

# SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

## Elevate: A conversation about political tension / Week 1

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### BEFORE GROUP

#### BOTTOM LINE

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).*

#### GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to take a new approach when entering conversations about politics and to point them toward valuing those who think differently than they do as people created and loved by God.

#### 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.

*This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the content as needed, and don’t feel like you need to complete everything listed.*

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### DURING GROUP

#### DISCUSS THIS

*Note to Small Group Leader: Remember, the goal of this conversation is not to debate the election, policies, or candidates. It’s to help students know how to navigate difficult conversations. Do your best to re-direct as best you can if it goes that way and focus instead on the choice to see people over policy.*

*Additionally: For this series, we created a guide to help your students think through 5 things before deciding who is right and who is wrong. We're calling it, "The Starting Five: A Student's Guide to Tense Conversations." You can find it at the end of the small group leader guide, in the Week 1 Small Group Folder, and in the additional resources folder.*

1. Do you think people can talk about politics in a way that's healthy and helpful? Why or why not?
2. In your own words, how would you define "political tension"?
3. Have you ever seen or experienced political tension in your own life? What did you observe and how did it make you feel?
4. In what ways do you think political views can lead to:
  - a. Judgement?
  - b. Debate?
  - c. Division?
5. How might those things impact our relationships with the people holding a different view than you over time?
6. How do we see Jesus treat people whether He agreed with them or not?
7. What can we learn from the way Jesus treated everyone (enemies and followers alike) that might help us navigate political tension in a better way?
8. If we chose to value people over policy, what might change about our:
  - a. Conversations?
  - b. Relationships?
  - c. The way we treat those who think differently than we do?

### TRY THIS

This is a great opportunity to encourage your students to do what's in their power to make an impact this election season and beyond. For those old enough to vote, encourage them to research their options, seek wise counsel, and participate if they want to. For those who aren't there yet, remind them that, regardless of who is leading the country, we as Christians have an opportunity to pray for that person and the people around us. You can even set an example in the group, closing your time together by asking God to give wisdom, discernment, discipline, humility, and more to those in power in our world.

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# THE STARTING FIVE

## PREGAME

Before deciding who is right or wrong, have you done your due diligence in forming your values before you make judgements on someone else's values?

## THE STARTING FIVE

- 1 Play on the same field.**  
Proximity matters.
- 2 Play by the same rules.**  
Be intellectually humble, intellectually honest, and disagree without insulting.
- 3 Call your own fouls.**  
Learn to monitor yourself. And if you can't play by the rules, a neutral referee might be helpful.
- 4 A neutral site is best.**  
Acknowledge home field advantage. The social, demographic, and psychographic locations of both parties matters.
- 5 Snacks matter.**  
Meals around the table make us feel more human.

## TIME OUT

Refusing to let someone else be your enemy is difficult when someone is dehumanizing you.

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