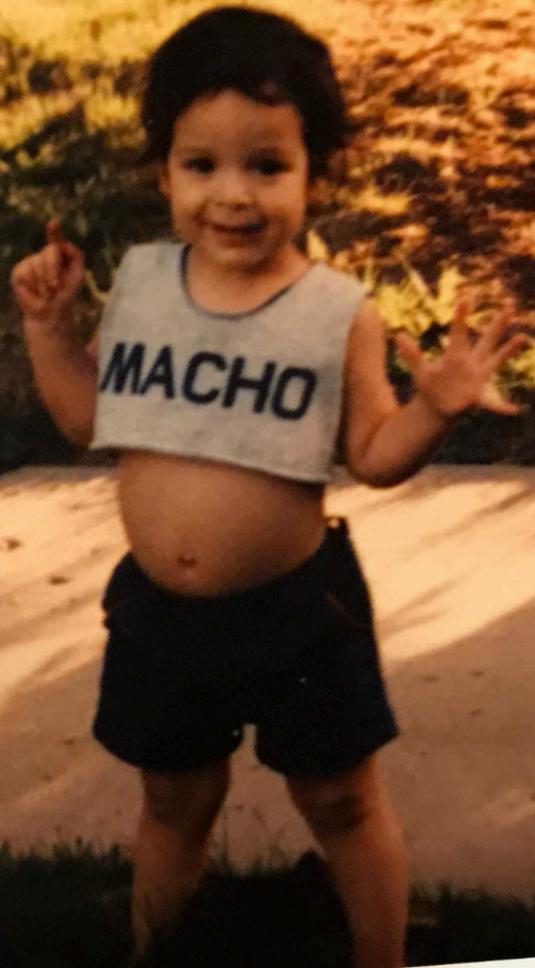


CONVERSION

THERAPY

DROPOUT

BOOK CLUB
DISCUSSION GUIDE



Welcome to the book club discussion guide for *Conversion Therapy Dropout: A Queer Story of Faith and Belonging*.

Whether you are meeting in a living room, a community center, or via video chat, the goal of this guide is to move beyond a simple critique of the book.

Instead, these questions are designed to help you explore the deeper, universal themes of identity, belonging, and the courage it takes to start over.

To create a meaningful experience for everyone, consider these three "guideposts" for your conversation:

Come as You Are

This book explores the tension between who we are told to be and who we actually are. We encourage you to bring your own "unfinished" stories to the table. You don't need to have all the answers or a perfectly resolved journey to participate.

Listen for the Universal

While this is a memoir about a specific life experience, the themes of searching for community and navigating high-pressure environments are human experiences. Even if your background is different from the author's, look for the "connective tissue"—the moments where his struggle for authenticity mirrors your own.

Hold Space for Each Other

Some of the topics in this book—such as religious trauma or identity struggles—can be heavy. Ensure your group is a "brave space" where people can share honestly without fear of judgment. It's okay to sit in the silence or the "gray areas" together.

This guide is divided into five chronological sections that mirror the journey of the book. You can choose to discuss the book as a whole using a few questions from each section, or, if your group meets multiple times, you can dive deep into one section at a time.

And remember, there are no right or wrong answers, only honest ones.

Introduction: The Invitation

- Timothy describes building digital cathedrals for others while living in the shadows. In what areas of your life do you feel like an invisible architect for others' success, and how does that affect your own visibility?
- The introduction touches on the physical and emotional toll of a double life. Even if not related to sexuality, have you ever carried a secret that felt like it was eroding you from the inside out?
- What is the difference between simply leaving a difficult situation and doing the work to process it and move forward?
- Why do you think sharing behind-the-scenes stories is so vital for healing? Does hearing the messy middle of someone else's life make you feel more or less hopeful?
- Timothy hints at the cost of belonging. What is the highest price you have ever paid to fit into a group or institution?
- The title uses the word *Dropout*. How does our culture typically view dropouts, and how does the author's framing challenge that negative stigma?
- Based on the introduction, what are you most hoping to learn or understand by the end of this book?
- Timothy speaks to anyone who has ever felt like they didn't belong. Where in your life today do you feel most like an outsider?
- Timothy writes that he is finally using his own voice after years of crafting voices for others. If you were to stop being a translator for other people's ideas, what is the first thing your own voice would want to say?
- The introduction sets the stage for a theology of restoration. What is your personal definition of *restoration*, and how does it differ from getting back to normal?

