

Social media has become a weapon of politics in our culture. But God says, “DON’T copy the behavior and customs of this world.” (Rom 12:2) You can’t spread the good news by tearing people to shreds. In Micah 6:8 God didn’t say “Do justice by carrying a big stick.” He says love mercy and walk humbly with Him. There is an enemy, but it isn’t those who you disagree with. God sees them as precious children, prisoners of war in a battle for their souls.

*When you react to something you disagree with in Social Media, do you offer others your opinion, or the hope God wants them to hear; that they are loved and precious to Him, and is always be a way back to God’s open arms for those who stray? What is it that leads us to repentance (Rom 2:4)?*

*Romans 2:4 NIV - 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?*

## WRAP-UP

We live our lives in this world, but we are citizens of a different Kingdom; the Kingdom of God. Like Daniel, we can be engaged in the business of government, electing representatives or even holding office, but our allegiance remains first and foremost to God. It may seem like our future depends on those we elect, but ultimately God is in control and our hope doesn’t rest in politicians, but in our heavenly king.

## Memory Verse

*17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."  
- Daniel 3:17-18 NIV*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members’ needs: \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Do a quick self-assessment this week. Which voice do others most often hear from you; political opinion, or the hope of God’s kingdom?*

## “Our Hope is in Jesus, not Empire” “We the People” #2

### INTRODUCTION

How to engage in culture and politics can be challenging. As Christians we are called to engage, but as citizens of God’s Kingdom we answer first to Him. For guidance on how we negotiate this dilemma we look back to Daniel and the exiles in Babylon. While they lived in a foreign land for 70 years, they neither compromised nor revolted but prayed for the peace and prosperity of the city where God sent them (Jer 29:7). Surrounded by other gods it was tempting to forget their identity and accept the practices of the Empire in which they lived, but God called on them to maintain their allegiance to Him. What does this mean for us in our current culture?

### Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Have you ever lived in a foreign country?

### STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

#### 1. Engagement versus Allegiance

*Jeremiah 29:4-11 NIV - 4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." 8 Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. 9 They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD. 10 This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

It was God who sent the Jews into exile in Babylon for 70 years. While they were there, he gave them instructions on how to live.

*How were they to engage in life in Babylon and what were they not to do or accept while they lived there? If they didn't believe God would come for them, how would that affect how they lived? How do you feel that applies to how we engage in living in the world today?*

Daniel and his companions not only survived in Babylon, they became rulers and administrators. They engaged in the Empire of Babylon. We can be engaged in the democracy in which we live. But there was a point at which they refused to follow orders of the King.

*What was it that went beyond engaging the empire to being in allegiance with it? How did their words and deeds reflect their true allegiance?*

*Daniel 3:16-18 NIV - 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."*

If our political affiliation is the primary influence on how we engage with those around us, we may have allowed our allegiance to shift from God to empire.

## **2. Dealers in Hope not Peddlers of Fear**

*2 Timothy 1:7 NLT - 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*

No self-professing Christian would deny that our hope is in Jesus. But sometimes our words and actions don't reflect that truth. The dialog of politics preys on our fears; fears of loss of our rights and resources. We can allow those fears and suspicions to displace our hope from Jesus to the "Empire", believing a particular candidate or party will be the solution to our problems. But rather than acting based on fear, Christians can bring a different message.

*What is the message we offer, and how do we deliver it? (1 Peter 3:15)?*

*1 Peter 3:15 NIV - 15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

It may be hard to see hope in this world, but our hope is not based in the systems of this world.

*If the candidate you support doesn't win, you have not lost all hope. What is the truth about the future in which we hope?*

*Revelation 21:1-4 NIV - 1 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

Christians live between the pain and injustice of this world and the hope we have in Jesus. We can envision a future worth the risk of hope because we know the One in whom that hope rests. As agents of hope, we can point people to a vision beyond the horizon of our current pain and fear.

*What issues have you heard in the news recently that play on people's fears? What response can you give that would gently, and respectfully, point to Jesus as your hope rather than government as the ultimate solution?*

## **3. What God Doesn't Require**

*Micah 6:8 NIV - 8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*