

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN FAITH AND POLITICS COLLIDE?

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

Apparently, Jesus saw this kind of division coming—when our political or cultural beliefs bump up against our faith and cause conflict. Did you know that Jesus actually prayed for you? Long before you were born, and long before any of the cultural or political issues that we argue over today existed, Jesus prayed for you and for all the Christians who would struggle to navigate these kinds of disagreements.

Read **John 17:20–21**, where Jesus takes the time before he leaves to ask the Father for peace among his disciples and all those who would follow him in the future. He said,

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also **for those who will believe in me** through their message, that all of them **may be one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us **so that the world may believe** that you have sent me.”*

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Where do you currently see disunity among the Christians you know? How is it being handled? Do you see any role that you could play in moving toward unity in this area?
2. What does it mean to you to know that Jesus prayed for you? How does knowing that unity among believers is one of his deep desires affect your perspective on issues that arise that could cause division?
3. Who do you know who is great at navigating difficult terrain when it comes to hard conversations politically or culturally? What can you learn from them?

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APPLY IT

Jesus showed us that one of the most important ways to face conflict is to pray for those who we disagree with. Sometimes writing our prayers makes the words stick in our own hearts and minds. Write a prayer somewhere where you will bump into it occasionally (a note on your phone or calendar or in your Bible) and remember to pray for unity. Pray specifically for the groups who are farthest from you in your opinions. Pray for peace among believers and grace for those who don't believe. Be as specific as you can, asking for forgiveness where you fail and wisdom for your conversations. Remember, because of your faith in Jesus, you are able to pray to the heavenly Father like he did. In fact, that kind of relationship is what Jesus prayed for.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION (IF DESIRED)

1. The “so that” in **John 17:21** is an important detail in this passage. Why does Jesus pray for unity among believers? What does this “so that” mean for you today?
2. What's the difference between unity and conformity? Where are disagreements and conversations helpful among Christians, and where can they go wrong?
3. How does a community or a community group have the potential to foster unity among believers? What is at risk if we don't engage meaningfully in conversations around important issues with other Christians? What is at risk if we don't do it well?

Digging Deeper

Read Andy Stanley's book, *Not In it To Win It: Why Choosing Sides Sidelines the Church*.