



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Let's Talk About . . . What to do when adults disagree / Week 1

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES SUMMARY

What to do when adults disagree.

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

What to do when adults disagree.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: Jesus shows us how to love people when there is tension.

SCRIPTURE

Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, "What do you want with her?" or "Why are you talking to her" (John 4:27 NLT)?

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another (Galatians 5:13-15 NLT).

NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

THINK ABOUT THIS

As you lead the conversation this week, keep in mind that students will be coming to it from all kinds of backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. Some may live in environments where adults never fight or disagree in front of them, while others may be surrounded by conflict at home. Some may have parents or caretakers who speak openly and passionately about politics, religion, and other hot-button issues, while some may have little clue about how the adults in their lives feel about those things. Some may have been on the receiving end of hatred and hurt from authority figures in their lives, while others may be following the lead of the adults in front of them. Regardless, do your best to not villainize any viewpoint that the parents, guardians, or adults in your students' lives may hold. You don't want to create division between the student and their authority figures. The hope for this conversation isn't to convince students that those adults in their lives who argue or disagree are bad or wrong. Rather, it's to help them begin to think critically about the viewpoints they hear from anyone and to respond to differences, disagreements, and division the way Jesus would: with love.

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

During your talk this week, make sure to focus more on the divide that results from political disagreements than the actual cause of that division. We want to help them discover how they can trust God when the people they love and respect aren't speaking to each other or can't speak to each other without fighting. We think this is a very important discussion, and we help middle schoolers discover how Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.

INTERACTIVE : THERE ARE NO INTERACTIVES FOR THIS TALK

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- *[Tell a personal story about a time you either witnessed or were part of a big debate.]*
- The reality is our world is pretty divided.

TENSION

- It's no secret that there are some topics that divide all types of people. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- There's probably a bunch of situations you can think of where things get awkward because people just don't agree, but sometimes, it gets extreme.
- In those moments, you might feel confused, awkward, or wish they'd stop bringing things up that lead to fights.
- For many reasons, politics, elections, and opinions about trending topics can bring out some strong emotions in people when they disagree.
- What exactly are we supposed to do when our families or the people we care about are divided, especially about politics?
- Is this what it's supposed to be like between us, especially as followers of Jesus?

TRUTH

- Unfortunately, tensions and divisions aren't anything new, but fortunately for us, the Bible is full of real stories that we can learn from.
- Jesus lived during a time of constant political, social, and religious tensions and divisions. One of those divisions was between two ancient groups of people: Jews and Samaritans.
- After a long day of traveling, Jesus sat down by the water well and asked a Samaritan woman for a drink.
- Look at how the disciples reacted:
 - *Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, "What do you want with her?" or "Why are you talking to her" (John 4:27 NLT)?*
- They were all wondering because Jews didn't talk to Samaritans, and, in their culture and at this time in history, men didn't talk to women.
- Jesus cared more about the Samaritan woman than He did about the politics and the social barriers.
- Because Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.
- The tensions in our world aren't going away, but we aren't helpless.
- In fact, one of the most influential Christians in history, Paul, told us what we can do.
- Paul grew up in that same society where social and religious divisions were normal, specifically between Jewish people and non-Jewish people, who were known as Gentiles.
- Paul was a Jew called to share the good news of Jesus with the Gentiles, the non-Jews.
- If anyone knew how to handle tension and disagreements, it would be someone who experienced them in the ways Paul did:
 - *For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another (Galatians 5:13-15 NLT).*
- Paul saw the tensions of his day and called them out!

- Paul also said we have received the gift of freedom in Jesus, but he warned us not to use our freedom to satisfy our selfishness.
- However, Paul strongly suggested we use our freedom to serve one another.
- Paul reminded us of one of the things Jesus said was more important in life:
 - “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
- When we choose to serve and love the people around us, we are living like Jesus.
- You aren’t too young to set that example, even for the adults in your life who seem divided and at odds with each other.
- Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.
- You may not be able to change what adults in the world around you say and do, but you can change what you say and do.
- You can choose to be more like Jesus. *[Give relevant examples.]*

APPLICATION

- Maybe a better way to approach it is to ask this question: How can I be like Jesus in the middle of the tension?
- We can start here: Care more about the person in front of you than the tension going on around you.
- It’s easy to focus on the cause of the tension, but the way of Jesus is choosing people first. I’d argue that loving people is one of the hardest things that God asks us to do.
- However, it will always leave a lasting impression on who you are choosing to love.
- You may be wondering what it looks like to love the people who are in the middle of tensions. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.
- Jesus showed us a bunch of examples of how to love all sorts of different people.

