

THE PARTY CRASHER

Study Guide



Introduction

Use this study guide for personal reflection and group discussion, based on the book, *The Party Crasher: How Jesus Disrupts Politics as Usual and Redeems Our Partisan Divide* (WaterBrook, 2024).

The Conversation Starter Cards and *The Christian Political Commitment Pledge* resources are available as free resource downloads at the end of this study guide.



Chapter One

The Four Political Religions

Personal Reflection Questions

1. How can you tell when your political views are becoming something closer to a religion?
2. Which of the four quadrants do you lean toward and why? If you have a difficult time identifying which one you most relate to, look for the quadrant you think I'm being too hard on. That might be an indicator of which way you lean.
3. Which quadrant do you have the hardest time with? What bothers you most about the ideas or people in this quadrant and why?
4. Make a list of friends and family members who lean into your least favorite quadrant. What specific steps could you take to better understand them and love them?
5. How have your political leanings shifted over time? What were the factors that contributed to your change in perspective?



Group Discussion Questions

1. How do political ideologies compare with historic world religions in terms of devotion and conversion?
2. How does this framework help you understand your experiences during past election seasons?
3. Reflect on each of the political religions one by one. Imagine how the world would change if everyone converted to that political religion.
 - What would change?
 - Who would benefit?
 - Who might suffer?
4. Not only do the four quadrants create false gods, but they also create false devils. Specific people or issues are treated as the primary source of evil. Who or what are the false devils created by each quadrant?
5. How can we as God's people navigate the four quadrants and remain faithful without giving our full allegiance?



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

6. What does it look like to be a church where people lean in different directions but refuse to bow to the political idols?

7. How would forming a common table during the next election season reflect the character and teaching of Jesus to a watching world?



Chapter Two

Pledging Allegiance to the King of Kings

Personal Reflection Questions

1. Are there times when your political engagement has felt like religious devotion competing with your allegiance to Jesus? Pray and ask God to search your heart to reveal such moments. (The goal here is not shame but honesty before God with our stories.)
2. Why is it important to acknowledge the good intentions of those we disagree with politically?
3. Since each quadrant reflects some aspect of God's creative design, each will contain good gifts that should be affirmed. Identify some good aspects of each quadrant and thank God for those gifts. Try to go beyond the examples I mentioned in the chapter.
4. Since each quadrant has been influenced by the Fall, each will contain some very destructive features. Identify some sinful and broken aspects of each quadrant and pray for God to rescue people from the tyranny of idolatry.



Personal Reflection Questions (continued)

5. How does Jesus provide what each political religion promises but can't fulfill?



Group Discussion Questions

1. How does the concept of the sacred/secular divide negatively influence our understanding of the gospel's relevance to politics and culture?
2. What are some potential consequences of keeping Jesus confined to the “sacred” box and not letting him influence the so-called secular aspects of life?
3. What are some signs that your interest in politics has shifted from a lean to a bow?
4. How would you respond to someone who said, “Why should we even talk about politics? Shouldn’t we just focus on spiritual things?”
5. Since each of the four quadrants reflects some aspect of God’s creational design and is occupied by people who are made in his image, each quadrant will contain good gifts that should be affirmed. Spend some time identifying the good aspects of each quadrant and thanking God for those gifts. Try to go beyond the examples we named in the chapter.



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

6. Since each quadrant has been affected by the Fall, they all contain some very destructive features. Identify the sinful and broken aspects of each quadrant and pray for God to rescue people from the tyranny of idolatry.
7. What are some examples of modern- day idols that require sacrifice? What are some specific sacrifices that each political idol demands?
8. How does political idolatry affect the witness of the church?



Chapter Three

Welcome to the King's Table

Personal Reflection Questions

1. When have you experienced strained relationships due to political differences? How have you navigated these conflicts? Is there a step you can take to help repair a broken relationship?
2. There's a difference between having a political leaning and bowing to an idol. Prayerfully reflect on each of the following questions and ask God to reveal any evidence of idolatry.
3. Do you give more time and attention to political pundits than to the words of Scripture?
4. Is there a quadrant you feel the need to defend or justify and are unwilling to let be challenged?
5. Do you have a pattern of refusing to talk to people who disagree with your politics? Have you ever cut someone out of your life because of politics?



Personal Reflection Questions (continued)

6. How do we know when we are giving too much attention to a political leader?
7. Ask God to show you if there are patterns you need to confess and repent of, and any steps you can take to repair broken relationships.



Group Discussion Questions

1. Imagine three different political conversations between Simon (the revolutionary Zealot) and Matthew (the tax collector). What might those conversations have sounded like? How might their conversations have changed over time?
 - Conversation 1: Before they met Jesus
 - Conversation 2: Around the campfire as they followed Jesus
 - Conversation 3: A week after Pentecost
2. If you could seek advice from Simon (the revolutionary Zealot) and Matthew (the tax collector) about how to follow Jesus despite political differences, what questions would you ask them? What do you think they might say?
3. When you think about the imaginary conversations between Simon and Matthew, which of those stages—before Jesus, around the campfire, after Pentecost—most resembles the conversations you have about politics?
4. Where have you seen Christian friendships, churches, and organizations fracture along political fault lines? What were the issues? How did it happen? What are specific ways you could push against that trend?



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

5. I gave several questions in this chapter to help evaluate whether you are bowing to an idol rather than having a healthy lean. Walk through each of them as a group and ask God to help you answer honestly.

- Do you give more time and attention to political pundits than to the words of Scripture?
- Which quadrant do you feel the need to defend or justify? How angry do questions about that quadrant make you?
- Do you have a pattern of cutting people out of your life who disagree with your politics?
- Is there a cultural leader who moves your heart more than Jesus?

6. What are tangible ways fellow believers can help one another see the creational good within each quadrant as well as what's been broken by sin?



Chapter Four

Ten Political Commandments

Personal Reflection Questions

1. Which of the six commitments in this chapter is easiest for you to embrace? Why? Thank God for the way he's at work in your life.
2. Which of the six commitments is most challenging for you? Ask God what it would look like to press into that commitment.
3. In what ways can you ensure that your views are challenged by the biblical story rather than using the Bible to proof-text your predetermined positions?
4. Audit your language: Think about the ways you speak about those who lean toward different quadrants. Does the way you speak about them portray a conviction that they are made in God's image and worthy of your respect?
5. Identify someone with whom you disagree strongly about politics. How might you interact more charitably and kindly the next time you see this person?



Group Discussion Questions

1. How is it possible for someone to display Christlike character in their personal life but act so differently when it comes to their conduct in the political arena? What factors contribute to this inconsistency?
2. Even if we don't experience persecution today, in what ways might full allegiance to Jesus be costly?
3. If you had the chance to speak with brothers and sisters from the global church (like Vinh) who have endured violent persecution, what wisdom do you think they might offer about how to remain faithful to Jesus in a world filled with so much idolatry?
4. How can we shift our perspective from thinking that our time, money, and influence are solely for our own benefit to recognizing that those gifts ultimately belong to God and should be reimagined as instruments of his love?
5. What's the simplest way you could love someone you know who leans toward a different quadrant? What's the most out-of-the-box way you could love them? Is there a next step toward them you want to take?



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

6. Have you ever felt as though someone held a dehumanizing or inaccurate view of one of your convictions? What was that experience like for you?
7. How can we recognize whether we're being shaped more by the biblical story or by propaganda (idols)?
8. When was a time when your political leanings conflicted with the teachings of the Bible? How did you reconcile that conflict?
9. How can we differentiate between unhealthy and healthy conceptions of justice? In what area are you best equipped to pursue justice in a healthy way?
10. Reflect on each of the fruits of the Spirit and discuss what political discourse might look like if it reflected one of these characteristics: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.



Chapter Five

Breakers, Fakers, and Makers

Personal Reflection Questions

1. Do you sense God inviting you to make peace with anyone? Make a list of people with whom you have the opportunity to repair broken relationships or build stronger relationships despite differences.

