

RESPOND TO CONFLICT AS AN AMBASSADOR OF JESUS CHRIST

NAVIGATING POLITICAL CONFLICT



Study Guide

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. Isaiah 26:3-4

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Session 1: The Political Affiliation of the Christian

Principle:

The Christian's ultimate allegiance is to Jesus Christ as King and Lord of the Heavenly Kingdom, not earthly political entities.

Promise:

Rooted in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, believers can navigate earthly politics with wisdom and discernment, always prioritizing their primary citizenship in Heaven and advancing the Lord's interests.

Playbook:

1. Recognize Dual Citizenship: While we reside on earth, our true citizenship is in Heaven, making our ultimate allegiance to God and His Kingdom. *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ* (Philippians 3:20).
2. Embrace Ambassadorial Role: As ambassadors for Jesus Christ, our main task is to represent the Heavenly Kingdom, promoting reconciliation with God rather than pushing a political agenda. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God* (2 Corinthians 5:20).
3. Seek the Holy Spirit's Guidance: In the midst of political complexities, rely on the Holy Spirit for discernment, ensuring decisions align with God's heart. *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come* (John 16:13).
4. Avoid Idolatry: Guard against allowing any political party, ideology, or leader to take precedence over Christ as your First Love. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen* (1 John 5:21).
5. Promote Kingdom Values: Engage in politics with the aim of advancing justice, love, and righteousness, reflecting the nature of God's Kingdom. *He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8).

Prompt:

Reflect on your current political affiliations and positions. Are there areas where they might be overshadowing your primary identity and allegiance as a citizen of Heaven and ambassador of Jesus Christ? This week, pray for discernment and guidance from the Holy Spirit regarding political issues or conversations.

Session 2: Christ Above All - Navigating Political Affiliations

Principle:

Our relationship with Jesus Christ holds supremacy over all, including political affiliations.

Promise:

When we prioritize our bond with Christ, political divisions fade in significance, fostering true unity in the body of believers.

Playbook:

1. **Anchor in Identity:** Regularly remind yourself that you are first and foremost a citizen of Christ's Kingdom, and your identity is rooted in Him, not in any political party or worldly association. *But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.* (Philippians 3:20-21).
2. **Eyes on Eternity:** Focus on the eternal implications of decisions and interactions, seeking Christ's perspective over transient political viewpoints. *Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.*(Colossians 3:1-4).
3. **Lead with Love:** Allow Christ's love to guide your discussions and actions, emphasizing unity in Him over discord in political stances. *So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*(John 13:34-35).
4. **Seek Spiritual Wisdom:** Dive deep into the Word of God and seek spiritual understanding, ensuring politics is seen under the light of Scripture. *If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.* (James 1:5).
5. **Prayerful Posture:** Continually approach political conversations and decisions with prayer, inviting Christ's wisdom and guidance. ... *pray continually* ... (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Prompt:

Reflect on a recent political conversation or decision. How might it have been different if you had prioritized your relationship with Jesus Christ above all? Today, consciously choose to place Christ at the center of any political discussions or decisions, observing the peace and clarity it brings.

Session 3: Christ's Contrasting Approach - Overcoming Worldly Political Tactics

Principle:

The world often advocates for attacking and belittling opponents, but Jesus' approach stands in stark contrast, emphasizing respect, understanding, and love.

Promise:

By embracing Christ and His kingdom, not only do we rise above worldly tactics, but we also pave a path for healing and unity even in the midst of political differences.

Playbook:

1. Kingdom Perspective: Recognize that worldly tactics are transient and short-lived, while the ways of the Kingdom have eternal implications. Choose the latter. *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing, and perfect will.* Romans 12:2
2. Resist Retaliation: Even when faced with hostility or slander, mirror Jesus' example by not retaliating or stooping to the world's tactics. Instead, respond with grace as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. *He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly* (1 Peter 2:23).
3. Value Over Victory: Prioritize the value of the individual over the need to "win" a political argument. Remember that Christ died for everyone, including those with opposing views. *Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will bless you for it* (1 Peter 3:9).
4. Speak Truth with Love: While standing firm in the truth, ensure it's communicated with the love and gentleness of Christ that comes from the Holy Spirit living in you, avoiding the abrasive and divisive techniques of the world. *But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head - Christ* (Ephesians 4:15).
5. Constant Communion: Stay in close communion with Christ through prayer and the Word, seeking the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit to navigate conversations with the humility and wisdom that comes from Jesus. *But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere* (James 3:17).

Prompt:

Reflect on a recent political conversation where you observed worldly tactics of belittlement or attack. How can you apply Christ's contrasting approach in similar future situations? Commit this week to respond to any political tension by consciously choosing the ways of the heavenly kingdom over worldly tactics.

