

Small Group Study Guide

Can Christians Be Political Without Losing Their Christian Minds? |

Judges 12:1-15

From Sunday July 5, 2020

Appetizer:

Question: What is it about politics that has frustrated you over the last 10 years? (No fist fights allowed!). Why do you think politics is so divisive?

Have someone read Judges 12:1-15

What stands out to you?

Question: Manasseh and Ephraim were the two sons of Joseph. Rather than Joseph being one of the tribes of Israel, his two sons both were considered tribes of Israel (although often referred to collectively as “The House of Joseph”). Gileadites emerged out of the area that the tribe of Manasseh had settled. So what you have in this passage is not only two tribes having a small civil war, but two tribes that are actually quite close to each other in their genealogy. Have you observed politics splitting families? What political issues have divided them?

Main Course:

In our series, “Asking for a Friend” the question was asked: “Can Christians be political without losing their Christian minds?” The passage that was used to talk about the question highlighted a pre-Christian time for the people of Israel, but still a time when the people of God were losing their minds in the midst of their passion.

The problem with politics is not Christians being political (for we are ALL political) but Christians being political while no longer looking like Jesus.

Question: List some political issues that Christians have been passionate about but have not looked like Jesus in the midst of their passion.

Question: A Shibboleth describes a way of speaking that is used by one set of people to identify another set of people. It is often used in a negative way, pointing out the outsider: who is NOT one of us. It was suggested that the words “Left” and “Right” are

indicators of “Shibboleth” in our society today. What things do people do and say that get them labelled “Left” or “Right”? Do you think these labels are helpful or inflammatory? Why do we use labels to differentiate people in negative ways?

Jeff mentioned that at times it feels like Faith and Politics got together and “had an ugly three headed baby. It’s first head was passion without relationship. The second head was having a cause without having a faith. And the third head was having conflict without reconciliation.

Question: Do you think this is a fair word picture? How have Christians been passionate about issues without being relational? Have you seen example where Christians have been more passionate about causes than about the mission of God? And have you noticed an absence of reconciliation—this idea that at the end of the day we really do want to get along with those that think and act differently than us?

Question: Have we lost our ability in our society to have civil discourse? Can or should the church be advocates for better civil discourse in Canada?

Dessert:

The challenge this week is to spend time with someone who doesn’t think like you. They may have viewpoints of the world that you would instantly think are “Shibboleths”: Their words reveal that they are definitely NOT in your camp!

Grab a coffee with this person and take time to hear their point of view! See if you can have a conversation where you don’t get riled up, or judge too quickly, but you ask questions to understand. Commit to having some friends that do not necessarily think like you.

Take some time to pray as a group about the political environment we see today in North America and around the world. In the same way that Jesus told his followers to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (the capital and cultural influencer of that area of the world), pray for peace in Victoria (BC), and Ottawa (Canada) and the White House (US) as well as the world (The United Nations).

