

AVOIDING ELECTION INFECTION

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Note: The following content is a raw transcript and has not been edited for grammar, punctuation, or word usage.

00:01 Speaker 1: So are y'all nervous?

[laughter]

00:04 S1: Hey, real quick, I gotta do a little survey, and so everybody gets to play along, even if you're watching at home you can play along. How many of you, if you're honest, and my hand's up on this okay, even though this might be the minority, how many of you are actually enjoying the drama and the chaos and the tension associated with this presidential election? You kind of like it, yeah. My hand's up. Yeah, yeah. I don't think any ladies raised their hand, yeah. Probably not the case.

[laughter]

00:27 S1: Okay. How many of you can't wait for it to be over? Yeah, I was afraid of that. Okay, how many of you would say, "I just can't stand it." In fact, you might even use the word hate. "I just... I hate it whenever the subject of politics comes up around the dinner table or in a social gathering or with extended family, I just don't like it when that topic comes up. I just get nervous on the inside a little bit." How many just... Yeah. How many of you are like me, you bring it up?

[laughter]

00:50 S1: Anybody else? You bring it up? Yeah. You down here in the front, yeah. I'm with you, it's just, it's a lot of fun. Okay, how about this. How many of you have watched, this is, my hand doesn't go up on this one, unfortunately. How many of you have watched all the debates? Anybody here, you've watched every single one of the debates? Come on, be proud, be an American. There you go, you've watched all the debates. How many of you have watched at least some of the debates? Okay? Okay. Anybody that's like, "Huh? Debates? There are debates?" Anybody? No, okay. All right.

[laughter]

01:18 S1: Now, here's the most personal question, I promise I won't go any more personal, I'm not going to list candidates. But how many of you have already, don't raise your hand until I finish the question, okay... How many of you have already made up your mind who you would vote for if the person you want to vote for is actually the nominee? You've already got your sight set on somebody, you are... Look at that, yeah, you've kind of got your minds made up. Okay. Last question, maybe. Who thinks that churches and preachers in particular should stay away from all things political? Like we shouldn't even really be talking about this. Yeah, thanks. But you came anyway, right? Anybody here, you almost didn't come, but you just made yourself come. You really were just... And some of you are at home, you should be here, but you're not here, you just couldn't stand it, and you told yourself, "I'm not gonna watch that. He shouldn't be talking about that." And now you're watching, 'cause you were just so curious. So we're glad.

02:08 S1: So here's what I wanna do today. I want to issue a corporate challenge to all of the attenders, participants, if you call any one of our churches, church home, maybe one of our churches in Florida, maybe down there at Citrus Point in Tampa, Athens, you know in Alabama, wherever you are, where you're part of one of our local churches, I wanna issue a challenge today to you that I think you're up for. I don't think most Christians are, by the way, but I think we're a peculiar group of people, you're super mature, you're super astute when it comes to politics, and just what's going on in the country and the world in general, you're incredible people. So I don't think most Christians could pull this off, but I think you can. So I'm gonna offer this challenge, see if you're up for it. And by the way, if you're not a Christian, this is the perfect Sunday for you to be watching or to be participating at one of our churches, because in just a minute, we're

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going to look at something Jesus said that you agree with, even if you're not a Jesus follower and you agree with this. In fact, some of you, you have heard this before, you have said it before. You didn't know it originated with Jesus, so that's gonna be fascinating.

03:05 S1: So there's a lot of common ground, but my challenge isn't to everybody, although everybody can certainly play. But my challenge is to those of you who are Christians what I wanna challenge you to do is I wanna challenge you between now and November the 8th to put your faith ahead of your politics. To put your faith before your politics. In other words, to put your faith filter upfront, and your political filter somewhere down the line after that. To be a Christ follower first, and a Republican second. To be a Christ follower first, and to be a Democrat second. To be a Christ follower first, and a Libertarian or an Independent second. Now, whatever your political views, would you subjugate or would you submit, or would you place your political views below your faith values or your Christian values? Because, let's face it, if for no other reason, nobody goes to Washington DC when they die. I mean, that's just reason enough, right? That at some point, here's the thing, because you're gonna find this hard to do and you're gonna think, "Oh, there's no way I can do that." But let me tell you, I know you can do it, okay? Here's how I know: Because there is something that could happen in your life that would make your political persuasion completely irrelevant.

