



Outline

Session 1: *Invited to the Party*

Session 2: *The Disciple*

Session 3: *The Combatant*

Session 4: *The Exhausted*

Session 5: *The Cynic*

Session 6: *The True After Party*

What is it?

The After Party (TAP) is a 6 session video based curriculum that promotes a Christ centered political identity amidst the current toxic polarization. The course is designed for small groups (i.e. church small groups, book groups, seminars in Christian higher education, etc.), but will also include an option for individual engagement.

How will it be experienced?

The primary TAP curriculum guides participants through a creative combination of teaching by David French, Russell Moore, and Curtis Chang, testimonials from others, interactive exercises, and group discussions.

Where do you take the audience?

The audience journey begins by first locating oneself as identifying with one of the three common political identities: Combatant, Cynic, Exhausted. TAP calls participants to move from their particular starting point towards the Learner identity — a move which is the essence of becoming a “disciple.” Encouraging Christians to adopt the Learner identity in politics — with Jesus as our Teacher — is the key goal of the course.

Curriculum Overview

SESSION ONE: Invited to the party

Relationships, communities, and churches are being fractured in our acrimonious political climate, and Christians can’t avoid the topic of political cultural engagement any longer. That’s where The After Party comes in. We are not telling people whether to be a Republican or a Democrat, what to believe about any particular issue, or asking people to stop caring about politics. Instead, we want Christians to care more — and more thoughtfully — by relating to perceived political enemies in light of Scriptural teaching. We want to reframe the preoccupation with the “what” of politics (various hot button cultural issues) to the “how” of politics.

In Session One, Curtis Chang, Russell Moore, and David French begin by talking about Micah 6:8 then pivot to Jesus himself. Interestingly Jesus’s inner circle included people who held deeply opposed political beliefs: Simon was a “Zealot” (the Zealots were a Jewish political party that hated the Roman government ruling over Israel). Matthew was a “tax collector” (a political position appointed by the Romans to collect their taxes on the Jewish people). Politically, Matthew and Simon were at odds, yet they gathered regularly around Jesus – the Who of their politics, because their new identity in Christ transcended their political identity.

Compared to the world, we are gathered around a different WHO. Therefore, we should share a different HOW. The different HOW is “how” we show the world we follow a different WHO. Since our WHO is Love personified, that’s how people will know we are Christians: by our love.

The After Party asks people to gather around the Who of Jesus and let Him reshape us with his HOW of politics.

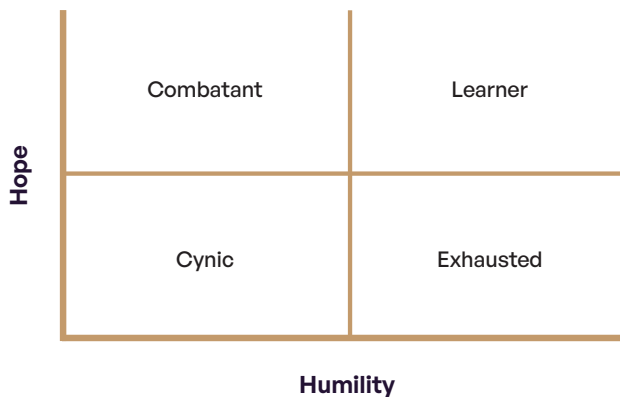
In this session, we will talk about the law of group polarization; how the Big Sort and social media push us to homogeneity; and why learning from Jesus requires being open to difference.

SESSION TWO: The Disciple

You might be predisposed to being combative (fighting cultural

problems), cynical (dismissing cultural problems), or exhausted (hiding from cultural problems), but we are called to be learners.

A disciple of Jesus is a “learner from Jesus.” A Disciple is high in HUMILITY; they know they don’t know everything or are right in everything — that’s why they need to learn. And they are also high in HOPE: they believe that the Master teaching them can make things better, can teach them what’s right, and that they themselves can change. This 2x2 shows how hope and humility affect each category.



There’s no judgment about your category. The three of us also tend towards certain quadrants. David French tends to be a Combatant; Russell Moore tends to be Exhausted; and Curtis Chang tends to be a Cynic. These profoundly human states are merely starting points from which we can move. Spiritual growth is moving from any of these starting tendencies towards the posture of the Disciple.

There is a path forward.

The *Combatant* needs Jesus to lead us towards greater humility; the *Exhausted* needs Jesus to lead us toward greater hope; and *Cynics* need both greater humility and hope.

Humility, a key part of this growth process, comes from recognizing complexity. This is why being in relationship with people who hold different political views is so helpful to becoming a disciple. Jesus called both Simon the Zealot and Matthew the Tax Collector — to gather around him even *with* their political differences. The two of them must have learned from each other, and grown in their humility.

This session will encourage people who already have a relationship with someone who is different politically and want to more deeply tap into the potential for Hope. It will also encourage people without such a relationship to ask Jesus to provide one. We can only grow together when we

are in a relationship with other disciples.

SESSION 3: The Combatant

David French, who tends towards being a Combatant, takes the helm of this conversation. He explains that partisan mindsets prevent Combatants from being Disciples.

