



Civility: American Politics and Christian Responses

SESSION 2

Civility has deep moral roots in Christianity.

Goal for the Session

Participants will affirm Christian principles that promote civility using biblical examples.

Preparing for the Session

- Spend some time evaluating the first session. Did everyone participate and engage in the topic? If not, are there ways you can alter the next sessions to ensure greater participation?
- Consider calling a few participants during the week to see if they have questions about the session or their project.
- Before class, arrange the room and post all the relevant newsprint used in the first session. Also, prepare to show the video clips and have this ready before participants gather.

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- Pens
- Newsprint or board
- Markers
- Extra copies of Participant Handout 2 for visitors
- Computer with both videos downloaded or ready to stream. Projector if available.

Teaching Tip

The first video includes one example of a Republican representative calling President Obama a liar. If a participant objects to this being one sided, affirm that certainly examples can be found of liberals being uncivil

Session at a Glance

OPENING

- Welcome
- YouTube video about civility
- Prayer

EXPLORING

- Reactions to handout
- Small-group work
- Reports to large group
- General discussion

RESPONDING

- Why Christians are civil
- Update on projects

CLOSING

- YouTube video about civility in sports
- Prayer

to conservatives, but agree that incivility is incivility, whoever initiates it.

Opening (10 minutes)

1. Welcome

Welcome participants as they gather and introduce any newcomers. Make sure everyone has a copy of Participant Handout 2 and a pen.

2. YouTube Video about Civility

Show the YouTube video about civility located at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLi6zMUF61o>. It is only a few minutes in length. Facilitate a brief discussion around these questions:

- What do you remember from last week that would touch on the topics in this video?
- Do you agree that people love to yell at other people for being rude? Does that promote civility? What are other effective responses when one witnesses incivility?

3. Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather together in a safe space to discuss civility. For those unable to be here today we ask for healing so that they may return next week. Now open our hearts and minds to learn more about your ways. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Exploring (20 minutes)

4. Reactions to Handout

Ask for general reactions to the Participant Handout. Some questions to ask include:

- Were you surprised the author used the same four virtues as last week?
- What perspective do Christians have on civility that might be different than non-Christians?

5. Small-Group Work

Form four small groups. Assign one of the virtues in the handout to each group. (If you do not have enough people to have at least two in each group, form two small groups and assign two virtues to each group.) Have them review that section and read any biblical examples used in the section. Invite them to think of other biblical stories or texts that highlight this principle. Ask them to prepare a brief summary report to the larger group that answers why Christians hold this principle as important to civility. (Note: The first category does not include a specific biblical example but plenty may be found, such as Matt. 5:5 or John 8:7.)

6. Reports to Large Group

Have each group briefly summarize their groups' findings.

7. General Discussion

Add any pertinent findings to the appropriate newsprint sheets on the wall.

Draw attention to the next-to-last sentence in the section "Integrity." It says, "And integrity also requires something from us citizens, that we make civility a prerequisite for a candidate who would have our vote." Ask: Do you agree one should never vote for a politician who is uncivil?

Responding (10 minutes)

8. Why Christians Are Civil

Give participants a piece of paper and pen (or have them use their journal if you provided one) and have them pretend they are writing a short note to someone who is not a Christian explaining why Christians value civility. Give them five minutes to write their paragraph.

9. Update on Projects

Depending on how you organized the group, spend a few minutes checking in on what they have done so far. Allow people to compare the groups they have found that represent different positions around a topic. This next week have them continue to gather information. Have them begin to think about how they would approach someone with views different from their own on this subject using information learned so far in this study.

Closing (5 minutes)

10. YouTube Video about Civility in Sports

Show the following video to the group: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTutDzTgZ0k>.

Say to the group: Christian virtues of civility inform our actions in all aspects of life. While we do not know the religion of the forgiving pitcher, how did his act of civility model the values we have identified? Did it diminish actions taken to remedy the situation?

11. Prayer

Holy Lord, you alone are perfect. As we strive to imitate Christ, give us patience, humility, and clear vision. Amen.

Teaching Alternatives

- Extend activity #5 to include other virtues related to civility noted in the first session, such as self-control, tolerance, and humor.
- Read the conclusion section again. As a group, discuss how your church is a safe place to confront social issues that divide members. How can it improve?
- In small groups of two or three persons, write an abbreviated beatitudes of civility based on Christian values. The Beatitudes are found in Matthew 5:3-12.

Key Scriptures

Genesis 1:27

Luke 6:37-38a

John 15:12

Ephesians 4:1-6

1 Thessalonians 5:13-14

2 Timothy 4:2