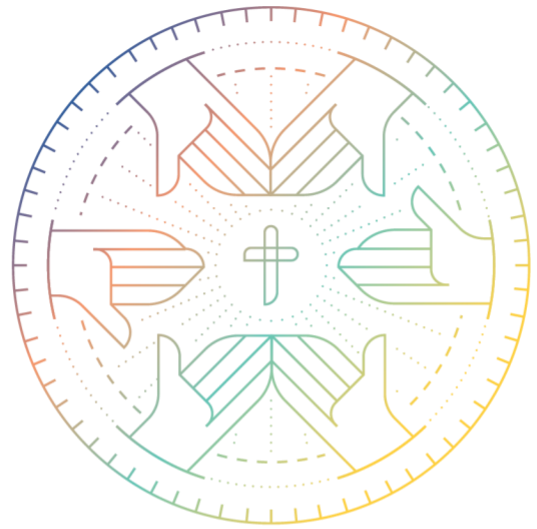


# Group Life.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER



## ICEBREAKER (10 MINUTES)

Have you ever been to Washington, D.C.? If so, what was most impressive to you about that city?

OR

Did your parents or family of origin strongly embrace any particular political party? If so, how was that experience for you?

## INTRODUCTION (5-10 MINUTES)

**Read Matthew 22:15-22.**

What most stood out to you from this week's sermon?

Did it surprise you that society in Jesus' day was as fragmented and divided as it seems our society is today? How does that reality make Jesus' response to the "tricky" question surprising?

**HOST Guidance:** Jesus wisely sidestepped the contentious issue that his questioners tried to use to trip him up. It wasn't that the issue wasn't real (people have many opinions about taxes), it just wasn't the most important issue. In the John 18 passage, Jesus emphasizes that his priority is the Kingdom of God, not the kingdom of this world. That was the underlying truth behind his response in Matt. 22:21.

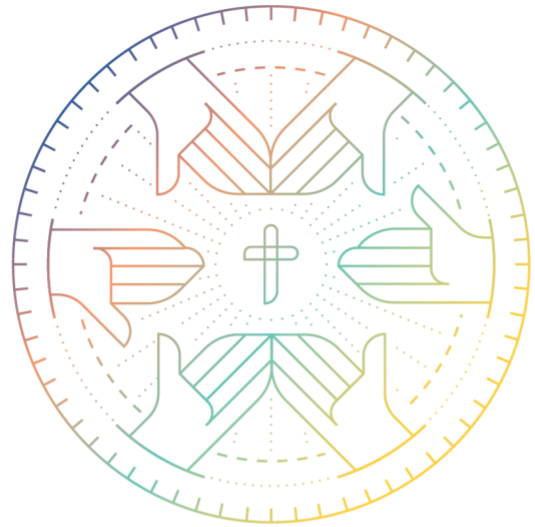
## INTO THE WORD (20 MINUTES)

**Read John 18:33-36.** What did Jesus mean when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my

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kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.”?

**HOST Guidance:** Jesus is saying that his purpose in coming and his focus during his ministry was not to establish a new or better government, or to be installed as a ruler, or to overthrow Rome for something better. His focus and purpose cannot be measured by human titles or human institutions. Jesus’ kingdom is from the heavens and it will not reform this world system, it will replace it. And it will not come about through hostility, resistance or fighting, but will come about as the love of Christ captures people’s hearts.

**Read Romans 13:1-7.** How would you summarize Rom. 13:1-2 in your own words? What do you think Jesus means when he discourages his followers from resisting the authorities?

**HOST Guidance:** God is sovereign over His world and he has the power to raise up leaders and to cast them down; to remove governments or to punish them. To take such authority into our own hands would be tantamount to resisting God. Instead, we are to pray for those in authority over us (1Tim. 2:1-2) and trust God to rule as He wills.

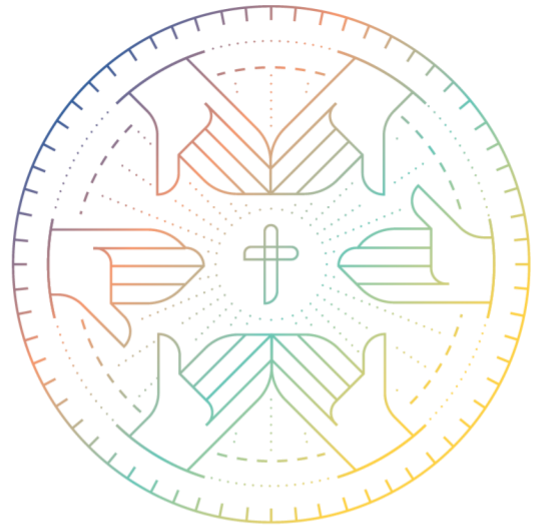
**Read 1 Peter 2:13-17 and Titus 3:1-2.** Hearing David describe the depravity that was pervasive throughout the Roman culture of Jesus’ day, does it surprise you that Peter commands us to “honor the emperor”? How did Jesus and his disciples honor the emperor and “be subject to every human institution”?

**HOST Guidance:** Roman depravity was dark and pervasive. All the moral issues of our day, and more, were just as visible in Jesus’ day. Yet, Jesus wants us to change the world through changing hearts, through loving people, through caring for those in need, and through being people of honor and respect. That’s why we can be instructed to honor the king, not based on meeting our moral standard, but based on the honor due the position. Jesus and his disciples

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obeyed the rules and laws of the Romans, paid taxes, and conducted their lives in such a way that no evil could be said about them (1 Pet. 3:16).

Understanding that in the passage we read, Titus was referencing submission to government and those in authority, how did Jesus and the disciples live out the truth of Titus 3:2 (to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people)?

**HOST Guidance:** Jesus ushered in a revolution that eventually overtook the entire Roman empire when Emperor Constantine decreed Christianity the religion of the empire in 380 CE. But it was a revolution of the heart: not hostile or quarrelsome or adversarial, but gentle, loving, gracious and convincing through its truth and genuineness. As David taught, the Church grew because it valued people—all people, regardless of race or background, it cared for children, it honored marriage, it provided for the needy, it made society more peaceful, and it introduced people to Jesus.

## APPLICATION (15 MINUTES)

**Host Guidance:** Below are several separate application questions for your group to consider and discuss. Choose as many questions as you have time to discuss, but don't feel pressure to cover them all.

Discuss C.S. Lewis' warning that politics starts as part of our faith, then becomes the most important part of our faith, and finally, faith becomes simply a tool to advance our politics. Do you see this happening today? How might a Christian know that their politics has become dangerously bigger than their faith?

How can we better reflect the powerful traits of the early Church, which led to such amazing influence around the world?

- How can we get better at engaging in multi-ethnic worship?
- How can we better advocate for the unborn?
- How can we better support the poor?
- How can we better support marriages?
- How can we be better peacemakers?

Is the gospel of Jesus your primary focus? Can those around you or close to you pick up on that priority? What's one way you can demonstrate that reality in the week ahead?

In a season of divisiveness, in what ways can you become a peacemaker in the various realms of your life, family, and relationships?

### **PRAYER (10 MINUTES)**

*Our Savior and Lord Jesus, we are so grateful for your truth and the way you have transformed our hearts through your sacrifice and love. You have placed us in your family and made us citizens of your kingdom. May our identity in Jesus be the driving force of our lives and may we not get detoured by the politics of our day. Help us to seek your kingdom first. Help us to lead others to you and to your kingdom from the heavens. May all who meet us or know us, see that our hearts are in heaven and we are living for something that transcends this world. Help us to prioritize your message and advance your Gospel. Amen.*