

Putting Politics in Its Place: Egypt (Week 2)

Discussion Guide



You can use this discussion guide on your own, with your family, or with your discipleship community (virtually or in-person). To watch or listen to this week's sermon, visit bellevuechristian.church/sermons, subscribe to the Bellevue Christian Church podcast on your preferred provider, or watch our weekly service at youtube.com/bellevuechristian.

Introduction

We're in an 8-week series called *Putting Politics in its Place* that will take us all the way to week of the election. In a time where it feels like politics has forgotten its place, we want to be a church where we put politics back in its place. And, we believe that the best way to do that is by exploring political life in specific places throughout the Bible—places like Eden, Egypt, Israel, Babylon, Rome, & New Jerusalem.

This week we're exploring the political implications of Egypt (Genesis 37-50, Exodus 1-15), and we're focusing on the how the story of Joseph shows us a model for collaborating with the government for the common good and how the story of Moses shows us a model for confronting government for the sake of the oppressed.

Since political conversations tend to be particularly volatile in our cultural moment, we want to go over a few guidelines every single week that can shape we talk with one another:

1. **Seek to understand before you're understood.** This means that we're practicing active listening, not just thinking about how we'll respond. Before you counter what someone is saying, try your best to repeat back what the person is saying—to *their satisfaction* ("Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying").
2. **Hold the Bible tightly and your political opinions loosely.** Instead of trying to forcefit the Bible into our preconceived political opinions, we want to approach the Bible with humility that says, "God, I give you permission to reshape any of my opinions in light of your Word." If we're not careful, it's easy to let our political opinions shape how we read the Bible—instead of the other way around. This also means we want to keep our discussion centered around the text we're actually studying.
3. **Love the person even when you don't love their idea.** And, just because someone doesn't love your idea doesn't mean they don't love you. In the end, Jesus says that people will know we are his followers not by "the uniformity of our political opinions" but by our "love for one another" (Jn. 13:35).

Questions

It's okay if you don't get through all the questions. These questions are nothing more than a launching point for moving toward everyday life like Jesus. Feel free to add additional questions of your own.

- One of the best ways to break political polarization is getting to know people who hold different views than you—so every week we'll have a get-to-know-each-other-better question. **Besides the Bible or *How to Build a Raft*, obviously, what would be one book you'd want on a desert island with you?**
- In Egypt, we see that there's not a one-size-fits-all approach to politics—sometimes it looks like collaboration, sometimes confrontation, and usually a mix of the two. **What are some of the problems with trying to have a one-size-fits-all approach to politics as believers?**
- Let's look at the story of Joseph. Through his story, we see that sometimes we're called to collaborate with the government for the common good.
 - **Can someone summarize the basic story of Joseph from Genesis 37-50?**
 - Instead of looking at the whole story, let's zero in on Genesis 41 where Joseph is elevated to second-in-command over all of Egypt. Everyone find Genesis 41:25-43 in your Bible or on your phone. **Can someone read Genesis 41:25-43 for us?** Then, let's consider: **What are some lessons we can draw out of this passage about collaborating with the government?**
 - Joseph was able to find common ground with an idol-worshiping, magic-consulting Pharaoh. **Is it possible for believers and unbelievers to find common ground and work together to solve problems that affect us all? What about democrats and republicans? What are some reasons it's so difficult to find common ground in our own cultural moment?**
 - The Pharaoh saw that Joseph's solution was wise and discerning even though it had come from a God outside the official Egyptian gods. **Do you think people in our community look to the churches for solutions to widespread problems in our own cultural moment? Why or why not?**
 - **Are there any local problems you've noticed that our church could try to solve—or at least take steps toward addressing?**
- Now, let's talk about the story of Moses and the exodus. Through his story, we see that sometimes we're called to confront the government for the sake of the oppressed.
 - **Can someone summarize the basic story of Moses and the Exodus from Exodus 1-15?**
 - Instead of trying to unpack the whole story, let's zero in on a few specific texts.
 - To get a picture of what was happening in Egypt at the time, **can someone read Exodus 1:8-15? What are some things you notice from this passage?**
 - Exodus 2:11 is Moses' first real moment of awakening to the suffering his people were experiencing. He could no longer ignore what was happening. It says, "One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people." **Have you ever had a moment of awakening like this to something wrong in the world? What was it like for you?**

- On Sunday, Austin mentioned that confrontation will always cost you something. It cost Moses his life in Pharaoh’s house. **What are some reasons it can be costly to speak up about something wrong you see?**
 - **As believers, how do we know *when* to confront or critique the government over something we see?**
 - In Exodus 5:1, Moses and Aaron made a clear ask to the government—essentially a policy proposal. It says, “Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.’” **What are some reasons that clarity is important when confronting or critiquing?**
- At the end of the sermon, Austin warned of the tendency to see ourselves as Joseph when our preferred party is in power and Moses when the opposite party is in power. **How do we correct this tendency?**
- **What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon or discussion this week?**

Prayer

Spend some time responding to this week’s discussion in prayer—especially for this political season. Pray that the Lord reveals where we can collaborate with the government and where we might need to confront the government, and that we would have the courage to do both.