



## Getting Started

**Politics:** the word itself is full of conflict. Isn't it better to just avoid these conversations altogether? After all, most aren't even conversations—just polarized people shouting tweets at each other, getting angrier as the conversation progresses. Each person is often thinking, **"But this is a moral issue! How can anyone see it any differently? I honestly find myself questioning your character if you think differently about this than I do."**

And yet Jesus' disciples represented a broad range of the political views. Matthew was a tax collector who supported the Roman occupiers; Simon was a Zealot, a member of a Jewish terrorist group prepared to do whatever it took to oust the Romans; Peter was a fisherman, the equivalent of a small business owner; and Luke, one of the gospel writers, was an educated physician.

Governments matter, laws matter, societal systems matter. Should Christians be involved in politics? Can it be avoided? If they are involved, what should their role be?

*"Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is."*

**Mahatma Gandhi**

*"Mixing politics and religion is like mixing manure and ice cream; it doesn't affect the manure much, but it really messes up the ice cream."*

**Tony Campolo\***

\* <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/oop06i/the-colbert-report-tony-campolo>

### Choose one

With which political party do you think Christians should align?

If Jesus belonged to a political party, which one do you think it would be?

If you chose a politician, living or dead, as a political role-model for everybody else, who would it be?

If God put an ideal form of government in place, what would it be?



## Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's

Questioning the role that Christians should play in politics is not something new. The leading religious leaders of the day quizzed Jesus on just that question. During the time Jesus was on earth, Rome ruled Palestine through Herod and many of the Jews of the day rebelled against this. And to trap Jesus into choosing a side, the religious leaders of the day posed this question to Jesus:

**15** Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?"

**18** But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

**21** "Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

**22** When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

(Matthew 22:15-22, NIV)

In the Apostle Peter's letter to early church congregations, he got a little more specific—support governments wherever you can but don't be surprised by persecution.

**12** Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. **13** But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. **14** If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. **15** If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

(1 Peter 4:12-15)

### Choose one

What would the US and world look like if Jesus were elected president?

How do you balance political awareness and activism with practicing self-care?



## Going Deeper

Jesus challenged people to think for themselves when it came to obeying, resisting, and/or participating in civil government. And today that ongoing discernment remains vital.

### Choose one

What do you think that Christians should give to “Caesar” (i.e., the government)? What should they withhold?

What should Christians give to God? Give an example.

How do you think faith could play out in politics?

## The Journey Ahead

Invite someone who has a different political view than you to share the story of how they came to that view. Try to better understand how they developed their perspective. Be curious rather than confrontational.

Find someone opposite your views and read the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Choose a controversial topic and see if you can have a truthful, authentic conversation that is characterized by these attributes.

Choose something you advocate for and move beyond words to actions. Find a way to serve the people you care about.

## To Learn More



*Red Letter Christians: A Citizen's Guide to Faith and Politics* By Tony Campolo

*Gandhi: Selected Political Writings* By Mahatma Gandhi

*Christ and Culture* By H. Richard Niebuhr



<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/christ-and-culture-an-overview-of-a-christian-classic/>



Pass the Mic:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/pass-the-mic/id1435500798?mt=2>

<https://player.fm/series/quick-to-listen/why-reinhold-niebuhr-still-haunts-american-politics>

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/truths-table/id1212429230?i=1000401362920&mt=2>