

The Bible & Politics

Week One: The Gospel & Politics

Dialogue & Interaction

Throughout this I want to try to facilitate questions and discussion. Please, if you have a relevant question or comment then interject.

Slideo: I understand that some may be apprehensive to state a question in this format. Lets use Slido as an additional means of posing questions.

Intro

There is a lot of anger, acrimony, disagreement, and confusion about political and cultural issues.

According to Pew Research Center, the number of people in both parties who have unfavorable opinions of the opposing party has doubled since 1994. In 2022, the number of people who have very unfavorable opinions of the opposing party is at record highs.

Examples really don't even need mentioning: the George Flyod riots, social media interactions, gender issues, anti-racist talking points, the Israel/Hamas conflict, border policy, abortion,

People tribalize, dividing on so many issues, demonizing the opposition. Empathy and understanding dies. Animosity grows.

The Goal of this Series

First: That we would honor and rejoice in God as our Creator, Sustainer, Judge, and as Redeemer and in the Good News of His Kingdom

This primary goal will hopefully be the foundation throughout.

Second: That we would prioritize the Gospel in talking with others

Third: That we would consider how we come to our political positions

Today we will discuss the first two goals

Over the next 9 weeks we will take on the topic of how we come to and understanding on controversial topics, both cultural and political
What is NOT the goal: This is not about specific candidates, ballot measures or parties.

Sessions

Why the Divisiveness

As Believers, Why the Divisiveness, Anger and Skepticism Towards Those Who Differ?

Christians Care About Justice

Those who have been made right in their standing with God, those who have been justified are to be concerned with justice. We, as Christians, are to care about righteous judgments.

**'You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.
Leviticus 19:15**

As believers, we are to care that justice is done.

This requires judgment, being able to discern between justice and injustice, good and bad.

What do we feel when we perceive deep injustice being carried out?
When a child is abused?

When someone is murdered?

What is our emotional response?

Anger is the God given emotion for seeing injustice.

However, christian still struggle with remaining sin. All this means that the anger you feel when people disagree with you politically might be the right response to injustice. But remember God's word: we must be

"slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires"

James 1:19-20

Because of the Fall We All Tend to be Self-righteous and Self-justifying

Due to our sin we tend to be self righteous and self justifying. We are prone to be scornful with those who disagree.

This characterizes default political interactions. Throughout all of history.

"Are you convinced about your own political opinions? If so, maybe that's because you are walking in the Spirit, you love your neighbor as yourself, and you have rightly formed judgments about the issues of the day. Then again, it also might be because you are following the self-justifying script of every other political party, of every other tribe and nation, throughout the history of the world."

— How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics? (Church Questions) by Jonathan Leeman, Andrew David Naselli

Too often we use our anger as a weapon to destroy anything that opposes our personalized version of a just universe. We can be self-serving with our anger.

Political Judgements Require Wisdom

Direct application of Scripture: you shall not steal; you shall not murder. We will Call this Straight Line Judgements

Indirect application of Scripture: There is a distance between our biblical principles and its application in a society. Wisdom is required to understand nuanced and complex issues not directly addressed in Scripture.

Examples?

How to address theft?

How to address murder?

What about tax rates?

Border and immigration policy?

Showing compassion to asylum seekers?

These topics are not a straight line in applying scripture to a situation.

We rely on wisdom based judgements that are not driven by explicit instruction from the Bible.

These political judgements depend upon how to apply biblical principles to a very complex set of circumstances.

Wisdom is required to consider these multiple factors. The We will call this a Jagged Line Judgment

(GRAPHIC)

Differences will arise.

Differences do arise. On important issues that have

You and I are not Solomon in his wisdom.
Your and I are not Jesus Christ in his perfect wisdom

We too often see differences and respond with scorn, are quickly angered and question the character of the other. If the other is a professing Christian then we might call their profession into question.

We are in desperate need for God's intervention, for His guidance.

This brings us to the need for the Gospel in this situation.

The Gospel

Before we address any controversy we must understand the relevance of the Gospel and motives shaped by the gospel?

What is our "Theology of Disagreement."

If you take nothing else away from this series, take this to heart.

I am good if we end up disagreeing on a range of political topics. But, brothers and sisters in Christ, on this we must agree.

Let's discuss Gospel's priority in politics

The Gospel Summarized

The Gospel and its broader context.

God: As the Creator of all, God is both the source *and fulfillment* of Life.

Creation: All people were created, were intentionally designed by God, in His image for the purpose of having and enjoying fellowship with Him and His creation.

