



THE
AFTER PARTY
TOWARD BETTER CHRISTIAN POLITICS

Workshop Participant Workbook



We believe

The Gospel shows us a better way and we'd love for you to join us.

The After Party is a video course designed to provide churches, small groups, and individuals with an on-the-ground, biblically based approach to navigating today's challenging political environment.

It's no secret that the church has been challenged by extreme polarization, entrenched tribal affiliations, and the broken relationships that often result. Our course, born of a deep friendship among Russell Moore, David French, and Curtis Chang, is both inspiring and practical and will help you reorient your heart and mind towards a Christ-centered political identity for 2024 and beyond.

Through interactive videos that encourage participants to inventory their own political identities, consider the "how vs. the "what" of politics, and explore what the Bible has to say about it all, you'll be equipped to navigate these challenging topics in your own life and within the community you lead.

What can participants *expect?*

- No need to do much prep work! Expect just 10 minutes of work before each session.
- It's flexible: We have provided suggestions for a one, two, or three day workshop, but feel free to further adapt the content to best fit your needs and context.
- There's plenty of room: Our format for breakout discussions and exercises can be adapted to fit any group size.

Meet Your *Instructors*



Curtis Chang is the founding Executive Director of Redeeming Babel, host of the Good Faith podcast, and author of *The Anxiety Opportunity: How Worry Is the Doorway to Your Best Self*.



David French is a columnist at *The New York Times* and author of *Divided We Fall: America's Secession Threat and How to Restore Our Nation*.



Russell Moore is Editor-in-Chief of *Christianity Today*, the Director of its Public Theology Project, and author of *Losing Our Religion: An Altar Call for Evangelical America*.

ONE DAY WORKSHOP

Suggested agenda:

6 hours of programming + one hour lunch break

9:00 am - 12:00 pm Sessions 1-3 (include a 15 min break)

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm *Lunch*

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm Sessions 4-6 (include a 15 min break)

TWO DAY WORKSHOP

Suggested agenda:

3 hours of programming per session

Day 1

9:00 am - 12:00 pm Sessions 1-3 (include a 15 min break)

Day 2

9:00 am - 12:00 pm Sessions 4-6 (include a 15 min break)

THREE DAY WORKSHOP

Suggested agenda:

2 hours of programming per session

Day 1

9:00 am - 11:00 am Sessions 1-2 (include a 10 min break)

Day 2

9:00 am - 11:00 am Sessions 3-4 (include a 10 min break)

Day 3

9:00 am - 11:00 am Sessions 4-6 (include a 10 min break)

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

We invite you to take this brief survey (just 7 minutes!) prior to beginning your journey with The After Party. We'll ask you some quick questions about yourself, your experiences with faith & politics, and how you see the world around you.



Session 1 - Invited to the Party

Session 1 (VIDEO) - Watch 00:00 - 5:16, then hit pause

Disappeared Loved Ones

Individual Exercise

Suggested: 5 minutes

Who has disappeared from your life because of politics?

Perhaps you too have experienced a complicated brew of feelings around this question. Perhaps you have started this course because, for whatever reason, you think it might finally be time to address this question.

Do this quick exercise. Set a timer for 60 seconds. In the space provided and the time allotted, write down the people who have disappeared from your lives because of political tension.

Here are some prompts:

- Who do you no longer see at church, either because they've left or you've left?
- Whose texts have you stopped seeing, because you blocked them for the offensive links that were shared?
- What out of town friend or family member have you stopped connecting with when they visit because you fear even a catch up conversation could turn to current events?
- Who has disappeared from your social media feed because their posted comments were so disagreeable?
- Which family members have stopped showing up at Thanksgiving or Christmas because of a past conflict or simmering tension about politics?
- Who have you stopped inviting to your parties? Whose parties are you no longer invited to?

List the people below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

If you cannot identify at least one person that fits one of these descriptions, reflect on why that is the case. What does this reality mean about how your life is constructed?

If you can identify at least one person on your list, take a look at the list of feelings.

What are your feelings? Circle all of the words that resonate and add ones not on this list in the spaces below

Anger	Revulsion	Powerlessness
Sadness	Insecurity	Unaffected
Numb	Obsession	_____
Affection	Resentment	_____
Guilt	Confusion	_____
Curiosity	Outrage	_____

Session 1 (VIDEO) - Watch 5:17 - END

Notes from the video:

Individual Exercise

Suggested: 2 minutes

Identify the community that is most influential on your identity (i.e. church, work, neighborhood)

Rank how vulnerable this community is to the Law of Group Polarization (1-10)

Not very vulnerable

Very vulnerable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

For your religious community (i.e. church), rank how vulnerable this community is to blurring religious identity with political identity (1-10)

Not very vulnerable

Very vulnerable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 20 minutes

Discuss the below questions.

