

Monday, February 2, 2026

God & Governance - Session 3

Homework Assignment: Practicing Communication and Reflection

1. Reflect and Categorize:
 - Think about a current news issue that matters to you. Using the "Four Ds" framework (Die for, Divide for, Debate for, Decide for), write a paragraph explaining where you believe this issue fits and why.
2. Conversation Practice:
 - Have a chat with a friend or family member about a topic both of you don't completely agree on. During your conversation, try to spot when the other person is talking about facts, giving an opinion, or sharing feelings. After your talk, jot down notes on how you handled the conversation differently with that awareness.
3. Nationalism and Patriotism Reflection:
 - Find an article or video that talks about nationalism and patriotism. Note down one new thing you learned and one question you still have. Bring these notes to the next session to share.
4. Community Engagement:
 - Identify an issue in your local community that you care about, like a recycling program or a public park initiative. Think of one small action you could take to support this cause. It could be as simple as a phone call to a local leader, attending a meeting, or posting something about it on social media.
5. Eschatology Exploration:
 - In a few sentences, summarize how different beliefs about end times might change the way some people think about politics. How does this compare with your own views?

Summary: Faith and Politics: Navigating Christian Identity in American Civic Life

This teaching session explores the intersection of faith and politics, addressing how Christians can engage in civic discourse while maintaining unity in Christ. The pastors establish frameworks for communication and debate, distinguishing between issues worth dying for, dividing over, debating about, or simply deciding on. They challenge binary thinking that divides people into "us versus them" categories and examine controversial concepts like patriotism versus nationalism. The session emphasizes that Christians' primary identity is in Christ, transcending political affiliations, and warns against over-realized eschatology that attempts to force prophetic fulfillment through political action. The teaching encourages believers to communicate with clarity, define terms carefully, and resist the cultural pressure to choose political tribes over Christian unity.

Scripture References from the Sermon

Explicitly Mentioned Scripture References:

1. Zechariah 7:9-10 - "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, and do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.'"
2. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 - "For even when we were with you, we would give you this command. If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat."
3. Mark 9:38-41 - The account of John telling Jesus about someone casting out demons in Jesus' name who was not following them.
4. Galatians 3:28 - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
5. Colossians 3:11 - "Here is, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all."
6. Matthew 26:11 (alluded to) - "The poor you will always have with you" (Jesus' statement about the poor)
7. John 11 (referenced) - The account of Caiaphas receiving prophecy about Jesus dying for the nation

Discussion Questions

- How can Christians maintain unity in Christ while holding different political opinions, and what practical steps can we take to prevent political differences from becoming divisive issues in our church communities?
- In what ways might our tendency toward binary thinking ('good vs. evil,' 'us vs. them') prevent us from seeing the complexity of political and social issues through a biblical lens?
- When communicating about controversial topics, how can we better distinguish between facts, opinions, and feelings in both our own speech and in what we hear from others?
- How does the concept of 'tribal trenches' manifest in your own life, and what would it look like to step out of those trenches while still maintaining your convictions?
- What is the difference between patriotism and nationalism from a biblical perspective, and how should our identity in Christ shape our relationship with our nation?
- How might an 'over-realized eschatology' lead Christians to take actions that are inconsistent with trusting God's sovereignty over history and prophecy?
- Considering the orchard analogy, how can Christians balance caring for the vulnerable and marginalized while also promoting personal responsibility and the flourishing of the whole community?
- What does it mean practically to render 'true judgments' and 'show kindness and mercy' (Zechariah 7:9-10) in our current political climate without compromising biblical truth?
- How can we avoid the trap of prejudging people based on a single opinion they express or a label they claim, and instead seek to understand the full complexity of their beliefs?
- In what ways does the reminder that 'there is neither left nor right...you are one in Jesus Christ' challenge how you engage with fellow believers who hold different political views?

5-Day Devotional: Unity in Christ Amid Division

Day 1: Beyond Binary Thinking

Reading: Galatians 3:26-29

Paul reminds us that in Christ, human divisions dissolve. We are neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female—and we might add, neither left nor right, Republican nor Democrat. Our culture constantly pressures us to choose sides, to fit into predetermined boxes. But Christ calls us to a higher identity. When we meet someone with different political views, do we see an enemy or a fellow image-bearer of God? Today, resist the urge to categorize people based on single opinions. Instead, ask questions. Seek to understand before being understood. Remember that unity in Christ transcends every earthly division we create.

Reflection: Who have I been putting in a "box" based on limited information? How can I approach them with curiosity rather than judgment?

Day 2: Caring for the Vulnerable

Reading: Zechariah 7:9-10

God's heart beats for the widow, the orphan, the foreigner, and the poor. This isn't merely a political position—it's a divine mandate. Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly calls His people to show mercy and kindness to the vulnerable. Yet we must balance compassion with wisdom, enabling flourishing rather than dependency. The challenge isn't choosing between caring for the marginalized or promoting responsibility—it's doing both. Jesus fed the five thousand and also told people to take up their cross. Today, consider how you can show practical mercy to someone in need while also encouraging their dignity and agency. True biblical justice combines compassion with truth.

Reflection: Is there someone vulnerable in my community who needs both help and encouragement toward growth?

Day 3: The Danger of Prophecy Fulfillment

Reading: 1 Samuel 24:1-7

David had multiple opportunities to kill Saul and claim the throne God had promised him. Yet he refused, saying he would not take matters into his own hands. This stands in stark contrast to Abraham's attempt to fulfill God's promise through Hagar, or Caiaphas's plot to kill Jesus. The lesson is clear: God's purposes don't need our manipulation. When we try to force prophecy or rush God's timing, we create disaster. Whether it's attempting to establish a Christian nation by human effort or fearing

globalism will usher in the Antichrist, we must remember: God is sovereign. Our job is faithfulness, not control. Trust His timing. Walk in obedience. Let God be God.

Reflection: Where am I trying to control outcomes that belong to God alone?

Day 4: Speaking Truth with Love

Reading: Ephesians 4:14-16

Paul instructs us to speak truth in love, growing up into Christ in all things. Notice the balance—truth without love becomes harsh judgment; love without truth becomes empty sentimentality. In our polarized culture, we must master the art of distinguishing between facts, opinions, and feelings in our communication. When discussing difficult topics, ask yourself: Am I sharing verifiable facts, my personal opinion, or my emotional response? Be clear about which you're expressing. When someone shares with you, discern what they're actually communicating before responding. This prevents unnecessary conflict and builds genuine understanding. Truth spoken in love doesn't avoid hard conversations—it engages them with grace and clarity.

Reflection: In my recent conversations, have I confused my opinions with facts? Have I responded to someone's feelings as if they were making a logical argument?

Day 5: Citizens of Heaven First

Reading: Philippians 3:17-21

Paul reminds us that our citizenship is in heaven. While patriotism—loving and serving our earthly nation—is appropriate, it must never supersede our primary identity as citizens of God's kingdom. We can fly the flag and participate in civic life while remembering that no nation, including our own, is God's chosen people in the way ancient Israel was. Our ultimate allegiance belongs to Christ. This frees us from the anxiety that our political party must win or our nation must dominate for God's purposes to prevail. It also prevents us from demonizing those who disagree politically. When we remember we're pilgrims passing through, we can engage politics with both conviction and humility, working for good while trusting God's sovereignty.

Reflection: Does my political engagement reflect heavenly citizenship or earthly tribalism? How can I serve my country without making it an idol?

Closing Prayer: Lord, help us to be people of unity in a divided world. Give us wisdom to discern truth, courage to speak it lovingly, and humility to listen well. May our primary identity always be found in Christ, transcending every earthly label. Teach us to care for the vulnerable while promoting human flourishing, to engage politically without becoming tribal, and to trust Your sovereignty rather than trying to control outcomes. Make us instruments of Your peace. Amen.

Wise Council

Determining the Importance of Specific Issues

The Four "D's"

Die Divide
Debate Decide

Wise Council

Judging Others

Binary Thinking
Good/Evil
Us/Them
Left/Right

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SILENCE

WE REFER TO OUR OPENNESS REGARDING THESE THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AS THE "SIGNIFICANCE OF SILENCE." AS WE EXPLAIN IN EVANGELICAL CONVICTIONS, "THIS EXPRESSION DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE WILL NOT DISCUSS AND DEBATE THESE ISSUES BUT SIMPLY THAT WE WILL NOT DIVIDE OVER THEM" (P. 24, FOOTNOTE 18).



Wise Council

Categorizing of Communication

Facts Opinions Feelings

MARK 9:38-41

JOHN SAID TO HIM, "TEACHER, WE SAW SOMEONE CASTING OUT DEMONS IN YOUR NAME, AND WE TRIED TO STOP HIM BECAUSE HE WAS NOT FOLLOWING US." BUT JESUS SAID, "DO NOT STOP HIM, BECAUSE NO ONE WHO DOES A MIRACLE IN MY NAME WILL BE ABLE SOON AFTERWARD TO SAY ANYTHING BAD ABOUT ME. FOR WHOEVER IS NOT AGAINST US IS FOR US. FOR I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WHOEVER GIVES YOU A CUP OF WATER BECAUSE YOU BEAR CHRIST'S NAME WILL NEVER LOSE HIS REWARD."

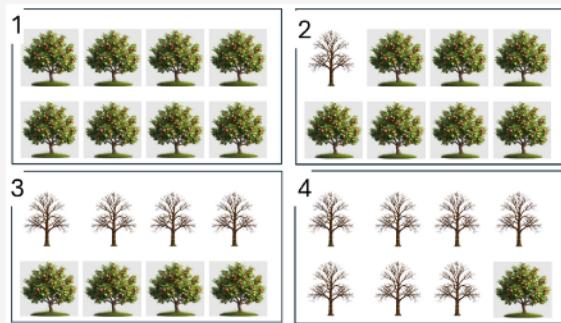


GALATIANS 3:28

THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK, THERE IS NEITHER SLAVE NOR FREE, THERE IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE-FOR ALL OF YOU ARE ONE IN CHRIST JESUS.

