

I Love You, Man (2009)

Rated R. Our Rating: V-1 ; L-4 1; S-7/N-0. Length: 1 hour 45 min.

When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.

1 Samuel 1:1-3

Director John Hamburg and co-writer Peter and Sydney jamming.

writer Larry Levin's funny male bonding film adroitly combines 2009 DreamWorks

the date and buddy film genres.

Although it has too much sex talk (though no nudity or physical sex) for most church groups to see and discuss, it would appeal to many a young adult one.

Peter Klaven (Paul Rudd) is a shy realtor entrusted with the selling of an expensive house owned by Lou Ferrigno (yes, "The Hulk" plays himself). At the film's opening Peter's bended knee proposal to his sweetheart Zoey (Rashida Jones) is accepted, but he needs the money that he will gain from selling the house, as they are financing the wedding themselves. There is also another slight problem, one which Peter realizes when he overhears Zoey defending him during a gathering of her female friends—Peter has no male friend close to him whom he can ask to be best man at the wedding.

There is his younger brother, a trainer at a gym, but he is gay and not very close, nor could Peter ask his hotshot

colleague at the realty agency, who is trying to horn in on his attempt to sell Ferrigno's house. Thus begins Peter's quest to find a suitable male friend, resulting in a series of funny, and disastrous "man-dates." We have seen this before when a woman, or a man, is seeking a soul mate, but not when a character is looking for a friend of the same sex, this adding greatly to the humor, such as when one guy, mistaking Peter's sexual orientation, kisses him passionately outside the restaurant where they have shared a supper.

It is at an open house that Peter meets Sydney Fife (Jason Segal), who turns out to be there so he can eat some of the upscale food that Peter has set out for prospective clients. This he reveals so openly to Peter that the latter is drawn by his honesty. When Sydney points out that the guy who had raised Peter's hopes is not really interested in buying so much as in impressing the gorgeous gal he has picked up, Peter's interest in the muncher grows even more. Sydney is such a good reader of character that he even predicts exactly when the guy will pass gas. As Sydney is leaving the two men exchange cards, and almost before you can say "Lou Ferrigno," Peter calls him for a lunch date.

The two really hit it off well, especially when Sydney shows his new friend his digs, where he has an array of guitars and drums set for playing. They discover that they both love to jam, and better, that Rush is their favorite band. Soon they are jamming and seeing each other several times a week, with Sydney loosening up his shy friend, especially in the realm of sex talk. At first Zooey is pleased that Peter has found a male friend, but...It is the series of humorous incidents that follow this "but" that will test both his relationship with his fiancé as well as that with his new-found friend. The film offers both insights and a good occasion for guys and gals to discuss male and female friendship—but the frank sex talk makes it a difficult sell for some church folk. Youth workers will want to look elsewhere for a suitable film. For some,

however, the film offers rich rewards.

For Reflection/Discussion

Spoilers below!

1. What about your own experience in forming friendships? Have you gravitated, like Peter, more to the opposite sex than your own?

2. Compare Pete and Sydney: list the qualities which each has, and which the other lacks. Accepting the modern theory that one's sexuality is a matter of where we fall on a sliding scale, rather than an either/or, absolute "Male" and "Female," which of the two has more female, and which more male attributes? In the scenes in which Sydney walks his dog (Anwar Sadat), how does his "assertiveness" come out? Is this an attractive trait in him? Funny in the movie, but what if all dog walkers refused to clean up after their pet?

3. With which character do you most identify with—if any? Why? How have your friends contributed to your life—and you to theirs?

4. How does Zoey demonstrate that she is a very giving person? What do you think of her feeling excluded, especially after the three of them attend the rock concert? How is this often a concern for engaged and married couples? Have you had to work hard to integrate friends, and maybe even drop one for the sake of your new relationship?

5. Why is it important after a wedding that each partner give the other the freedom to maintain old friendships—such as a Girls' or Guys' Night Out?

6. The sexual content of the conversation is high: were you uncomfortable with this? And if so, was it the content, or the somewhat loose attitude of Sydney in regard to sexual

relationships? How does he have some maturing to go through?

7. "I love you" is repeated many times: how does this show a more openness on the part of men expressing their emotions? In the past, if men were to say this, what would we believe about their sexual orientation? Can you imagine the Duke saying this to another man in one of his Westerns?

8. Besides this openness of expressing affection, another sign of the new generation this film is aimed at comes right after Peter has proposed to Zooey. What is she doing in the car when they drive away? How is the cell phone (and the array of similar communication devices) a hall mark of young adults today? What does such frequent use of devices say about the desire to maintain relationships?

9. Touching moments of grace: What does Peter do in regards to his relationship with Sydney in order to save his relationship with Zooey? Later, who invites Sydney to the wedding—and why do you think she did? What was Sydney already doing when he received the call? How did you feel at the end of the ceremony? How might the friendship of David and Jonathan be a good model for Peter and Sydney? How has this friendship been interpreted in very different ways through the years?