

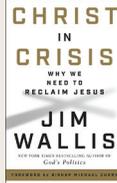
**BACK TO JESUS
IN A TIME OF FEAR, FALSEHOOD,
HATE, AND VIOLENCE**

A Lenten study guide based on
CHRIST IN CRISIS:
Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus
by Jim Wallis



SOJOURNERS

faith in action for social justice | sojo.net



CONTENTS

How to Use This Guide / 3

Session 1

Final week before Lent (February 17-23)
What about Jesus? / 4

Session 2

First week of Lent (February 24-March 1)
The Neighbor Question / 6

Session 3

Second week of Lent (March 2-8)
The Image Question / 8

Session 4

Third week of Lent (March 9-15)
The Truth Question / 10

Session 5

Fourth week of Lent (March 16-22)
The Fear Question / 13

Session 6

Fifth week of Lent (March 23-29)
The Peacemaker Question / 15

Session 7

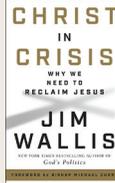
Sixth week of Lent (March 30-April 5)
The Power and Caesar Questions / 17

Session 8

Holy Week (April 6-12)
The Discipleship Question / 20

Session 9

First week after Easter (April 13-19)
Becoming Salt, Light, and Hope / 23



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

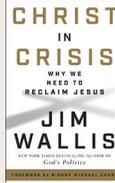
This discussion guide is intended for small groups, Bible studies, book clubs, and individuals who wish to actively discuss and explore what it will take to reclaim Jesus in this time of spiritual and political crisis, particularly in the context of Lent in 2020. Lent is traditionally a time for deep reflection, often with prayer, fasting, study, and repentance. Given the crisis we are now facing in both nation and church, such deep Lenten reflection is urgently needed. This study guide is offered in that spirit.

Organized around key topics in *Christ in Crisis: Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus*, by Jim Wallis, the guide provides public-domain video clips, suggests selected passages from the book to read, poses questions to facilitate conversation and action, and provides suggested scripture passages and a prayer for each session.

The guide is divided into nine sessions—an introductory session, a concluding session, and seven sessions focused on the key questions Jesus asked or prompted that we must all answer today, as laid out in *Christ in Crisis*. Resources for each of these sessions are provided, but no specific structure for the sessions is required or recommended. Within each session, the leader and participants should use their own judgment about how many video clips to watch, whether to read the suggested book passages aloud, whether to use the scripture readings and prayers, and which discussion questions to tackle. The intent of these resources is to foster rich, constructive conversations and actions, and we urge group leaders to use the resources in whichever ways work best for your group. Please note that the material in this guide does not necessarily reflect the views of Jim Wallis or Sojourners and is provided with the aim of nurturing deep conversations.

Note on the Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast: This 10-episode podcast launched on September 26, 2019, with one episode releasing each week thereafter. The episode names correspond with the chapters in *Christ in Crisis*. You can download it for free wherever you get your podcasts (e.g. Apple Podcast app, Stitcher, Spotify, etc.), and there is also a link to it on the *Christ in Crisis* website, book.sojo.net.

USING THIS GUIDE? We'd love to hear from you! For a chance to have Jim Wallis come speak at your church or other community organization between now and the 2020 election, email us at events@sojo.net or use the hashtag [#ChristCrisisStudyGuide](https://twitter.com/ChristCrisisStudyGuide) on social media and tell us how you're using the guide.



Session 1

Final week before Lent (February 17-23)

What About Jesus?

Session Description

Underneath our present political crisis lies a deeply spiritual and dangerously moral one. Christians in the United States and around the world have become disconnected from the person and teachings of Jesus Christ, and it is time to return to him, to “come home.” This session explores our present political and spiritual crisis and names the questions Jesus asked or prompted as a way to find our way back to him.

