



THE
AFTER PARTY
TOWARD BETTER CHRISTIAN POLITICS

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 free six-part 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?

The course can be experienced individually or with a small group. A few notes for group leaders:

- No need to do much prep work! Expect just 10 minutes of work before each session.
- It's flexible: The course can be completed via Zoom or in person.
- There's plenty of room: Each group member can register for free.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

We invite you to take this brief survey (just 2 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.



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*.

SESSION 1

Invited to the Party

Session 1 - Invited to the Party

1-1 The Problem (VIDEO 5:30)

Notes from the video:

1-2 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

If you have extra time, jot down a few notes about your experience with this exercise.

Notes:

Small Group Discussion

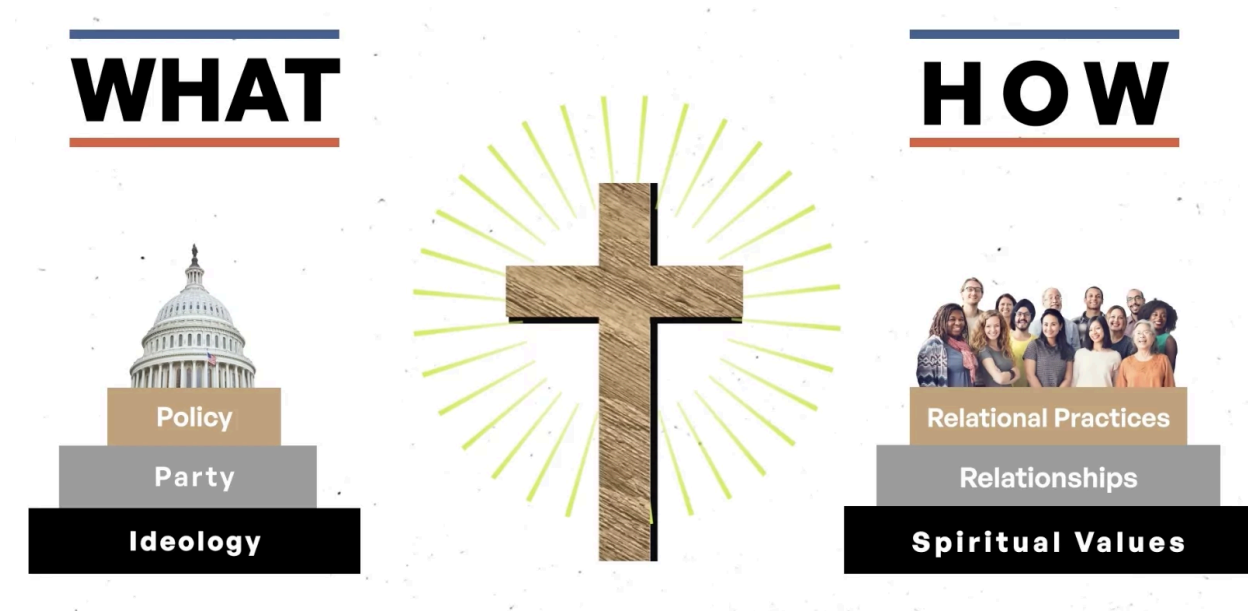
Suggested: 10 minutes

Split up into pairs or smaller groups and discuss any insights that emerged from this exercise.

1-3 The Big Shift (VIDEO 12:00)

Notes from the video:

1-4 What Versus How



Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 minutes

If you are in a small group, discuss the below questions. Otherwise, use the text box below to journal and reflect on the questions.

- 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?

1-5 The Law of Group Polarization (VIDEO 12:30)

Notes from the video:

1-6 Self-Evaluation of our Communities

GROUP POLARIZATION:

**WHEN PEOPLE OF LIKE MIND GATHER,
OVER TIME, THE GROUP CAN BECOME
MORE EXTREME THAN THE MOST EXTREME
PERSON IN THE GROUP**

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

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 10 minutes

Share your rankings. Discuss why you chose your rankings. Or journal about your rankings in the box below.

1-7 The Difficulty of Love (VIDEO 8:35)

Notes from the video:

1-8 The Question of Love

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 10 minutes

With the remaining time, discuss or journal about the insights or key takeaways from session one.

Session 1 - 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.

SESSION 2

The Disciple

Session 2 - The Disciple

2-1 Hope and Humility (VIDEO 11:30)

Notes from the video:

2-2 Hope and Humility Conversation Starter

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 result, or you can manually take it in the workbook provided below.

