

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS FOR THE SPACE BETWEEN US:

How Jesus Teaches Us to Live Together When Politics and Religion Pull Us Apart

Week 1

1. When it comes to political and religious tension, how do you typically respond? Run away? Engage? Observe from the sidelines?
2. What about the current political atmosphere bothers you the most?
3. What are some of the emotional/mental/physical reactions you have when conversations with loved ones start to get tense around these heated topics?
4. Who in your personal life do you tend to have the most conflict with when it comes to these topics?
5. How do conversations with this person typically end (tense, yelling, in good humor)?
6. What are the other factors in your relationship with this person that could be contributing to the tension? (for example: family history adds layers of complication)
7. If you had to script how a conversation between you and this person would go, what would the perfect response from them be? What would your response be? (examples: Feeling heard, changing their mind, ending in a more civil manner.)
8. What is an outcome with this person that you can control? (Note: you cannot control a change of mind, so rethink a metric of success.)

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Week 2

1. Think back on a time when an idea you had about a particular group or a particular person was changed from an encounter you had. Share what happened.
2. How do you see assumptions we make about groups of people or one person contributing to the current problems in our culture?
3. What might it cost us to have our assumptions about a group of people proved wrong?
4. Why do you think we resist learning to see the humanity in a group we don't understand? Why is it easier to see them as "other" from us?
5. Have you ever been seen as "other" and treated that way? How did it make you feel?
6. What does keeping lines of communication open with people we don't identify with, look like? How is it different from what you are currently doing? How is it the same?

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Week 3

1. Talk about the difference between Beliefs, Convictions, and Opinions. (Beliefs are the things that are nonnegotiable to you. The hills worth dying on. Convictions are things you feel strongly about, but understand others may see things differently than you. Opinions are ideas you have not based on very strong emotion—or fact.) When it comes to politics and religion, what ideas would fall under each of those categories for you?
2. How has neglecting the differences between these categories led to the divisiveness we feel in our culture today?
3. Why do you think it is so much easier to assume someone who thinks differently from you is wrong, instead of thinking their convictions may be different from yours?
4. Read Romans 12:17-18. Paul uses the phrase, “as far as it depends on you”. In other words, we aren’t responsible for peace between all people at all times, but in our personal worlds and relationships. What does “living at peace with each other” look like, even with deeply divided views?
5. What is the difference between “sameness” and “oneness”? How does going after sameness hurt the cause of oneness? How can we pursue oneness, even in our differences?
6. Read Galatians 3:26-29. In this passage Paul is both acknowledging the differences these believers have, while saying what they share in common is what matters more. Think of the people you have the least in common with (groups of people or individuals you feel in conflict with). Think of three things that you share in common with them instead of where you are different.