

# Orientation

## What is God's Good News about Politics?

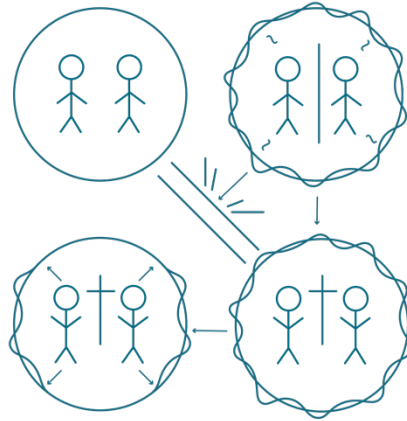
By Connie JG Anderson, Andrew Berg, and Jonathan Walton

We believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ is always Good News to all people in all situations – this includes politics. When the disciples declared “Jesus is Lord,” this was a political statement, not just a theological one. The coming of the Messiah was fused with political implications for the Jewish people and the Roman Empire, and it is true for us in the United States. The English word “politics” comes from the Greek word “polis,” meaning “city-state.” It refers to the way that people living in a large community (such as a city, state, or country) make decisions about power and resources. And since Jesus calls his followers to love our neighbors, obedience to Jesus will necessarily mean every Christian is involved in “politics”—broadly speaking—in one way or another. While words and actions must be contextualized, the question is *how* Jesus’ people should be involved in politics, not only *if* we should engage at all.

So, every believer should be well-informed about what Jesus has to say about political discipleship and civic engagement. Our goal with this guide is to wrestle faithfully with the teachings of Scripture, not to confirm everything you already believe about politics or to convert you to what we believe. *Instead, this guide is designed to take a broader look at how God's people have engaged with issues of power, justice, and political organization, and consider His invitation to faithful engagement in our time.*

In some contexts, it is taught that the only fruit of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection is victory over one’s personal sin and eternal life in Heaven. In other contexts, formation and discipleship dismisses this reality and only focuses on the systemic and institutional renewal that Christ and the Kingdom of God promises. Fortunately, the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek texts that we get our current Bibles from don’t separate the two. Our personal and collective sin is met with individual and institutional renewal. Praise God that Jesus came, died, and rose not only for our lives to be redeemed, but for our freedom from personal, relational, and systemic sin and brokenness. This includes civic and political structures that govern our everyday lives. Wherever there is brokenness and injustice, the Kingdom of God came to make it right.

In InterVarsity, we use the [Big Story Gospel Diagram](#) as a visual representation of this holistic Christian gospel message. It consists of four key components:



- **God's Design:** The top left circle of the diagram illustrates God's original plan for humanity, emphasizing that God created humans to be in a loving relationship with Him, and to reflect His image. We were made in the image of God to flourish, work, steward, and create, living in blessed shalom with peace between all relationships. That is peace between humanity and God, peace with one another, peace within ourselves, and peace with creation.
- **The Problem of Sin:** This top right circle illuminates humanity's rebellion against God and the personal, relational, and systemic brokenness that results. Due to our desire to live outside of what God intended, we see abuse, violence, jealousy, racism, and all sorts of addictions and afflictions. And this brokenness is not confined to individuals, but afflicts families, communities, and countries as well.
- **Jesus' Solution:** The image on the bottom right proclaims that Jesus Christ is Messiah, Redeemer, and Liberator. He is the solution to the problem of sin. It portrays Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as the means through which God reconciles humanity to Himself, offering forgiveness and restoration. But the Gospel story does not stop there; it includes the coming of the Kingdom of God to renew all of creation. This includes all individuals, institutions, and every power and principality.
- **Faithful Response:** The final part of the diagram is the personal and collective response to this radical love and justice. And that is faithful, loving obedience where the fruits of our repentance lead to flourishing communities where Christ comes close, and the Kingdom of God is reflected in the lives and environments of those around us. We have been healed, and God has sent us out as ambassadors, testifying to the same freedom and reflecting the same love and justice He has shown to us.

Often, there is a temptation to move from the second circle to the fourth and skip Jesus altogether. But, as followers of Jesus, that would mean we are again, moving out of our own will, means, and preferences. As His witnesses, we are to be living testimonies to His love, freedom, and justice, and that is impossible to do unless we have encounters with Him and cultivate that relationship. This is an especially important point when we are approaching costly and contentious areas of life like politics and civic engagement where brokenness, frustration, rage, anger, and fear are pervasive. Jesus shows us a better way.

The Scriptures that we chose, stories in the introductions, and “Beyond the Text” highlight these four realities. For example, in our first discussion we look at the creation story, reflect on what it means to be made in His image, and contemplate a world where we believe that as a community. This encompasses circle one of the diagram. Later in the study, our engagement with Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion forces us to confront the consequences of our sin alongside Jesus’ resistance to temptation and obedience to His mission, bringing circles two and three to life. Lastly, we look at leaders like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and Sophie Scholl who lived out circle four. These two people were willing to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus in obedient resistance to segregation in the United States and antisemitism in Nazi Germany, respectively.

In all these discussions, we see that the Gospel is not only Good News for us personally, but speaks peace, love, freedom, and justice in the face of immense suffering and injustice. Jesus has won the victory, and that victory extends to our political systems and structures. And that is Good News!

*Scan the QR code for more resources  
on God’s Good News About Politics*



# Format and Content

## A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Written thousands of years ago, these passages may feel challenging to you, or distant from the political questions we face today. You may read a story or consider an idea that feels unfamiliar or hard to imagine. It may be tempting to try to fit the Bible or Christian teaching into your pre-existing categories. We invite you to resist the urge to stay comfortable, and instead, to engage thoughtfully, wrestle with the text in small group discussion, and seek to *observe*, *interpret*, and *apply* God's words. You might be surprised by how relevant, wonderful, and timely engaging with these ancient words and historical contexts can be.

It is important to emphasize that the four passages we chose do not cover all God has to say about political life. In fact, it would be difficult to find a single page of the Bible that doesn't have some reference to rulers, justice, laws, wars, or another political topic! Instead, we chose a variety of passages from both the Old and New Testaments that take different looks at how God's people engage with political power. Our invitation is to genuine reflection, honest critique, and an openness to what God might be saying to us through these examples and experiences.

## WALKING THROUGH THE STUDIES

Each participant should receive a printed copy of the handout and the leader should print out the notes for the entire study. At the bottom of the handout, there is a QR code anyone can scan to access the notes for the study. This way, participants can review the material and/or use it to lead this study with others after going through it themselves.

Here is our format:

- **Opening:** This section includes notes to the leader and an icebreaker question.
- **Story:** This section includes a personal story from one of the primary authors of this series. They are designed to draw participants in and raise interest in the topic of that particular session. Discussion questions are included after each story.
- **Scripture Study:** In this section you will find a brief introduction to the passage, the passage itself, and a series of discussion questions grouped under the headings of Observation, Interpretation, and Application (OIA). If you don't have

time to discuss all the questions, please select at least one from each of those categories.

- **Conclusion:** This paragraph reviews the main points of each Bible study and makes connections that participants may have missed.
- **Challenge:** These are invitations to take a concrete step in response to the session.
- **(OPTIONAL) Beyond the Text:** The studies were designed to last an hour. If time permits, this additional 30-minute section connects the central point of each session to more contemporary political applications. If there is not enough time, point people to the QR code at the bottom of their handout for access.
- **Closing:** To close each meeting please thank people for coming, confirm the next meeting, and pray.

As mentioned earlier, these studies are designed to take a broader look at how God’s people engage with issues of power, justice, and political organization and consider His invitation to faithful engagement in our time. Instead of conversion to a particular party, politician, or platform, we believe Christ followers should be well-informed about what Jesus has to say about civic engagement, so that we can respond as faithfully as possible.

When we say well-informed, we are not saying that we decide what the “righteous” political positions are, and then go to Scripture to justify our political platforms and preferences. We are explicitly saying the opposite. It is Scripture and the teachings of Jesus that inform our politics and shape our civic engagement. We long to have our political lives be determined by our lives with God—not the other way around. Our goal is not to be right or to be self-righteous, but to orient our politics around the love of God, neighbor, and ourselves. We invite you to faithfully wrestle on this side of heaven with what it means to steward our power and resources in ways that are honoring to God and to our neighbors in and through our systems and institutions.

## TOOLS TO HELP YOU ALONG THE WAY

[Discussion Tips](#): Want ideas for how to facilitate your group? Check out this link!

[Navigating Conflict](#): Conflict is normal, healthy, and should be expected.

[InterVarsity’s Approaching Differences tool](#) can help you and your group engage with dissonance and differences with love.