LANDING

- Tensions and divisions are a part of our lives.
- Imagine if you could choose to follow Jesus’ example and love people, even when they disagree.
- This is the kind of approach that, over time, could change the world.
- Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.
- Who are the adults in your life who you need to love even when they disagree?

TEACHING SLIDES

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



TEACHING SCRIPT

Let's Talk About . . . What to do when adults disagree / Week 1

BOTTOM LINE

JESUS SHOWS US HOW TO LOVE PEOPLE WHEN THERE IS TENSION.

INTRODUCTION

1 1/2 MINUTES

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

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

- Talk about a time you either witnessed or were part of a big debate.
- This could be about something small and seemingly trivial (like who the better singer or athlete is) or about something bigger and with more weight (like the right approach to a conflict or whether you should be on social media).
- Whatever it is, focus on the fact that the debate illustrated a divide for you.

The reality is our world is pretty divided. In fact, you can scroll through Instagram or TikTok for five minutes to see some sort of tension, strong opinions, or division! Or maybe you even hear the adults in your life talk about certain things so much that you can just feel the tension between them.

TENSION

1 1/2 MINUTES

It's no secret that there are some topics that divide all types of people. Topics that drive a wedge between family members, best friends, and even people of the same faith. This happens at the table during family gatherings and might even show up in your everyday life.

- You can't go to Grandma's house unless you avoid certain topics.
- Auntie So-and-So isn't invited because Grandpa You-Know-Who will be there and the last time they were together it was Avengers: End Game.
- You've been forbidden from going to your friend's house because of what their parents believe.

Look, there's probably a bunch of situations you can think of where things get awkward because people just don't agree.

But sometimes, it gets extreme. Like to the point where they stop talking or can't talk without a fight breaking out. Maybe in those moments, you've felt confused. Maybe you wish everyone would just get along or at least not bring up the things that always lead to a fight.

I don't think it's any secret that this is really real right now. Because for too many reasons to mention, politics, elections, and opinions about trending topics can bring out some really strong emotions in people when they disagree.

And when that happens, most of us just feel awkward. We don't know what to do when the tensions, or those feelings of awkwardness, anger, or discomfort, are high. I mean, **what exactly are we supposed to do when our families or the people we care about are divided, especially about politics?**

Sometimes, when the people around us are so divided, it can cause us to wonder where God is in all of this—especially when the people fighting are Christians.

Now, I'm not questioning anyone's faith, but I am wondering if this is what it's supposed to be like between us, especially as followers of Jesus.

TRUTH

5 MINUTES

Unfortunately, tensions and divisions aren't anything new. But fortunately for us, the Bible is full of real stories that we can learn from—stories of siblings who didn't talk to each other for years, religious and social groups who looked down on other people, and cultural groups who hated one another and avoided each other at all costs.

Jesus lived during a time of constant political, social, and religious tensions and divisions. One of those divisions was between two ancient groups of people: Jews and Samaritans. More than 2,000 years ago, it was understood that Jews did not talk to or interact with Samaritans.

Until one day, Jesus was going through Samaria (which is where Samaritans lived).

Imagine this! It was mid-day, the sun was high, it was hot, and Jesus and His disciples had been walking all day. The disciples went into town to find food, and Jesus sat down by the water well. A Samaritan woman came to get water, and Jesus asked her for a drink of water.

Now, asking for a cup of water may not seem like a big deal to you or me. But the Samaritan woman was surprised. In fact, the disciple John wrote this about the interaction:

Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, "What do you want with her?" or "Why are you talking to her" (John 4:27 NLT)?

They were all wondering because Jews didn't talk to Samaritans. And in their culture and at this time in history, men didn't talk to women.

But Jesus cared more about the Samaritan woman than He did about the politics and the social barriers. The conversation Jesus wanted to have with her was more important than the divisions of the day. Jesus went on to offer her hope that didn't fade.