COLOSSIANS 3:11

HERE THERE IS NEITHER GREEK NOR JEW, CIRCUMCISED OR UNCIRCUMCISED, BARBARIAN, SCYTHIAN, SLAVE OR FREE, BUT CHRIST IS ALL AND IN ALL.



The orchard analogy is used to illustrate differing political perspectives, particularly between the left and the right. In this metaphor, the world is seen as an orchard, where healthy trees represent a prosperous society. The left is described as focusing on the unhealthy trees, emphasizing the need to address issues such as poverty and social injustices. This concern for individual trees could lead to neglecting the overall health of the orchard. Conversely, the right is portrayed as concentrating on the overall orchard's health, sometimes neglecting the needs of the few unhealthy trees to maintain general prosperity. This perspective is

characterized by a tough-love approach, valuing the collective well-being of the orchard. The analogy highlights the balance needed between addressing individual needs and maintaining the general health of society, advocating for a moderate position that incorporates both views for the benefit of all.

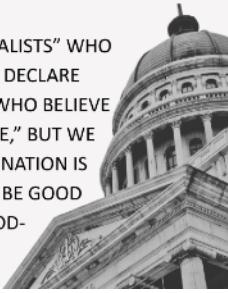
CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

FROM TGC: "WHEN CHRISTIANS CASUALLY ADOPT THE "NATIONALIST" LABEL WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING ITS IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT, THEY'RE SIGNING UP FOR A PACKAGE DEAL THEY MAY NOT REALIZE THEY'RE BUYING."



CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

FROM EFCA: WE ARE NOT "CHRISTIAN NATIONALISTS" WHO BELIEVE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD DECLARE THE UNITED STATES A CHRISTIAN NATION OR WHO BELIEVE THAT AMERICANS ARE "GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE," BUT WE DO BELIEVE THAT A PATRIOTIC LOVE OF ONE'S NATION IS APPROPRIATE AND THAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE GOOD CITIZENS WHO MAY FREELY ADVOCATE FOR GOD-HONORING PUBLIC POLICIES.



CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

FROM EFCA: WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT POLITICAL MEANS CAN ESTABLISH THE KINGDOM OF GOD, BUT WE DO BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS APPOINTED GOVERNING AUTHORITIES TO DO GOOD AND THAT, FOR CITIZENS IN CHRIST'S KINGDOM, KING JESUS' RULE AND REIGN TRANSCENDS ALL OTHER CITIZENSHIPS AND PARTISAN IDEOLOGIES AND TRANSFORMS HOW WE LIVE IN THE WORLD.



authority, though his views may suggest a desire for top-down Christian influence in governance. There is a concern that this ideology can adopt an over-realized eschatology, where individuals believe they must enact certain biblical prophecies, similar to historical biblical figures who attempted to fulfill prophecy prematurely. The Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) distinguishes itself by rejecting the concept of Christian nationalism that equates American exceptionalism with divine favor, instead promoting patriotic love that supports God-honoring public policies without enforcing Christianity at the expense of other beliefs.

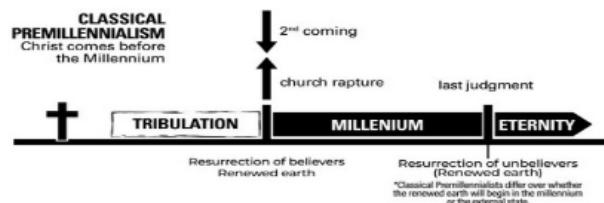
1. **Postmillennialism**, which believes that the physical return of Christ will occur after a golden age of peace and prosperity on the earth through the spread of the gospel (this view is unique in that it has a positive eschatology and it is believers who usher in the kingdom, not Christ);



2. **Amillennialism**, which believes that there is no literal future thousand year kingdom (thus, no millennium) on the earth, but rather a spiritual kingdom that refers to Christ's rule in the hearts of His people during the church age, and finally;



3. **Premillennialism**, which believes that the millennial kingdom refers to a future, physical kingdom that Christ Himself will establish at His return. The kingdom, which will be centered in Jerusalem, will last for one thousand years, after which the current earth along with the heavens, will be destroyed and replaced by the new heavens and the new earth.



4. **Dispensational Premillennialism**, which differs from historic premillennialism primarily in its insistence that Israel as a nation will be regathered at the end times, converted, and the land promises made with her fulfilled in the millennial kingdom (e.g., Gen 12:1-3; 15:18-21). Thus, the point is not that many Jews will be saved in the end, but that the nation of Israel will exist and will inherit the promises made to national Israel in the Old Testament.