Video and Audio Clips

- Introductory trailer for *Christ in Crisis* (1min 41sec): <https://bit.ly/2jZLjBb>
- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 1, “What About Jesus?”
- Reclaiming Jesus Declaration video (4min 25sec): https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=oheb3MplSHE
- Morning Joe segment, “What Drives Evangelical Support for Trump?”—includes a discussion of the Reclaiming Jesus movement (9min 40sec): <http://www.msnbc.com/morning-joe/watch/what-drives-evangelical-support-for-trump-1240889411703>

Selections from the Book [Prologue and Chapter 1]

pp. 1-3

pp. 6-11 (paragraph beginning with “Unable to rest” through paragraph ending with “any commitment to serve each other and the common good”)

pp. 15-17 (paragraph beginning with “I believe two things are now at stake” through paragraph ending with “our hurting and frightened world”)

Scripture Passages

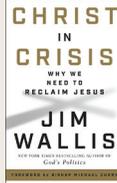
Acts 3:1-16, 4:1-20

Luke 6:46-49

Ephesians 6:10-17

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the biggest gaps you see between what Jesus taught and how some Christians behave? Where and how do you see followers of Jesus truly acting “in his name” in the world today? What patterns, if any, emerge from your contemplation and discussion of this question?
2. Which of Jesus’ teachings do you find it most difficult to follow in your personal life? Why? Which of Jesus’ teachings most urgently need to be applied to U.S. and global politics? Why?



3. What does the book's title, *Christ in Crisis*, mean to you? What do you think about when you hear that phrase? What does "reclaiming Jesus" mean to you? What might reclaiming Jesus look like in our public and private lives?

Prayer

Lord, we come into your holy presence with sadness.

With acknowledgment of our brokenness.

And with confession of our failures, disobedience, and sin.

With Nehemiah of old, we confess that we and our people have sinned.

With Isaiah, we acknowledge that we have unclean lips, and that we live among a people with unclean lips.

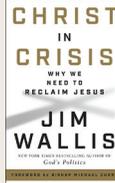
Forgive us, O Lord.

Gracious, merciful Lord, we acknowledge that we come into your presence with sorrow and, yes, fear.

We are truly sorry, and we ask your forgiveness for our many failures to love others the way we should, and we acknowledge that we have fear—genuine, deep fear—for the future of our beloved country, so riven by division, hostility, racism, and neglect of the less fortunate.

Please forgive our failure and sin. Please empower each of us to understand and live the way Jesus our Lord summons us to live, and please, loving, holy, and powerful Creator, heal our land.

—Ron Sider, Reclaiming Jesus vigil, May 24, 2018



Session 2

First week of Lent (February 24-March 1)

The Neighbor Question

Session Description

In an environment where the question of whether we will love or hate our neighbor is dangerously at stake, the words of Jesus reminds us that “our neighbor” includes those who are different from us. Learning to truly love all our neighbors as ourselves has the power to transform our lives, our communities, and the world.

Video and Audio Clips:

- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 2, “The Neighbor Question”
- (AUDIO) Martin Luther King, Jr. “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” Memphis, Tennessee, April 3, 1968. Start at 28:00 and listen to 35:30 (7min 30sec): <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>
- Shirley Chan and Kaylee Domzalski, “Kids Explain in Their Own Words What Disturbs Them About Trump’s Child Separation Policy,” Slate.com, July 2, 2018 (2min 17sec): <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/07/kids-at-family-separation-protests-explain-how-theyve-processed-trumps-policy.html>
- Tom Silverstone and Francisco Navas, “Minors separated from parents and detained at US border tell of anguish,” Guardian News, July 2, 2018 (Spanish with subtitles) (2min 31sec): https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=9apPQVxc26M
- “United Methodists Bond with Muslim Neighbors,” United Methodist Church Communications, December 7, 2017 (3min 40sec): <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/united-methodists-bond-with-muslim-neighbors>

Selections from the Book [Chapter 2]

pp. 23-25 (beginning of chapter through paragraph ending with “this story can change cultures and even politics.”)

pp. 26-30 (“Outside Your Path”)

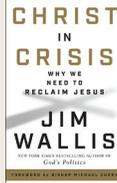
pp. 34-36 (beginning of “Separating the Children” section through paragraph ending with “which defied their faith in Christ”)

pp. 38-40 (beginning of “The Muslim Ban” section through paragraph ending with “the mission and nature of the church.”)