Sin: Sin plunged all people into the lie and corruption that we do not need God, that He is not worthy. That His words are not good. That we can create our own gods and ultimate purpose. This separation from the God of Life brings guilt, corruption and is spiritual death.

God's Work: In grace, God provided redemption through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. In grace, the Holy Spirit reveals to sinners their need. In grace He applies this redemption: He justifies, adopts and regenerates. God removes the heart of stone and gives a living heart that seeks to understand, to love, to obey Him. A heart being shaped by grateful humility for God's intervention and grace.

Our Response: In grace, God calls all to place their faith and confidence in Christ's work to put them in right standing with Him. To see all of His self revelation (the Bible) as good. Good because it is good for us by its nature and our nature. It is therefore trustworthy and worthy of being followed. God is worthy of our attention and affection.

Destiny: Those redeemed will continue to grow in and enjoy fellowship with God. Life without end. For eternity. Hallelujah!

The Gospel & Our Response to God

The first and most basic step of being the best child, parent, student, teacher, neighbor, citizen or mayor?

Loving and desiring God as beautiful, worthy of praise and

The Gospel Motivates Us to Expand our Knowledge of God

We are to always pursue greater understanding of God through the Scriptures and relationships with other believers.

This means, in part, vigorously pursuing a sound knowledge, an intellectual understanding of the scriptural issues.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

2 Peter 3:18

How do we come to understand these important truths?

Is this merely an arbitrary flex and the preening of an egomaniacal God?
This is not an arbitrary command. It is a call to us to be what we were
designed for.

The Gospel Motivates Us to Expand our Affection for God

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal
procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him
everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are
being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from
death to death, to the other a **fragrance from life to life**. Who is sufficient
for these things?

2 Corinthians 2:15-17

Pursuing and attaining truth is its own reward. We were created and
designed by God to grow and thrive in the context of truth and following
that truth (obedience). Christ is the Truth and the Life. In apprehending
Christ we gain truth and life, in abundance.

The Good News concerning Jesus is not just information to be known, but
a transformation to be experienced.

Why should we seek a greater understanding of Christ? Knowledge of
Christ is the fragrance of life.

Viewing the gospel should stir in us a curiosity for more. This curiosity, this
desire for more of God, proceeds a sense of wonder of what we've been

given in Jesus Christ.

A true knowledge of God reveals itself in an affection for Him

Note this, a true intellectual understanding of Christ leads to wonder, worship, devotion, affection, humility, confidence and gratitude.

If someone's intellectual grasp of theology and the Bible doesn't go in this direction but instead shows up as arrogance then they are doing theology wrong. A fundamental failure is taking place.

If you're like me, I've found myself here at times in my walk. Repent and ask God to reveal Himself.

The Gospel & Our Response to Others

The Gospel Teaches Humility

For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

1 Corinthians 4:7

Recognize that the Holy Spirit is the one who illuminates people to truth. Therefore, we are to be faithful, gentle and patient in discussing areas of difference.

How does this reality impact our interactions with others?

This Gospel Humility Leads to Love

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. [...] If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

Romans 12: 14, 18

The gospel does not resolve our wisdom based political judgements.

It does help up to love and be patient with one another through these disagreements.

Whenever we walk in the Spirit we become able to seek out the plank in our own eye, not just the speck in our neighbor's eye, and to fight for what's right, not to justify ourselves but for the sake of love.

Does this impact the attitude of “owning the ____” or trolling the opposition.

This Gospel Love Leads to Curiosity

Ask questions, be present, listen, seek to understand.

Some of the first steps of love as action.

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger

James 1:19

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:3-4

One must ask questions to know the interests of others.

And pay attention....quietly.

And seek to understand.

And for their good.

For their good in context of their standing before God.

And controversy sick dialogue

Seek to dialogue through disagreement. Do not seek to inflame

disagreement.

In this way, curiosity is a display of love.

Does this humility and love lead to insecurity and compromise?

The Gospel Provides Confidence in Controversy

Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:16-18

Confidence that Christ is building his Church.

That Christ is tending His flock.

That the Holy Spirit gives sight, understanding and illumination.

That God is sovereign.

That God is good.

That God is wise.

That He is trustworthy.

The Gospel & Our Response to Other Christians

The Gospel Calls Us To Unity

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

Ephesians 4:1-3

We are natural born enemies. It is our nature to harbor hostilities and

divide. Each of us wants to rule.