The Foundations of Identity (Chapters 1–2)

- How did the specific culture of your hometown and the values you were raised with influence your early understanding of a successful life?
- The narrative explores moving between biological and adoptive families. How do the stories we are told about where we come from impact our sense of self-worth as children?
- Why is it sometimes easier to perform a role (like the "good kid") than it is to simply *be*? Did you have a performance you relied on growing up?
- Before things became complicated with organized religion, what was your earliest or simplest experience of the sacred or a sense of wonder?
- Timothy describes feeling like a unicorn in his community. Was there a specific moment in your youth when you realized your interests, values, or identity didn't align with the standard around you? How did you handle that discovery?
- In these early chapters Timothy was searching for a mentor. Who were the people or institutions that helped shape your worldview? Do you still hold their perspectives today?
- Timothy balances very different family dynamics. How do you navigate the various versions of yourself that people in your life expect to see?
- Even as a child, Timothy is drawn to the communal aspect of church. Why is the human drive for community often stronger than our drive for self-preservation?
- Timothy's early years were shaped by being in an open adoption. How does being raised with a high level of transparency (or a lack thereof) influence your ability to trust others as an adult?
- Looking back at your childhood uniqueness, what is one trait you tried to hide back then that you now realize is actually one of your greatest strengths?

Part 2: The Crossroads (Chapters 3–5)

- Timothy moves cross-country for a mentor who fails him. How do you recover your sense of direction when someone you follow betrays your trust or lets you down?
- An outing creates a before and after. Have you ever had a moment where your life was permanently altered by someone else's choice to reveal your truth?
- When faced with a part of ourselves we think is wrong, why is our first instinct to seek a manual or a cure? Why is unlearning harder than fixing?
- How does a community's entry price (the things you must change to stay) affect the quality of the relationships within that community?
- Looking at the "Ex-Gay Rodeo," how can shared trauma create a false sense of progress? Have you seen this dynamic in other high-control groups?
- Why are we so willing to hand over our agency to experts when we are in a state of crisis?
- These chapters use specific religious language to describe brokenness. How does the language we use to describe ourselves determine our ability to heal?
- Timothy describes the pressure to testify to change before it actually happens. Where else in society do we see people faking it to satisfy a group's expectations?
- After the trauma of being outed, Timothy looks for shelter in a system that promises to change him. When you are at your most vulnerable, what is your go-to coping mechanism or place of refuge?
- Many high-control groups use love-bombing to keep people in. How can we distinguish between a community that truly loves us and one that is just trying to recruit or control us?

Part 3: The Long Middle (Chapters 6–13)

- Timothy achieves professional heights while in personal turmoil. Why do we often use professional achievement to compensate for personal pain?
- The book explores the idea of "holy discontent"—the idea that the things that wreck our hearts are often the things we are meant to address. What is your holy discontent in the world today?
- As a social media manager, Timothy packaged faith. How does the packaging of an idea (in politics or religion) obscure the messy reality of the truth?
- Why is it so difficult to walk away from an institution even when it is harming us? What are the anchors that keep us tied to places that don't love us?
- Timothy spends years in the background. What is the emotional toll of knowing your work is valued but your whole self is not?
- How did Timothy's ambition both save him (by giving him a career) and trap him (by making him indispensable to the system)?
- Have you ever worked for an organization whose public-facing message contradicted your private reality? How did you reconcile that?
- These chapters describe a gradual wearing down. How do we distinguish between hard work and the kind of soul exhaustion Timothy describes?
- Timothy was the man behind the curtain for some of the world's largest megachurches. How does knowing the backstage reality of an organization change how you view its front-stage success?
- In the long middle of his journey, Timothy felt like his life was on hold. If you feel like you are currently in a waiting room season of life, what is one thing you can do to reclaim your agency today?

