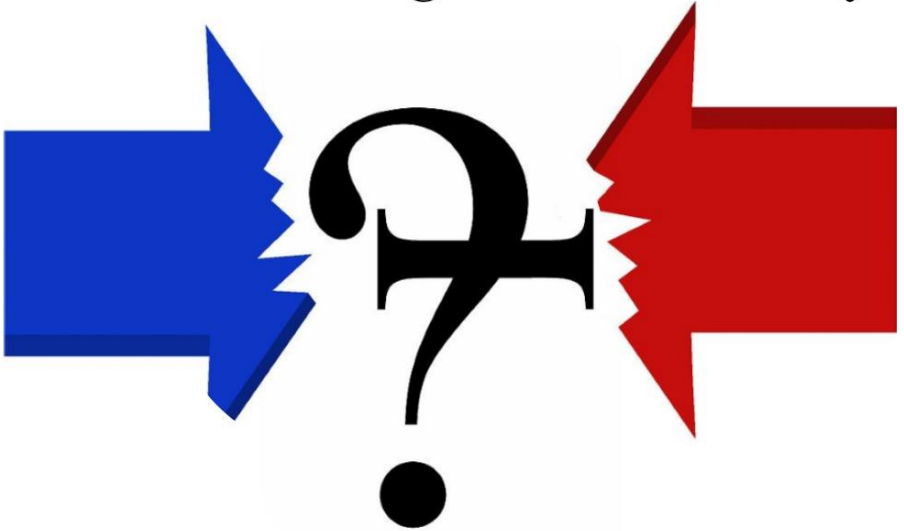


Summer Nights @Trinity



Jesus and Politics

## GENERAL OUTLINE

- June 1<sup>st</sup>: **God's Caesar**
- June 8<sup>th</sup>: **God's Christendom**
- June 15<sup>th</sup>: **God's Counter Culture**
  - Polarized and Partisan
  - Red vs Blue vs ??
  - Ethical Foundations
- June 22<sup>nd</sup>: **God's Concerns**

- What is underneath and behind the Issues we debate?
- Legislation (for or against?)
- Ways and Means
- Examples
- **June 29<sup>th</sup>: God's Kingdom**
  - Civility
  - Public vs Private
  - Who are we to BE in this would?

### MY HOPES AND GOALS

- **Goal:** Help us (as Christians) think deeper, speak more civilly, and be more compassionate about political issues

### REMINDERS:

- General Rules of All My Classes:
  - The Bible is our ultimate authority
  - Ask Questions

### CHRISTIANS AND GOVERNMENTS

- Obedience
  - **1 PETER 2:13-17** SUBMIT YOURSELVES FOR THE LORD'S SAKE TO EVERY AUTHORITY INSTITUTED AMONG MEN: WHETHER TO THE KING, AS THE SUPREME AUTHORITY, <sup>14</sup> OR TO GOVERNORS, WHO ARE SENT BY HIM TO PUNISH THOSE WHO DO WRONG AND TO COMMEND THOSE WHO DO RIGHT. <sup>15</sup> FOR IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT BY DOING GOOD YOU SHOULD SILENCE THE IGNORANT TALK OF FOOLISH MEN. <sup>16</sup> LIVE AS FREE MEN, BUT DO NOT USE YOUR FREEDOM AS A COVER-UP FOR EVIL; LIVE AS SERVANTS OF GOD. <sup>17</sup> SHOW PROPER RESPECT TO EVERYONE: LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD OF BELIEVERS, FEAR GOD, HONOR THE KING.
- Disobedience?
  - **ACTS 5:29** PETER AND THE OTHER APOSTLES REPLIED: "WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN!"
- Both in Tension
- Participation (Working For Change Within)

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## KINGDOM OF GOD AND/OR AMERICAN?