2. Identify one person on your list and prepare for a peacemaking conversation by prayerfully reflecting on the following questions:
 - What are my motives?
 - What do I need to repent of?
 - Where might I be misunderstanding?
 - What story am I telling myself?
 - What are my emotions?
 - How can I seek appropriate counsel without gossip or slander?
 - What is the specific issue I want to bring up?
 - What would it look like to forgive the other person?
 - Can I overlook this offense, or will there be ongoing tension I need to resolve?



Personal Reflection Questions (continued)

- What would they need to own for reconciliation to be possible?
3. When it comes to political engagement and discourse, in what areas do you need to remove the log from your own eye?



Group Discussion Questions

1. What associations do you have with the word peace? How might that affect the way you perceive the Bible's teaching on peace?
2. How is peacemaking central to the gospel, and what role does it play in the mission of Jesus and his followers?
3. Why is it important to address conflicts directly with the person involved rather than talking about them behind their back or debating with them on social media?
4. What's the difference between peace breaking, peace faking, and peacemaking?
5. This chapter provides four steps in the peacemaking process. Reflect on each of these steps and identify why they are important. Also, name the dangers of skipping a step.
 - Step 1: Get with God.
 - Step 2: Get together.
 - Step 3: Get help.
 - Step 4: Give the gospel.



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

6. Which of the four steps do you tend to skip? How has that affected your relationships?
7. Why is it important to scrutinize our personal sin and political leanings more than those of others?
8. What is fake boldness? What kind of fake boldness are you most tempted to engage in?
9. Can you think of a time when you addressed a conflict directly with another person? How did it go, and what did you learn from the experience?
10. How does the love and forgiveness you've received from Jesus influence the way you can extend forgiveness to others?
11. How does our heavenly Father's reputation become tied to our actions as his children, especially as it relates to peacemaking?
 - What are some tangible steps we can take today to become people who love our enemies and work toward peace?



Chapter Six

When to Be Bold

Personal Reflection Questions

1. If you had the opportunity to launch a Prayer and Action group about a particular issue, what would the issue be? Who would you want to join you?

2. We discussed five marks of the early church. Which of these five is easiest for you to embrace? Which is most challenging?
 - Multiethnic Community
 - Care for the Poor
 - Sexual Ethic
 - Pro-Life with Children
 - Forgiveness and Enemy Love

3. If you boldly embraced all five of these characteristics, what would the cost be? How would it impact your life? Spend some time asking God to give you courage to be bold in areas that are uncomfortable for you.



Group Discussion Questions

1. Why do people often see prayer and action as opposing forces, especially during times of national crisis or conversation?

2. How can prayer inform and motivate action? How can action be grounded in prayer?

3. In what ways have you seen prayer and action work together effectively in the past? What are some examples where one was more dominant than the other, and how did that affect the outcome?

4. In this chapter, we outline five marks of the early church. Which of them is easiest for you to embrace? Which is most challenging?
 - Multiethnic Community
 - Care for the Poor
 - Sexual Ethic
 - Pro-Life with Children
 - Forgiveness and Enemy Love

5. Why do American Christians struggle to care for all five of these marks simultaneously? Why do we tend to gravitate toward a few of them while distancing ourselves from the others?



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

6. If American Christians were known for passionately pursuing each of these five marks, what would it communicate about Jesus to a watching world?
7. Why is it important for the church to take a stand on issues of race and justice? What's the cost of faithfulness in this area?
8. Why is it important for the church to take a stand on issues of sexuality and gender? What's the cost of faithfulness in this area?
9. What are other important issues for which Christians should take a stand that were not mentioned in this chapter? What's the cost of faithfulness in those areas?
10. In what ways does the strangeness of Christianity provide a beautiful witness about the character of Jesus?



Chapter Seven

An Outpost of the Kingdom

Personal Reflection Questions

Think back to the last sermon you heard and reflect on any possible implications for your conduct in the political realm (even if the sermon was not explicitly on anything political).

Using Psalm 13 as a template, write a prayer of lament, where you bring anything sad, broken, or unjust in our world that captures your heart into the presence of God. Be attentive to the local, national, and global issues that grieve you most.