04:12 S1: I mean, I have walked with people through very, very difficult things. Every pastor has. Many of you have walked with friends through stuff. I have never been at the bedside with someone in a hospital, or in their room, and they say to me, "Andy, would you please just read to me portions of the Constitution?" Okay. So as important as this is, and as amped up as you can get about political things, at the end of the day, you know intuitively, and you know in your heart, and you know through your lifestyle and experience, there are more important things. And at the end of the day, your faith really is more important. So what I'm challenging you to do, even though I don't think the average Christian could pull this off, I'm challenging you between now and November the 8th, to put your faith ahead of your politics. Now, here's what I'm not saying so that you don't leave, or shut us off too early. I'm not saying don't have an opinion, you should have an opinion. In fact, Sandra says, "I have an opinion about everything." And I said to her, "I thought everybody had an opinion about everything." She said, "No. Most people are just fine to not have an opinion about everything."

05:06 S1: So I'm okay with you having an opinion about this, it's okay for you men to continue to yell at the television. You just go right ahead and do that, I'm not suggesting you stop doing that. Men, maybe you get the remote and mute and explain to your family what they should have said, and then you narrate through all the news, and the commentary, and the debates. You know, I don't know how you do that. You can keep doing that. I'm not suggesting that we should, or that we will all agree, that would be foolish. And I'm not suggesting that all Christians should vote for any particular candidate, or that all Christians should lean into one party. All I'm saying is that we... I'm challenging you to put your faith, your convictions, your faith ahead of your politics. Now, for many of you, you're sitting here and you're going, "I'm so glad you're talking about this, because there's other people..." I mean, everybody here, you pretty much think you have this down. In fact, all of us don't see... Very few of us see any conflict between faith and politics. In fact, you would argue, "Andy, the reason I'm a Republican is because I'm a Christian."

06:05 S1: "Andy, the reason I'm a Democrat is my faith. I mean, my faith is the primary filter, it's the reason I decided to leave a particular party and go to a different party. I got this down. So but I'm glad you're talking about it, because all these other people need to hear this, but yeah, duh! I got it. It is why... My faith and my politics are synonymous, there is no space between those." If you're Republican, good grief. Of course you've got your faith first, God is always right... [laughter] And Jesus was always right. So of course, you're... Jesus and God are Republicans because you're right and they're right and everything goes right, do we even need to talk about this? And then there's that whole thing in the New Testament. There's evidence in the Bible where Jesus called Matthew to be His follower and what are the other words for tax collector is a publican like Republican? It's almost right there in the Bible.

[laughter]

07:03 S1: And if that wasn't enough, when Jesus got to Matthew's house and all the Pharisees were all disturbed that Jesus was hanging out with the publicans, Jesus makes this statement and it's right there in the text, here's what He said. He said, "It's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Follow this. "I haven't come to call the righteous because the righteous are fine, I have to come to call the sinners to repentance." So Andy, there it is. There's the people on the

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right, and then there are the sinners. [laughter] So I'm on the right and I'm a Republican, and everybody else are the sinners, so I'm with yeah. I... My faith and my politics, they are completely lined up together. And if you're a Democrat, you're going, "Are you kidding me?" [laughter] Jesus, come on, Jesus was a healthcare dispensing machine.

[laughter]

07:48 S1: Everywhere He went, He dispensed healthcare for free, people lined up for hours, He never turned anybody away and didn't charge any flight, I mean can we get more obvious? You got one, some little silly verse, but I mean the whole, Jesus' whole ministry was about that. Plus, Jesus was always getting on the case of rich people. For he even said rich people aren't going to heaven because they're gonna poke themselves in the eye with a needle or something, I can't remember what it is.

[laughter]

08:12 S1: But anyway, and, that whole thing, Jesus was always... He gave away food, at least on two occasions. So we know... You look at Democratic values... Jesus was clearly Democrat, and there is a clue in the text. After Jesus fed the 5,000, remember? They collected all that extra food and here's what the text says, look at this, "They all ate and were satisfied, and afterward the disciples picked up seven basketful of broken pieces that were left over." It is in the text.

[laughter]

08:39 S1: It's kinda buried in there, but anybody with eyes can see this, right? And if you're Libertarian, you're going "Really? Really?" I mean, the most famous verse in the New Testament is John 3:16, but the second most famous verse is the one that every political candidate quotes at some point, it's the most politically charged verse and nobody gets it right but the Libertarians. And you, you can finish it. Fill in the blank, "And you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free." There you go! As in "Liberated". Duh! [laughter] There it is, it's right there. Not to mention, not to mention there was this incident one time where the rich young ruler and Jesus talked to the rich young ruler, and He sent the rich young ruler away and the rich young ruler was sad. So obviously we know what Jesus thinks about rules and rulers. And then if that wasn't enough, the Apostle Paul, who was actually talking to Christians, Jesus wasn't even talking to Christians.

09:28 S1: The Apostle Paul, when he wrote his letter to the Thessalonians. First Thessalonians, He said this... How much clearer can we get? He said, "Work hard with your own hands and mind your own business." It's in the Bible. "Mind your own business." We should mind our own business individually, we should mind our own business nationally, God's clearly leaning toward Libertarians, right? Have I offended everyone? Have I left anybody out?

[laughter]

09:55 S1: The point is this, when it comes to putting your faith before your politics, when it comes to putting your faith before your politics, it's not enough to say, "Well, Bible first and politics second." That doesn't work. Because no matter where you stand politically, no matter where you stand politically, you can find something in the Bible that supports your stand. That no matter where you stand politically, you can find something in the Bible that supports where you stand. And this is the surprise, it's not enough to say, "Well, Jesus first, political party second." Because no matter where you stand, you can find something that Jesus said that supports where you stand. And the interesting thing is this, when it comes to political season, we all want Jesus on our side if we're Christians. But when you read the gospels, Jesus did not come to be on anyone's side. He didn't come to take sides, He came to take over. And yet it's for some reason when it comes to political season, we're all trying to reel Jesus in to support our political view.

10:53 S1: But simply trying to find something that Jesus said to support what you believe politically is not enough, and simply putting Jesus before politics isn't enough. For us to get this right, and we can get this right. For us to get this right, and we must get this right. For us to get this right, and we have the opportunity in the next few months to get this right. This requires more than reading what the Bible says. And it requires more than even reading what Jesus said. This requires that we actually approach this topic the way that Jesus approached everything. In other words, to get this right, we actually have to do something that Jesus did. And Jesus did one thing specifically and one thing consistently that

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models the way for all of us and all of us can do this, this isn't complicated, you don't even have to write it down, it's so simple, but it's so convicting. And it is so transformational. The way you keep your faith in front of your politics, the way you keep your faith filter first is by putting people first and politics second. Because Jesus was for what was best for people.

12:06 S1: It's one of the first lessons you learned when you first started attending Church. That Jesus always put what was best for people first and that's our common ground. That's our common ground as citizens. That's our common ground, certainly as Christians, and that's our common ground with our Heavenly Father. To kinda tease that out a little bit we could say it this way, "We can disagree", which we will, and we should. "We can disagree on what's best for people but we cannot, and we dare not, disagree that what's for people is what's best." That we can disagree about what's best for people. Name any bill, name anything before Congress, name any of the things that we're debating as a nation and we can debate about which side, or which version, is best for people but we cannot debate whether or not what's best for people is what's best. Now, when you read the Gospels this is so clear. If there's a theme throughout the Gospels, "Jesus was for what's best for people" and we know that from the most famous verse in the New Testament, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world," he was for the world, "that he sent his son to pay the ultimate price on behalf of," not the planet, not the dirt, but "the people of the world."

13:19 S1: That Jesus loved people and Jesus put people first. And the thing that drove Jesus crazy, read the Gospels, the thing that drove Jesus crazy is when religious people would use religious law to hurt actual people. And Jesus would say over and over and over, "You had it backwards. God did not create people for the law. God created the law for people. God did not create people for religion. God created the religion for people." So one day, a group comes to Jesus... And if you grew up in Church you're so familiar with this you can quote the first part of this verse. They come to Jesus, and this is my version of their question, they say, "Jesus, tell us. You're a teacher, you claim to be close to God, tell us, what's most important? And what's most important to God? But specifically, Jesus what do you think is most important?" Now, there're a lot of important so this isn't, "This is important and nothing else is important." There's so many important things but what is the most important thing?