- Share your rankings above. Discuss why you chose your rankings.
- What do people think about this Big Shift (from What to the How of politics)?
- If you had a name on your “disappeared” list, can you imagine applying the Big Shift to that relationship?
- Could that Big Shift possibly change dynamics in that relationship? How so?

Notes:

Session 2 - The Disciple

Session 2 (VIDEO) - Watch 00:00 - 2:58, then hit pause

Individual Exercise

Suggested: 10 minutes

Each individual will go through two sets of questions and receive two scores, which you will add up at the end.

Note: This is not a scientifically designed diagnostic quiz. These questions are meant to be light-hearted and are intentionally designed to be a bit exaggerated to prompt conversation. Select the answers that most closely reflect your inclination when it comes to political topics and conversations.



You can take the quiz online at the QR code to the left, which will automatically give you a score, or you can manually take it in the workbook provided below.

Locating Yourself on the Quadrant

Read below the descriptions for each profile. After you read the descriptions, if you scored 15 and 15 or you do not feel like the profile you landed in is accurate, choose the one that best describes your current posture toward politics.

Circle your profile below.

Combatant (15+ hope, 0-15 humility)

Cynic (0-15 hope, 0-15 humility)

Exhausted (0-15 hope, 15+ humility)

Disciple (15+ hope, 15+ humility)

Note: These profiles are not fixed and you might have different tendencies depending on the discussion topic or your season of life.



The Combatant

The Combatant Profile is high in hope and low in humility. They are fighting political battles because they believe their side can win. However, their fighting spirit is untempered by the possibility that “they do not know what they are asking.” They believe confidently that their side is right, and that’s that.

We may see this among uncompromising young activists with sweeping policy demands, overzealous parents at a PTA meeting, or just that person who dominates conversations about politics. They engage because they believe their world can improve, but they miss the complexity of an issue or the validity present in opposing views.

In politics, Combatants exercise a level of influence that greatly exceeds their actual numbers. This is because politics — like any human activity — is dominated by those who care the most. And out of all the profiles, the Combatants care the most about winning. For them, the stakes are very high.

Picture the Combatant as the one who has their fists up to the world. They are more than ready to engage, but their posture means they are also defending themselves against any countervailing influence.

The Exhausted

The Exhausted Profile is the mirror image of the Combatant. The Exhausted is low in hope and high in humility. This profile is essentially humble: they do not claim to have all

the answers. In fact, they fear that no one can figure a way out of the current conflict, and so have given up on politics entirely.

We see this exhaustion among people skipping family reunions riven by partisan conflict, blocking anyone posting politics on social media, and changing the subject whenever this topic comes up in conversations. When conflict arises, they want to hide and back away into the bushes.

In America, surveys show that this profile is much more widespread than any other profile, giving rise to the term, “The Exhausted Majority.” Compared to the Combatants on both sides, the Exhausted Majority holds more moderate views, are more open to compromise, and dislike the spirit of hatred overtaking politics. However, the Exhausted actually exercise much less influence than would be warranted by their actual numbers. The reason is obvious: you cannot exert influence when you are hiding in the bushes.

Picture the Exhausted as the one who has their shoulders slumped and their face buried in their hands. In their politics, they are not offending or hurting others; but they also are squandering their potential influence for good.

The Cynic

The Cynic Profile is low in both humility and hope. Like the Combatant, Cynics believe they are right, and are not really open to learning otherwise; it’s just that unlike the Combatant, the Cynic is especially self-convinced about one particular truth: that things are hopeless. Like the Exhausted, the Cynics have given up — it’s just that unlike the Exhausted, the Cynics are so self-certain that they influence others with their deep seated pessimism.

In their combination of certitude and disengagement, Cynics can seem sophisticated (indeed, for many Cynics, this is part of the appeal of this posture). Their disengagement actually makes their critical takes more convincing than that of the Combatant (who can be more easily dismissed as biased). As confident and seemingly sophisticated critics, Cynics often exercise social influence disproportionate to their numbers.

However, the long-term effect of the Cynic is corrosive. At the individual level, cynicism is self-corrosive, as this posture leaves the holder stewing in a spiritually degrading mix of pride and despair. At the broader societal level, the spread of the “I know better” and “everything is hopeless” combination undermines our institutions. Institutions depend on people trusting institutional knowledge. However, as more citizens are influenced by the self-certitude of cynicism, the average person is increasingly willing to believe that he — armed with a few online videos produced by fringe voices (that sound very confident) — know better about the complexities of a virus and a vaccine than established scientific institutions. Institutions also depend on the participation of people. However, as politicians

who lose elections cynically undermine trust in the election system, people feel any kind of engagement is hopeless; they don't bother to even vote (much less volunteer as much needed election-workers).