The Partisan Mind divides people into US vs THEM. It leads people to believe the other side is evil and out to get them. When locked into this Partisan Mind, the Combatant is closed off from humility. This affects how we relate to Jesus as a disciple and how we relate to others. This mindset has damaged the church, relationships, and our witness of Christ to the world. The Partisan Mind undermines the central claim of the cross, that the US vs THEM division of the world have been overcome by Jesus (Eph 2:13–16). The cross puts to death the hostility between everyone and God, as well as the hostility between US vs THEM. For anyone submitted to the Cross, there is only an US.

Humility isn’t necessarily changing your political beliefs or watering them down. It’s submitting to Jesus. When we seek to move from Combatant to Disciple, it turns out we are fighting against spiritual forces that draw us into the US vs THEM mindset. This is precisely the strategy of the Enemy.

There actually is an US vs. THEM. But “our struggle is not against flesh and blood.” The real battle is against the devil. We are to take our stand — not against human “flesh and blood” opponents — but rather “against the devil’s schemes.”

In this session, we examine how our Enemy hides behind human institutions and works schemes through them. The devil’s scheme is to use political institutions to reconstruct the “dividing walls of hostility,” to separate and divide humanity back into US vs THEM. That’s how the devil and his forces attempt to diminish the power of the Cross.

In this session, we explain how to resist the “devil’s schemes.”

Combatants have a wonderful and necessary spirit, because they are willing to “stand their ground.” They just have to make sure we are standing against the true Enemy. There is a fight going on. It’s a fight between the partisan mind and the mind of Christ.

SESSION 4: The Exhausted

Russell Moore, who is prone to be in the Exhausted category, takes the helm in this fifth session.

The *Exhausted* tends towards *hiding*. Like the *Cynic*, they don’t have much hope. But unlike the *Cynic*, they don’t assume they are right; they have more humility. But for the Exhausted, trying to figure out what’s right or do what’s right

is just that, it feels too exhausting. They are low in HOPE. They tend to want to just curl up and wish it would all go away.

We should pay attention to our feelings of exhaustion. Exhaustion is a signal that we have misplaced our hope. The Disciple is filled with a Jesus hope that does not leave us exhausted. In Matthew 11:28–30, Jesus says that His “yoke is easy” and His “burden is light.”

In this session, we explain how social media encourages us to adopt an US vs THEM mindset and creates more hopelessness and more exhaustion. We provide practical advice on how to change our relationship to social media and the wider world.

SESSION 5: The Cynic

Curtis Chang, who tends towards being a Cynic, takes the helm of this conversation. A Cynic is low in HOPE. Cynics think that politics is hopeless, because nothing can ever change. They are also low in HUMILITY, because they believe they can see more clearly than either side. *A Cynic tends to dismiss everyone else.*

Cynics need to learn the profound difference between *dismissing everyone* and *seeking justice for everyone* (Micah 6:8). Seeking the common good (which is another way to describe Biblical justice) grows out of our HOPE and HUMILITY, and also actively grows those virtues as we do so. Seeking the common good for everyone is the pathway toward discipleship for the Cynic.

This session will provide some practical ways for participants to seek the common good at the level that will most build HOPE and HUMILITY, which is not in the distant debates of national politics, but in local projects that involve face to face, shoulder to shoulder efforts with actual neighbors.

SESSION 6: The True After Party

Does this Jesus centered politics work? What do we mean by ‘work?’ What is the purpose of human politics? What can we rightly expect of it? This session explains that partisan politics will never deliver what it promises. It will also make outsized promises: it will resist HUMILITY. It will ultimately fail to deliver on those promises: it will dash HOPE. That’s why partisan politics leads us towards adopting the posture of a Combatant, Cynic, or Exhausted.

The answer isn’t a What — it is a Who. It is Jesus himself. The Bible depicts the return of Jesus as a party: the wedding feast of the Lamb; the feast on the mountaintop (Isaiah 60–66). This party establishes true peace, ending all the “Us vs Them” conflicts of the world. This party does what politics

and political parties can never do.

This is the true Christian hope. Imagine if we redirected all the energy and emotion currently consumed by partisan conflict towards this true after party? Imagine how much more hopeful we would all be.

However, this is not how people normally think about politics. We wrongly think politics is the destination instead of a signpost to the true after party. Ultimate restoration will happen when we truly become an “us” gathered around King Jesus.

The promise of the true after party doesn’t mean we should stop paying attention, caring about, or being engaged in politics, or even call ourselves Democrats or Republicans. But it ought to relativize current politics and parties. It doesn’t make them the ultimate deliverer of hope; it makes current politics a mere signpost to the party.

A signpost doesn’t achieve the hoped for reality, but it points towards it. It is hopeful because it shows where we are headed. It does this by conveying some partial nature of that final destination. Our current politics should do the same: not give false hope by promising that it can achieve what we want; but rather convey some partial aspects of that for which we long.

The wedding feast of the lamb is where HOPE (all that is broken is mended) AND HUMILITY (when “every knee shall bow”) come together in fullness.