14:18 S1: Do you remember how Jesus answered my version of this question? Here's what He said, Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the first and the greatest commandment." But before they could breathe, as you remember, Jesus kept going... But this is great because, see, there's a lot of wiggle room here, right? Because this is all internal. In fact, I bet if you ask every single candidate who's running for President, "Hey, do you love God?" The answer is, "Yes." Who's gonna say no? You'd have to be Agnostic or Atheist, but regardless, all over the world most people would say, "Do you love God?" "Yeah." "Do you love God with all your heart?" "Well, I don't know if all, but to the best of my ability." "Do you love him with your soul?" "Well, I don't even know what that is, but yeah, I don't know." "Do you love him with all your mind?" "I don't know what that means, but yes." Who can dispute whether somebody loves God with your heart, your soul, and your mind?

15:05 S1: There's a lot of wiggle room. You can do a lot of things under this broad umbrella and Jesus doesn't even pause. The next word out of his mouth is, "and", remember this? He says, "And the second is like it, and I'm not finished" he'd say, "Hold your question. The most important thing is love God with everything in you and the second is like it. The second is equivalent, the second is on the same level, the second is just as important." And do you remember what He said? In fact, if you're not a church person or Christian, you've heard this, you've said it. This may be the first time you've heard that Jesus said it first. Here's what He said, "The second is like it, love your neighbor." "Oh man, why couldn't we just stop with love God? Because I can love God on the inside, then I can treat my neighbor the way my neighbor deserves to be treated. In fact, I can treat my neighbor the way my neighbor treats me and I'd love to treat my neighbor's kids the way that he treated my..."

16:01 S1: Suddenly it can be tit-for-tat and Jesus says, "No. Let me tell you what's most important to me. What's most important to me is that you love God on the inside and that you demonstrate it on the outside." "Well, how do we demonstrate it on the outside, by church attendance?" "No, there's wiggle room there too." You demonstrate your love for God, heart, soul, and mind, by the way you treat other people." Because what's most important to people is people, and what's most important is people. And we may debate what's best for people but we dare not, as Christians, debate whether or not what's best is what's best for people. He continues, "Love your neighbor as yourself." and this is an amazing statement. For us, in our modern world, we can't understand how emotional this was for Jesus' original

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audience when He said this. All the law, 600 plus laws in the first century. All the law, and not just the laws, everything the prophet said...

16:57 S1: Have you ever tried to read through the prophets of the Old Testament? It sounds like the same thing over and over, and over and over. He said, "Everything in the law and everything spoken by the prophets. All the law and all the prophets hang", that is hinge, that is are contingent upon, "these two commandments." This was Jesus' way of saying this, "If you forget everything else. If you forget everything else. If you're never able to open the scriptures. If you don't remember anything else I say, the most important thing, the most important thing in the world is love God and demonstrate your love for God, not by the way you treat God," too many loopholes, too much wiggle room, "demonstrate the way that you love God by how you treat the people God created. The way that you treat the people made in the image of God is a reflection of your true love for God." What's most important is people. If you wanna keep your politics... If you wanna keep your faith rather, if you wanna keep faith in front of politics you put people ahead of politics.

18:01 S1: So to use Jesus' word, we can disagree. We can disagree on what's best for our neighbors. We can disagree about what's best for our neighbors, but we dare not, we dare not, we dare not forget that what's best for our neighbors is really what's best. Now, that is profoundly simple, isn't it? But think about this and you're smart people, you get this: Imagine, just imagine, let's just think really big. Imagine if everybody in the United States, Christian or not... Because love your neighbor as yourself. Every religion embraces that value, not just Christianity. Imagine this: Imagine if every single person in the United States of America decided between now and November the 10th, between now and November the, excuse me, the 8th, between now and November the 8th, if everybody in America decided between now and November 8th, "I am going to consistently love my neighbor as myself. I'm just gonna do for others what I would want others to do for me." If every single person did that between now and the election, our nation would feel different. Most of our laws, many of our laws would be irrelevant. We could leave them on the books, but they would never be tested. Our country would be completely different.

19:13 S1: It almost would not matter who the president was because what would happen in our country culturally would be so powerful. Because it all hinges... Jesus was right. Everything hinges on love for God on the inside and how I treat my neighbor on the outside. It would be a game changer, and that's why it is so simple, why it's so simplistic, at the same time, why it's so difficult to think in terms of placing that value ahead of my political values.