Because **Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.**

Here's the reality: The tensions in our world aren't going away. We can't change how other people act or what they will say or do. We can't change the fact that people we love will argue or fight about things, even if it hurts their relationships with other people. We can't change that people will have different opinions, values, and thoughts about basically everything. And honestly, we can't change how the adults in our lives behave toward others.

So, what then? If we can't do anything, are we just helpless?

Thankfully, no, we aren't helpless. In fact, one of the most influential Christians in history, Paul, told us what we can do.

Paul grew up in that same society where social and religious divisions were normal, specifically between Jewish people and non-Jewish people, who were known as Gentiles. Paul lived in the middle of that division. Paul was a Jew called to share the good news of Jesus with the Gentiles, the non-Jews. Basically, he was supposed to talk about Jesus with people that he didn't have a whole lot in common with.

If anyone knew how to handle tension and disagreements, it would be someone who experienced them in the ways Paul did. And this is what he wrote when it comes to tensions in relationships:

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another (Galatians 5:13-15 NLT).

Paul saw the tensions of his day and called them out! Look back at the last thing he said there:

If you're always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another (Galatians 5:15 NLT).

You may have had someone come to mind when you heard that phrasing. We don't need to say who, but for some of us, that word picture brought up experiences we'd rather not repeat. Because those tensions and divisions that Paul talked about still exist today.

But here's what's cool: Paul also said we have received the gift of freedom in Jesus. Paul warned us not to use our freedom to satisfy our selfishness. Because the reality is, that's really easy to do. If I can say what I want, what's stopping me from saying whatever I want to whomever I want, however I want. After all, Jesus forgives me, right? Nothing's stopping me or you. That's the gift of freedom.

However, **Paul strongly suggested we use our freedom to serve one another.** Paul reminded us of one of the things Jesus said was more important in life:

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

When we choose to serve and love the people around us, we are living like Jesus. Our relationships win. Now, I'm not saying that everything will be perfect all of a sudden. But when we choose to love the person in front of us, then we are choosing to act how Jesus would in that situation.

And here's the thing: You aren't too young to set that example, even for the adults in your life who seem divided and at odds with each other. So, when you find yourself in a situation where there's lots of tension and disagreements, this is what I want you to remember:

Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.

You may not be able to change what adults in the world around you say and do, but you can change what you say and do. You can choose to be more like Jesus.

- You can choose to love your parents, grandparents, coaches, teachers, and leaders.
- You can choose to serve one another in love.
- You can choose to prioritize people over personal opinions.
- You can choose to lean in when others want to leave.

APPLICATION

1 1/2 MINUTES

So, instead of getting frustrated, upset, or disappointed with how the adults in your life are acting, maybe a better way to approach it is to ask this question: **How can I be like Jesus in the middle of the tension?**

We can start here: **Care more about the person in front of you than the tension going on around you.**

It's easy to focus on the cause of the tension, but the way of Jesus is choosing people first. That means we are prioritizing people the most. This isn't always easy to do. In fact, I'd argue that loving people is one of the hardest things that God asks us to do. But I believe that when you do this, it will always leave a lasting impression on who you are choosing to love.

You may be wondering what it looks like to love the people who are in the middle of tensions. Well . . .

- Loving someone might look like listening to them.
- It could mean staying curious and open-minded.
- It might look like finding something else you love about them and choosing to focus on that instead.
- It might mean changing the subject so you don't get too frustrated or annoyed.
- And it could mean asking God to help you love them when you don't know how to.

Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.

Jesus showed us a bunch of examples of how to love all sorts of different people. Maybe loving someone just means focusing on who's in front of you and asking God to show you how to love them in that moment.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Tensions and divisions are a part of our lives. People can give in to these tensions and become divided, even about things that really don't seem to matter.

Imagine if you didn't have to feel totally helpless or confused in these situations.

Imagine if you could choose to follow Jesus' example and love people, even when they disagree.

This is the kind of approach that, over time, could change the world. And I believe that your generation can be the one that starts to get this right!

So, what does it look like to follow Jesus' example in the middle of division and tension in our world?

By remembering that **Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.**

When we move to Small Groups, think about this: **Who are the adults in your life who you need to love even when they disagree?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS