

5 Surprising Things God Loves

Week 2 | Purple

■ BOTTOM LINE

Mid-term elections are happening this week in our country and, although we may all be burned out from constant ads, arguments, mud-slinging and division, we will take a look at how we can say that God loves politics. God loves purple (red and blue – democrat and republican) because God loves leadership.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

We will discuss how we are to live under the authority of government and leaders. We do not need to be in agreement regarding our views on political policy, party, or persons. We should be united in the truth that we all serve one King who humbled himself so that we can all be truly free.

■ SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 2:13-17, Matthew 5:38-44, Colossians 2:15

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** How would you describe your family's involvement or interest in politics while growing up? How do you think this has affected you today?
2. **Read 1 Peter 2:13-17 and Discuss:** Peter is addressing these thoughts to Christians who were living under extreme violent persecution simply for their religious views. Discuss your thoughts on what Peter is saying. Do you understand how people can live as free, and honor the emperor?
3. In what is widely considered the greatest message ever preached, Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount to a large crowd gathered on the side of a mountain. Jesus used his brilliance and his spiritual authority to bring a new teaching to the people. Several times Jesus would state "you have heard it said...But I say..." Jesus was teaching as one with authority and people were amazed. This is a small part of that message. **Read Matthew 5:38-44 and Discuss:**
 - a. Jesus lived in an extremely dangerous and volatile political climate. The Roman Empire was the occupying force, and some Jewish leaders, hungry for power and wealth, had sold out to the Romans. For the average Jewish person, there was deep anger and hatred toward both of these political forces. Yet, Jesus does not teach about personal retribution. He takes a radically different approach. What are the 5 different examples Jesus uses to show us how we are to respond when we are wronged?
 - b. Can you imagine what Jesus might use as illustrations if He were teaching this same thing to us today using examples that are relevant to our current daily life? What might be comparable?
 - c. Discuss what it could look like today for you, your family, your small group, or your church to "love your enemies". Be as specific as you can.
 - d. If we want to make a difference in the world, we need to lead like Jesus. Jesus showed what it looks like to fulfill 1 Peter 2 and how to start a revolution. What would you say are some of the attributes of the leadership Jesus taught and demonstrated?
4. **Read Colossians 2:15 and Discuss:**
 - a. When Jesus died on the cross, it looked like He had failed. What a spectacle of Rome's power and Jesus' weakness. But, according to this verse, what actually happened?
 - b. Jesus is the full revelation of God. He could have demonstrated power by crushing authorities or enemies. Instead, He shows us something bigger than the mighty political power of the Romans. Explain how His power was revealed in a way that aligns with what he taught in the sermon on the mount.

If we put our hope in a political leader or in a government we will be disappointed. We can't be married to the agenda of the donkey or the elephant. We must be married to the party of the lamb!



TRY THIS

Practice radical, subversive, revolutionary love this week. Seek ways to actively express the kind of love Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount. Election week will undoubtedly offer you opportunities to love an enemy. Come to group next time prepared to share how you were able to practice the kind of love that is in submission to the King of Kings as your only hope.

5 Surprising Things God Loves

Week 1 | Laughter

■ BOTTOM LINE

When you discover what a person loves, you discover what is at the heart of that person. It is no different with God. We often have misconceptions about the heart and character of God. This series will reveal a God that many of us don't really know. We will look at 5 things that God loves...and they might surprise you.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

The goal of this week's group is to consider and discuss how God and joy go together, and how it could be a misconception that the more spiritual we become, the more serious we are.

■ SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 8:8-10, Proverbs 15:13 and 17:22, Philippians 4:4-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** While growing up, would you describe your impression of God as joyful and laughing? Explain.
2. **Read Nehemiah 8:8-10 and Discuss:**
 - a. This meeting is comparable to what we would call a church service. The Israelites are gathered, someone is reading from the scriptures and teaching about it. As the people are listening, they are serious and mournful. Does that sound like church to you? Have you had an experience of being in church and being told or sensing you should not laugh?
 - b. Look again at verse 10. The people are told there should be joy and celebration on a sacred day. But celebration is not intended to merely be self-centered. What does Nehemiah suggest? How do you see the modern church living this out?
3. **Read Proverbs 15:13 and 17:22 and Discuss:**
 - a. The book of Proverbs contains a collection of timeless wise sayings. Can you think of recent discoveries in science or medicine that confirm these two ancient sayings hold truth?
 - b. Have you ever experienced or witnessed laughter as good medicine?
4. **Read Philippians 4:4-5 and Discuss:**
 - a. This is a letter Paul wrote to a church while he was in prison and unsure if he would ever get out! It seems strange that he would be telling a church to rejoice. How do you think Paul was able to have joy in the midst of what appears to be dire circumstances? Have you ever experienced joy that transcends circumstances?
 - b. It is said that there is a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness can be a reaction to circumstances, but where does joy come from?
 - c. We see again, in this letter from Paul, there is more to joy than simply enjoyment. Look at verse 5 and imagine what the joy of the church could look like to those who do not know joy! In what ways do you see Christ followers living this out? In what ways do you think we have missed this opportunity?

Statistically, a child laughs about 500 times a day and an adult laughs about 15 times a day. Have we equated "growing up" with "being serious"? Laughter can cause increased heart and respiratory rate, relaxation of muscles and even an increase in production of disease fighting immune cells.

Laughter is good medicine.



TRY THIS

Fun and laughter are really good for you emotionally, physically and spiritually. Do you find humor in every day things? Have you gotten a bit too serious? What cracks you up? A comedian? A funny movie? A funny friend? Intentionally spend some time, just for fun, pursuing laughter this week!