



DEAR FELLOW PASTORS,

Before I founded Redeeming Babel, I served for years as a senior pastor. I loved that role deeply, and also, it nearly unraveled me. I know firsthand what it means to preach week after week with an eye on faces in the congregation and a heart full of questions: Is it wise to speak plainly today? Will my words fracture what's already fragile? Can our church withstand another election cycle?

Those aren't abstract concerns. They're questions I wrestled with regularly. Pastoral ministry has always asked much of us. But these days, it asks more. This cultural moment is charged: politically, socially, even theologically. Many pastors feel like they're walking a tightrope, carrying the weight of others' anxieties while navigating their own.

The After Party was born from this kind of terrain. Together with David French and Russell Moore, we've tried to help Christians not just consider what to believe about politics, but how to engage with faith, hope, and integrity. We created the course and its resources not as an answer key, but as a guide for the spiritual formation work pastors like you are doing every day.

This material is not meant to be another thing on your plate. It's intended to come alongside your ministry and to serve as a tool, a guide, and maybe even a bit of relief. We hope it encourages you to lead with clarity, listen with humility, and fully trust that what Christ calls us to in public is no different than what He calls us to in private: to focus on love, truth, and grace.

In this guide you'll find:

- The After Party's Guide for Tending the Flock in a Polarized Age
- Videos of Encouragement from Fellow Pastors
- A Guide to all Scripture used in The After Party

May this be a season of clear-eyed leadership – one that is not driven by fear but by a deeper, steadier hope.

With you in the work,
Curtis Chang



Tending the Flock in a Polarized Age

**A PASTOR'S GUIDE TO DISCIPLING
THROUGH POLITICAL STORMS**



LISTEN

Russell Moore on Shepherding During an Election Year



Pastor, we know politics have become a source of tension, division, and fatigue in many congregations—including yours. This guide isn't here to add to that burden. It's here to help you speak into that space with wisdom, courage, and grace.

It offers simple, practical ways to disciple your people in how they engage politically, not to win arguments, but to become more like Christ. Drawing from The After Party course and book, these practices can be woven into your church life through small groups, teaching moments, or quiet conversations that spark real change.

WATCH

Ray Ortlund's message of encouragement to pastors in the midst of Political Tension



Political division isn't just a cultural issue—it's a discipleship issue. Your faithful leadership can help your congregation rediscover what it means to follow Jesus, especially in a world urging them to follow factions.

Jesus didn't come to take sides; He came to call people to Himself. You don't have to take a political stand. You get to take a pastoral one. And this guide is here to help you do that well.

Move from the *What* to the *How*

“What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” — Micah 6:8

In most political conversations, the central question is **what**:

What policy do you support?

What party do you vote for?

What position do you hold on this issue?

But *The After Party* invites us to make **The Big Shift**, from *what* we believe to *how* we engage. Not because the “what” is unimportant, but because the “how” reveals the condition of our hearts. Jesus never gave his followers a political checklist, but he did give us the Beatitudes. He didn’t command us to win debates, but to love our enemies. He didn’t endorse a platform—he formed a people.

This shift from *what* to *how* is not disengagement; it’s *discipleship*. It’s asking, *How do I speak to someone who votes differently? How do I respond when I’m misunderstood or maligned? How do I reflect Christ in how I participate in public life—even in high-stakes, high-conflict moments?*

When we embrace *The Big Shift*, we aren’t surrendering our convictions, we’re surrendering our posture to Jesus. We’re learning to be shaped more by the Sermon on the Mount than the comment section. And we’re offering the world a vision of Christian political engagement that is compelling, credible, and Christ-centered.

PRACTICES FOR PASTORS

- **Preach:** A series on Micah 6:8 and the Beatitudes as a public witness framework.
- **Reflect:** Where is the “us vs. them” story showing up in your church? What would a “how” story sound like instead?
- **Pray:** “Lord, where am I tempted to win rather than shepherd?”



Recognize the Real Battle

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood...” — Ephesians 6:12

When political conversations heat up, it's easy to forget: the person on the other side of the aisle, or the other side of the sanctuary, is not your enemy.

The After Party reminds us that the true battle is not against fellow image-bearers. It's against something deeper, more dangerous, and far more subtle. Division. Fear. Pride. These are not just bad habits, they are spiritual forces that fracture churches, poison families, and harden hearts. They thrive when we mistake opposition for enmity, when we allow contempt to masquerade as conviction.

The political realm loves to paint everything in binary terms: us vs. them. Right vs. wrong. Good vs. evil. But the gospel paints a different picture. One in which we are all in need of grace, and in which no human is beyond redemption or relationship. Our struggle, Paul tells us, isn't with each other, it's with the powers that are eager to tear the Body of Christ apart from the inside.