Part 4: Dropping Out and Rising Up (Chapters 14–23)

- How does this book reframe dropping out as an act of bravery rather than a failure? Is there something in your life you need to drop out of?
- Timothy describes the concept of chosen family—the people we gather when our original circles cannot hold all of who we are. How do you define your own chosen family, and what makes those bonds different from biological ones?
- Why is clarity sometimes more important than agreement? How can we apply the need for transparency to our personal relationships?
- Timothy shifts from praying for God to change him to acknowledging, accepting, and thanking God for how he was created. How does gratitude for your true self function as a form of resistance?
- When Timothy finally speaks his truth publicly, the power dynamic shifts. Why does the institution lose its power when the individual stops being afraid of the truth?
- Discuss the creation of Church Clarity. Why is it so disruptive to simply ask an organization to be clear about its own rules?
- Coming out isn't just one moment; it's a series of "re-entries." What was the most surprising challenge Timothy faced after "dropping out"?
- How does Timothy begin to separate God or faith from the institution that caused him harm? Is it possible to keep one without the other?
- Timothy writes about the second coming out—the one where you come out as someone who has changed their mind or left their old tribe. Which coming out feels more daunting to you: the one about your identity or the one about your beliefs?
- Restoration often requires burning bridges and leaving no way to go back to the old life. What is one safety net you are holding onto that might be preventing you from fully rising up?

Part 5: Wholeness and Restoration (Chapters 24–26 & Epilogue)

- Repair implies putting things back the way they were; restoration implies making them whole again. How has Timothy's life been restored?
- How did Timothy removing numbing agents allow for deeper healing? What are the things you use to numb out when things get difficult?
- The book ends with the idea that the light was always there. What is one practical step you can take this week to live a little more in the light?
- By age forty, Timothy finally feels seen and loved. Why is the feeling of being enough so elusive in our modern, achievement-oriented world?
- Does Timothy seem to have forgiven the people and institutions of his past? Does forgiveness require a reconciliation, or can it be a solo act?
- After everything, the author still engages with faith. Does this surprise you? Does it change your view on the resilience of the human spirit?
- What does the word *freedom* mean to you now compared to before you read this book?
- If you had to summarize the message of Timothy's journey in one word, what would it be? How will that word influence your own story moving forward?
- Timothy eventually finds home not just in a new city, but in his own skin. How do you distinguish between home as a physical location and home as a state of internal peace and self-acceptance?
- Timothy ends the book with a prayer. How does that final prayer reflect the restoration Timothy mentions throughout the book, and how has your own way of communicating with the sacred (or your inner self) shifted after reading his journey?

Final Reflections: Looking Back to Move Forward

- Before reading this book, what was your understanding of conversion therapy? How has Timothy's "behind-the-scenes" account changed your perspective on the psychological and spiritual impact of these practices?
- The book tracks a journey from a faith of certainty and performance to a faith of honesty and mystery. How has your own definition of faith (or your view of those who hold it) evolved as you followed his story?
- Timothy argues that his sexuality and his spirituality are not in conflict, but are both essential parts of his wholeness. What did this book teach you about the possibility of integrating parts of ourselves that society often tells us must remain separate?
- Timothy suggests that leaving a harmful system is not an act of giving up, but an act of choosing life. In what ways did this book challenge your ideas about loyalty to traditions or institutions?
- After reading about the inner workings of megachurch marketing and leadership, what do you think is the most urgent change needed in modern religious or community institutions to prevent the kind of harm described in the book?
- Timothy spent years being an invisible architect for a world that didn't fully see him. Who are the invisible architects in your own circles or communities today? How can you help bring them into the light?
- Timothy ultimately finds freedom by letting go rather than holding on. Discuss a time when letting go of a long-held belief or goal was actually an act of bravery.
- Recovery and healing are described not as becoming someone new, but as "returning to who you have always been." Discuss this shift in perspective. How does it change the way you think about self-improvement?
- Timothy's story is an act of reclaiming his own narrative after years of others defining it for him. If you were to stop trying to prove your worth to the people from your history, what is the most important truth you would finally be free to believe about yourself?
- Throughout the book, Timothy illustrates that while we don't choose the families we are born into, we have the radical power to choose the people who walk us home. How has your definition of *family* evolved, and who are the people in your life that make you feel truly seen without you having to perform?

A Note from Tim

Thank you so much for making the time to read *Conversion Therapy Dropout*.

Engaging with themes of trauma, faith, and identity isn't always easy, but it is a vital part of how we process our own stories. Throughout this book, I talk about the "Lost Boys," the friends who stood with me and walked beside me. By gathering as a group to talk through these chapters, you are participating in that same act of community that helped me find my way.

I hope my words and the conversations created as you discussed them brought you some hope, comfort, and perhaps a good laugh. Most importantly, I hope they made you feel a little bit less alone.