19:48 S1: Now, switching gears a little bit, then we're gonna come back to that. Here's just something to keep in mind because this is challenging and you're gonna sit here and go, "Yeah, yeah, he's probably right. He just took all the fun out of it, but yeah, he's probably right." So here's something I just want you to think about as you think about how this looks in your life. Here's something, think about this, your behavior... And you know this. Your behavior makes perfect sense to you, right? If somebody said, "Why'd you do that?" You wouldn't go, "I have no idea." Your behavior makes perfect sense to you. Your children's behavior does not make perfect sense to you, but your behavior makes perfect sense to you. Everybody's behavior, everybody's behavior makes perfect sense to him or her. Every single person you ever meet, every person you see on television, every person you hear about, every person you interact with, everybody's behavior makes sense to them.

20:33 S1: Second part, your political views, isn't this true? Your political views make sense to you. If I were to say, "Why would you vote for him? Why would you support that? Why would you march against that? Why would you be all up in arms? Why would you send everybody that article?" Your political views make perfect sense to you. Everybody's political views, everybody's political views make perfect sense to him or her. So here's the lesson, Christians, look up here. When you don't know how someone could do such a thing, when you don't know how someone could believe such a thing, when you don't know how somebody could support such a person, when you don't know how somebody could support such a view or support such a bill, when you don't know how in the world could they do such a thing, support such a thing, believe such a thing, it's because there's something you don't know. I'll say it again. When you run into, hear about, talk to someone who holds a view that you're like, "How in the world could anybody believe such a thing? How could anybody support such a thing?" The problem is there's something you don't know.

21:40 S1: So one of the best things you could do this political season, and one of the best things you could do to help

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keep your faith in front of your politics, is when you find yourself in one of those contentious conversations, or you overhear one, and you're starting to get an attitude, or you're tempted to quit minding your own business and go over there and interject yourself, or you're beginning to lose respect for somebody, it's like, "We might have to move. I just can't believe anybody would hold that view." Here's what I would encourage you to do: Be a student, not a critic. Because if you are a student, not a critic, you will learn something. And if you don't think you need to learn something, you're arrogant and you're insecure, or you're God, and if you're God, you need to do hospital visitation with us. But I don't think you're God. So if there's something in you that gets so amped up especially over political issues, especially this season of the year, if you get so amped up that you can't learn anything new, that is a 'you' problem. That's not a political problem.

22:40 S1: This is the season to learn, and the way you learn is by deciding, "I will be a student first and I will be a critic second." Now, for some of you that's easy. For some of us, we just need to put that on every mirror and every car, and every... I mean, that just needs to... Because we just go there so quickly because we get so amped up over political things. Now, here's the deal. If you're a Christian, look, Jesus' followers, or Christians, Jesus' followers should be the most. The most. We should be the most confident, not arrogant, confident. If you believe your eternity is all worked out, you should be confident. If you believe God knows your name, you should be confident. If you believe that you are a son or a daughter of God, regardless of where you live or what you have, there is a confidence that comes with that. You should be the most confident, the most curious. Listen Christians, we should be the most curious people on the planet. We should be the learners above all learners because we believe our God. Come on, you believe this. We believe our God is a God of infinite wisdom. When does infinite wisdom run out? It doesn't run out. That means between now and the time that you take your last breath, you would have just begun to grasp the wisdom of God. We should be intensely, eternally curious. We should never be threatened by science.

23:58 S1: Anytime science rolls something out new, or discover something new, or changes its mind, Christians should just say, "Oh, so that's how he did it. So that's how he designed it. So that's how he created it to work." We shouldn't be threatened by science, good grief, we should be the most curious. And we should be the most composed, because we remember what we used to be, and we remember what God did in us, and we remember what we didn't know. And we should be the most compassionate person, we should be the most compassionate people in the room. And that doesn't mean we don't have an opinion, and that doesn't mean we don't have a view, and doesn't mean that we don't believe in it passionately. But in terms of our response, and in terms of our demeanor, we have an opportunity. But if you're a Christ follower, you have a responsibility, and this is what we've been called to do, and this is who we've been called to be.

