

Christians Weigh in on 8th GOP Presidential Debate

The eighth Republican presidential debate was held Saturday night in New Hampshire, and aired on ABC television affiliates around the country.

A group of Christians gathered from all across the U.S. to discuss the debate on social media. Afterward, they stuck around for an extra hour to answer some questions about what they watched. Here's a transcript of that conversation.

First question: What was your overall impression of tonight's debate?

Doug Goff—Slow start for everyone. Toward the end, Rubio picked it up and overall turned into a good night for him. Cruz and Trump were rather unimpressive. Christie was his typical whiny self. I loved Carson's answers, but I just cannot get over how boring he is.

Tom Nichols—Didn't really learn anything new. I didn't change my opinion about any of them, except maybe Bush and Christie. I despise them even more than I did for their answer on abortion.

Michael Leotta—Lackluster. No clear winner. Each had at least one fair moment. Trump got booed the most. Cruz enjoyed laying low. Rubio repeated himself a lot.

Cathy Little—Rubio said all the right things. Trump was OK ... just so ... arrogant. I liked Ted ... and I really like Carson, but like I said, I don't want to wish the presidency on him. I don't like Christie. He buddied up to Obama after Hurricane Sandy and was all about Obama then. I don't trust him.

Second question: Did any candidate improve his position in

your mind?

Cathy Little—Rubio improved. I was pro Cruz ... but now ... I don't know. Rubio really said everything I believe in unless I missed something. I came in late.

Michael Leotta—Rubio slightly ... but they all still fail on the life issue for supporting regulations.

Tom Nichols—No. I didn't see any change. I do wish Cruz would have had to answer the selective service question. That might have affected my opinion on him.

Doug Goff—My mind's never gonna change. I truly believe Rubio resonates with my views the most. But Carson improved, in my opinion. I do really like him; he's just boring.

Next question: The debate opened with Trump vs. Cruz and then Cruz vs. Carson. Did anyone win either of those "controversy" discussions?

Tom Nichols—Not really.

Doug Goff—No, in my opinion, those debates make us look petty.

Michael Leotta—I didn't think so. It was an overblown issue anyway ... typical media.

Cathy Little—I agree with Michael.

How would you rate the questions from the moderating panel?

Doug Goff—They weren't as bad as they have been. That lady was rather argumentative with them. Wasn't a fan of her.

Tom Nichols—Pretty decent questions. I wish they would have made all of them answer every question.

Michael Leotta—After the initial high school he said xyz about you questions ... they stabilized and we're mostly on point with the issue at hand.

Cathy Little—The panel did a good job but, unless I missed something, I don't know why they asked Bush about bringing back the draft. I didn't hear him say anything like that ... it was like she was trying to lead into something.

On the issue of national defense, how do you think the candidates did?

Michael Leotta—Cruz and Rubio both strong as expected. The rest below expectations. Trump's thoughts are not solidified.

Tom Nichols—If Cruz helped himself at all tonight, it was in this area. He explained that his comments about carpet bombing were not indiscriminate bombing, and that they should go in, win and get out.

Cathy Little—Rubio and Cruz did a good job ... Trump? His arrogance just scares me like he will think he is a *God* and just blow up stuff just because.

How did they do on the economy questions?

Tom Nichols—Fine, as far as they went? Not near enough detail.

Cathy Little—I think I missed those questions.

Michael Leotta—This was a weak area ... I honestly don't even remember most of them. Fixing the broken tax system seemed to tie in nicely for those that worked it in the answer. No real standouts, but Cruz is strong on this topic.

Surprisingly, the life question came up. First question: How did they do, in general, with the issue?

Tom Nichols—I will complain again that all of them did not have to answer it. I'd have like to (have) heard Cruz respond. And Carson. Christie and Bush were horrific. Did Kasich have to answer that one? I don't remember.

Cathy Little—Rubio answered excellent. Christie? He's for

self-defense for the woman if she's raped so ... kill the baby in her defense?

Michael Leotta—This is my No. 1 issue. If you are willing to compromise on thou shall not murder, then what aren't you willing to compromise on? They all fall short on the life issue for their support of regulations that each end in ... and then you can kill the baby. Unless you protect all innocent life, you are not pro-life ... you are pro-choice with exceptions.

Cathy Little—I'm a woman. I've come close to being raped ... but I wasn't ... I can honestly say I would NOT kill an innocent being because I was a victim of another person. That baby had nothing to do with it! Anyway. It's just not right.

Follow-up question: Do you think that question will resonate with NH voters who are notoriously secular?

Tom Nichols—Don't know enough about NH to answer that.

Michael Leotta—No.

Cathy Little—Just in opinion ... no.

Doug Goff—Don't believe so, no.

I'm going to go back for just a moment to an earlier question. During the debate, CNN took the unprecedented step of issuing a press release during the debate saying Ted Cruz was misleading voters about the Carson rumor. The media certainly isn't letting that controversy die. Do you think it helps Carson or hurt Cruz at all in NH?

Doug Goff—Definitely hurts Cruz. The polls have shown that. And I think it makes him look bad in the eyes of some voters.

Tom Nichols—It certainly didn't help Carson, he would have to be awake for it to help him. Probably hurt Cruz, because most people won't take the time to investigate whether or not CNN

is lying.

Michael Leotta—Having read through the timeline, it really was a non-issue made into a molehill. It may sway some who were on the fence, but overall, I don't think it hurt Cruz much and Carson is too far gone anyway.

Cathy Little—OK ... I didn't follow up on that ... but didn't Cruz apologize to Carson?

Michael Leotta—If I were Cruz, I would not have apologized.

Cathy Little—I'm thinking it's water under the bridge. The media and the moderators just like to get things heated for ratings. The American people should be offended to be manipulated like that.

Carly Fiorina wasn't on stage and never got mentioned. She was polling below 2 percent as of this morning. Is she done Tuesday night?

Cathy Little—I really liked her ... I would vote for her over Christie any day.

Michael Leotta—She's done ... along with Carson, Kasich, Bush and Christie.

Tom Nichols—Yes, along with Bush, Christie and Gilmore. Depending how many people Kasich fools, he might drag it out for another month. Carson is done and just won't admit it yet.

Cathy Little—I agree.

Based on everything leading up to this moment, not just this debate, how do you think the vote will go Tuesday in New Hampshire?

Michael Leotta—Honestly too tough to call for me ... would not be surprised if Trump edged out the rest.

Tom Nichols—Trump will win, by a much smaller margin than the

polls say, maybe about the 28 percent that Cruz got in Iowa. Rubio hurt himself tonight I think in the early part of the debate and may not finish second. Kasich, Cruz, Rubio will occupy the next three positions although I don't have any idea on an order. All of them around 20 percent give or take 3 points. That's as far as my prognostications go.

Cathy Little—Trump, Rubio, Cruz. The rest? Kasich ... Christie and Carson. But I don't want Trump on top ... lol I personally like Rubio ... Cruz/Trump.

That's all my questions. Any final thoughts?

Tom Nichols—I really would have liked to see Cruz answer the life question and the selective service question. Disappointed that I didn't get to learn his position on those issues.

Michael Leotta—At this point, I think most following the race have a clear favorite. These debates are not helping, but rather exposing weaknesses, which is a good thing.