



For **LOVE** of **NEIGHBOR**

Politics for the Common Good

Discussion Guide

What role should Christians play in politics and public life?

This perennial question is made even thornier by our present circumstances in the United States and, in some respects, across the Western world: intense polarization, an increasingly pluralistic society, weakened civic institutions, the rise of populist movements on both the right and the left, and a whole host of particular public policy challenges.

Meanwhile, many young Christians sense that the modes of Christian political engagement practiced in recent decades have been either unproductive or unfaithful, or both. However, to a large degree, younger generations have not been taught a substantive, alternative mode of engagement and so they find themselves engaging in equally unproductive and unfaithful ways.

For Love of Neighbor was created to speak into this moment of uncertainty, division, and disillusionment. The film does not pretend to provide definitive answers to the complex questions surrounding Christian political engagement. It does not tell you who to vote for or what specific policies to support. In fact, it makes the case that definitive answers to many of these questions do not exist.

Instead, it tells the stories of Christians seeking a better path forward and explores more foundational questions, like: What role does government have in promoting human flourishing? What are the political implications of Christ's call to love our neighbor? What should we rightfully aim to achieve through politics, and what—on the other hand—should we never expect to achieve through politics? In a pluralistic society, how do we bring our faith to bear on the decisions we make in the public square? To what extent is the way in which we engage politically as important as the ends which we are trying attain through politics?

In our view, these are *a priori* questions that ought to be asked before we dive into other worthwhile discussions about a particular election or specific public policies. If Christians are to speak and act faithfully in these challenging times, deliberate thinking about these foundational questions must happen first. And it is up to churches, families, and communities to take that imperative seriously.

Above all, this film is meant to spark further, ongoing dialogue about these important themes. To that end, we have curated discussion questions and other resources to facilitate these conversations. We hope you find them helpful as you wrestle with what it looks like to meaningfully love your neighbor in your own context.

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P.S. Inevitably, conversations about politics can provoke disagreement and become both personal and tense. While it is impossible to completely avoid these moments, we encourage you to set a tone for your discussion that emphasizes mutual respect and humility, and welcomes charitable disagreement. Although these are important questions to consider together, we strongly believe they are not worth damaging relationships over.

“...seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

Jeremiah 29:4–7 (ESV)

Introductory Questions

- If you were raised in the Church, what teaching or training did you receive about how Christians should engage in politics?
- What questions do you have about Christian participation in politics? What frustrations do you have?
- Do you currently consider yourself politically active? If so, in what ways are you active?

Should We Participate in Politics?

- What are the main reasons that people choose to disengage from politics entirely?
- Do Christians have an inherent responsibility to engage in politics and public life?
- As Dr. Russell Moore states in the film, perhaps a lack of political engagement—especially in a democratic context—is in fact hyper-political because it constitutes a “baptizing of the status quo.” What is your reaction to this sentiment? Do you find it convicting?
- The term public life—as opposed to politics—broadens the scope of public engagement. What sorts of activities are included in public life that might not be included in politics? Why is this distinction important?
- Why do the decisions that get made through politics matter? What are examples of ways in which the societal structures created through government can be more, or less, conducive to human flourishing?
- Opportunity Zones are cited in the film as one way that Sen. Tim Scott has pursued justice and economic inclusivity through public policy. However, some argue that there are other more effective ways to achieve the same goals. To what extent will policy solutions always be imperfect? And why does that make an ongoing competition of ideas about public policy important?

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:13–16 (ESV)
