

Group Discussion Guidelines for the *Going There* Series & Election Season

As we navigate the fall campaign season, tension and anxiety often increase among people, and conversations in small groups (either before or during the group discussion) can turn toward emotionally charged and divisive topics.

In September, we will have a three-week series called “*Going There: truth, politics, sex*” that will encourage us to look to God for our foundation on these hot topics. Even after this series, as the national election approaches, people in your group may bring up political or polarizing topics.

Here are some simple tips for you as you guide your group in these discussions.

1. **Act decisively to keep the conversation focused.** The goal of any group (including the *Going There* series) is to dig into God’s Word and seek his perspective. Don’t be afraid to jump in and bring the conversation back on topic to the specific Scripture or specific question being asked. Politics and social issues are polarizing, and chances are you have someone in your group on the opposite side of an issue or with a lived experience you don’t know about. To shepherd your group well and to honor everyone, don’t hesitate to jump in and bring it back on topic. Do yourself a favor before you start by giving your group a heads-up that you will guard the conversation against becoming political or argumentative.
2. **Keep conversations focused on personal application and growth.** Whatever the topic, keep discussing what we are learning and how the material personally challenges us. This will help move the conversation away from pointing out flaws in others and toward sharing how we are all growing and being encouraged. It is often tempting to share how others need to apply God’s Word but remind your group that we must begin by letting God’s Word change our hearts first.
3. **Unity is the goal. Love is the way.** In the Bible, the early church leader, Paul, spends much of his letters to churches coaching them on pursuing unity. When we, as followers of Jesus, keep faith, hope, and love as the main things, that’s precisely what happens. When it comes to people outside the church, remember that Jesus regularly taught us that we should love our enemies. Help keep your group focused on these essentials. Remind them of the important foundations of unity and love. Work together to get practical in how you can live in ways that honor Jesus and represent him well.
4. **Please let us know if a conversation becomes contentious.** Reach out to one of the staff members on the Next Steps Team (Chip Ewald: ChipE@wschurch.org, Kayla Hulskotter: KaylaH@wschurch.org, Bethany Spear: bethanys@wschurch.org) so that we can coach and support you as you lead.

We are praying for you all as you lead through this season!



Going There 2 – Yours is the Kingdom Discussion & Reflection Guide

Message & Scripture Discussion

- **How do you feel and react to discussions about politics – especially in person? What's your leading emotion?**
 - **What stood out to you from Sunday's service?** How did you sense God at work in you through the songs, the story video, the message, and being together with others as part of the church? (The message's main points and scripture are listed below if it helps you think back.)
 - Chip shared that although he was often called upon to take sides, Jesus most often transcended the us vs. them mindset and was above the two sides. **Read John 18:36. How do you react to Jesus' words and example? How does this challenge you?**
 - **Read the following Scripture passages out loud:**
 - Philippians 3:12-21
 - 1 Peter 2:9-12
- What stands out to you in these passages? Is the Holy Spirit revealing anything in these verses that you need to embrace this week?**
- Chip shared that “our home culture is God’s kingdom.” **Make a list of descriptions of what God’s kingdom is like.** (You can start by using the Scripture verses you just read.) Once you make the list, read it out loud. **How can you make your home in God’s Kingdom and embrace His Kingdom values?** Get practical.
 - As he shared the story of Jesus sleeping in the boat during a storm from Mark 4:35-41, Chip encouraged us to “rest in the sovereignty of God.”
 - **How do you understand God’s sovereignty – that he is above everything and ultimately in control?**
 - **How is God calling you to rest amidst the political storm – not without care, but without fear?**
 - **Is there anything else from the message you want to explore more deeply this week?**

We hope you'll use this guide to take the teaching from Sunday's service and reflect on it with a few friends or with a group. If you have questions or want to talk more about how to take your next spiritual step, contact us at info@wschurch.org.

Book Recommendation: “Live No Lies” by John Mark Comer

In this provocative and practical book, bestselling author John Mark Comer combines cultural analysis with spiritual formation. He identifies the role lies play in our spiritual deformation and lays out a strategic plan to overcome them.

Message Main Points & Scripture

- Joshua 5:13-14 – “When Joshua was near the town of Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and demanded, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” “Neither one,” he replied. “I am the commander of the Lord’s army.”
- **You most often find Jesus above the two sides**
- John 18:36 - “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight tooth and nail against those who arrest and persecute me.”
- **If you’re living from that higher ground, you’ll often be misunderstood.**
- **God is our home.**
- **Your home culture is God’s kingdom.**
- Philippians 3:20 – “But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- **No government will ever save the world**
- 1 Peter 2:11-12 - Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, even though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.
- **We rest in the sovereignty of God.**
- Mark 4:38 - “Teacher, **don’t you care** if we drown?”
- Mark 4:40 - “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”
- Isaiah 40:15-22 - ¹⁵ Surely all the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales... ¹⁷ Before him all the nations are as nothing... ²¹ Haven’t you heard?... ²² He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth...
- **The true king is on his throne.**