

POLITICS AND FAITH

DISCUSSING ELECTIONS WITH OUR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

The elementary years are a period of significant growth and transformation. Children enter kindergarten as five-year-olds, where their understanding of the world blends fantasy, feelings, and facts. By the time they leave fifth grade, they have developed the ability to distinguish between reality and make-believe, truths and lies, and good and bad, allowing them to create a more structured and reliable worldview. They begin to demand evidence for claims and shift from a purely self-focused perspective to one that considers and coordinates with others' viewpoints, including their political opinions.

Parents play a crucial role in shaping the cultural environment, including setting the tone for discussing politics. These conversations will inevitably enter the classrooms and playground, and teachers and school staff have the opportunity to partner with families to guide students in thinking critically about current issues (discerned for age appropriateness) and interact with others respectfully. When navigating conversations about politics with children, we should remember our SFC Eagle Essentials: Respect, Responsibility, Resourcefulness.

RESPECT

It's crucial for us to discuss differing opinions respectfully and thoughtfully. As we approach this election season, we have an opportunity to practice these skills and model them for our children. Remind them that:

EVERYONE HAS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

We will approach these discussions with humility, acknowledging that there's always room for growth and understanding.

MISSION

To partner with Christian parents within a Bible-based community, in order to disciple students to embrace biblical truth, strive for academic excellence, and model Christ-like leadership to influence their homes, churches, and communities for Christ.

CONVICTIONS

Statement of Faith and Declaration of Ethical and Moral Integrity

VALUES

"The Santa Fe Way Prayer Journal"

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Living Truth in Christ

APOLOGIAS

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

INSTRUCTION

APOLOGIAS

LEARN TO LISTEN

We must seek to listen to one another and focus on trying to understand the other person's point of view. James 1:19 reminds us, "...Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." The principles from Philippians 2:2-4 remind us to respect others, regardless of our disagreements, and even to count others as more significant than ourselves as we interact with them and remember who they are in light of the Creator who considers all people equally.

SPEAK WITH CARE

Given the extremely hostile landscape of the current political race, it's difficult for children to know that sometimes, what they're saying/mimicking is an insult they've overheard. Take this opportunity to remind them to speak with care about others. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Ephesians 4:29)

RESPONSIBILITY

Political issues can quickly divide a home, a friendship, a community, and a nation. Reacting to one's political beliefs does not help; however, responding can. It's our responsibility to control how we communicate and to focus on the relationship.

FACTS VS. OPINION

This is an excellent opportunity to teach our children the difference between facts and opinions. This is also a timely lesson on sources of our knowledge. While older children and adults can dig deeper into this topic, focusing on their sphere of influence (parents, teachers, grandparents, etc) will start building this framework for our younger children.

RESPOND VS. REACT

Titus 3:9 says, "But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless." There are undoubtedly critical issues to discuss, but if we fall into

the trap of reacting rather than responding, it can send us spiraling down the path where we begin to argue about everything. Take a moment to teach our children the difference between responding logically and respectfully and reacting with anger and frustration.

HEALTHY PATRIOTISM VS APATHY

The United States is a great country, and we are blessed to live in a period with so much freedom and prosperity. But loving our country also means recognizing its flaws and understanding that being a citizen comes with responsibilities, such as voting. Take a moment to share with children the importance and the privilege of voting and how they can participate when they are 18.

PRAY

Pray for our leaders, God's wisdom, and a spirit of discernment. Children need to hear adults actively committing their concerns and praises to the Lord, as this is how they learn to depend on God. Ephesians 1:17 tells us that if we ask the Holy Spirit for guidance, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." The Bible tells us, "He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding" (Daniel 2:21). Asking Him for help to understand the issues at hand will help us see things from His perspective.

RESOURCEFULNESS

Election years are an opportunity for civic lessons that may not be covered in our curriculum for your student's particular grade level. With maturity and age in mind, encourage students to learn about the foundational documents, the history of this country, and how the election process works today.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Do they know the facts? What are the laws governing the election system? What does the Constitution say about the election? Who can run for the presidency? There are many resources and books for children to help them understand how the system works. This is a good opportunity to focus

on learning.

L.I.F.E.R.

The acronym L.I.F.E.R. helps us remember the main themes of America: Limited government, Individualism, Freedom (religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition as outlined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution), Economic opportunity based on measures of capitalism, and the Rule of law and order. Based on the child's maturity, you can take this opportunity to introduce these concepts and how they connect with the election and policies.

ASK QUESTIONS

The best way to learn is by asking questions. Encourage children to ask questions. Some questions should be answered by parents as they relate to what's important in the family and those should be directed to the appropriate adult. Other questions may be factual and related to how the system of government works, which can be taught by our school staff. Ultimately, we should encourage curiosity and build up the desire to learn more about their country.

The Constitution was written "in order to form a more perfect union." Every generation is responsible for moving our country closer to its highest ideals, recognizing the process is challenging and that we are all in it together. Each day in class, we get an opportunity to strive after this

statement. Abraham Lincoln sought hope and healing at the end of our country's greatest conflict, the American Civil War. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation (I Cor 5:16-21), and we will seek that in our classrooms.

"With malice toward none with charity for all with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan ~ to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." —A. Lincoln.

Our school strives to create an environment where everyone feels valued, even if they have different views. Respecting others doesn't mean all ideas are equally valid, but it does mean treating each person with dignity. We should not live in a spirit of fear but one of hope. God is sovereign and in control: "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:16-17)

IN CONCLUSION

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. — Romans 15:13