Hope Questions

You're flipping through the channels on your TV or scrolling through social media and the latest political controversy appears. What do you do?

- A. Walk away from the TV or immediately close the app. The news throws you into a state of despair about the world and you'd rather ignore it.
- B. Leave the channel on or keep scrolling through the controversy for hours.
- C. Switch channels/apps and look for something to distract you from all of the bad news.

- D. Take about 30 minutes to learn the details, then turn it off.

If someone were to ask if you trust government leaders to make important decisions for the U.S., how would you reply?

- A. No. If they made it into office, then they're already corrupt.
- B. Not usually. They don't seem concerned with what's at stake in the decisions for people like me.
- C. Sometimes. I distrust some individuals but assume most are operating in good faith.
- D. Yes. The U.S. Constitution establishes a framework and process for democratic participation and holding leadership accountable.

What do you do during an election year?

- A. Tune it all out. Conflict is uncomfortable and, in any case, you believe your vote doesn't really matter.
- B. Devote yourself to a platform or a party. You quietly hope that those from the other party might choose not to vote.
- C. Reluctantly do some research and vote quietly. You're glad when it's over.
- D. Read widely about the topics that are important to you, even from those whose opinions you find offensive, to understand all sides of the debate.

Which set of words best describes how you feel about politics?

- A. Frustrated and defeated
- B. Lost and nostalgic
- C. It's complicated
- D. Hopeful

The future of American democracy looks like it is heading in the direction of...

- A. Civil war
- B. Perpetual unrest
- C. A stalemate
- D. Healthy compromise

Do you pray for the government or specific government leaders?

- A. No, the country is continuing to go downhill.
- B. Yes, but only for one political party to win.
- C. Occasionally, when you feel despair about the future.
- D. Yes, consistently.

You are going to Thanksgiving or another event where you know you'll have to spend a lot of time with people who don't see eye-to-eye on politics. How do you prepare?

- A. Find a reason to back out. Too much drama and stress.
- B. You'll go, but you'll do everything you can to avoid that person or that topic.
- C. Research and prepare your arguments. Maybe this is the year when you convince your uncle to agree with you.
- D. Focus on the time spent together. Some things are more important than politics.

Humility Questions

When the presidential political debates are televised, what do you do?

- A. Cheer on your candidates and shout down opposing candidates like at a sporting event.
- B. Who are you kidding? You're not watching because you know how it ends. You might read a couple of analyses the next day.
- C. Pause the debate constantly to fact-check the candidates when they get something wrong and debunk their claims.
- D. Try to gather various perspectives on the debate by watching with friends who see things differently or reading articles from different viewpoints the next day.

Your uncle reposts on Facebook a thread that has been circulating filled with wild conspiracy theories. How do you respond?

- A. Get into a debate with your uncle publicly on his post and link articles to your favorite news sites debunking the conspiracy theory.
- B. Take a screenshot and send it to a family member or friend with the caption: "look how crazy this is."
- C. Hide your uncle from your Facebook feed so you don't see his posts anymore.
- D. Pray for your uncle and maybe ask if he would like to catch up sometime soon.

You are at church when the preacher says something you disagree with politically. What's your reaction?

- A. Vow to write the preacher a harsh email on Monday morning to explain your anger that they pushed a political agenda from the pulpit.
- B. Size up the person beside you quickly and assume they would not be kind to you if you expressed your disagreement.
- C. Ask your pastor to grab coffee so you can politely explain your disagreement.
- D. Talk with people at your church who are interested in the contentious topic. You hope to foster respect and better understand the other side.

Which adjectives would your family or friends use to describe how you approach political conversations?

- A. Aggressive and argumentative
- B. Passionate and committed
- C. Careful and sympathetic
- D. Thoughtful and nuanced

If you were to meet a stranger who held an opposite political belief about a topic you are passionate about, you would feel...

- A. Defensive about your own worldview.
- B. Threatened by their worldview.
- C. Hesitant to start a conversation.
- D. Curious to learn more about how they arrived at their beliefs.

How often have you changed your opinion on a topic you were confident about?

- A. Never
- B. Seldom
- C. Occasionally
- D. I've had to admit I was wrong several times

Do you believe a Christian can reasonably have a different stance on a controversial issue like immigration reform or gun control?

- A. No, not if they've carefully thought through it.

- B. On most hot topic issues there is only one right Christian response.
- C. Sometimes, but what really matters is that Scripture is more of a guide than a rulebook for politics.
- D. Well-meaning, well-informed, godly people can disagree on specific policy issues.

