

## Better Angels Book Discussion Guide

*Love Your Enemies: How Decent People Can Save America From a Culture of Contempt*, by Arthur C. Brooks

An online discussion on December 18, 2019, 8pm-9pm, hosted by Better Angels library coordinator Jennifer Livingston

### Optional resources for pre-discussion reading and reflection

Better Angels interview with Arthur Brooks: <https://www.better-angels.org/arthur-brooks-and-the-transformational-power-of-love/>

Arthur Brooks' website with short videos explaining his key ideas: <https://arthurbrooks.com/love-your-enemies/>

Word on Fire Institute interview with Arthur Brooks: <https://wordonfire.institute/bishop-barron-presents-nov-2019/>

### Discussion questions

1. It is widely accepted that economic competition leads to innovation, higher quality products and lower prices for consumers. Brooks argues that healthy competition in the “marketplace of ideas” is similarly beneficial, yielding better solutions to the problems facing America today. Have you had an experience of “ideological competition” that led to a positive outcome? What do you think made that experience possible?
2. Brooks identifies contempt as the primary driver of destructive political polarization. (Webster’s defines contempt as “the act of despising” or “lack of respect or reverence for something”). Have you struggled with feelings of contempt for others based on their ideology or political beliefs? Is there a specific piece of advice or insight in this book that you found helpful in managing feelings of contempt?
3. Brooks uses the language and tenets of religion and spirituality throughout this book, referring to his own Catholic faith, the teachings of the Dalai Lama, and the metaphor of “missionary work” for bridging ideological divides. What elements of his faith-based arguments resonated with you? How do you think atheists or people of different faiths than you would react to those ideas?

### The Better Angels Pledge

- As individuals, we try to understand the other side’s point of view, even if we don’t agree with it.
- In our communities, we engage those we disagree with, looking for common ground and ways to work together.
- In politics, we support principles that bring us together rather than divide us.