



TRY THIS: The Spiritual Discipline of Politics

Honor the emperor. That doesn't sound like something from the Bible, a book that tells us that we're to have no other gods before God, that we can't have two masters, and that we're to seek first God's kingdom. But the statement is straight out of 1 Peter 2:17 in fact. So how do we honor the emperor? This exercise might help answer that question and at the same time introduce you and your teens to a whole new spiritual discipline: politics.

MATERIALS

- You'll need a whiteboard (or something similar) for the group.
- Each student will need a copy of the student page found below. Print as many copies as you need.

OPEN

After your teens have gathered, open your time by discussing one or more of these questions:

Depending on your locale, you are most likely represented by someone like a village council member, a mayor or a township trustee. This would be your first-level of representation by an elected official. Do you know who that person is?

For those who are not yet 18 years of age, do you know the election that will be your first election in which to vote?

Do you know the names of any of these elected officials?

- a. your representatives in your state government**
- b. the representative from your district to the U.S. House of Representatives**
- c. your state's two U.S. Senators**

DIGGING IN

Share with your students that Scripture contains more verses than one might think regarding how believers are to treat government officials. Explain that the Bible passages printed on their student pages offer three examples. Invite them to take a few minutes to read these verses and to draw a flag over anything that mentions authorities or leaders.

After a few minutes, ask students to tell you what these verses teach us about how we are to treat those who govern us. Write their responses on a whiteboard and invite students to note this info in the space provided on their student pages. Your board will look similar to below.

Romans 13:6-7

-authorities are God's servants; if you owe taxes, pay taxes

Titus 3:1-2

-be subject to rulers and authorities; be obedient and ready to do whatever is good; be peaceable and considerate

1 Peter 2:17

-honor the emperor

TAKING IT INWARD

After you've noted your teens' observations on the board, spend a few minutes processing the information by discussing these questions:

How would you describe people's attitude in general toward elected officials?

(note to leader: you may want to pick a level of elected officials to discuss, such as local, state or federal.)

How would you describe your personal attitude toward elected officials?

How would you describe the way God wants believers to act toward elected officials?

Do you see this kind of behavior in today's political dialogue?

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Close your session by encouraging your teens to put some action steps to what the Bible has to say about how believers are to treat those who have authority over us.

Ask in your own words:

What can you do to follow through on the instructions you just saw in Scripture?

Give teens a minute to write their ideas on their student pages. Then ask for volunteers to share. If ideas are slow in coming here are a few to spark the creative juices:

1. Learn the names of all the representatives in the question that is part of the opening exercise for this session. Sign up for their newsletters or join their social network in order to track their take on issues.
2. Schedule a visit with your first-level representative (city council member, mayor, trustee, etc.) and ask about your community's biggest needs.
3. Offer to provide refreshments at the next city council meeting (enough for council members and community members attending the meeting).
4. Provide bottles of water or other refreshment at a few polling places in your community (contact your county board of elections for permission). Thank people for voting as you hand them a bottle of water.



DIGGING IN

Romans 13:6-7

⁶This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Titus 3:1-2

¹Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ²to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

1 Peter 2:17

¹⁷Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

What do these verses teach us about how we are to treat those who govern us?

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Ideas for Action Steps