



Week Three

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for the gift of friendship and this safe place to grow in our faith. Help us use this time in life-giving ways. Amen.

Ice Breaker [For New Groups or Groups with New Members]

- Tell us your name and what show are you currently binge-watching. What is it about this show you like?

Talk It Over

During this series, we are examining Christlike responses to topics like racism, politicism, sexism, and pluralism. As we move through our discussion today, let's be mindful of the fact that our group is full of diverse stories and opinions. We are not here to force our ways or opinions on others, but in hopes of having a life-giving discussion that empowers all of us to grow, heal, and learn together. In fact, even if you are here today and you aren't a follower of Jesus, know this is a safe community to explore matters of faith.

- Some of the earliest leaders of this country cautioned against and feared the danger of a two-party system where there is no room in the middle. In other words, our country has anticipated and experienced a level of the divide from the start. Without siding with either party, what is it about our current culture, technology, or place in history that seems to be highlighting this divide in new ways?
- Without expressing a political party, in what ways do you feel the political divide in your own life?
- Politics, "the theory and practice of government", is what we use as we try and live together as citizens in city, state, or nation. All gatherings — families, churches, businesses, sports teams, schools, and on and on — use politics for better or worse. Tell us your earliest memories of running into politics in some area of life?

This week we looked at four ways a Jesus follower can respond to politicism. As we talk, let's remember the reality is there are not easy, simple answers to complex political issues. Our aim is to engage in a life-giving conversation without feeling the need to make anyone think like us.

- As we look over all four of these ideas, let us know which idea feels like the hardest for you and why.

One — Choose God's side. | Read Joshua 5:13-14 (NIV)

While both sides will often say their side is God's side, let's always remember God cares about both teams. God's view has a much higher, broader perspective. He is the Lord of all sides.

- How could remembering God cares for all people impact the way we deal with politics?
- In your own life, have you ever changed your perspective on an issue once you considered God's perspective? Tell us about that experience.

Two — Jesus separates church and state. | Read Mark 12:13-17 (NIV)

In this passage, we read about two political enemies that team up to try and trap Jesus. Jesus stood in the middle of these two groups and neither side liked the third option he was creating. In response to their questions, Jesus separates church and state in a way that had never really been done before.

- In the ancient world, kings often claimed that their authority came from the gods or that they were gods. In what ways do we complicate things by seeing our political leaders as gods worthy of our worship and our ultimate allegiance?
- When we look at church history, we most often see that whenever church and state merged the church never did well. This is what Jesus cautioned us about too. Why do you think this separation between church and state might work better for the church?

Three — What do we give to Cesar? *This is a four-part answer.*

We pray. | Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NIV), Matthew 6:10 (NIV) and Jeremiah 29:7 (NIV)

We are called to pray for our leaders, even when we don't like who is in charge or the way things are going.

- Tell us about a time you found yourself praying for someone you struggled with liking or agreeing with.

We obey. | Read 1 Peter 2:13-15 (NIV) and Acts 5:29 (NIV)

It's healthy for us to remember there is no perfect government. But even when our government is in the wrong or asking us to violate our values, it's helpful to remember we are called to *respectfully* disobey.

- What does it mean to obey the government in the United States?
- What would it look like to respectfully disobey the government?

We pay. | Read Romans 13:6-7 (NIV) and 1 Peter 2:16-17 (NIV)

- What is something your taxes pay for that you are personally grateful for?
- Have you ever struggled with the value of paying taxes? If so, what was the challenge and how did you work it out?

We vote.

There is no verse in the Bible that addresses this topic head-on. Governments worked differently when the Bible was written. But we know voting is a key way we engage in healthy social responsibility. As Christ-followers, may we consider doing our part by researching, voting intelligently, and voting our convictions.

- When did you first learn about the power of voting? Tell us how you learned the value of voting.
- Numbers show that roughly one-third of our country didn't vote in the last major election. What do you think keeps people from voting? How might we go about addressing that concern?

We speak up.

Again, there is no verse that directly addresses this topic. But as believers, we are called to live in civility, mutual respect, and love of our neighbor. May we use our voices to move things forward in healthy ways.

- To help us engage in healthy dialogue, we looked at three simple tips: (1) Don't assume the worst of the other side and the best of your side. (2) Listen deeply for the personal stories behind the political passion and be on the lookout for pain. (3) And lastly, acknowledge that God loves you both. Of these tips, which is the hardest for you?
- Are there any tips you would add?

Four — What do I give God? *This is a three-part answer.*

We Surrender. | Read Joshua 5:14 (NIV)

As Christ-followers, first and foremost we are called to give ourselves over to God. God desires to have our top allegiance and be our greatest passion.

- In what ways do you struggle with surrendering to God in political matters?

We love everyone. | Read Romans 13:9-10 (NLT)

- In what ways do you struggle with showing love to all people through your political positions?

We pursue peace. | Read Matthew 5:9 (NLT)

Politicism is dividing our nation, communities, and even some families. Making peace takes active work.

- Tell us about a relationship where you have been able to both agree that your relationship matters more than agreeing on political topics.
- Have you ever experienced relationship damage due to political issues? What went wrong? What were you able to do to repair the relationship?
- In what ways do you carry bitterness or anger in your heart due to political issues? Share some about why you're struggling and how you might start moving towards healing.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for loving us and looking to be an active part of our life. May your kingdom fill us and heal us. May your kingdom come. Help us to be conduits of your will and goodness on matters involving politics. Amen.

Group Logistics [A Reminder for New Groups]

Are there are details or questions we need to cover for next week? Are we meeting at the same time and place? Who is owning snacks? Are there childcare questions to cover?

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressured to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.