

TAKEAWAY

God & Politics



DESIRED OUTCOMES

- To see that while God does not want us to idolise politics, He does want us to engage with it.
- To get practical about how we might be politically engaged for the greater good, in service of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world that is politically complicated. How do we as followers of Jesus engage healthily with politics? There is much that could be said in answering this question, but the aim of this session is to build some foundational principles rather than focus on a particular issue.

SHARE

- If you were running the country for the day, what law would you want to make? Your answer can be silly or serious!
- Do you think Christians vote differently from the national population? Why?

READ

You may find it helpful to have all these verses visible together – we've provided them on one sheet for you to print out below.

Matthew 22:15-22, John 6:14-15, Mark 4:30-32, Matthew 22:36-40, Proverbs 18:17

DISCUSS

Taken in turn, what do these verses have to say to us about *how* followers of Jesus engage with politics and *why*?

On Sunday, Matt suggested that we should seek 'kingdom over control' and 'discernment over disengagement'. What was meant by this?

On Sunday, Matt shared some 'diagnostic' questions we could ask ourselves about how we engage with politics, both in person and online, which are as follows:

- *To what extent is my politics based on what I think Jesus would do?*
- *Do I simply believe what people of my age and background tend to believe in this time and place or am I willing to be counter-culturally formed by Jesus?*
- *Does the video/article/opinion I want to share reflect the love and truth of God? Does it build up, or does it tear down? Am I coming from a place of anger, fear, or love?*
- *Am I connected relationally to people who are different to me in upbringing, age, wealth, ethnicity, political leanings, and who will help me form insightful opinions?*
- *Who am I choosing to listen to and what is their 'angle'? Do I think carefully about not only the content but the character of those who have my ear?*
- *If my speech leads to me being perceived as on a particular political 'side' does that compromise how I am able to express that being made in the image of God is my primary identity?*
- *Do I seek reconciliation, the greater good, truth, and kindness over being right, winning an argument, or imposing my way?*
- *Do I place my ultimate hope not in political change but in the person of Jesus? Do I believe that He reigns over history and will one day put all things right, giving me reason for humility, joy, and relief?*

DISCUSS

Which of the practical suggestions are you most convicted by? Share it with the group and discuss what you could do about it.

How does the core Christian message about Jesus change both how we speak or behave about politics, and how we feel as we go about it?

As followers of Jesus, how do we deal with disagreement in politics and relate well with others who have very different views?

PRAY

TRY OUT

Take some time this week to reflect on the diagnostic questions above:

What are you convicted by? What could you do about it?

What does seeking God's kingdom over control practically look like for you?

What does healthy discernment and engagement over disengagement look like for you personally?

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Matthew 22:15-22

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, ²⁰ and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" ²¹ "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." ²² When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

John 6:14-15

¹⁴ After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Mark 4:30-32

³⁰ Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Proverbs 18:17

In a lawsuit the first to speak seems right, until someone comes forward and cross-examines.