- Are you a Texan, an American, or a North American? How do you determine your 'kingdom'?
  - Might the Kingdom of God be like that... but a more important layer?...
- **MATTHEW 22:16-22** THEY SENT THEIR DISCIPLES TO HIM ALONG WITH THE HERODIANS. "TEACHER," THEY SAID, "WE KNOW YOU ARE A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND THAT YOU TEACH THE WAY OF GOD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TRUTH. YOU AREN'T SWAYED BY MEN, BECAUSE YOU PAY NO ATTENTION TO WHO THEY ARE. <sup>17</sup> TELL US THEN, WHAT IS YOUR OPINION? IS IT RIGHT TO PAY TAXES TO CAESAR OR NOT?" <sup>18</sup> BUT JESUS, KNOWING THEIR EVIL INTENT, SAID, "YOU HYPOCRITES, WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO TRAP ME? <sup>19</sup> SHOW ME THE COIN USED FOR PAYING THE TAX." THEY BROUGHT HIM A DENARIUS, <sup>20</sup> AND HE ASKED THEM, "WHOSE PORTRAIT IS THIS? AND WHOSE INSCRIPTION?" <sup>21</sup> "CAESAR'S," THEY REPLIED. THEN HE SAID TO THEM, "GIVE TO CAESAR WHAT IS CAESAR'S, AND TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S." <sup>22</sup> WHEN THEY HEARD THIS, THEY WERE AMAZED. SO THEY LEFT HIM AND WENT AWAY.
- But we have to know the difference... where one starts and the other stops
  - "We can render unto Caesar and we can render unto God only if we know the difference between the two." (Moore 143)

## CONSTANTINE AND CHRISTENDOM

- "As G. K. Chesterton is noted to have said, 'The coziness between church and state is good for the state and bad for the church.'" (Frost 4)
- As Christians have, as Christianity, moved towards the state, we have seen a decline in our numbers
  - "Midcentury Christianity had been political without appearing overtly partisan: Sometimes its leaders

spoke for American consensus and sometimes they critiqued it, but in either case they tended to transcend (or at least seemed to transcend) the liberal-conservative, Democrat-Republican divide." (Douthat 66)

## SUMMING EVERYTHING UP

- Lecture #1 – Our first Obedience is to God, then to State (too)
  - Lecture #2 – Your first Identity/Allegiance is to the Kingdom of God, then to your local sovereignty or whatever else
  - Clearing The Deck
    - God isn't on a side: God isn't a Republican and God isn't a Democrat.
    - **Matthew 7:1-3** "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup> Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?
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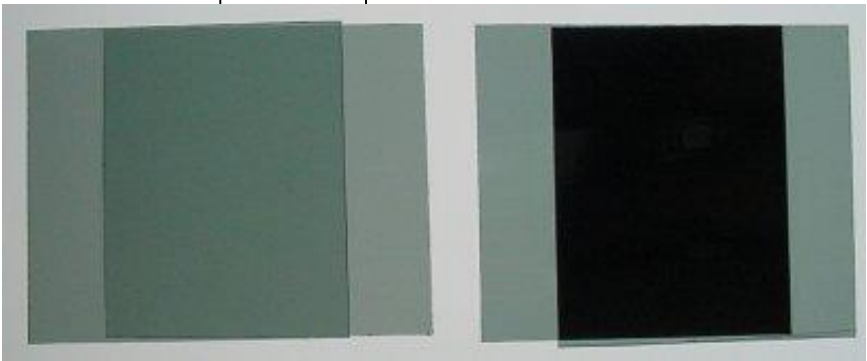
## INTRODUCTION

- **Isaiah 30:21** Whether you turn to the **right** or to the **left**, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

## TERMINOLOGY

- Partisan: A Strong Supporter of A Party
  - "Partisans inflate the best features of their party while inflating the worst features, real or contrived, of the other party. They ignore the weaknesses of their own party while dismissing the other party's strengths." (Sauls 11)
- Polarize (Polarization):

- To Cause people to separate into opposing groups
- To cause something (such as light) to vibrate in a particular pattern
- To cause something to have a positive and negative charge (Magnets)
- Etymology: polarize (v.) 1811, in optics, from French polariser, coined by French physicist Étienne-Louis Malus (1775-1812) as a term in optics, from Modern Latin polaris "polar" (see polar). Transferred sense of "to accentuate a division in a group or system" is first recorded 1949 in Arthur Koestler.  
Related: Polarized; polarizing. (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=polarize>)
- Examples
- Optics Example



- Magnet Example and Magnetizing
- Ideology: "Here's a simple definition of ideology: 'A set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved.' And here's the most basic of all ideological questions: Preserve the present order, or change it? At the French Assembly of 1789, the delegates who favored preservation sat on the right side of the chamber, while those who favored change sat on the left. The terms right and left have stood for conservatism and liberalism ever since." (Haidt 277)