Which of these gathered practices stood out to you as one that you possibly want to be more attentive to?

1. Call to Worship.
2. Confession and Lament.
3. Scripture and Sermon.
4. Communion and Worship.
5. Baptism.



Group Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree with the idea that attending church can be a powerful political practice? Why or why not?
2. Describe how each of the following gathered practices is a political act. Also, which of these practices is most surprising to describe as political?
 - Call to Worship
 - Confession and Lament
 - Scripture and Sermon
 - Communion and Worship
 - Baptism
3. How are the different aspects of a corporate worship gathering designed to form us into faithful people who can resist idolatry?
4. How might the political quadrants provide counterfeit versions of a church worship service? (Think of a few examples.)



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

5. What does it mean for America to have a national liturgy of “the crisis of the week”? How can we respond with compassion to national events without being driven by headlines?
6. How should the public reading of Scripture and the sermon shape our understanding of the world? How should it counter the false stories and help us align our lives with the biblical story?
7. How can lament be used to address and process national tragedies, such as mass shootings and natural disasters? In what ways can prayer help us respond to such events?
8. How can the experience of receiving God’s forgiveness and grace through confession and lament help us extend forgiveness and grace to others, even in a polarized and divisive culture?
9. In what ways can the presence of Jesus be more powerful than our strategies, opinions, and policies?
10. How is baptism similar to and different from the Pledge of Allegiance?



Chapter Eight

Formation Practices for a Polarized World

Personal Reflection Questions

1. How do you consume information on a daily basis?
2. What are your go-to sources for news and entertainment? How do those sources compare to your rhythms of engaging Scripture? Which way of obtaining information carries more weight?
3. Do you find yourself quoting articles or social media posts more frequently than Scripture when justifying your perspective to others?
4. Take your phone and scroll through the last ten to twenty text-message threads. Can you identify at least one person from each of the quadrants? If not, how might you pursue relationship with those with different leanings? Ask God to bring to mind the people with whom you need to share a meal.



Personal Reflection Questions (continued)

5. Have you ever experienced being part of a group or community where everyone has the same political perspective? What was that experience like? Did it lead to a more extreme perspective on certain issues?
6. What political issues do you tend to talk about most? How often do you bring those to God in prayer? What are your biggest barriers to praying about public issues?
7. What's the smallest change to your daily rhythms that would have the biggest impact on your life?



Group Discussion Questions

1. Why do many Christians tend to apply spiritual disciplines like Bible reading and prayer to their personal issues but not to public life?
2. What portions of Scripture do you tend to avoid and why? Make a plan to engage those parts, ideally with someone who is drawn toward them.
3. How has Scripture been twisted at times to justify certain political ideologies? (Name a few examples.) How can a better understanding of the biblical story help to prevent this?
4. How does reading the whole Bible rather than just focusing on certain passages help guard against misuse of God's Word and provide a more balanced understanding of it?
5. How can having relationships with believers with different political leanings enhance our discipleship and deepen our understanding of God?



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

6. How can participating in shared meals be a powerful way to build relationships within the body of Christ?
7. How can we avoid reducing God to a cosmic lobbyist when we pray about political issues and instead seek to align our prayers with his purposes for the world?
8. Read through the news headlines and try to reimagine what those headlines might sound like in a world made new. Let this exercise guide your prayers for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.
9. When was the last time you prayed for a politician you don't like? Do a Google search for a politician you strongly disagree with and try to learn a little bit about their family. Spend time praying for them.
10. What are some creative ways to practice fasting, solitude, and silence in our information-saturated age that make more space to be attentive to God? Do you sense the Spirit inviting you to step into any of those ways?



Chapter Nine

Creative Options for Political Involvement

Personal Reflection Questions

1. Which of the six options resonated with you the most?
2. Why do you think that approach stands out to you?
3. Which of the six options would be most challenging for you to take? Why?
4. Spend some time in prayer to see if you sense an invitation to move forward with one of the options. What are the first few steps you would need to take?
5. Read through the list of creative options and try to identify at least one friend who would thrive with each of the approaches.
6. Consider sending them a note of encouragement regarding the gifts and abilities you see in them or sharing an insight from this book with them.



