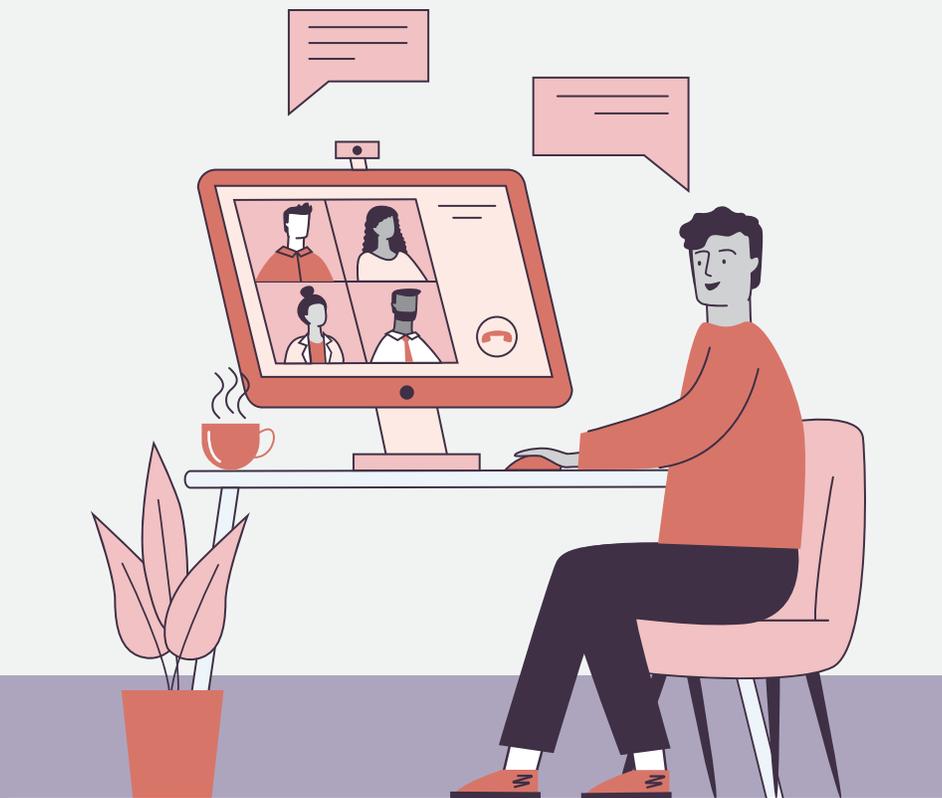


ONLINE GROUP PLAN

Summer 2020 // Special Focus // How Should I Respond to Politics?

Suggested Use Date: July 19, 2020

For use with Bible Studies for Life Leader Guide and Personal Study Guide



PREPARATION

Best Practices for Leading an Online Group



PRAY for your group members, and for God to grant you insight as you study and prepare your Bible study session. Do this throughout the week.



SCHEDULE your group's online Bible study using the online meeting tool you prefer. Invite group members and guests to participate using a meeting ID if required by your online meeting tool. [Click here](#) to view a Best Practices document for online groups.



SEND digital copies of the next session to group members who do not have a print copy. If using the *Personal Study Guide*, encourage group members to read the passage and comments for the next session.



CONNECT with your group via email or text messaging early in the week.

Create your own message:

- Briefly tell the group the title of your next Bible study, why it is important, and what they will learn.
- Challenge group members to study before the group session if your group uses a *Personal Study Guide*.
- Remind group members when your group will meet online.

Or copy and paste this suggested wording into the email or text message to your group:

WEEKLY MESSAGE

What responsibilities do Christ-followers have in relation to our government? The United States is divided over important issues. Each side in the political arena is convinced they're right; consequently, passions run high and the rhetoric and debate is often less than civil. God calls His people to respond not based on emotion but with actions that honor government and its leaders. A love for Christ and a love for others is to permeate every way we engage in and express ourselves in the political arena. Join us this week as we study Romans 13:1-10.



PREPARE to lead your group's Bible study.

- **Study** the Bible passage.
- **Listen** to the Bible Studies for Life Adult Podcast. Search for *Bible Studies for Life Adults* at your preferred podcast app or access the podcast at BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra.
- **Visit** BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra for additional leader helps, including the podcast, news articles, additional questions, and a devotional blog for group members.
- **Create** your teaching plan for guiding your group's online Bible study experience. Use the Online Group Plan on the next pages as a starting point, modifying it for your group as needed. Consult the *Adult Leader Guide* commentary, *Advanced Bible Study*, or *Herschel Hobbs* commentary for additional insights on the passage. The *Adult Leader Pack* will also provide posters and handouts to supplement the group experience.