## POLARIZATION TODAY (IN AMERICA)

- Brokaw: “My friend Bob Schieffer, host of the highly regarded Sunday morning public affairs program Face the Nation, has been in Washington more than forty years and he says it’s never been worse. He cites a prime example of the juvenile behavior that takes place on too many Sunday mornings when he tells of one show in which he had one Republican guest and one Democratic. The Sunday shows all have what is called a “green room,” where the guests and journalists gather for coffee, makeup, and any last-minute instructions. Bob told me, incredulously, “We had a call from the staff of one of the men, a senior leader of the Senate, requesting separate rooms so the guests wouldn’t have to be together. I said, ‘No. We’re not changing our behavior just to suit theirs.’ ” (Brokaw, Tom. *The Time of Our Lives: A conversation about America* (Kindle Locations 418-424). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.)
- “America’s hyperpartisanship is now a threat to the world.” (Haidt 276)

#### **AMERICAN POLARIZATION AND PARTISANSHIP (WASHINGTON)**

- “According to data compiled by political scientists Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, two-fifths of the Senate’s Republicans and a third of House GOPers could be considered moderates as late as the early 1990s; by 2012, that label could be fairly attributed to only a tenth of Republican senators, and an even smaller slice in the House. Among progressives through roughly the same period, moderates dropped from 35 to 12 percent of the House Democratic caucus, and from 27 to 15 percent in the Senate. 17 (Dunkelman, Marc J.. *The Vanishing Neighbor: The Transformation of American Community* (p. 184). W. W. Norton & Company. Kindle Edition.)
- “We learned that much of the increase in polarization was unavoidable. It was the natural result of the political realignment that took place after President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964. The conservative southern states, which had been solidly Democratic since the Civil War (because Lincoln was a

Republican) then began to leave the Democratic Party, and by the 1990s the South was solidly Republican. Before this realignment there had been liberals and conservatives in both parties, which made it easy to form bipartisan teams who could work together on legislative projects. But after the realignment, there was no longer any overlap, either in the Senate or in the House of Representatives. Nowadays the most liberal Republican is typically more conservative than the most conservative Democrat. And once the two parties became ideologically pure – a liberal party and a conservative party – there was bound to be a rise in Manichaeism.” (Haidt 310)

- “If you think about politics in a Manichaean way, then compromise is a sin. God and the devil don’t issue many bipartisan proclamations, and neither should you.”
  - “America’s political class has become far more Manichaean since the early 1990s, first in Washington and then in many state capitals. The result is an increase in acrimony and gridlock, a decrease in the ability to find bipartisan solutions.” (Haidt 310)
- “Things changed in the 1990s, beginning with new rules and new behaviors in Congress. Friendships and social contacts across party lines were discouraged. Once the human connections were weakened, it became easier to treat members of the other party as the permanent enemy rather than as fellow members of an elite club. Candidates began to spend more time and money on ‘oppo’ (opposition research), in which staff members or paid consultants dig up dirt on opponents (sometimes illegally) and then shovel it to the media. As one elder congressman recently put it, ‘This is not a collegial body any more. It is more like gang behavior. Members walk into the chamber full of hatred.’” (Haidt 275)
- “changes that began in 1995. Newt Gingrich, the new speaker of the House of Representatives, encouraged the large group of incoming Republican congressmen to



leave their families in their home districts rather than moving their spouses and children to Washington. Before 1995, congressmen from both parties attended many of the same social events on weekends; their spouses became friends; their children played on the same sports teams. But nowadays most congressmen fly to Washington on Monday night, huddle with their teammates and do battle for three days, and then fly home on Thursday night. Cross-party friendship are disappearing; Manichaeism and scorched Earth politics are increasing.” (Haidt 311)

### **AMERICAN POLARIZATION AND PARTISANSHIP (THE REST OF US)**

- “The country now seems polarized and embattled to the point of dysfunction. ... Up until a few years ago, there were some political scientists who claimed that the so-called culture wars was limited to Washington, and that Americans had not in fact become more polarized in their attitudes toward most policy issues. But in the last twelve years Americans have begun to move further apart.” (Haidt 274)
  - Centrists from 40% in 2000 to 36%
  - Conservatives from 38% to 41%
  - Liberals from 19% to 21%
- But we’re doing the same thing. “In 1976, only 27 percent of Americans lived in ‘landslide counties’ – counties that voted either Democratic or Republican by a margin of 20% or more. But the number has risen steadily; in 2008, 48% of Americans lived in a landslide county.” (Haidt 311)
- As Bishop and Cushing dug deeper, they discovered that same phenomenon— which they dubbed the “Big Sort”— playing itself out in other ways. For example, local churches once collected a diversity of believers, but younger adherents more frequently sought out houses of worship that spoke to their particular spiritual tastes. What’s more, Americans were becoming less inclined to tolerate those who didn’t share their point of view. One recent study has found that nearly a fifth of those who use social networks like Facebook have blocked, “unfriended,”

