



MY RIGHTS ARE BEST PROTECTED BY PROTECTING YOUR RIGHTS. THAT MEANS JEWS STANDING UP FOR THE RIGHTS OF FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANS AND VICE VERSA. IT ALSO MEANS THAT THE WAY WE DEBATE OUR DIFFERENCES IS ALMOST AS IMPORTANT AS THE DIFFERENCES THEMSELVES. – **OLIVER THOMAS**

In the last session, we discussed humility, remembering the feet of Jesus. In this session we remember the extension of that humility. Hung amongst two thieves, Luke records Jesus reconciling even then, declaring to one, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

How does humility offer a model for reconciliation? John Danforth writes, “[We] have the power to substitute the ministry of reconciliation for the strategy of divisiveness. Where Christians in politics often have been notable for their hubris, claiming that they speak for God, they can, instead, be notable for their humility, acknowledging that God’s truth is greater than anything they can hope to express.”

SESSION OBJECTIVES: To identify ways in which we create divisions and enemies. To practice considering our daily actions as both political and religious, and how an extension of our humility can bring healing.

“We Have Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself” -Jeanne Murray Walker

1. Have someone read the poem aloud from page 32.
2. Discuss how drawing lines relates to enemies.
3. With a partner, list three things/people that you would consider your enemy. Now list three ways that trusting God offers a chance to view them differently.

What Do We Desire? The Future of Faith and Citizenship -Serene Jones

1. Compare the divisions Jeanne Murray Walker talks about and the internal divisions that Serene Jones discusses (mother, teacher, dog-walker, Christian, Democrat, etc). List ways the divisions we make in ourselves compare to the divisions we make about others. Name ways that accepting our own selves teaches us to accept others.

SOMETHING EXTRA: Without listing your affiliations or activities, describe yourself and what is behind what you do to a partner.

2. Take the following 3 situations and explain or describe how faith and/or politics affect these everyday activities.
 - a. Buying groceries.
 - b. Picking a school for your children to attend.
 - c. Going on vacation.

3. Read **LUKE 18:9-14** aloud. Compare how this idea of public and private relates to proclamations of being on God's side. What are ways that you can live your life to be like the humble tax collector?

Winning the Unwinnable Culture Wars -Jennifer Butler

1. Divide into two groups. One group should make a list of compromises needed in marriage, while the other prepares a list of compromises made in civic life. Compare your lists and discuss similarities/differences.
2. How does a need to "be right" threaten a marriage? List reasons why humility is important in marriage.
 - a. How does this extend to all interactions with people? Can it be considered political?
3. Butler suggests some areas of common ground; combating poverty, speaking out for peace and protecting the environment. Name ways that similarities can be more powerful than differences.
4. With a partner, come up with two ways you can be open to "unlikely allies."

Close with prayer, meditating on Jesus' awareness of those suffering with him as he died.

HELP US, O LORD, TO LISTEN AND TO SEE THOSE WHO ARE AROUND US. HELP US AS WE CONSIDER HOW TO LIVE TOGETHER, TO LIVE WITH HUMILITY UNDER YOUR CARE. GUIDE US INTO CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR ENEMIES. TEACH US OF OUR NEED OF ONE ANOTHER AND HELP US MAKE RECONCILIATIONS, NOT DIVISIONS.

NAME SOME OF THE ALLIES JESUS MADE IN HIS LIFE.
HOW CAN YOU FOLLOW THAT EXAMPLE IN YOUR OWN LIFE?

"A Ritual to Read to Each Other" -William Stafford

1. Have someone read the poem aloud from the back page.
2. What dangers does Stafford present in being isolated from each other?
3. In what areas of life do we use signals? Why are they important?

The American Consensus: Civic, Not Religious -Oliver Thomas

1. As a group, list differences between the idea of a *people* and the idea of a *tribe*.
2. Have someone read **MATTHEW 5:43-48** aloud. List ways American civic responsibility offers a way to respect differences and love enemies. Mention how Jesus' humility can apply to our ideas of others.
3. Break into pairs. Share with your partner one group of people that you don't agree with. Take turns having a conversation with your partner role-playing how to discuss differences.
Return to the group and share any observations.