24:54 S1: So to make this really, really practical, I wanna give you four simple questions. In fact, you may not like all four of these, or need all four of 'em, maybe just one. But when you find yourself in one of those environments, whether it's around the dinner table with extended family, or at work, or in the neighborhood, and suddenly politics comes up and you kind of feel your blood boiling. Or you find yourself just wanting to be so dismissive, and walk away, and shake your head, roll your eyes, like, "What a bunch of idiots." Okay, here are four questions that may keep you engaged, may cause you to learn something, and perhaps will set you up for future influence. So heres four questions... I just made this up, okay. So they may be terrible, but just to get you going, and two of these are questions that I ask all the time. The first one is simple this, is what led you to that view? What led you to that view? Let's just say this together. Ready, what led you to that view? Or what led you to believe that, or what led you to this position, or what led you to hold this position?

25:45 S1: And here's why this is important, because when we get in debates, and we get in the conversation, we're basically getting the last sentence of a long discussion. This is my view, this is who I like, this is what I'm voting for, this is what I believe. We're getting the end, we're getting the caboose. But one of the best questions you can ask is, "Wow, that's new," or, "That's different." Hey, what led you? Tell me about the process. How did you come to believe this?" And you have just invited someone to tell you part of their story. And here's what you know, this is way we don't like this question: When you discovery somebody's story it's very difficult to continue not liking the person. When you get context for a view, when you get the context for an opinion, when you get the context for somebody's persuasion, you begin to understand. And when you begin to understand the temperature goes down in the room.

26:32 S1: Say, "Hey, wow, that's fascinating," or "Wow, honestly that's kind of offensive," or "Wow, hey, I'm just curious, what led you to hold this particular view?" Here's the second one. Have you always held this view, have you

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always seen it this way, have you always voted that way, have you always supported that idea, have you always, have you always, were you ever on the other side? That's a good question. Then if you want to be a little bit snarky, this is kind of a little bit a snarky question. Okay, you know you're talking to somebody and it moves beyond policy to personality. Don't you hate this, or maybe don't you love it, maybe you instigate it. We're talking about issues and now we're talking about the person, or something that goes beyond politics.

27:09 S1: And you're a Christian, and you do realize, I know you're gonna hate this, you do realize that in the New Testament, we're told not to gossip. Do you know that applies to political conversations as well? Did you know we're told to not let any unwholesome word proceed out of our mouths, except such a word that is good for edification, that it might build other people up? Did you know that during political season God doesn't reach in and say, "Well, we're gonna take those out until after the election and put 'em back in"? So when the conversation starts getting way outside of policy, here's a great question to ask, you just say, "That's interesting, have you met him, have you met her? Do you know him, do you know her?" And of course they say, "No," and then you say, "Oh," and then you don't say anything else. "Oh".

[laughter]

27:52 S1: "So you know, you know, Congressman... You know, you know them?" "Oh, I don't know them." "Oh." You just shut up, it's like okay let's get back between the guardrails, your talking way outside of your knowledge. But I'm not gonna be critical it's just kind of a question... And then here is maybe the one where it's gonna be a little bit dig for you. Okay, this is where you may decide you don't like me anymore. Okay, here's a great question, statement and a question. "You know, I get most of my information from the media, how about you?"

[laughter]

28:19 S1: "I get most of my information from the media, how about you?" "Oh, you too well that means that we are both marginally informed, and we're both probably wrong." We are both marginally informed, and the truth is neither one of us really know what we're talking about. Now, that is not a dig on the media. I tell you, all you have to do is travel to some countries where the state controls the media, or the press, and you will be so grateful for the United States of America, okay. So that's not a dig on the media, the truth is we all... The point is most of us get all, or 90% of our information from the same sources. All you know is what you're told, and all I know is what I'm told. So for us to create unnecessary friction, relationally, around marginal information and limited information is absolutely foolish. So those are four questions to kind of bring the temperature down, to kind of find common ground with people. Because at the end of the day, at the end of the day, what matters most is people. So in conclusion to this fascinating talk that you're thinking, "That was like the worst sermon I ever heard in my life." In conclusion, in conclusion, here's what I want to say, okay here we go.

