



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Elevate: Raising the bar for conversations about political tension / Week 1

---

## SERIES OVERVIEW

### SERIES SUMMARY

Raising the bar for conversations about political tension.

### SERIES BOTTOM LINE

Raising the bar for conversations about political tension.

### WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: The way of Jesus means people are more important than policy.

---

## SCRIPTURE

*“If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles” (Matthew 5:41 NIV).*

*Then Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28 NLT).*

*“go and sin no more” (John 8:11 NLT).*

*For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son (Romans 5:10 NLT).*

*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27 NIV).*

---

## NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

### THINK ABOUT THIS

Studies show that this generation of high schoolers is incredibly concerned with the social and political issues of the day. They not only know about or are aware of the way political decisions can impact their everyday lives, but they also care deeply about the way those decisions are changing their world, both now and in the future. That’s what makes leading a conversation about navigating political tension especially important in this phase. As a church, it’s our job to meet our students where they are and to care about what they care about. Because your students care about politics in a very real way, we want to step into the conversation with them. Be mindful of the fact that this isn’t about telling them which policies to support, debating what political party they should back as believers in Jesus, or talking about who to vote for. Zoom out and consider the conversation from a higher level, making it less about *what* we talk about in terms of politics and more about *how* to approach those whose vote or viewpoint may differ from our own.

## NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

In the Tension section of your talk, be prepared to share a personal story that illustrates how politics and people have collided in your life. This can be lighthearted and fun or serious. Just make sure that how you conclude the story flows well into the heart of this idea: More than almost any other topic, politics create judgments.

---

## INTERACTIVE 1: IMAGE BEARERS

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll display two signs that indicate two divided political sides and reveal a truth shared in Scripture that is true for both.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Two poster boards
- A marker

### PREP

- On one poster board, write the word "Democrat."
  - On the other poster board, write the word "Republican."
  - On the back of both poster boards, write this Scripture:
    - *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27 NIV).*
  - Place both signs on the stage where you can easily access them during the Application section of your talk.
- 

## TEACHING OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

- How many of you love yelling, "CANNONBALL!" and jumping into the water?
- We're going to cannonball straight into the deep end regarding a conversation that isn't easily had, but so many people feel tension about: politics.
- We are raising the bar for conversations about political tension.

### TENSION

- *[Tell a personal story from your own life about how you've seen politics and people collide in your own life.]*
- More than almost any other topic, politics creates judgments.
- Tension exists in our society and culture all the time. People disagree over a ton of things. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- Rather than just being a simple disagreement, the tension about politics often grows into something negative toward the other side, toward another person, and toward creating hostility between two people or groups.
- It's no secret that political tension divides all types of people. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- The fact that we even have the right to vote for a candidate and policies is an incredible privilege.
- But the constant tension and debate around politics can often feel like a game no one can win.
- So, how do we approach conversations about politics and policies in the wisest way?
- It all comes down to a choice: Will I choose a position regarding an issue over a person on the other side?

## TRUTH

- Jesus Himself lived in the middle of constant political tension.
- He navigated life alongside people who rarely lived in total agreement, and He addressed how to live well inside this ideological hurricane that politics can create.
- He said this:
  - *“If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles” (Matthew 5:41 NIV).*
- The Jews listening to Jesus knew that He was addressing a Roman policy declaring that any Roman soldier, at any time, could demand and force a Jew to carry his gear for him for one mile.
- Jesus cuts through the enflamed emotions of the political policy to teach His followers that you should show compassion to those who oppose you—to love your enemies.
- Jesus always chose to value the person over the policy.
- Mark captures another notable example of this where Jesus places the dignity, value, and well-being of people above rules and policy.
- Some religious leaders were accusing Jesus’ disciples of breaking the rules when Jesus said this:
  - *Then Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28 NLT).*
- The religious leaders were caught up in the rules and missed the purpose of why the rules existed: to help people.
- More important than a policy, a party, a side, or a stance, Jesus constantly chose to value people first.
- In John 8:1-11, we see a story of a woman caught in adultery. As a result, the law and policy demanded that she be publicly humiliated, shamed, and then executed.
- Jesus showed grace and love to the dignity and humanity of this woman who was exposed and guilty. He tells her to *“go and sin no more” (John 8:11 NLT).*
- Jesus is saying the same thing to you and to me every time we’re guilty in our sin.
- The apostle Paul said in his letter to the Romans:
  - *For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son (Romans 5:10 NLT).*
- The entire Bible is one big story of God loving, choosing, and rescuing His people.
- When argumentative religious leaders demanded Jesus take a side, Jesus chose to love people more than a policy.
- The way of Jesus means people are more important than policy.
- Which leaves us with a big question: How do you and I follow Jesus and navigate political tension?