Scoring Your Exercise

For each set of questions, tally your number of Bs, Cs, and Ds and record them in the **blue** blanks.

Then, multiply each by the prescribed multiplier (1, 2, or 3) and record the total score for each letter in the corresponding **red** blanks.

Finally, add each column of red blanks and record the total below in the **green** blanks.

Hope Questions

___Bs → multiply by 1 → B score total: ___

___Cs → $\frac{\text{multiply by}}{2}$ → C score total: ___

___Ds → $\frac{\text{multiply by}}{3}$ → D score total: ___

Hope Score: ___

Humility Questions

___Bs → multiply by 1 → B score total: ___

___Cs → multiply by 2 → C score total: ___

___Ds → multiply by 3 → D score total: ___

Humility Score: ___

2-3 Explaining the Quadrant (VIDEO 3:00)

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)

Exhausted (0-15 hope, 15+ humility)

Cynic (0-15 hope, 0-15 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.

2-4 Quadrant Application

Individual Reflection

Suggested: 10 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

If you feel like the political profile is missing something important, inaccurate, or you don't like it at all, describe below your reaction.

2. Be curious.

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?

3. This profile refers to your posture towards politics. But do you see this posture in other parts of your life? If so, how?

4. Understanding others.

Read through the other profiles in the last section.

- How do you feel about the other profiles?
- Do the other profiles describe people you know? Do they describe anyone on your "disappeared" list?
- How might this profile help explain them?

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 10 minutes

Each person can share anything that arose from the Individual Reflection Exercise.

2-5 Our Need for Humility (VIDEO 10:30)

Notes from the video:

2-6 Your Profile: Strengths, Forgiveness, and Humility

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 10 minutes

As a group, discuss the strengths and weaknesses found in each profile of the combatant, cynic, and exhausted. You will have the opportunity for homework to reflect further about your own strengths and weaknesses in your profile.

2-7 Our Need for Hope (VIDEO 11:40)

Notes from the video:

2-8 Walking Towards Hope

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 10 minutes

With the remaining time, discuss or journal about the insights or key takeaways from session two.

Session 2 - Homework

Our Profile as a Strength

David demonstrates how his Combatant profile was connected to his strengths in other parts of his life, like his vocation (i.e., as a lawyer before and as a public commentator today).

How is your profile connected to your strengths 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?

Our Profile as a Need for Humility

David is a Combatant, which means he needs to grow in Humility. The Cynic (as we will discover in Session 5) also needs to grow in this way. The Exhausted and the Disciple need to sustain their Humility. All of us — all of the profiles — need Humility in some way.

What is your current level of motivation to grow/sustain your humility? (1-10)

Not very motivated

Very motivated

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

David also described how he grew in Humility by listening to his friend in the Army who was different politically than him. Reflect on the below questions.

- Is there anyone on your “disappeared list” that could potentially play that role, if the relationship could be repaired?
- If not, is there anyone else who could play that role?
- If you can’t think of anyone in your relational circles, is there a public writer who could helpfully play that role of dialogue partner? If you don’t know, how could you discover such a person?

Our Profile as a Need for Forgiveness

David described how his profile also led to a need for forgiveness. Reflect on the below questions in the notes box.

- Can you imagine ways that this might be true for you?
- 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?
- What do you think could be aspects of your political beliefs that need more humility?

SESSION 3

The Combatant

Session 3 – The Combatant

3-1 What is the Partisan Mind? (16:10)

Notes from the video:

3-2 Understanding the Partisan Mind

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 minutes

If you are in a small group, discuss the below questions. Otherwise, use the text box to journal and reflect on the questions.

- 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?

3-3 What is the Mind of Christ? (VIDEO 11:15)

Notes from the video:

3-4 Developing Humility

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 min

The “mind of Christ” is the mind filled with Humility and Hope. For the Combatant, the “the mind of Christ” can transform the “partisan mind” by growing Humility.

If you are in a small group, discuss the below questions. Otherwise, use the text box below to journal and reflect on the questions.

- 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?

3-5 Fighting for the Kingdom of God (VIDEO 11:00)

Notes from the video:

3-6 Working for Peace and Reconciliation

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 minutes

With the remaining time, discuss or journal about the insights or key takeaways from session three.