or hidden a contact based on a political disagreement. 27 It wasn't just, as Eli Pariser articulated, that corporations were manipulating what comes up in our news feeds and ad spaces. Empowered with the opportunity to connect with people who reflect our values and outlook, we've become more microscopically homogenous amid a sea of diversity. (Dunkelman, Marc J.. *The Vanishing Neighbor: The Transformation of American Community* (p. 48). W. W. Norton & Company. Kindle Edition.)

### WHY POLARIZED? (ADVANTAGES)

- “I prefer life *inside* the lines. Clean, straight, black and white. That's way simpler. Who wants to live in the *gray*, anyway? Blurred lines breed chaos and confusion. All control feels lost. In the gray we are exposed, our vulnerability and uncertainties put on display. To risk existence in the middle ground requires humility, or more – being misunderstood.” (Sauls xv)

### WHY POLARIZED? (GROUPISH)

- “...people care about their groups, whether those be racial, regional, religious, or political. The political scientist Don Kinder summarizes the findings like this: ‘in matters of public opinion, citizens seem to be asking themselves not ‘What's in it for me?’ but rather ‘What's in it for my group?’ ... Our politics is groupish, not selfish.” (Haidt 86)
- “Weston found that partisans escaping from handcuffs (by thinking about the final slide, which restored their confidence in their candidate) got a little hit of that dopamine. And if this is true, then it would explain why extreme partisans are so stubborn, closed-minded, and committed to beliefs that often seem bizarre or paranoid. Like rats that cannot stop pressing a button, partisans may be simply unable to stop believing weird things. The partisan brain has been reinforced so many times for performing mental contortions that free it from unwanted beliefs. Extreme partisanship may be literally addictive.” (Haidt 88)

### WHAT HAS CHANGED? (WHY SO POLARIZED?)

- “At root is a central mystery: if the institutions we blame for Washington’s gridlock were present in earlier eras, why have things now gone off the rails? If the common excuses for today’s dysfunctional politics don’t explain the more present gridlock, what’s changed? The answer, like the explanation for the decline of economic innovation, lies in the disappearance of the middle rings. (Dunkelman, Marc J.. *The Vanishing Neighbor: The Transformation of American Community* (p. 188). W. W. Norton & Company. Kindle Edition.)

### TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER

- “Can partisans even understand the story told by the other side?” (Haidt 286)
- “The change, then, isn’t that Americans today are necessarily more polarized, or are less inclined in the routines of their everyday lives to believe in compromise. It’s that those on the other side of any given issue now are not only wrong, they’re almost alien. You can’t say, “that’s a crazy position to take, but I understand why Jack thinks that” if you don’t know Jack, or don’t know what Jack’s take is. Without the firsthand exposure gained from passing conversations, it’s much easier to castigate the other side— whether your position has hardened or not. 31 (Dunkelman, Marc J.. *The Vanishing Neighbor: The Transformation of American Community* (pp. 190-191). W. W. Norton & Company. Kindle Edition.)

### THE RIDER AND THE ELEPHANT

- Rider: Our thinking/reasoning
- Elephant: Our emotions and Gut
- “The mind is divided into parts, like a rider (controlled processes) on an elephant (automatic processes). The rider evolved to serve the elephant. -- You can see the rider serving the elephant when people are morally

dumbfounded. They have strong gut feelings about what is right and wrong, and they struggle to construct post hoc justifications for those feelings. Even when the servant (reasoning) comes back empty-handed, the master (intuition) doesn't change his judgement." (Haidt 49-50)

