

Discussion Guide for Gospel Unity

What are some examples of preferences that Christians might need to reconsider for the sake of others?



We can't expect to have a Christian political discussion without having Christlike people.

You've probably heard it said that we shouldn't talk about religion and politics in polite conversation. Why do you think we're told these conversations should be off-limits?

Today's cultural and political landscape changes at a breakneck pace. While Jesus was on earth, He was careful not to become involved in matters that didn't directly pertain to His work and ministry. Getting involved in every political concern keeps us from giving our primary focus to the work of the gospel. There's room in the church for people with different political beliefs, but to keep the gospel above all, we need to filter everything we do through the imperative of the Great Commission.

Read Romans 12:18.

When we enter political discussions, our primary concern should be to refrain from anything that would harm our witness for the gospel. Should we take an unpopular stand on moral

The thing that has hurt Bible-believing Christianity
the most regarding our unity has
been a lack of sensitivity and indifference
to the pain of others.

issues? Absolutely, but our discourse and actions must be covered in grace.

What does it look like to disagree gracefully? Who do you know that has modeled this skill well?

To be a follower of Jesus, I enter this conversation
with empathy and charity.

What opportunities do Christians have in a culture of perpetual outrage?

How can we maintain a disposition of grace and humility when our stand on issues causes people to assume we're hateful or bigoted?

If politics is ultimate to you, then Jesus Christ isn't Lord to you. If politics is unimportant to you, you're not obeying Christ when He says, "Love God and love your neighbor as yourself."

We want to share the gospel with sinners so, whenever possible, we don't want to alienate them through our political engagement. When we make the gospel foremost in our decision making, it not only drives the way we vote and advocate for positions, but also the manner in which we carry out those actions.

Although Scripture doesn't explicitly address many issues we face when engaging with our culture, it provides principles that can help equip us to make God-honoring decisions and respond redemptively to moral issues. No matter how we're perceived or received, we can respond with grace, whether the issue is one of striking moral clarity or one about which Christians of good conscience disagree.

When politics deals with allegiance and loyalty, there is nothing more fundamental about allegiance and loyalty than the claim that Jesus Christ is Lord.

How do biblical principles help shape our positions on issues that Scripture doesn't clearly address? What are some examples of these principles?

The Bible advocates for many issues very clearly. We should care for the poor, advocate for the vulnerable, uphold the institution of marriage, protect children, and value the dignity of work, among other stances. Even if we passionately care about an issue, the way our passion translates into policy is often less clear. We get ourselves in trouble when we assume that our position on an issue is God's position on that issue.

The Scripture will not endorse a candidate.

The Scripture will show where there are common principles, but it will also show where the kingdom of God is different and unique.

Why is it so easy for us to replace our identity as followers of Jesus with a political affiliation or position? How can we actively resist this temptation?

There's no single Christian policy for taxes, the economy, or foreign policy. Therefore, the word "Christian" can't adequately describe a policy; it describes who we are as the redeemed people of God. The gospel provides us with our ultimate identity. All other identities and loyalties are subservient to that. We don't have to look to any issue to provide us with identity or purpose. We find those in our designation as sons and daughters of God. Although we're free to engage with a variety of moral and social issues, they'll never become the ultimate identifiers of who we are as followers of Christ.

Christians are coming into the body of Christ from different places.

Read Jude 1:3; Philippians 3:14; Ephesians 4:3.

How do these passages shape the way we relate to and consider one another, particularly in our politics?

Our truths and convictions point to
common principles, but our principles
are clearer than our platform.

How can we focus our energy on unity in Christ despite political differences?

There is not a square inch in the whole domain
of our human existence over which Christ,
who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: "Mine!"

Abraham Kuyper

The gospel guides our political engagement, and gospel-minded Christians can disagree on a variety of issues without compromising the gospel. Our witness to the gospel must come before every other priority.

We're talking about the saving message of salvation that comes through the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and makes it possible for sinners to be saved and given the gift of eternal life.

APPLICATION

What should it look like for Christians to be actively engaged in political and social issues today?

I don't want to engage in politics in any kind of way that would cause me to be weaker as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How might you need to reconsider the way you've approached politics? Explain.

How might a biblical approach to these areas show the world a better picture of what it means to follow Jesus with every area of our lives?