Session 3 - Homework

1. Identify a story in your life when you finally discovered you were wrong about something important. The story doesn't have to be political per se. It could be:

- How you handled a relationship
- A disagreement at work
- A financial decision
- Or anything else that felt important at the time

In "free write form" (where you start writing and don't stop, letting the words come to you), reconstruct the story from memory:

2. Reflect on the period in the story BEFORE you discovered you were wrong — the part of the story when you felt like you were right.

- Why did you think you were right?
- What were you feeling during this period? (Example emotions could include: anger, disdain, pride, confidence, and more)
- What do you regret about this period?

3. Identify the process by which you discovered that you were actually wrong about this issue. How did this discovery happen?

- Was it something that you did differently?

- Was it somebody else doing something differently?
- Something else?

4. As you reflect on that story, what wisdom do you want to take from this story and apply to how you relate to others around politics?

SESSION 4

The Exhausted

Session 4 - The Exhausted

4-1 How Did the Church Exhaust Itself? (VIDEO 15:10)

Notes from the video:

4-2 Naming and Examining Your Exhaustion

Individual Exercise

Suggested: 10 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?

What do we **seek** or **avoid** when we expose ourselves to those influences? Use the below prompts to journal on the things we seek and avoid.

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)

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 10 minutes

Share an insight with the group that emerged from the self-evaluation.

4-3 An Unlikely Friendship (VIDEO 11:50)

Notes from the video:

4-4 Relationships and Social Media

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 minutes

If you are in a small group, discuss the below questions. Otherwise, use the text box to journal and reflect on the questions.

- 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?

4-5 Everyone Faces a Hard Battle (VIDEO 5:00)

Notes from the video:

4-6 Taking a Step Toward a Disappeared Loved One

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 minutes

If you are in a small group, discuss the below questions. Otherwise, use the text box below to journal and reflect on the questions.

- 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?

Session 4 - Homework

Review again your list of “disappeared loved ones.” Focus on the people that live nearby. Pray and ask God to lead you to someone who elicits a sense of longing for a further reunion (this could be someone whom you’ve already chosen for a previous exercise, or it could be a new person).

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.

SESSION 5

The Cynic

Session 5 - The Cynic

5-1 Introduction to the Cynic (VIDEO 12:40)

Notes from the video:

5-2 Understanding the Cynic

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 minutes

If you are in a small group, break up into triads or smaller groups to discuss the below questions. Otherwise, use the text box below to journal and reflect on the questions.

- 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?

5-3 Pursuing Justice as the Antidote to Cynicism (VIDEO 14:10)

Notes from the video:

5-4 Reflecting on Past and Present Injustices

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 10 minutes

If you are in a small group, discuss the below questions. Otherwise, use the text box below to journal and reflect on the questions.

- 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?

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, 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.
- Keep the list visible for the rest of the lesson.

5-5 How We Pursue Justice (VIDEO 12:15)

Notes from the video:

5-6 Acting Justly

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 minutes

Go back into your triads or smaller groups to discuss the below questions. For individuals, use the text box to journal and reflect on the questions.

- 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?

Session 5 - Homework

There's no shortage of hard, lasting challenges in our broken world, including things like poverty, war, and natural disasters. What single challenge most challenges your own hope or leaves you feeling like nothing will ever change?

Spend the next 5 minutes brainstorming one small step you can take to move towards hope around this issue. Consider things like intentional prayer, contributing your time or treasure, going deep on the complexities of the issue, and so on.

SESSION 6

The True After Party

Session 6 - The True After Party

6-1 The Wedding Feast of the Lamb (20:00)

Notes from the video:

6-2 An Invitation to Jesus-Centered Politics

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 10 minutes

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7

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"

If you are in a small group, break into pairs to discuss the below questions. Otherwise, use the text box below to journal and reflect on the questions.

- Which of these invitations feels most important for you right now?
- What have you learned from the course that could help you do this?

6-3 The Kingdom of God (VIDEO 7:25)

Notes from the video:

6-4 The After Party of Jesus

Individual Reflection or Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 minutes

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

If you are in a small group, break up into triads and discuss the following questions. Otherwise, use the text box below to journal and reflect on the questions.

- 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?

6-5 Signposts on the Way to Becoming a Disciple (VIDEO 6:15)

Notes from the video:

6-6 Closing Reflection and Discussion

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?

Small Group Discussion

Suggested: 15 minutes

Have everyone share with the full group their one takeaway and one change. If there is time left over, take time to share any additional reflections on the course.

6-7 Closing (VIDEO 3:00)

Notes from the video:

Session 6 - Homework

You've reached the end of The After Party course. We've so enjoyed having you here and hope your journey through the course 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. 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.

