

4 Things Christians Can Take Away From Thursday's Debate

After Thursday's brutal Republican presidential debate, it may seem difficult to find anything useful that really came of it. But there were a few takeaways Christians could find.

They just had to dig a little to find them.

Charisma Caucus held separate voter focus groups with supporters and voters who were leaning toward front-runner Donald Trump and U.S. Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Marco Rubio (R-Fla.). Here are four key points that came from those discussions:

1. No One Learned Anything New?

Voters who have been watching the process—those who make up about 60 to 70 percent of remaining primary voters—didn't learn anything new about any of the candidates Thursday night. But those who haven't been paying attention the whole time, particularly first-time voters, say they did learn something: politics, at times, is a dirty, ugly business.

There were, however, some relatively new allegations made, particularly against Trump. They didn't offer new information, but rather reintroduced older—in some cases, decades older—information about the front-runner. But supporters of all three candidates seemed to agree the new information would do little to sway existing Trump supporters.

Late-breaking voters, which make up nearly a third of the remaining voters, are probably an entirely different story.

2. This Should Have Happened Sooner?

Rubio and Cruz supporters alike said they wished this kind of attack on Trump's character had been launched sooner in the

debate schedule, not in the 10th debate, when the field had been narrowed down to five candidates and three legitimate contenders. Their reaction seemed to suggest the front-runner's current success is the result of unchecked early momentum.

Even Trump supporters seemed to agree, though, that the "airing of grievances" that took place Thursday would have better served the voters had it happened sooner in the process. Not because it would've swayed their voting decisions, but rather because it exposed—they say—the lengths the other candidates will go to in order to win the GOP nomination.

3. And The Winner Is?

Victory, much like beauty, was entirely in the eye of the beholder Thursday night. Each group thought their respective candidates had the best night. But by early Friday morning, it was clear that the debate really hadn't change too many voters' opinions, which doesn't necessarily bode well for candidates not named Trump.

The support groups liberally cheered for their candidate and jeered the others—with Cruz and Rubio supporters occasionally throwing out a compliment to "the other senator"—all night long. Trump supporters, meanwhile, seemed to like the slightly more passive approach their candidate took.

4. Will Expectations Be Met on Tuesday?

Trump supporters, based on past performance, have always expected their candidate to have a good night next Tuesday. After Thursday's debate, Cruz and Rubio supporters now feel the same way. But with all of the "Super Tuesday I" events set up with proportional delegate allocation, it may be somewhat disappointing all the way around.

Regardless of Thursday's debate outcome, Trump can't pull off

a “clean sweep,” Cruz can’t win all the Texas delegates, and Rubio is going to have a difficult time winning a plurality of delegates in any state. This was, in part, by design, but may be an unintended consequence of the Republican National Committee’s “tweaking” of the nomination rules four years ago.

Ultimately, the answers to all four questions above aren’t going to be truly answered until Tuesday night (or Wednesday morning for those eager for vote tallies from Alaska).