

The Political Elephant
1 Peter 2:9-17
Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Icebreaker Question:

- Are you more likely to enjoy political conversations or avoid them? Why?

Peter was writing from Rome, the nerve center of the most powerful empire in the world at the time, at the cusp of a season of great difficulty for Christians. The emperor Nero had not yet begun his official persecution of the Christians, but more and more followers of Jesus found themselves under suspicion and attack from Greek, Roman, and Jewish sectors of society. They felt more and more like they didn't belong, and Peter was writing to bring them encouragement.

TAKE TURNS READING 1 Peter 2:9-17

1. Introductory Questions

- a. Peter starts off his letter by addressing his readers as “chosen exiles, or sojourners.” The term means a “temporary resident in a foreign place.” How are we as Christians “temporary residents” here on earth? What experiences do you have in your daily life where this becomes most real to you?
- b. In v. 9 of today's passage, Peter says that we are a holy nation. How are we as Christians a “holy nation” here on earth? What implications does this have for your identity?

2. Pastor Josh said that this passage provides three answers to the question, “What does faithfulness to God look like in the current political climate?” The first answer is **Embracing our primary identity as his redeemed people.**

- a. What are areas in which we could find our identity other than as Christ's redeemed people? Which of these is the most real temptation for you?
- b. What are the dangers of identifying ourselves with a political party over first identifying with Jesus?
- c. What are tangible signs or evidences that you are drawing your identity from something else other than Jesus?
- d. What helps us keep our identity rooted in Christ (could be behaviors, attitudes, habits, practices and/or world views)?

3. Re-read vv11-13a with question 3a (see below) in mind:

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. **12** Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. **13** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority...

- a. From the passage above, how would you describe the second answer to what it looks like to be faithful to God politically? (After your people have had a chance to discuss their thoughts, you can compare them with Josh's answer: **Engaging in our call to live attractive lives among**

the people and needs around us.

- b. Pastor Josh quoted another pastor (Andy Stanley):
The hope for our nation is that 60-70% of US citizens consider themselves to be some kind of Christian. Our conduct has more potential to bring about any change than any elected candidate or any law. The behavior of Christians in this nation has more potential to change our nation and culture.

Agree or disagree? Discuss.

- c. What are ways that we can be involved in our community that might be a “flavorful” witness to people who don’t believe in Christ?
- d. Are there any ways in which you can improve in your respect for and submission to (v13) the secular authority God has “ordained”? Discuss how you might practically do this, even when you disagree.

4. The third element of faithfulness to God in our current political climate is **exercising our office as voting citizens with integrity.**

- a. Pastor Bryan Wilkerson says it this way:

Voting isn’t just about influencing the outcome of the election, it’s an expression of gratitude, patriotism, and responsibility. When we vote we show respect for the candidates who are committing themselves to public service, we show respect for the democratic society in which we live, and we show respect for the people who fought and died to secure that freedom, and we show respect to God, who allows us to live in a free nation.

Have you ever thought of it this way? Please discuss your reaction to this quote.

- b. Josh discussed three qualities we need to examine in the candidates when voting: character, demonstrated leadership, and positions on issues.
- i. When lying seems normal for politicians, how do you personally discern their character?
 - ii. What are key areas where you want to see a candidate demonstrate leadership? Why?
 - iii. This may bring some debate, but what issues do you think are biblically weighty?
 - iv. If you are courageous and your group is tight, discuss actual candidates in light of these factors.
- c. Sometimes elections are described as “voting the lesser of two evils.”
- i. What are our options in voting when this does truly happen?
 - ii. Do you believe that God is sovereign over the nations and the political processes? If so, how do you reconcile this when things go wrong politically?

5. Summary Question: What are some ways that Jesus’ death and resurrection affect our involvement in the political process – our identity, our hope, our votes, etc.?

6. **Share and Pray:** Among our prayer requests, let’s pray that we will grow in our experience of Jesus in our lives (heaven on earth) and be even more motivated to share this with others who don’t believe. Be sure to pray for elected leaders and for the election process.