Picture the Cynic with arms folded, eyebrows slightly arched, and standing above it all. In their politics, they are not offering their own constructive energy, only proffering critiques that tear down what is around them, especially the institutions that run so much of our lives.

The Disciple

The Disciple Profile is the one who is high in Humility and Hope because they have submitted their political lives to Jesus. The Disciple is humble: they recognize that the political world is defined by complexity, and this means that there are rarely obvious and easy answers. The Disciple believes firmly in objective truth, but is much less firm that they themselves have complete ownership of truth. The Disciple thus is willing — indeed eager — to listen and learn from others, including others who might hold different views.

The Disciple is also filled with Hope. The Disciple believes that Jesus is the Lord, the King of Kings. They have faith that Jesus will ultimately restore all of creation — including the political world — to God's loving and just purposes. The Disciple places their hope for this final restoration in Jesus and his final return, not in human political parties or leaders. In the meantime, the Disciple seeks to serve the world by acting as signposts to that ultimate Hope.

Picture the Disciple as the one whose head is inclined forward seeking to listen and learn, and whose arms are held open ready to accept and serve.

Individual Reflection

Suggested: 2 minutes

1. How does your political profile make you feel?

Circle which of the possible responses might apply to you (you can choose more than one):

Seen	Curious	Frustrated
Affirmed	Hesitant	Angry
Emotional	Confused	_____
Raw	Annoyed	_____

Session 2 (VIDEO) - *Watch 3:00 - END*

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 20 minutes

As a group, discuss the strengths and weaknesses found in each profile of the combatant, cynic, and exhausted.

- Even if you are not sure you agree quite yet with the profile assigned to you, put it on for size for a moment. How might this profile provide further insights about how you engage in politics?
 - This profile refers to your posture towards politics. But do you see this posture in other parts of your life? If so, how?
- Do the other profiles describe people you know?
 - Do they describe anyone on your “disappeared” list?
 - How might this profile help explain them?
- How is your profile connected to your strengths or weaknesses in other parts of your life?
 - For example, if you are an Exhausted in politics, how does that High Humility/Low Hope profile help you in other parts of your life?
 - What do you think could be aspects of your political beliefs that need more hope or humility?
 - How might you need to ask God for forgiveness for the weaker aspects of your profile?
 - Might there be ways you may eventually want to ask other people for forgiveness for the weaknesses in your profile?

Notes:

Session 3 - The Combatant

Session 3 (VIDEO) - *Watch the full video*

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 30 minutes

As a group or in smaller groups, select a few of the following prompts and questions to discuss.

- What did you think about how David described the “partisan mind?”
- How do you feel about the traits of “the partisan mind?”
- Where have you witnessed the “partisan mind” in others?
- When have you felt “partisan mind” dynamics in yourself?
- When, if ever, has your perception of someone (based on political persuasion) been wrong? How did you figure it out?
- Describe a time when your mind was changed about a topic or idea that you once held. Was it a particular conversation you had? A book you read? A life changing experience?

Notes:

Session 4 - The Exhausted

Session 4 (VIDEO) - *Watch the full video*

Individual Exercise

Suggested: 5 minutes

What makes you feel exhausted? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Social media posts
- ☐ Tense conversations
- ☐ Talk shows
- ☐ Cable news
- ☐ Other influences? [Fill in the blank]

Why do you keep exposing yourself to exhausting influences?

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 20 minutes

As a group or in smaller groups, select a few of the following prompts and questions to discuss.

- What do we **seek** or **avoid** when we expose ourselves to the influences listed in the individual exercise? Consider possible things we are **seeking**:
 - *Recognition* (because people are responding to what we post)
 - *Reassurance* (because we need to be right in our views)
 - *Stimulus* (because we don't want to be left with our own boredom/silence/emptiness)
- Consider possible things we are **avoiding**:
 - In person conversations (because they require more effort)
 - Boredom, silence, inner emptiness (because these feelings are uncomfortable)
 - Anxiety (because we think if we find out more information, we can escape uncertainty)
- How did Nancy and Kathy's story make you feel?
 - What did it stir in you?
 - What might God be saying to you in those stirrings?

- Is there a relationship in your own life that is coming to mind?
- What are some ways you can change your social media behavior (both what you post & what you consume) so that you better reflect Christ in this arena?
- Likewise, how can you further model charity and kindness through your time spent on social media?
- Are there new social media habits you can think of that might reduce your own fear or anxiety or draw you into connection with those who might have a different perspective?

Notes:

Session 5 - The Cynic

Session 5 (VIDEO) - *Watch the full video*

Brainstorm Exercise

Suggested: 10 minutes

As a full group, use a flip chart or white board to create a list of current injustices in the world around you. Remember that this is a brainstorm exercise: you can ask people to clarify their suggested issue, but this is not the time to debate the issues. See the suggested prompts on the next page, and take notes in the box if you'd like.