## APPLICATION

- Perhaps the best place to start is by asking yourself a few questions:
  - Do you see the person on the other side of your view as sacred?
  - Do you see that person as an image bearer of God with worth and dignity?
  - Do you view that person with reverence and treat them with incredible respect and care?
  - Do you do all this regardless of their political persuasion, party, or stance?
- *[INTERACTIVE: Image Bearers: This is where you’ll display two signs that indicate two divided political sides and reveal a truth shared in Scripture that is true for both.]*
- Even if you disagree with them, you can see them as someone made in the image of God.
- If we want to follow Jesus and navigate political tension, we are called to show everyone the same love and grace that Jesus shows us.

## LANDING

- The way of Jesus means people are more important than policy.
- And if you’re here and you don’t really care that much about political stuff, you’ll still have people that you disagree with for some other reason.
- That’s the way of Jesus—treating people like they’re sacred.

---

## TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.

---



# TEACHING SCRIPT

Elevate: Raising the bar for conversations about political tension / Week 1

## BOTTOM LINE

THE WAY OF JESUS MEANS PEOPLE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN POLICY.

## INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

I have an important question for you:

How many of you love yelling, “CANNONBALL!” and jumping into the water?

Yeah, I’m right there with you. I’m an especially big fan when I make a big enough splash to even reach the people sitting beside the pool—you know, the people who aren’t even trying to get wet. Yeah, I even want *them* to feel the wake of my colossal splash!

What we’re going to talk about today is going to be a little bit like that. We’re going to cannonball straight into the deep end regarding a conversation that isn’t easily had, but so many people feel tension about: **politics**. And what a good time to talk about it since we’re in a Presidential election season! We are raising the bar for conversations about political tension. So, let’s dive right in.

## TENSION

3 MINUTES

### TELL A PERSONAL STORY

*Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following thoughts or ideas...*

- Talk about how you’ve seen politics and people collide in your own life.
- Maybe it’s a divide in your family, a tense conversation with your friends, or what you’ve observed online.
- The goal is to set the stage for students to understand the tensions that exist around politics and how that tension can impact people and relationships.
- A sample story is included below.

*Every time an election rolls around, my community is filled with signs on street corners promoting a candidate for some public office. And every time, my kids will read the signs and ask me the taboo question, “Who are you voting for, Dad?” Since I can’t break down the candidate’s political agenda to my little kids, I normally say, “I’m not sure yet.”*

*But what I secretly know is true is that if I tell my kids who I’m voting for, there’s a chance they’ll tell their friends at school.*

*And if they tell their friend at school, then their friend at school will tell their parents.*

*And if their friend's parents disagree with my opinion, it could get a little awkward at the ball field later that week.*

**More than almost any other topic, politics create judgments.** We build judgments of who people are simply by how and for whom they cast their vote. That's why politics have become taboo; they generate so much tension.

Now, tension exists in our society and culture all the time. People disagree over a ton of things, like...

- Is a hot dog a sandwich or a taco?
- LeBron James or Michael Jordan?
- Minecraft or Fortnite?

But political tension is a different category altogether. Rather than just being a simple disagreement, the tension about politics often grows—like an overfilled water balloon—into something negative toward the other side, toward another person, and toward creating hostility between two people or groups. We choose dividing political sides on things like who should be President and issues like immigration, equality, the economy, and other issues so divisive that, merely mentioning them, would cause emotions to rise, maybe even in you.

It's no secret that political tension divides all types of people. It can drive a wedge between family members, best friends, or even people of the same faith. And we've all seen how wild it can get when people bring up politics at a table during Thanksgiving or Christmas. Want to ruin a fun family gathering? Ask everyone at the table who they are voting for and why!

Now, let's be clear: The fact that we even have the right to vote for a candidate and policies is an incredible privilege. The truth is that there are populations of our society who, at one time, were not afforded the right to vote. Since the right to vote costs so much and is such an honor, people can often be incredibly passionate about the topic. And that's understandable. But the constant tension and debate around politics can often feel like a game no one can win.

So, how do we approach conversations about politics and policies in the wisest way? It all comes down to a choice:

**Will I choose a position regarding an issue over a person on the other side?**

And when you are a Jesus follower, that choice becomes even more important.

