



CWRm

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PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Politically Charged Conversations

QUESTION: Over the past few years, as political differences have intensified and arguments become more passionate, I have found it increasingly difficult to bite my tongue when illogical and just plain false statements are made.

This dynamic even “rears its head” in our small group where we are supposed to be studying the Bible, talking about God and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I don’t want to say something I will regret and will only cause alienation. Sometimes I think the only recourse I have is to avoid places where such conversations take place—but then where does one find such places? How can I handle such situations in a Christian manner?

RESPONSE: This topic is surely one of the most difficult and contentious issues of our time.

I believe that a Christ-follower may be more liberal than friends and family or more conservative than friends and family and still be a Christ-follower. Christ-followers are not political yellow pencils.

Within reason, excepting fanaticism (and definitions of fanaticism vary!), we can differ about political opinions while remaining respectful and understanding. **Unfortunately, some feel as if their task is to bulldoze everyone else into submission so that all agree with their political perspectives.** This “warfare” happens within Christendom as well—in fact, in some quarters, especially within Christendom.

Why would I want to pass on my own stupidity or ignorance to someone else?

Paul spoke about this general perspective as

he discussed “disputable matters” (Romans 14:1).

I hear you—I believe I best reflect the Light of Jesus Christ when I maintain neutrality on political topics. As the old saying goes, why not say little or even maintain silence and be assumed as wise rather than opening one’s mouth and remove all doubts.

When I do give in and join the fray, after it’s all over I invariably feel dirty, as if I have lowered myself into the gutter.

In such settings my goal is to be as polite as possible, try to listen and perhaps ask questions—the problem with my questions is, depending on how opinionated and dogmatic the discussion becomes, the more probing and challenging my questions become. My desire to stay out of the heat of political battles does not always work. The spirit is willing, but the flesh, especially the (my) mouth, is weak!

Is it best to avoid and withdraw from people who tend to be fanatical and extremely opinionated about their political beliefs? Sometimes it might be necessary—even for one’s own health. But there are many times in which a Christ-follower can model and reflect the peace of Christ, and empowered by Christ, be a peacemaker.

I realize such a result is not always possible—sometimes it seems almost impossible. I do know some people with high blood pressure whose health dictates that they avoid confrontational discussions.

May God speak in and through us. May God give us wisdom in what we say and how we express our thoughts. May Christ in us, the Prince of peace, live in us in such a way that we, as his sheep, finding ourselves among wolves, might be **“shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves”** (Matthew 10:16). □