Scripture Passages

Luke 10:25-37

Matthew 22:34-40



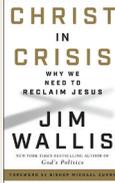
Discussion Questions

1. How old were you when you first remember hearing the story of the Good Samaritan? What were the main takeaways that you were taught about the story? Has your understanding of Jesus' message in this parable changed over time? If so, how and why?
2. Can you share an example from your own family, community, job, activism, etc., of people either recognizing and loving neighbors the way Jesus taught in the parable, or failing to do so? How might that example be applied more broadly to society and politics?
3. Jim Wallis talks about the racial geography and other policies, structures, and attitudes that keep people from meaningful encounters and relationships with those unlike themselves. How does that concept apply to your own life and experience? What strategies and tactics do you think are most effective for getting "outside your path?"

Prayer

*Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.*

—Revised Common Lectionary Prayers, courtesy of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library



Session 3

Second week of Lent (March 2-8)

The Image Question

Session Description

How a society treats people is an essentially moral decision. It is also a theological matter that reflects our obedience, or lack thereof, to the Word of God. The foundation of all human rights, equality, and dignity is *all* of us being created in the image of God—*imago Dei*. Seeing all people, no matter their race or ethnicity, gender, who they are, how they worship, or who they love as full image-bearers of God undermines any human attempt to build barriers or divisions between groups.

Video and Audio Clips

- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 3, “The Image Question”
- Barbara Williams-Skinner, at the D.C. Reclaiming Jesus Vigil, May 24, 2018, clip starts at 26:45 and goes to 33:40 (6min 55sec): <https://www.facebook.com/SojournersMagazine/videos/10155616183912794/>
- A Conversation About Growing Up Black (5min 11sec): <http://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000003670178/a-conversation-about-growing-upblack.html>
- Sharon Watkins, at the D.C. Reclaiming Jesus Vigil, May 24, 2018, clip starts at 52:25 and goes to 57:45 (5min 20sec): <https://www.facebook.com/SojournersMagazine/videos/10155616183912794/>
- “Faith Leaders Have a Message for Survivors: We Believe You,” Sojourners (2min 43sec): <https://sojo.net/media/faith-leaders-have-message-survivors>
- Father James Martin, “Spiritual Insights for LGBT Catholics” (9min 23sec): https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=9&v=mdO87dmgMMk

Selections from the Book [Chapter 3]

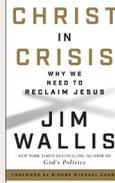
pp. 45-50 (beginning of chapter to paragraph ending with “will be explored in this book”)
pp. 60-72 (“Male and Female God Created Them” and “Aren’t We All Beloved of God?”)
pp. 81-86 (“The Choice America Has Yet to Make”)

Scripture Passages

Genesis 1:27-31
John 1:1-18
Galatians 3:23-29

Discussion Questions

1. What is the image of God? What do you think about when you hear that phrase? What does it mean to be created in God’s image and likeness? What’s the connection for you between the



concept of the image of God (*imago dei*) introduced in Genesis and the person and teachings of Jesus Christ?

2. What did you take away from Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner's and Sharon Watkins' words in the clips from the Reclaiming Jesus vigil? What does standing against racism, sexism, and other forms of marginalization and oppression look like in your life, community, church, workplace, political context, society, and beyond?

3. What most struck you from Jim Wallis' writings in this chapter on racism and white supremacy, the #MeToo movement, and LGBTQ rights and inclusion? Why? Was there anything in this chapter with which you particularly agreed or disagreed? What was it, and why?