Suggestions

- Try to generate as many specific candidates for your list as you can in the time allotted.

- Consider injustices at various levels, from international to national to local.

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 20 minutes

As a group or in smaller groups, select a few of the following prompts and questions to discuss.

- When it comes to politics, how much do you identify with the Cynic tendency?
 - How does this tendency show up for you?
 - What do you think about Curtis's perspective about the Cynic?
 - What are the barriers to spiritual growth for the Cynic?
- Why did Russell point to the pursuit of justice as important for the Cynic?
- Why did Dr. Dates point to the Civil Rights Movement as a model for Christian politics?
 - What feels compelling about this model? What feels challenging about this model?
- Review the list of injustices (from the brainstorm exercise) and pick one that particularly interests you.
 - Together imagine what it would look like for Christians to "act justly" on this issue in the ways that David described.
 - What would Christians be doing?
 - How would they relate to others?
 - How would they be praying?
 - How might the world respond?

- How would this affect the Christians involved?

Notes:

Session 6 - The True After Party

Session 5 (VIDEO) - *Watch the full video*

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 20 minutes

As a group or in smaller groups, answer the questions below.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:17

Based on 2 Timothy 1:7, David invites us to:

1. "not give in to a spirit of fear"
 2. "love your enemies"
 3. "engage with a sound and sober mind"
- Which of these invitations feels most important for you right now?
 - What have you learned from the course that could help you do this?

Russell calls us to focus on the true "After Party" of Jesus — the "wedding feast of the Lamb."

- What has been your past understanding of this ultimate future event?
- How does your past understanding compare to the biblical picture presented by Russell?

- How might the After Party of Jesus reshape your feelings about politics in the immediate future?

Individual Reflection

Suggested: 5 minutes

As an individual, take some time to reflect on these questions in the box below.

1. What is the most important takeaway you want to hang onto?
2. What is one change you feel like Jesus is inviting you to make?

Notes:

Homework

Look back at the names you generated in the 1-2 Disappeared Loved Ones exercise and slowly read each name out loud. As you do so, invite the Holy Spirit to guide your feelings. Try to discern if a particular name tugs at you.

With that one name, ask the Holy Spirit to help you call that person to mind.

- What do they look like?
- How did you meet this person?
- What was your favorite memory of this person?
- What traits of theirs did you especially appreciate?

After you've answered the questions, spend 5 minutes praying for that person.

For those with at least one name on your "disappeared" list: Ask yourself, "How motivated are you to grow a relationship with someone who is different than you politically?"

Rank your current interest level from (1-10)

Not very motivated

Very motivated

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Then spend 5 minutes praying based on the following:

- If your rank is below 5, ask God if He is now wanting you to change your motivational level.
- If your rank is above 5, ask God for creative ideas on how you might get started. Ask God specifically about Russell's advice to start by finding a common goal that could be the context for this new relationship (i.e. volunteering together on a community project).

Write down any insights that came to you during this exercise & additional notes.

Either with the same person you prayed for above or someone else that lives nearby, pray and ask God to lead you to someone who elicits a sense of longing for a further reunion.

Write this person's name:

If you and this person are both on social media, review their posts to see what has happened in their life in the following categories:

- Cause for celebration
- Cause for congratulations
- Cause for sympathy
- Cause for intercessory prayer
- Cause for meeting a concrete need

Pray for this person at least three times along these lines, and jot down what the Holy Spirit stirs within you:

Consider sending a message (perhaps via social media) expressing celebration, congratulations, sympathy, or some other positive sentiment. If you feel comfortable, share that you have been praying for this person. Write out below what you could communicate to this person:

Depending on the response, consider a way that you can bring a shared meal into the picture. Perhaps it is offering to bring them home cooked or store bought food in a time of stress or need. Perhaps it may even involve offering to take them out to express celebration, congratulations, or sympathy in person.

If you are going to meet in person over a meal, here are some suggestions:

- Stay away from discussing politics for the first meeting.
- Prepare a short list of things that you know are happening in their life (because you've seen references to them on social media). Ask questions and arrive ready to listen.
- Prepare a short list of things happening in your own life that you are willing to let the other person in on. Come ready to be humble, honest, and open.

You've reached the end of The After Party workshop. We've so enjoyed having you here and hope your journey through the workshop has left you feeling equipped & empowered to lean into difficult conversations, re-center your heart (and politics!) on Jesus, rebuild relationships, and more.

Would you be willing to take a short survey to share your experience? Your feedback on The After Party will help us refine our work so we can equip & encourage more people like you. As a small token of thanks for completing the survey, we'd love to send you a copy of our newest book *The After Party: Toward Better Christian Politics*. If you'd like the book, be sure to leave your full name and full mailing address in the form provided at the end of the survey. Thank you for being a part of this growing movement — we're so glad you're here! Follow the QR code to complete the survey.