29:24 S1: Should you have an opinion? Yes, you should have an opinion, absolutely. Should you argue your point or argue your point? Yes, when it's appropriate, absolutely, because other people need to learn, and other people need to discover what you know that possible they don't. Should you make a point at the expense of influence? And the answer is absolutely not. Now this is so important, okay if you're a Christian... If you're not I think this is important for you as well. But I don't have, I'm not... I'm a preacher you don't have to do anything I say. But if you're a part of one of our churches, I want you to listen. Okay look, look up here, Jesus said that you, if you're a Jesus follower, you are the light of the world. That you are the salt of the earth. That we have been called to influence people in arenas where we think eternity is at stake. We have been called to influence people, to help put families back together. We've been called to influence people so that they can see the world as the world is, and to bring healing, and restitution, and to bring sons and daughters back together, and husbands and wives... I mean, we have been called to do something extraordinarily, extraordinarily important.

30:34 S1: And the only way we do that, don't miss this. The only way we do that is through influence. So listen to me. Never, never, never give up influence unnecessarily. Never, never give up influence unnecessarily. Don't give it up with your kids. Don't give it up with your spouse. Don't give it up with extended family, the people at work, the people in the neighborhood. Never, ever give up influence unnecessarily. And you should never, ever, ever give up influence over a political issue. And let me tell you why. Because in the United States of America that I love, and I love what I'm about

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to say... In the United States, your opinion doesn't even count. It's better than that. Your vote counts. So why would you give up influence over something that doesn't even matter when you get to go and vote your conscience, or vote your view, that makes a difference? Why would you give up influence unnecessarily? Never, ever give up influence unnecessarily, and please don't give it up over something that doesn't really matter. In your opinion, doesn't matter. The good news is your vote does.

31:50 S1: This is huge because how tragic... Some of you have a story around this. How tragic to burn a bridge... How tragic to burn a bridge of influence over something that after the election, all the temperature goes down, and it kind of goes away, and then suddenly that guy at work, that lady at work, your neighbor, an extended family member, they have a need, they have a question, and they can't ask you, and they can't invite you in, because you've lost influence over something in the heat of the moment that seemed like a really, really, really big deal at the moment? But a year later... Years later, you can't even really remember what the issue is. Please, please, please listen. Never give up influence unnecessarily, because we, as Christians, have been called to influence everyone and to influence our world. And lastly, jeopardize a relationship, never. You never jeopardize a relationship, especially over politics, and here's why. Because while we can disagree on what's best for people, while we can disagree on what's best for people, we can't disagree that what's best for people is what's best.

33:00 S1: So, here's the thing, during this political season, between now and November the 8th, between now and November the 8th, we have an extraordinary opportunity, think about this, as Christians, to showcase our political diversity in a way that honors God who made us so diverse. We have an opportunity to showcase our political diversity in a way that honors God who made us so diverse, in our community groups, in the hallways, in our churches, in our communities and wherever else God chooses to put us. This is an opportunity, and if we get this right, if we get this right, we'll have more influence. And if we get this right, we will all learn something. But if we get this wrong, we will just be like every other community of Christians. We'll just be like every other church. So I want you to be intentional about putting your faith before your politics, and the way you do that is by putting people first, and here's why. Because Republican, Democrat, Left or Right, you are all precious in His sight.

[laughter]

34:12 S1: Because Jesus loves the little children of the world.

[laughter]

[applause]

34:24 S1: Okay. Next week I'm beginning a brand new series called 'Tough As Nails' and we're gonna talk about how Christians should respond... How we should respond to all the chaos in the world with ISIS, and all the stuff that's going on that's making us all afraid, and there's things to fear. So we're gonna talk about what Christians should do. If you are not a Christian or a church person, please be here because there is something for you. There's always something for you. And remember, it was Jesus who you're still making decisions about, who said, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and if you come be a part of one of our churches, we will love you as we love ourselves. Thanks for being here. Let me pray for us and we'll take off.

34:56 S1: Heavenly Father, thank you for preserving this text. Thank you for preserving these words. Thank you for allowing us to live in a country where we can even talk about this, where we will have possibly a bloodless transition of power, either way it goes. It won't be like so many nations experience... Like so many nations are experiencing even this very day. So thank you, Father, for allowing us to have the opportunity. Thank you for the stewardship of a republic. Thank you for the stewardship of where it doesn't really matter what we think, because better than think, we get to vote. So help us to get this right. And help us especially to get it right as a community of Christians. In Jesus' name, Amen. We'll see you next week.

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