In a culture that's addicted to conflict, you're not called to fight every fire. You're called to carry the fire: the refining, reconciling, radiant love of Christ. Not a fire that consumes, but a fire that transforms.

What would it look like if we saw every political interaction not as a battle to be won, but as a soul to be loved? What if the Church became known not for how fiercely we fight, but for how faithfully we love?

That's not weakness. That's spiritual warfare. *That's the way of Jesus.*

PRACTICES FOR PASTORS

- **Armor Up:** Lead your team through Ephesians 6:10–18. What armor have we dropped?
- **Pastoral Outreach:** Reconnect with someone who left your congregation over political views. Not to persuade, just to listen.
- **Preach:** Tell the story of Simon the Zealot and Matthew the Tax Collector. Ask: What kind of church includes both?



Help Your People Understand How They Engage

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” — John 13:35

Let’s be honest, most people in your congregation aren’t looking for a fight. But they also haven’t been given a better way. They’ve been shaped by cable news, social media algorithms, and cultural echo chambers more than by the fruit of the Spirit. They may feel confused, cautious, or even ashamed when politics comes up, uncertain about how to show up faithfully in a polarized world.

This is where *The After Party* offers language that clarifies and discipled. It identifies four postures that Christians often drift into in political spaces:

THE COMBATANT

fighters to win. They see the stakes as existential and opponents as threats.

THE CYNIC

rolls their eyes. They’ve been burned and have chosen sarcasm or withdrawal over engagement.

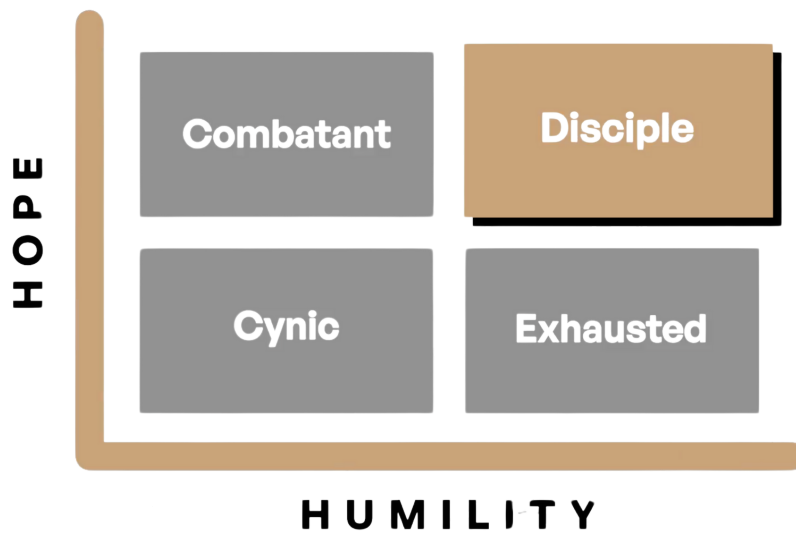
THE EXHAUSTED

checks out. They’re overwhelmed and disengaged, not because they don’t care, but because it just feels too heavy.

THE DISCIPLE

leans in with hope and humility. They remain present, rooted in Christ, and committed to love, even across lines of deep disagreement.





This isn't a tool for labeling or judging. It's a mirror. A diagnostic. A pastoral invitation to self-awareness and spiritual growth. When people see themselves in this framework, something powerful happens: they realize they're not alone, they begin to name their struggle, and they start to imagine a different way forward.

You don't need to box anyone in. But giving your people this framework can spark transformation, not just in how they vote or speak, but in who they're becoming. Because ultimately, this isn't about partisanship. It's about discipleship.

As a pastor or leader, you have the opportunity to gently guide people toward the posture that reflects Jesus most clearly, not with shame, but with grace. Not by demanding agreement, but by modeling a way of showing up that's marked by love, courage, and integrity.

And in a divided world, that kind of love will not go unnoticed. As Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples..." Not by the party you support. Not by your argument skills. But by how you love.

PRACTICES FOR PASTORS

- **Ask Yourself:** Where do I show up in the quadrant? How can I grow toward the Disciple?
- **Small Groups:** Use TAP's "Hope and Humility" quiz to prompt discussion and formation.
- **Teaching:** Preach John 13 and Philippians 2. Highlight the humility of Christ as a political posture.

Lay It Down at His Feet

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
— Matthew 11:28

You're tired. Your people are tired. The pace is relentless, the news cycle never stops, and the pressure to have all the right answers, on all the right issues, can feel crushing. But Jesus' invitation still holds: ***Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*** Not rest in performance. Not rest in control. Not rest in outcomes. Rest in me.

Leading from rest rooted in God's sovereignty isn't passivity, *it's spiritual resistance*. It's a prophetic declaration that our hope is not tethered to polling numbers, policy wins, or public opinion. Our hope does not rise or fall with the markets or the headlines. It rests in a King who is not up for re-election, whose throne is secure, and whose promises are sure.

When you lead from a place of Sabbath trust, you're not offering your people a plan to fix everything. You're offering something far more compelling: the non-anxious presence of Christ himself. And in a world addicted to noise and outrage, a calm, rooted, Christ-centered leader becomes a living signpost to a better kingdom—one not built on fear, but on faith.

PRACTICES FOR PASTORS

- **Pray:** Slowly, daily: Matthew 11:28-30. Ask: "What burdens am I carrying that are not mine?"
- **Worship Practice:** Let your congregation lay down their weariness. Create space for silence, lament, and release.
- **Team Check-In:** Are we modeling Sabbath rhythms or mimicking the outrage cycle?



Reframe Politics as an Area for Discipleship

“Do not merely listen to the word... Do what it says.” — James 1:22

We disciple our people in so many areas—marriage, parenting, work, finances. **Why should politics be the one area we avoid?** If anything, it's one of the most formative spaces where their faith meets real-world friction.

This doesn't mean prescribing a party or pushing a platform. The goal isn't to hand out voter guides—it's to cultivate the kind of inner life that bears the fruit of the Spirit under pressure. When people engage politically with gentleness, patience, and self-control, they offer a compelling witness in a world that's forgotten how to disagree without contempt.

Scripture doesn't ask your people to retreat from the public square. It invites them to show up: with clarity about their ultimate allegiance, with humility in how they engage, and with confidence that they can participate where they believe God has called them, without losing their soul to the outrage.

PRACTICES FOR PASTORS

- **Sermon Idea:** “The Fruit of the Spirit in a Polarized World.” Show how each fruit applies to our public witness.
- **Church-Wide Campaign:** Launch *The After Party* course across small groups. Start with your staff.
- **Ongoing Formation:** Use *The After Party's* Next Steps Resources guide to keep resources flowing.



Point to the True After Party

*“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.” —
Revelation 19:9*

Politics can stir deep passions. Candidates can feel like saviors. Parties can start to feel like home. But none of these things: *no platform, no president, no policy*—can carry the full weight of our hope. They were never meant to.

As Christians, we believe history is headed somewhere. The ultimate destination isn't the next election cycle but the wedding supper of the Lamb, what The After Party calls *the True After Party*. It's not hosted by a political party, but by Christ himself. The table isn't red or blue. It's radiant with the diversity of every tribe, tongue, and nation gathered not around an elephant or donkey, but around a slain and risen Lamb.

Our politics today, when engaged with humility, justice, and love, can become signposts. Not saviors. Not substitutes. *Signposts that point beyond themselves to the Kingdom that is coming and has already begun.* When your congregation learns to live with this kind of eschatological vision, they are formed to become less anxious and more anchored. Less combative and more compassionate. They can participate in the public square with purpose, while keeping their hope in the one who will make all things new.

Remind your people: every conversation, vote, and civic act is a chance to bear witness to the coming Kingdom, not to prove a point, but to reflect a Person. That's the true after party. And we're all invited.

PRACTICES FOR PASTORS

- **Preach:** End your series with Revelation 19. Not “we win,” but “He reigns.”
- **Communion Liturgy:** Reframe the Table as a place of political reconciliation. One loaf, one body.
- **Benediction:** Bless your people with a vision bigger than the next election. Point them home.





It's not about votes. It's about virtue.

Pastor, you don't have to be a political expert. You don't have to have the perfect words. You don't have to settle every debate or soothe every tension in your congregation.

What you do have is something far more powerful: a calling to shepherd people toward Jesus in every area of life, including their political lives.

This is not about disengaging from politics. It's about discipling through it.

Helping your people live as citizens of heaven even while they participate as citizens on earth. Helping them reflect Christ not just in what they believe, but in how they engage, with hope that outlasts cynicism, humility that disarms hostility, and love that crosses every dividing line.

You don't need to run a campaign. You just need to keep pointing people to the only kingdom that cannot be shaken. The only Lord who will never lose his seat. The only name worth building our lives upon.

This is your moment to lead: not with fear, but with courage. Not with pressure, but with presence. And you are not alone. We're walking this road with you. The Spirit is already ahead of you. And the Church needs leaders like you: anchored, humble, and ready to guide God's people toward something better.

Better politics begins with better pastoring. And you're already on the way.

Thanks for joining us on this journey.



Scripture Used in The After Party

This isn't about picking sides or winning arguments. It's about shifting from the what of politics to the how—how we engage, how we love, and how we stay connected even when we disagree. And **that starts here.**

Session 1: Invited to the Party

DIRECT SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- **Micah 6:8** – “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”
- **Luke 7** – Jesus dines at the home of a Pharisee.
- **Luke 19** – Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus’ house.
- **Matthew 10:2–4** – Jesus appoints both Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector as disciples.

IMPLIED/ALLUDED BIBLICAL STORIES

- **Jesus' frequent attendance at meals** – Repeated mention of Jesus crossing political and social lines by eating with tax collectors and sinners (*e.g., Luke 5:29–32, Matthew 9:10–13*).
- **Early church divisions** – Reference to conflicts between Apollos vs. Paul (*see 1 Corinthians 1:12–13, Acts 18:24–28*).
- **Judas of Galilee** – Mentioned as a real historical figure and political rebel (*referenced in Acts 5:37*) to illustrate first-century political polarization.

Session 2: The Disciple

DIRECT SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- **Mark 10:35–40** – James and John ask to sit at Jesus' right and left in glory.
- **Romans 8:25 (AMP)** – "If we hope for what we do not see..."

IMPLIED/ALLUDED BIBLICAL STORIES

- **The crucifixion scene with the two criminals (*Luke 23:39–43*)** – One demands rescue, the other asks to be remembered in the Kingdom.
- **Jesus' patient correction of the disciples' political ambitions** – Present throughout the Gospels, especially in *Luke 22:24–27*, as an example of shifting their understanding of leadership.

Session 3: The Combatant

DIRECT SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- **Romans 12:1** – “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice...”
- **2 Timothy 2:24–25** – “The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind...”
- **Matthew 26:51–52** – Peter cuts off the ear of the high priest’s servant; Jesus rebukes him.

IMPLIED/ALLUDED BIBLICAL STORIES

- **Peter’s sword moment** – Highlighted as a metaphor for misguided zeal (*Matthew 26*).
- **Paul’s instructions to Timothy** – Encouraging boldness and gentleness, seen in *1 Timothy* and *2 Timothy*.
- **Fruit of the Spirit** – Not quoted, but referenced thematically: *Galatians 5:22–23*.

Session 4: The Exhausted

DIRECT SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- **Micah 6:8** – Mentioned again to frame justice and humility.

IMPLIED/ALLUDED BIBLICAL STORIES

- **“Turn the other cheek,” “Love your enemies,” “Pray for those who persecute you”** – Allusions from *Matthew 5:38–48*, part of the Sermon on the Mount.
- **Image of God theology** – Implied from *Genesis 1:26–27* and foundational to much of the relational ethic described.
- **Jesus healing and shepherding with compassion** – The model of servant leadership referenced in multiple Gospel scenes (e.g., *Matthew 9:36, John 10*).
- **Pastoral leadership during crisis** – Although not scriptural, stories allude to the biblical imagery of shepherds and sheep (*Psalms 23, John 10:11*).
- **Church exhaustion not over doctrine but politics** – Reflects the early church tensions found in Acts and Paul’s letters, e.g., *Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8*.

Session 5: The Cynic

DIRECT SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- **Micah 6:8** – Highlighted again as a grounding text for “doing justice.”

IMPLIED/ALLUDED BIBLICAL STORIES

- **Civil Rights Movement as a biblical echo** – Paralleled to the nonviolent justice work of Jesus and the prophets.
- **The Pharisees' critique of Jesus** – Alluded to in the context of overconfidence and exclusion, such as Luke 18:9–14 (Pharisee and tax collector).
- **The skeptic vs. cynic distinction** – Implicitly invokes Thomas (John 20:24–29) as a healthy skeptic.

Session 6: The True After Party

DIRECT SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- **Revelation 19:7–8** – The wedding supper of the Lamb.
- **Luke 17:21** – “The kingdom of God is within/among you.”
- **Matthew 6:33** – “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...”
- **2 Timothy 1:7** – “God has not given us a spirit of fear...”
- **Luke 23:34** – “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
- **John 14:6** – “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”
- **Matthew 5:43** – “**Love your enemies...**”

IMPLIED/ALLUDED BIBLICAL STORIES

- **Jesus turning water into wine at Cana** – Referenced as a model of joy and celebration (*John 2:1–11*).
- **Jesus taking up the cross and calling others to do the same** – Echoes *Luke 9:23*, *Mark 8:34*.
- **Jesus' identity vs. political parties** – Invokes the contrast between Caesar and Christ, seen in *Mark 12:17* (“*Give to Caesar...*”).



A FINAL NOTE

We hope this guide has offered a few helpful tools for navigating politics in your church with wisdom and grace. But the heart of our work—and the primary resource we recommend—is The After Party itself. Whether through the six-session video course, a book club, the workshop version, or even integrating our worship collaboration with The Porter's Gate into your services, we believe this experience can bring real transformation to your community. If you'd like to talk with someone from our team about The After Party, you can schedule a [15-minute conversation here](#). For a step-by-step guide to bringing The After Party to your church, check out our full 'How to Bring The After Party to Your Church' guide.

With you and for you,
The After Party Team



**Schedule a 15-Minute
Conversation with Our Team**

**Bringing The After Party to
Your Church Guide**