REMIND your group members to study and prepare via another email or text message closer to the day your group meets.

- Include a quote from the *Personal Study Guide*, a question, or an insight you plan to discuss with the group when you meet online.



HELPFUL LINKS

- *Bible Studies for Life* main landing page: BibleStudiesforLife.com
- Digital version of *Bible Studies for Life*: curriculum.lifeway.com
- *Bible Studies for Life* EXTRA leader helps: BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra
- *Bible Studies for Life* Podcast: BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra
- Free Coronavirus links and leader helps: lifeway.com/coronavirus



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NOTES

GREET people as they join your online group. Share your screen with the group and play a funny, non-partisan, political video clip (Note: a video option can be found at BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra).

ASK Question #1 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): “What do you recall about your first experiences with an election?” Then return to the group screen and invite others to answer.

DIRECT group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 68 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of representing Christ well in the area of politics by inviting a volunteer to read the text. Call attention to “The Point” on page 68 of the PSG: “Reflect Christ in how you interact with politics and government.”

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God for wisdom to navigate this sometimes touchy subject with grace. Thank Him for allowing us to live in a country where Christians are free to choose our own leaders.

ASK a group member to read aloud **Romans 13:1-4** on page 69 of the PSG. Share your screen to display the Scripture text. Then return to the group screen.

DISCUSS Question #2 on page 69 of the PSG: “How have you seen government benefit you or your community?”

EXPLAIN: A challenge with earthly authorities confronted the apostles. The authorities arrested the apostles and instructed them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:18-28), but the apostles told the authorities: “We must obey God rather than people” (v. 29). Now this is not a loophole that allows us to disobey the government whenever it suits us. The apostles’ example is a reminder that we are to live in obedience to the government as long as that obedience doesn’t cause us to sin against the will of God.

ASK a group member to read aloud **Romans 13:5-7** on page 70 of the PSG. Share your screen to display the Scripture text. Then return to the group screen.

DISCUSS **Question #3** on page 71 of the PSG: **“How do we view these verses through the lens of our form of government?”**

EXPLAIN: Our obedience to government is important for a few reasons. God uses the government to build us up. God uses our lives as a testimony of His faithful love and unselfish grace. God uses the government for His purposes. God is working out His providential plan. We are sometimes so focused on our own lives and concerns we forget that God is working all around us—even in government.

TRANSITION: We should respond to the government with obedience. We should respond to the government with integrity, respect, and honor. We should also respond to political debates and disagreements with love.

ASK a group member to read aloud **Romans 13:8-10** on page 72 of the PSG. Share your screen to display the Scripture text. Then return to the group screen.

DISCUSS: Question #4: “How do these verses speak to our responsibilities as Christian citizens?” or Question #5: “How can love overcome political division among Christians?” on page 72 of the PSG:

EXPLAIN: Politics driven by love always seeks to do the right thing. “Love does no wrong to a neighbor” (v. 10). Love seeks to do what is right by our neighbors. When our political action is driven by love for God and love for others, we will lose the selfish attitudes. Our political actions must lift up Jesus. Our votes must bring glory to God. We do this when we care about all the things God cares about.

DO: Direct group members to **Engage** with **“The Law of Love,”** on page 73 of the PSG to help them apply the biblical principal to the area of government and politics (if time allows; otherwise ask group members to engage with this activity in the coming week).

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 74 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications for the coming week:

- **Practice love.** We are in a season of elections, so politics is a common topic of discussion. At times, Christians may find themselves on opposite sides of an issue or debating with a candidate. Maintain love for others in your conversations and discussions.
- **Plunge into God's Word.** The political issues we face today are not easy. Study Scripture to see how it speaks to the issues. Continually seek to be aligned with God, and do so with love and humility.
- **Participate.** Are you an active participant or do you just complain from the sidelines? It is important for Christians to influence the discourse in the public square and the political processes. Get active and let your love for Christ be an influence.

PRAY: Invite the group to share prayer requests. Conclude by thanking God for the gift of government. Ask Him to help us be a blessing to our political leaders as we seek to honor God.

NEXT STEPS



- Contact group members regularly to pray with them. Encourage them to devote some personal quiet time with God this week, and to study the group's next Bible study session.
- Send digital copies of the next session to group members who do not have a print copy. If using the Personal Study Guide, encourage group members to read the passage and comments for the next session.
- Repeat the process outlined in the Preparation section of this document.