

Handle with Care Politics

While politics are important, they are not of *first importance* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:20). When we become followers of Jesus, we give our primary allegiance to the kingdom of God and become ambassadors of that kingdom. Our first concern must be people meeting Jesus and experiencing a transformation of heart through Him. Unfortunately, politics and laws cannot resolve the issue of sin and our need for a savior. This does not mean that politics are unimportant. We should continually vote for righteousness with grace, kindness, and respect. We should contend for righteous laws that bless as many people as possible – believers and non-believers in Jesus – without trying to make people Christians through legal means. In this pursuit, Christians will not always agree on political matters. We can be *unified* on the centrality of Jesus and His kingdom and disagree over political philosophies and strategies. When there is disagreement, we must model the heart of God's kingdom by loving those with whom we disagree, by avoiding anger and extremism, and by outdoing one another in showing honor and respect.

GET THINGS STARTED

When it comes to political conversations, do you tend to avoid them (because you dislike conflict or tension) or lean in with passion (because you love a heated debate)? Does reading and talking about political issues energize or drain you, and why? How do you respond when you are around someone who has a different political viewpoint than you, especially if they are vocal about their perspective?

GO DEEPER

1. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, what does it mean to be Christ's *ambassadors*? What are the clear marks of an ambassador of Christ when it comes to their motives, attitude, and actions?
2. What is the point Jesus makes about being His disciple in Luke 14:26? Why does He use the word *hate*?
3. According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, what is of *first importance* to the apostle Paul?
4. How does Proverbs 11:11 inform how we should engage political matters?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. What is of *first importance* to you? What might those closest to you (e.g. your family, coworkers, friends, etc.) say is of *first importance* to you? What possibly needs to shift in you and in your choices to give the kingdom of God and being His ambassador top priority?
2. Do you need to give politics less or more attention, and why? How have political matters affected your *unity* with other followers of Jesus (both in the church and in the community)? What relationship(s) may need attention because of politics?

PRACTICE IT NOW

Take time as a group to specifically pray that the kingdom of God and being an ambassador of that kingdom would be of first importance to you. Ask Him to give you a proper perspective towards politics and a healthy balance of engagement in political issues. And ask God to show you if you need to take steps to initiate reconciliation in a relationship that has been damaged because of differences in political philosophies and strategies.