Prayer

God of all humanity

*You call us to bring about healing and wholeness for the whole world—
for women and men of all races and cultures and creeds.*

*Help us to respond to a world that is groaning under the weight
of injustice and broken relationships.*

*Remind us that differences are a gift,
and interdependence a strength from the same creative God.*

*Strengthen us to resist the forces that encourage polarization and competition
rather than understanding and cooperation.*

*We know that your reign is not built on injustice and oppression,
but on the transformation of hearts—
new life, not just reordered life.*

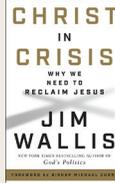
Teach us forgiveness, O God.

Bring us reconciliation.

Give us hope for the future.

*We pray in Jesus' love.
Amen*

—**Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook**, in *Seeing the Face of God in Each Other: The Antiracism Training Manual of The Episcopal Church*



Session 4

Third week of Lent (March 9-15)

The Truth Question

Session Description

When the number of official lies told becomes legion to the point that people doubt the existence of truth anymore, Jesus says, “You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.” Jesus clearly connects the truth with freedom: Truth sets us and keeps us free, but lies will finally enslave us. If you care about freedom, you had better care about the truth.

Video and Audio Clips

- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 4, “The Truth Question”
- Walter Brueggemann, the D.C. Reclaiming Jesus Vigil, May 24, 2018, clip starts at 39:00 and goes to 43:30 (4min 30sec): <https://www.facebook.com/SojournersMagazine/videos/10155616183912794/>
- “What’s happened to the truth under President Trump?” PBS Newshour, July 25, 2018 (15min 02sec): <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/whats-happened-to-the-truth-under-president-trump>
- Meg Kelly and Sarah Cahlan, “President Trump has made 12,019 false or misleading claims over 928 days,” *The Washington Post*, August 12, 2019 (2min 13sec): https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/president-trump-has-made-12019-false-or-misleading-claims-over-928-days/2019/08/12/382e0e6e-e9db-4764-ac48-f82216731f27_video.html

Selections from the Book [Chapter 4]

pp. 87-95 (beginning of chapter through paragraph ending with “the society in which we exist”)

pp. 109-112 (“Grave Spiritual Danger of Itching Ears”)

Scripture Passages

John 8:31-32

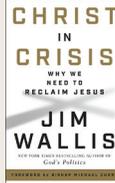
John 18:28-40

Matthew 7:1-5

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Discussion Questions

1. How do you answer Pilate’s question to Jesus in John 18:38, “What is truth?” What are the points of agreement and disagreement in your group on what truth is or isn’t?
2. How do you go about distinguishing between truth and falsehood in your daily life, community, work, politics, and the media? What challenges do you encounter, and how do you



overcome them? Can you share with the group some of the sources you view as most helpful in this regard?

3. When Jim Wallis says on p. 88, “If you care about freedom, you had better care about truth,” what do you think he means? How does this connection apply to the political context in the United States and around the world? When the concept of truth is under assault, what kinds of things can Jesus followers do to defend truth?

Prayer

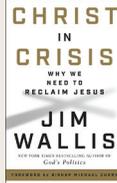
*Lord, help me to seek truth today—
To find it in places and people I wouldn't otherwise notice.
Teach me that in truth there is wisdom and understanding.
May seeking truth help me overcome my fears and frustrations.*

*Lord, help me to strive for truth in all that I do today—
That my thoughts, words, and actions may reflect Your goodness.
Show me that only in truth will I be free—
To live honestly and courageously,
To love wholeheartedly and unconditionally.*

*Lord, help me to cherish truth—
Knowing that You are the author of all that is beautiful, good, and true.
May truth reign in my heart, no matter what I encounter today—
Lies, mockery, confusion, or betrayal.
Your truth gives me clarity and peace.*

*Lord, You created truth.
You are Truth.
Help me to know truth when I see it;
Learn truth when I am taught it;
Love truth,
Live truth.*

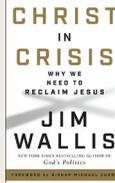
*Help me to share truth with others today—
Those who are lost and lonely,
The brokenhearted and weary,
Anyone who is suffering from visible or invisible pain.
When I am a son or daughter of truth, I am free to be
Fully alive
Fully myself
And an honest reflection of You.*



Truth leads to greater knowledge
Compassion
Understanding
Respect
Charity
And excellence in all virtues.