### HOW WE DECIDE/CHOOSE

- "We make our first judgments rapidly, and we are dreadful at seeking out evidence that might disconfirm those initial judgments. Yet friends can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves: they can challenge us, giving us reasons and arguments that sometimes trigger new intuitions, thereby making it possible for us to change our minds. We occasionally do this when mulling a problem by ourselves, suddenly seeing things in a new light or from a new perspective." (Haidt 47) {Maybe the picture on 47??}
- Would you rather BE right or LOOK right? - Well it turns out it's actually normally the LATER of the two!
  - "People are trying harder to look right than to be right. Tetlock summarizes it like this: 'A central function of thought is making sure that one acts in ways that can be persuasively justified or excused to others. Indeed, the process of considering the justifiability of one's choices may be so prevalent that decision makers not only search for convincing reasons to make a choice when they must explain that choice to others, they search for reasons to convince themselves that they have made the 'right' choice.'" (Haidt 76)
- "Accountability increases exploratory thought only when three conditions apply: (1) decision makers learn before forming any opinion that they will be accountable to an audience, (2) the audience's views are unknown, and (3) they believe the audience is well informed and interested in accuracy. When all three conditions apply, people do their darnedest to figure out the truth, because that's what the audience wants to hear. But the rest of the time – which is almost all of the time – accountability pressures simply increase confirmatory thought." (Haidt 76)

## DIFFERENT FOUNDATIONS

- Different Elephants are motivated by different foundations
- “The moral domain varies by culture. It is unusually narrow in Western, educated, and individualistic cultures. Sociocentric cultures broaden the moral domain to encompass and regulate more aspects of life.” (Haidt 26)

## 6 FOUNDATIONS OF MORALITY – JONATHAN HAIDT, “THE RIGHTEOUS MIND”

- Care/Harm
  - Christians: **Mercy**
- Fairness/Cheating (Altruism and Proportionality)
  - Christians: **Justice**
- Loyalty/Betrayal
  - Christians: **Faithfulness**
- Authority/Subversion
  - Christians: **Humility** (Obedience – Walk Humbly with your God)
- Sanctity/Degradation
  - Christians: **Holiness**
- Liberty/Oppression
  - Christians: **Peace/Shalom**

## TENDENCIES

- [www.YourMorals.org](http://www.YourMorals.org)
- Liberals tend to endorse/value Care and Fairness VERY High, and the others very lowly
- Conservatives tend to endorse/value Loyalty, Authority, Sanctity, and then Care and Fairness slightly less.

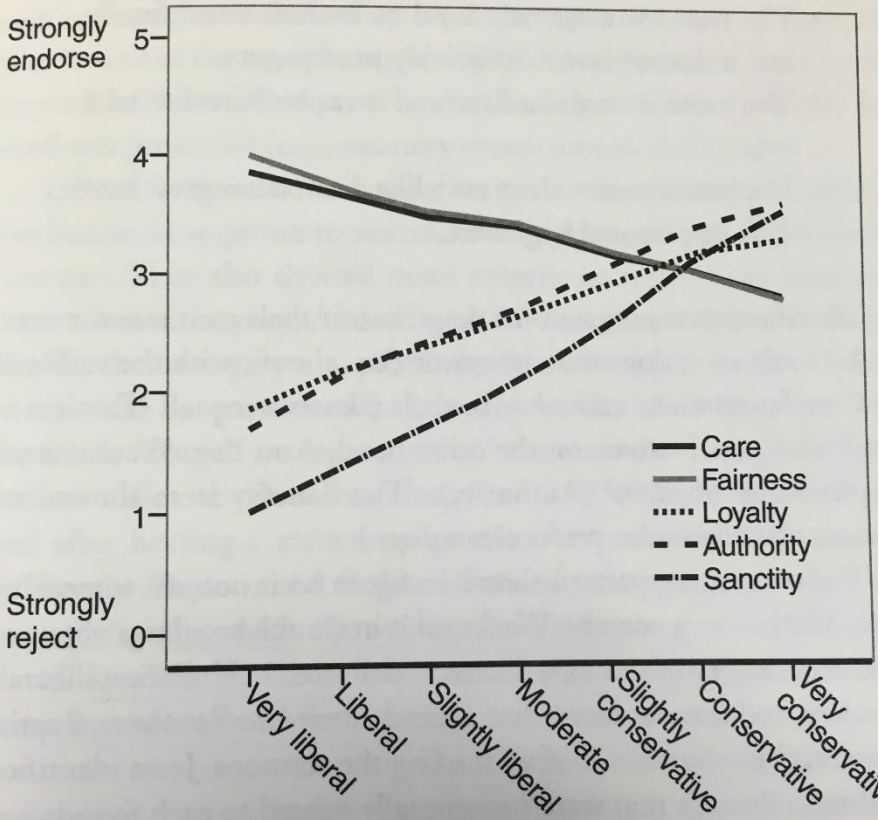


FIGURE 8.2. Scores on the MFQ, from 132,000 subjects, in 2011. Data from YourMorals

### REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS

- “Unless a human system is fully centered on God (no human system is), Jesus will have things to affirm and things to critique about it. The political left and the political right are no exception.” (Sauls 4)

- In many ways... Jesus is more conservative than the far right... And Jesus is more liberal than the far left... (Sauls 144)

## CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

- A Higher View
  - C.S. Lewis: 'If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next... The conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.' (Sauls 14-15)
- Diversity is Good
  - "Jesus gave so much of his time, attention, and love to people who did not side with him." (Sauls xxiii)
  - "It may surprise us to know that there was political diversity among Jesus' disciples. Included in the Twelve are Simon, a Zealot, and Matthew, a tax collector. This is significant because Zealots worked *against* the government, while tax collectors worked *for* the government. Interestingly, Matthew the tax collector emphasizes this diversity more than any of the other Gospel writers. Despite their opposing viewpoints, Matthew and Simon were friends, and Matthew wanted us to know this. Matthew's emphasis on a tax collector and a zealot living in community suggests a hierarchy of loyalties, especially for Christians. Our loyalty to Jesus and his Kingdom must always exceed our loyalty to an earthly agenda, whether political or otherwise." (Sauls 6-7)

- “Leaning toward a certain party is one thing (Matthew did it, Simon did it, and Jesus allowed it), but it is important to see that a partisan spirit can actually run against the Spirit of God.” (Sauls 10)
- Unity is Good
  - “The longest recorded prayer we have from Jesus is his famous High Priestly Prayer, in which he asks God that his wildly diverse communion of followers would be united as one. It is no coincidence that the apostle Paul begins most of his letters with the two-part salutation ‘grace to you’ – the standard Greek greeting – and ‘peace to you’ – the standard Jewish greeting.” (Sauls xxi)
- Tolerance and Understanding
  - **Galatians 5:14-15** The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>15</sup> If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.
  - “Tim Keller writes, ‘Tolerance isn’t about not having beliefs. It’s about how your beliefs lead you to treat people who disagree with you.’” (Sauls xviii)
  - { 1 Peter 3:15-16} “Slanderers and persecutors put to shame... *through gentleness and respect.*” (Sauls xxv)
  - **Matthew 5:43-44** “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
  - Getting to know the Other...

## CHANGING MINDS

- “[Carnegie] used a quotation from Henry Ford to express it: ‘If there is any one secret of success it lies in the ability to get the other person’s point of view and see things from



their angle as well as your own.’ – It’s such an obvious point, yet few of us apply it in moral and political arguments because our righteous minds so readily shift into combat mode. The rider and the elephant work together smoothly to fend off attacks and lob rhetorical grenades of our own. The performance may impress our friends and show allies that we are committed members of the team, but no matter how good our logic, it’s not going to change the minds of our opponents if they are in combat mode too. If you really want to change someone’s mind on a moral or political matter, you’ll need to see things from that person’s angle as well as your own. And if you do truly see it the other person’s way – deeply and intuitively – you might even find your own mind opening in response. Empathy is an antidote to righteousness, although it’s very difficult to empathize across a moral divide.” (Haidt 49)

- “if you want to change someone’s mind about a moral or political issue, talk to the elephant first. If you ask people to believe something that violates their intuitions, they will devote their efforts to finding an escape hatch – a reason to doubt your argument or conclusion. They will almost always succeed.” (Haidt 50)

## **CONCLUSION**

- “Morality binds and blinds. This is not just something that happens to people on the other side. WE all get sucked

into tribal moral communities. We circle around sacred values and then share post hoc arguments about why we are so right and they are so wrong. We think the other side is blind to truth, reason, science, and common sense, but in fact everyone goes blind when talking about their sacred objects.” (Haidt 311-312)

- “If you want to understand another group, follow the sacredness. As a first step, think about the six moral foundations, and try to figure out which one or two are carrying the most weight in a particular controversy. And if you really want to open your mind, open your heart first.” (Haidt 312)
- Or again, in Jesus’ words: **Matthew 5:43-44** “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’<sup>44</sup> But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,





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