Session 4: The Wisdom of Heaven vs. Earthly Rhetoric

Principle:

The wisdom of this world, often marked by cunning rhetoric and divisive strategies, differs vastly from the heavenly wisdom that Jesus embodies and provides to those who ask.

Promise:

By pursuing and applying Christ's wisdom, believers can rise above the noise, foster understanding, and remain anchored in truth amidst political storms.

Playbook:

1. Discern the Source: Always test political messages and narratives against the Word of God, discerning what aligns with Christ's teachings and what does not. *Test all things; hold fast what is good* (1 Thessalonians 5:21).
2. Embrace Humility: Recognize the limits of human understanding. Rather than leaning on our own insights or popular opinions, seek the wisdom that comes from above. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths* (Proverbs 3:5-6).
3. Guard Your Heart: In a world rife with persuasive speech and emotional manipulation, protect your heart and mind by meditating on Christ's teachings and staying rooted in His peace. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7).
4. Promote Peaceful Dialogue: Instead of engaging in heated debates that mirror worldly discord, strive for conversations that reflect the peace and unity Jesus desires for His followers. *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another* (Romans 14:19).
5. Pray for Leaders: Rather than falling into the trap of criticism and cynicism, uphold leaders in prayer, asking God to grant them heavenly wisdom and to guide them in decisions that align with His will. *Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence* (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Prompt:

Reflect on a political issue or discourse that stirred strong emotions within you. How might approaching it with Christ's wisdom reshape your perspective and response? This week, intentionally pause before reacting to political news or discussions, seeking the heavenly wisdom Jesus offers.

Session 5: Earthly Crowns vs. The Eternal Kingdom

Principle:

While the world's political leaders chase after temporal crowns and fleeting power, Jesus offers a Kingdom that is unshakeable and eternal.

Promise:

By focusing on the eternal Kingdom, believers can transcend the temporary struggles and chaos of worldly politics, finding hope and purpose that lasts.

Playbook:

1. Recognize Temporality: Understand that the world's political systems, leaders, and their promises are transient. Contrast this with Jesus' Kingdom, which is eternal and unchanging. *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).*
2. Seek Kingdom Values: Prioritize values of the Kingdom – justice, mercy, humility, and love – over any political party or worldly agenda. *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:1-2).*
3. Embody Servant Leadership: While worldly leaders often seek dominance and recognition, strive to emulate Jesus' example of servant leadership in every aspect of life. *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (Philippians 2:5-7).*
4. Stay Anchored in Hope: When political upheaval and uncertainty arise, remain steadfast in the hope of Christ's return and the establishment of His eternal Kingdom. *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5).*
5. Witness with Wisdom: Use political discussions as opportunities to point others to Jesus and His Kingdom, contrasting it with the impermanence of worldly reigns. *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4:5-6).*

Prompt:

Reflect on a time when a political event or decision deeply affected you. How might viewing it in the light of Christ's eternal Kingdom change your perspective? Challenge yourself this week to engage in a political conversation where you intentionally draw distinctions between worldly politics and the ways of Jesus' and His Kingdom.

Session 6: Building Bridges with Political "Enemies" - The Passport to Fruitful Dialogue

Principle:

Just as Jesus reached out to those whom society deemed as 'enemies' or 'outcasts,' we are called to establish relationships with those who hold opposing political views.

Promise:

Building genuine relationships with political adversaries can serve as a passport into their lives, paving the way for more understanding and fruitful conversations that can glorify Jesus Christ.

Playbook:

1. See Through Christ's Eyes: View political "enemies" as individuals deeply loved by Christ, deserving of dignity and respect, not just as representatives of opposing views. *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots* (Luke 23:34).
2. Initiate Connection: Take proactive steps to know and understand them on a personal level, setting aside preconceived notions or biases. *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone* (Romans 12:18).
3. Find Common Ground: Identify shared interests, values, or concerns outside of politics to foster mutual trust and rapport. *To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some* (1 Corinthians 9:22).
4. Listen Actively and Empathetically: Allow them to express their views without interruption or judgment, seeking to genuinely understand their feelings and concerns. *Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.* (Philippians 2:4).
5. Pray for Open Doors: Consistently pray for opportunities to share God's love and wisdom within these relationships, trusting that the Holy Spirit will guide your interactions. *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God* (Romans 8:14).

Prompt:

Think of someone you've labeled a political "enemy." How can you initiate a personal connection with them this week? Commit to one actionable step towards building a relationship with them, be it a simple coffee invite or an act of kindness, looking beyond politics.

