

## Uncharted Territory: Taking Life Where You've Never Been

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### Week Eighteen: *Do You Trust Me?*

There is a particular aspect of our lives that many people hold out as one of their last areas to surrender to Jesus. **Romans 13:1-8** teaches us to submit ourselves to earthly government as the authority that God has established. When political parties with whom we agree are in power, this comes easily and naturally. But when a party or ideology which we disagree with—or worse, *is directly opposed to God and His revealed truth*—is in power over us, this teaching becomes very difficult to **trust God** with our submission. We learned this Sunday that Jesus lived, thought, and reacted in a culture and political climate that was incredibly volatile and hostile to God—*far more so than our current cultural difficulties in the United States*. As we contemplate how to best apply the teaching of **Romans 13** to our thoughts, feelings, reactions, and speech within our current political and cultural circumstances, we should look to how Jesus thought, felt, reacted, and spoke, and then **follow him**. To do this, we must learn to **trust God** with the outcomes and consider His sovereignty over the “long game.”

**This week**, make a commitment to *invest three blocks of time* to meditate on God's Word slowly and carefully, to reflect on the internal leanings of your own heart, and surrender to God for His help.

### Day One—Examine my ideas: *Are they submitted to Jesus?*

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**Read slowly** and carefully meditate upon: **Isaiah 40:13-31**, with special attention to **Isaiah 40:15** and **23**. Also read **John 19:1-16**, with special attention to **John 19:11**. What do these verses reveal about God? What do they say about specific political leaders that we experience in our culture—both good and bad?

**Reflect:** **Isaiah** and **John** suggest that God has authority and direction over the specific rulers and authorities who are in power. In our American context, we have a voice in determining who will be our elected officials. This can lead us to have deep preferences, but also anxiety depending on who is chosen by our fellow Americans to be our political leaders. When reflecting on these passages as well as Paul's teaching in **Romans 13:1**, how do you visualize God being sovereign over those leaders—even the ones we dislike or profoundly disagree with...or even consider to be terribly dangerous for us?

- *Do I believe that God has a “long-view” of geopolitical power—that the ups and downs, good and bad, evil and righteousness in politics is somehow in His hands? Why or why not?*

- *What would it mean for my political views if God indeed has sovereignty over who is appointed to lead—especially if it's someone I consider to be unrighteous or even dangerous for our culture?*
- *If scripture were to reveal a contradictory idea to something I consider politically important—such as a moral matter that is at odds with my preferred candidate or party—would I change my political view to align with scripture, or would I hold on to that view? Why or why not?*

**Pray:** *God, I surrender to you all my desires and opinions for what is best for me, best for my family, best for my community, and best for my nation. I confess to you my concern and anxiety for where our culture and society is headed. I acknowledge that You are not surprised by the places where our society is headed away from You and in contradiction to Your will. I choose to believe in Your sovereignty over the long game of nations and societies. I choose to trust You to provide for all my needs, and to bring comfort, security, and healing to those who seek Your face. In Jesus' name! (ALSO: Consider praying **Psalms 2** as your own prayer to God!)*

**Practical Exercise:** To practice following Jesus fully, try this at home: Open on your lap **Isaiah 40:15, 23**, and **Romans 13:1**. Read these three verses out loud a few times. Then, purposely watch 15 or 20 minutes of a news broadcast or podcast from a source that is the exact opposite of your political views—while keeping those verses open on your lap. Each moment you feel frustration rising at the opinions and outcomes being propagated by your political opposite, re-read and speak out loud each of these three verses. Does the truth of God's Word effect your emotions in these moments? Why or why not?

### Day Two—Examine my communication: *Do I speak like Jesus?*

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**Read slowly** and carefully meditate upon: **Isaiah 53:2-12**, with special attention to **Isaiah 53:7**. Also read **Mark 15:1-5**, with special attention to **Mark 15:5**. What do these verses reveal about how Jesus reacted to political matters—to include the injustice of the sham trial against him?

**Reflect:** Throughout all of Jesus' ministry, he never once addressed the political issues of his day. He did not preach against the grotesque evils of the Roman culture or government; he did not warn against or try to temper the extreme Jewish nationalism that sought to overthrow Rome. Even when confronted with the false accusation that he was one of those Jewish zealots seeking to be king over Israel, he said nothing in his defense, fulfilling the prophecy of **Isaiah 53:7**: *“...he did not open his mouth.”* This silence earned him a Roman crucifixion.