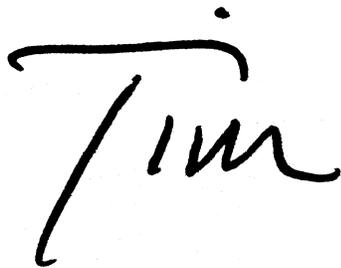
If my story resonated with you, I have a few small favors to ask:

- **Share with a friend:** If you know a friend, family member, or even a faith leader who needs to hear this message, please pass this book along or recommend it to them.
- **Share on social media:** I would love to see your group together! If you post a photo of your book club or a shot of the book, please tag me (@timothy.s.rodriguez) and use the hashtag #ConversionTherapyDropout.
- **Share a review:** Taking two minutes to post a review on [Amazon](#) or [Goodreads](#) makes a massive difference. Reviews help the algorithms know that this story matters, making it easier for other readers and book clubs to find their way to it.

Thank you again for being part of this journey.

And never forget: You are loved exactly as you are.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim". The letter "T" is large and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke that extends to the left and curves upwards. The "i" is small and sits on the top of the "T". The "m" is written in a cursive, flowing style.

P.S. - Let's stay in touch! Please follow me on [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), [TikTok](#), and [Substack](#).

Further Reading

If the themes of *Conversion Therapy Dropout* resonated with you, here are some other books I'd recommend that have been helpful to me:

Queer Stories of Faith & Survival

These memoirs explore the personal cost of navigating non-affirming religious spaces and the beauty of finding a path forward.

- *Boy Erased* by Garrard Conley: A harrowing and beautifully written account of a young man's experience in a fundamentalist conversion therapy program.
- *Devout* by David Archuleta: A vulnerable look at the *American Idol* star's journey of reconciling his Mormon faith with his sexuality, echoing the struggle of loving a community that doesn't always love you back.
- *Outlove* by Julie Rodgers: A memoir from a former leader in the "ex-gay" movement who eventually became a powerful advocate for LGBTQ+ people in the church.
- *Torn* by Justin Lee: A foundational text for many gay Christians, exploring how to navigate the tension between the Bible and one's orientation with grace and nuance.
- *Becoming Eve* by Abby Stein: The story of a woman raised in a world of Hasidic Judaism who navigated a high-control religious upbringing to live her truth as a trans woman.

On LGBTQ+ Theology & Scripture

For those who want to dig deeper into the "why" and "how" of queer-affirming spirituality.

- *Queer & Christian* by Brandan Robertson: A modern guide that reimagines Christian faith through a queer lens, focusing on inclusivity and social justice.
- *Unclobber* by Colby Martin: A direct look at the "clobber passages" often used against the LGBTQ+ community, providing a historical and linguistic context that opens doors rather than closing them.
- *The Queer Thing About Sin* by Harry Tanner: A provocative look at how traditional views of "sin" have impacted queer people and how to reclaim a healthier spiritual life.
- *Transforming* by Austen Hartke: An essential resource for understanding the Bible through the lives and experiences of transgender and non-binary people.

On Coming Out & Reclaiming the Self

These titles focus on the psychological and emotional work of shedding shame and stepping into the light.

- *The Velvet Rage* by Alan Downs: A psychological deep dive into the impact of growing up gay in a straight world and the rage that comes from years of performing for validation.

- *Out of the Shadows* by Walt Odets: An exploration of the lives of gay men that focuses on moving past survival and toward a life of deep connection and meaning.
- *How We Fight for Our Lives* by Saeed Jones: A stunning memoir that explores the intersections of race, sexuality, and the visceral experience of becoming oneself.

On Healing from Institutional Trauma

To understand the "behind-the-scenes" of how high-control groups and trauma affect the mind and body.

- *Holy Hurt* by Hillary L. McBride: A profound exploration of the intersection of spiritual trauma and the body, offering a path for those who have been wounded by the very institutions meant to care for them.
- *The Purity Culture Survival Guide* by Erica Smith: A practical, compassionate guide to unlearning the shame-based teachings of purity culture and reclaiming a healthy, empowered relationship with your body and sexuality.
- *Searching for Sunday* by Rachel Held Evans: A beautiful memoir of "loving, leaving, and finding the church again." It captures the heart of the deconstruction movement—asking hard questions while still longing for the sacred.