Session 7: The Power of Prayer in Political Tension

Principle:

In the midst of political tensions, our most potent tool as believers is not persuasive arguments, but earnest prayer, which taps into the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

Promise:

Engaging in intercessory prayer for those with differing views not only brings heaven's intervention but also softens our hearts towards them, paving the way for relationship.

Playbook:

1. Commit to Prayer Over Protest: Before engaging in debates or protests, dedicate time to pray for the situation, the leaders involved, and the hearts of those you may oppose. *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way (1 Timothy 2:1-2)*
2. Intercede for "Enemies": Make it a habit to pray for those with opposing views, asking the Lord to reveal Himself to them, guide them, and reveal His truth to them. *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them (Romans 12:14).*
3. Seek Personal Transformation: Use prayer as a time to reflect on any biases or prejudices you may hold, asking God to transform your heart and renew your mind. *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).*
4. Invite God's Kingdom: Continually pray for God's Kingdom to be evident on earth as it is in heaven, recognizing that His ways are higher than any political system or ideology. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).*
5. Uphold Unity in Prayer: Regularly intercede for the unity of the Church amidst political divides, believing that the Holy Spirit can bridge even the deepest of chasms. *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3).*

Prompt:

Identify a current political issue or individual that stirs strong emotions within you. Commit to praying for that issue or person daily this week, asking God to work in the situation and in your heart. Reflect on the changes in your perspective and attitude as you prioritize prayer.

Session 8: Embracing the Beatitudes in Politics

Principle:

Jesus' Beatitudes provide a counter-cultural roadmap for believers in the political realm.

Promise: Integrating the Beatitudes into our political approach and conversations will illuminate God's perspective amidst earthly tensions.

Playbook:

1. Be Poor in Spirit: Recognize our spiritual bankruptcy without Christ, and approach politics with humility. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:3).
2. Mourn Rightly: Grieve over sin and injustice, not just political losses or disappointments. *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted* (Matthew 5:4).
3. Practice Meekness: Engage with strength under control, avoiding aggression or domineering tactics. *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth* (Matthew 5:5).
4. Hunger for Righteousness: Advocate for godly justice in politics, rather than mere personal or party gain. *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled* (Matthew 5:6).
5. Be a Peacemaker: Actively work towards reconciliation and unity in the Body of Christ, even with political "enemies". *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God* (Matthew 5:9).

Prompt:

Reflect on the last political conversation you had. Which Beatitude could have been more present in that discussion? This week, meditate on one Beatitude and seek to embody it in your political engagements.

Session 9: The Role of Righteous Anger

Principle:

Righteous anger is a God-given emotion intended for justice, not for division.

Promise:

When channeled correctly, righteous anger can instigate positive change without causing harm.

Playbook:

1. Distinguish Between Angers: Learn to discern personal, reactionary anger from righteous indignation. *Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires* (James 1:20).
2. Confront Injustice: Use righteous anger as a catalyst to address and correct wrongs, especially when they oppose God's standards. *Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows* (Isaiah 1:17).
3. Stay Controlled: Ensure that even in anger, actions and words are guided by the Holy Spirit and are not destructive. *Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back* (Proverbs 29:11).
4. Seek Restoration: Aim for healing and reconciliation, not mere vindication. *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God* (2 Corinthians 5:20).
5. Pray for Guidance: Always turn to prayer when feeling anger, asking for God's wisdom and intervention. *Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil* (Psalm 37:8).

Prompt:

Recall an incident when you felt righteous anger about a political issue. How did you respond? This week, when confronted with a potential trigger, pause and pray before reacting.

Session 10: Recognizing and Avoiding Idolatry in Politics

Principle:

Politics, leaders, and parties must never take the place of God in our lives.

Promise:

By keeping Christ as our First Love, we safeguard our hearts from the seduction of political idolatry.

Playbook:

1. Evaluate Your Heart: Regularly check if political loyalties are overshadowing your allegiance to Christ. *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him* (1 John 2:15).
2. Limit Consumption: Ensure that political news or affiliations don't dominate your thoughts and conversations. *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth* (Colossians 3:1-2).
3. Guard Against Fear: Remember that God is sovereign over rulers and nations, regardless of political outcomes. *Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth* (Psalm 46:10).
4. Seek God's Kingdom: Constantly prioritize the advancement of God's kingdom over any political agenda. *For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come* (Hebrews 13:14).
5. Renew Your Mind: Regularly immerse yourself in God's Word to counterbalance the world's messages. *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (Psalm 119:105).

Prompt:

Reflect on your political engagement. Are there signs of it becoming an idol in your life? This week, commit to focus on our first love, Jesus Christ.