- *In matters of my own cultural and political climate, do I follow the example of Jesus by being silent, or am I more vocal about my views? Why is this my approach? What is healthy or unhealthy about this?*
- *What might I put at risk by saying nothing about politics or culture? Would I be a poor witness to God's desires? Would I fail to do my part to steer our culture towards what God wants? Or would I be guilty of affirming unrighteousness in our culture by my silence?*
- *When I do speak about politics or culture, how do I model the fruit of God's Spirit (see [Galatians 5:22-23](#))? How do I model Jesus? How do I not model these things? What could I do differently?*

**Pray:** *God, reveal to me where I am guilty of walking in my flesh rather than Your Spirit in matters related to culture and politics. Reveal to me where my words and actions are harsh and unkind. Reveal to me where I lack trust in You to accomplish Your will even when evil people are placed in power. Help me to trust in Your provision, no matter how dark the world around me seems. In Jesus' name!* (ALSO: Consider praying [Psalm 3](#) as your own prayer to God!)

**Practical Exercise:** To practice following Jesus fully, try this at home: Open [Galatians 5:22-23](#) in front of you. Take a piece of paper or a journal and make a list of all the things you see wrong about our culture and society, particularly those that are affected by politics. Include in this list the things you find distasteful or perhaps even threatening about a specific political candidate or party you fear being in power. Make the list simple bullet points but try to make it include everything that stirs your emotions or bothers you about this subject.

Then, get on your knees in a quiet place with that list in front of you (*or be seated in a chair if you are unable to kneel*). Go through each item and offer the item up to God. Tell Him how you feel, and ask Him to bring the **fruit of the Holy Spirit** over you in each matter—*love* for distasteful political leaders; *joy* regardless of the ills around us; *peace* in spite of troubling circumstances; *patience* with how you are negatively affected; *kindness* towards those who vote for those you dislike; *goodness* (active doing of good) in support of people who are different than you; *faithfulness* to trust God for His sovereignty and to surrender your emotions to Him; *gentleness* in all your communication and speech; *self-control* in all of your reactions and actions.

### **Day Three—Examine my affections: Am I fully following Jesus?**

**Read slowly** and carefully meditate upon: [Matthew 9:9-13](#) and [Matthew 10:1-39](#). What do these passages tell us about who Jesus surrounded himself with and what he wanted them to do?

**Reflect:** In these Gospel texts, Jesus befriended people who might be considered by some as “politically sinful.” He appointed as his disciples both a Roman tax collector (*Matthew*) who was terribly corrupt, and a radical Jewish nationalist (*Simon the Zealot*) whose political ambition was the overthrow of oppressive Roman control. Jesus also explained to his disciples how difficult their interactions with a hostile world would be as they took the message of Jesus into their society. But he called them to **trust God** with each of those interactions. If we did the same in our societal interactions, what would that look like?

- *If I were to **exclusively** and **entirely** follow Jesus' example in my interaction with society, what would I need to do differently?*
- *Are there people in my personal circles—or in my society in general—whose views and perhaps their votes are so repulsive to what I believe is right that I might consider them to be “politically sinful”?*
- *Do I have friends who significantly differ from me in political or cultural ideas? How do I relate to them? Do I trust them? Do I believe God is leading them? Why or why not?*
- *How would Jesus want me to treat those in my life who are not like me in terms of ideals, values, beliefs, and ambitions? Is this hard for me? Why or why not?*

**Pray:** *God, I confess to you my faith and trust in Your call to love other people as You have loved me. I surrender to You and choose to love all whom I consider to be politically or culturally sinful. Help me to both feel and express love for those who are not like me, those who do not think like me, and those whom I consider to be harmful to our society. Help me to put my trust fully in Your sovereignty over the outcomes in my life, and the lives of those whom I love. In Jesus' name!* (ALSO: Consider praying [Psalm 4](#) as your own prayer to God!)

**Practical Exercise:** To practice following Jesus fully, try this at home: Read [Romans 12:10](#), which says to “*honor one another above yourselves*” and [Philippians 2:3](#), which says to “*consider others better than yourselves.*” Make an appointment to spend some time with a friend who has different cultural or political ideals than you. Make a point to tell them how much you respect them and what you like about them. Ask them to tell you what is important to them in life, what they wish for our society, what their hopes and desires are for the world. Do not argue or dispute with them. Simply thank them for being who they are and appreciate their transparency with you. (**Note:** *Doing this in person is best. But if the opportunity does not exist, a healthy and meaningful email or telephone exchange could substitute. But beware of the temptation to take the easy road with this subject. It might betray your preference to avoid this hard exercise, as a face-to-face encounter is always the most personal!*)