---

## TRUTH

3 MINUTES

Jesus Himself lived in the middle of constant political tension. Placed between the oppression of the Roman Empire on one side and the religious power of the Jewish Temple on the other, Jesus navigated life alongside people who rarely lived in total agreement. He addressed how to live well inside this ideological hurricane that politics can create.

In Matthew 5:41, during Jesus' message on how to live the best life, Jesus says this:

***"If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles" (Matthew 5:41 NIV).***

This wasn't Jesus trying to help people get their steps in; He was addressing how to deal with political tension. The Jews listening to Jesus knew that He was addressing a Roman policy declaring that any Roman soldier, at any time, could demand and force a Jew to carry his gear for him for one mile. A Roman soldier's gear was heavy. In fact, some people believe it could've been up in the range of 80-100 pounds. I can't imagine how it would've felt—physically *and* emotionally—to be required to carry a Roman soldier's gear. And Jesus cuts through the enflamed emotions of the political policy to teach His followers that you should show compassion to those who oppose you—to love your enemies.

Through every example of Jesus's life and His ministry, we find a consistent thread: **Jesus always chose to value the person over the policy.** Mark captures another notable example of this where Jesus places the dignity, value, and well-being of people above rules and policy. A group of people were arguing about harvesting grain on the Sabbath, which was a commanded day of rest according to the Jewish Law. Some religious leaders were accusing Jesus' disciples of breaking the rules when Jesus said this:

***Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28 NLT).***

The religious leaders were caught up in the rules and missed the purpose of why the rules existed: to help people. For Jesus, it's people over everything. More important than a policy, a party, a side, or a stance, Jesus constantly chose to value people first. From His enemies to His followers, it was always people. And where we really see Jesus lead the way is how He interacted with those who were oppressed by society or circumstance.

In John 8:1-11, we see a story of a woman caught in adultery. As a result, the law and policy demanded that she be publicly humiliated, shamed, and then executed. But Jesus sends the crowds away by choosing to show grace and love to the dignity and humanity of this woman who was exposed and guilty. Jesus then helps her to her feet and tells her to ***"go and sin no more" (John 8:11 NLT).***

And, thankfully, Jesus is saying the same thing to you and to me every time we're guilty in our sin. Thankfully, Jesus chooses us even when we are against Him like the apostle Paul said in his letter to the Romans:

***For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son (Romans 5:10 NLT).***

The entire Bible is one big story of God loving, choosing, and rescuing people. And that's what Jesus showed us time and time again. When argumentative religious leaders demanded Jesus take a side, Jesus chose to love people more than a policy.

When you look at Jesus, this becomes abundantly clear:

**The way of Jesus means people are more important than policy.**

Which leaves us with a big question: **How do you and I follow Jesus and navigate political tension?**

---

## APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

I'm so glad you asked. Perhaps the best place to start is by asking yourself a few questions:

- **Do you see the person on the other side of your view as sacred?**
- **Do you see that person as an image bearer of God with worth and dignity?**

- Do you view that person with reverence and treat them with incredible respect and care?
- Do you do all this regardless of their political persuasion, party, or stance?

### **INTERACTIVE: Image Bearers**

*This is where you'll display two signs that indicate two divided political sides and reveal a truth shared in Scripture that is true for both.*

*[Hold up each sign.]* Okay, so this is the most obvious difference, right? Democrats and Republicans. They have nothing in common, right?

*[Flip both signs over to reveal the passage of Scripture on both.]*

This is referred to as *imago dei*, which is translated in English as “Image of God.” All people have the DNA of God inside of them. That includes the people you disagree with, you don’t like, and who look, act, and believe differently than you!

*[Flip one card over back to “Democrat” and leave the other at Genesis 1:27.]*

That means if you disagree with them, you can still see them as someone made in the image of God.

*[Flip both cards over—one will say “Republican” and the other Genesis 1:27 now.]*

Even if you disagree with them, you can **see them as someone made in the image of God.**

For Jesus, it was always about valuing people, even those He disagreed with. So, if we want to follow Jesus and navigate political tension, when we interact with someone, whether they believe the same things as us or not, we are called to show them the same love and grace that Jesus shows us.

---

## LANDING

1 MINUTE

**The way of Jesus means people are more important than policy.** It may not always be easy to choose, but it will always leave a lasting impact, both on the person on the other side of your beliefs and on you.

And if you’re here and you don’t really care that much about political stuff, you’ll still have people that you disagree with for some other reason. And you, too, can see those people as image-bearers with complete worth and dignity.

That’s the way of Jesus—treating people like they’re sacred. And that’s what we can do, too!



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

---