What brings us together: Christ brings us together.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb
Revelations 7:9-10

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
1 Peter 2:9

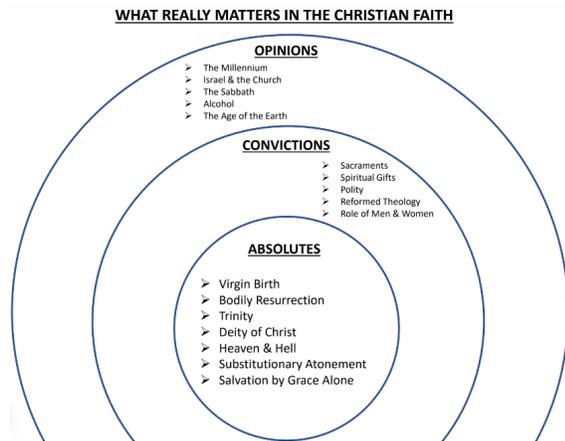
Members of every other nation, race, and tribe learn to live as fellow citizens of Christ's Kingdom - a new nation and new race

With the local church is where we who were once enemies start beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

It is where race, affluence, age, education, where the homeless and the senator unite in the Gospel.

Pursuing unity requires us to prioritize our positions

(GRAPHIC)



There are essential issues.

There are areas where disagreement is fine.

A healthy church will have unity in essentials. It will have members who are not uniform in their politics. What unites them is Jesus, not a political party.

In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things charity
— Augustine (?)

This is not to say that political positions are unimportant or to be abandoned.

It is to say that you listen with humility and love.

That is, you listen with charity.

The Gospel Calls us to Charity

The gospel does not automatically resolve all our Jagged Line political judgments in the here and now. It helps us love and forbear with one another amid those different wisdom-based judgments... It creates unity amid diversity, not uniformity. Here, then, is a big irony: even if your church is healthy, your members will likely not be entirely uniform in their politics.

Your members might even feel some measure of political tension. What unites them is Jesus, not partisan politics.

— How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics? (Church Questions) by Jonathan Leeman, Andrew David Naselli

John 13:35

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you are right on all matters and have an angry tone and are quick to judge one another

- No -

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another

John 13: 35

The Gospel & Our Response to Non Christians

The Gospel Priority

What is a guiding principle in discussing political issues with non Christians?

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

The greatest need for your neighbor is not to become moral or hold to moral teachings

The greatest need is for the hearer to see their need for Christ as their Redeemer.

Salt to the World

Beyond that, to understand how God made the world. To understand how that impacts ethical, cultural or political issues.

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Colossians 4:5-6

We speak to non Christians about cultural and political issues because we are interested in loving our neighbor. In sparing them from the consequences of bad ideas.

“Christians should speak out on moral issues not because they feel "offended" or because their "cherished beliefs" are threatened, but because they have compassion for those who are trapped by destructive ideas.”

Nancy Pearcey

Conclusion

Review: The Gospel & Politics

The Gospel & **Our Response to God**

The Gospel Motivates Us to Expand our Knowledge of & Affection for God

The Gospel & **Our Response to Others**

The Gospel Teaches Humility

This Gospel Humility Leads to Love

This Gospel Love Leads to Curiosity

The Gospel Provides Confidence in Controversy

The Gospel & **Our Response to Other Christians**

The Gospel Calls Us To Unity

The Gospel Calls us to Charity

The Gospel & **Our Response to Non Christians**

The Gospel Priority
Salt to the World

Book Recommendation

(GRAPHIC)

Next Week

We will start on the topic an how we come to our political positions

Parting Thought

Remember the primary goal of the series. Our politics and all of life must start here.

That we would honor and rejoice in God as our Maker, Sustainer, Judge, and as Redeemer and in the Good News of His Kingdom.

Why honor and rejoice?

Sometimes we hear the word honor and we think of a removed, uninterested, and distant power hungry ruler. There is little reason to rejoice in that.

Questions

Do you view God as distant and uninterested in you?

Do you feel that God is lacking power, goodness, or wisdom?

Does Jesus Christ sometimes seem irrelevant to your day to day life, your hurts, your challenges?

Does your mind or heart answer yes, even somewhat, to these questions?

This part of the Christians struggle.

This is my struggle.

Truly understanding God in the mind and heart shows itself through honor and rejoicing. Rejoicing is honoring Him. Honoring is having a heart that rejoices in Him. Two sides of the same coin for the Believer.

Brothers and sisters - cry out to God that he would this day reveal Himself as True and Trustworthy, as Beautiful and Worthy, as Loving Father and as a Kinsman-Redeemer.