Group Discussion Questions

1. **The Local Option:** What are the benefits of prioritizing local politics over national politics?
2. **The Daniel Option:** If you had to run for political office, what office would you want to run for? Imagine that you won—how would you resist the temptation to give your full allegiance to your political party? How would you seek to remain faithful to Jesus and his ways?
3. **The Prophetic Option:** This section imagined a Prophetic Loser Party, which would be more focused on faithful witness than winning an election, with specific countercultural practices that this party would engage in.
4. Which of the following ideas resonated most with you?
 5. How do you think the world would react to a candidate or political community that put that idea into practice?
 - An honest failure report that acknowledges ways a candidate has fallen short
 - A listening bus, where candidates are only allowed to ask questions



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

- Candidates who lean in different directions but campaign together
 - An advisory board consisting of both the powerless and the powerful
 - Candidates who would regularly post things they respect about their opponent
6. **The Scuba Option:** If you had to dive deep into one particular issue, what would you choose? What challenges have you faced in your life that have equipped you to engage that issue?
7. **The Monastic Option:** In what ways does being an alternative community offer a way to love your neighbor without compromising your convictions?
8. **The Reform Option:** If you could change one aspect of our political system or processes, what would you change? What is the smallest action we could take that would have the biggest impact in that area?



Group Discussion Questions (continued)

9. What are some other ways of faithfully participating in political life that we haven't mentioned here?
10. When you consider your gifts, abilities, and life experiences, which of the aforementioned six options seems like the best fit for you?
11. What do you think should be your next steps? Spend some time praying for one another and encouraging one another about how to take action.



Resources

We hope this study guide has encouraged you. Learn more about **The Party Crasher** by Joshua Ryan Butler [here](#).

Download other free resources based on **The Party Crasher** [here](#).

Use the Conversation Starter Cards for your small group discussion. Download for free [here](#).

Consider signing this **Christian Political Commitment Pledge** for the election season (available as a free download [here](#)).

You can also share this commitment with others in your church or small group, as a way of approaching the upcoming election season together.



A CHRISTIAN POLITICAL *Commitment*



Worship

I commit my allegiance to King Jesus over all idols and ideologies. (Exodus 20:2–3; Psalm 115:1–8; Philippians 2:9–11)

Love of Neighbor

I commit to participating in civic life as a means of loving and serving my neighbor rather than just serving my own interests. (Matthew 22:34–40; Philippians 2:1–11)

Image of God

I commit to honoring the image of God in all people by treating them with respect and abstaining from dehumanizing caricatures. (Genesis 1:26; James 3:9)

Biblical Wisdom

I commit to having my views challenged by the biblical story rather than using the Bible to proof-text my predetermined positions. (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:16)

Biblical Justice

I commit to understanding and pursuing justice as I engage in civic life, not minimizing Scripture's repeated call to seek justice, and allowing Scripture to critique popular conceptions of justice in our culture. (Isaiah 1:17; Micah 6:8; Matthew 23:23)

Fruitful Speech

I commit to engaging in political discourse with speech that is marked by the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22–23; James 3)

Peacemaking

I commit to face-to-face conflict resolution rather than vitriolic arguments on social media or talking behind someone's back. (Matthew 18:15–17; Romans 12:17–21)

Removing the Log

I commit to giving more attention to examining the potential flaws in my own political leanings, conduct, and sin than I give to scrutinizing others. (Matthew 7:1–5)

Humble Learning

I commit to being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger as I seek to learn from the varied perspectives within the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12–26; James 1:19)

Loving Enemies

I commit to loving and praying for my so-called political enemies, especially those I have the hardest time loving and praying for. This includes a commitment to praying for our government leaders regardless of who wins the election. (Matthew 5:43–44; 1 Timothy 2:1–4)



COMMITMENT

During this election season, I commit to following Jesus in my political participation and discourse. While I know that I am a sinner who is imperfect and cannot live out this vision perfectly, I am committed to growing in these ten areas as a means of loving God and my neighbors during these conflicted times.

SIGNATURE

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