Truth strengthens me
Guides me
Leads me
Protects me
Keeps me.
I am constant when I dwell in Your truth.
I am unafraid of what I may face.
I am vigilant and poised for speaking
The witness of who You are in truth.
Amen.

—*Jeannie Ewing*, Catholic spirituality author



Session 5

Fourth week of Lent (March 16-22)

The Fear Question

Session Description

In response to people who are gripped by a “spirit of fear,” Jesus repeats this phrase more than almost any other: “Be not afraid.” Fear is not wrong—it is natural, but living in a spirit of fear is not healthy and can actually dehumanize us if we submit to fear’s control. And the hate that often comes from fear causes us to forget the power of love to transform our fear. For the health of the nation and the world, a “sound mind” must be made to flourish.

Video and Audio Clips

- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 6, “The Fear Question”
- “Story Table: Faith and Fear” FULLER studio, November 28, 2017 (5min 53sec): https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=99&v=f5YwzEJwbQw
- “Trump’s caravan stokes cultural fears ahead of midterms,” *The Washington Post*, October 24, 2018 (2min 52sec): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0I-60zJFl_Q
- “QAnon conspiracy theorists increase their presence at Trump rallies,” *The Last Word*, MSNBC, March 29, 2019 (7min 31sec): <https://www.msnbc.com/the-last-word/watch/qanon-conspiracy-theorists-increase-their-presence-at-trump-rallies-1468233283703>

Selections from the Book (Chapter 6)

pp. 135-146 (beginning of chapter through paragraph ending with “the spiritual question before us”)

pp. 153-157 (“Fear Leads to Hate, Which Leads to Violence,” and “The Spread of Fearful Conspiracy”)

Scripture Passages

John 6:16-21

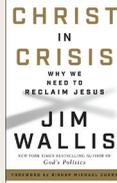
Psalm 23

2 Timothy 1:7

Philippians 4:4-7

Discussion Questions

1. How do you answer these questions from the opening of the chapter (p. 135): “When is fear necessary and even useful, and when is it harmful and destructive? What does it mean to live and act in a spirit of fear? What does it mean to have a sound mind, and how do we cultivate that?”
2. How do you manage fear in your personal and professional life, in your community, and in this fearful time in U.S. and global politics? What coping strategies do you employ to avoid



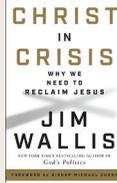
living in a spirit of fear? How does your faith inform your approach?

3. What insights did you find most useful, powerful, or challenging from the “Story Table: Faith and Fear” video clip? Why?

Prayer

When evil darkens our world, give us light. When despair numbs our souls, give us hope. When we stumble and fall, lift us up. When doubts assail us, give us faith. When nothing seems sure, give us trust. When ideals fade, give us vision. When we lose our way, be our guide! That we may find serenity in Your presence, and purpose in doing Your will.

—**John D. Rayner**, courtesy of Grace Cathedral



Session 6

Fifth week of Lent (March 23-29)

The Peacemaker Question

Session Description

When accusation, slander, and attack become the norms of public discourse, Jesus says that those who are the peacemakers, the conflict resolvers, will be called “the children of God.” Conflict is inevitable for human beings, and conflict resolution will always be a necessary and urgent task. Most of our human conflicts are resolved every day without violence, and the activity of peacemakers can critically increase those numbers.

Video and Audio Clips

- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 8, “The Peacemaker Question”
- “Q&A with Sojourners editors on nonviolence and Just Peace” (27min 12sec): <https://www.facebook.com/SojournersMagazine/videos/10154193973427794/>
- “Dr. Glen Stassen on Just Peacemaking” (2min 11sec): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqU70eiYyUo>

Selections from the Book [Chapter 8]

pp. 187-193 (beginning of chapter through paragraph ending with “a science, art, and vocation”)

pp. 201-205 (“Waging Peace”)

Scripture Passages

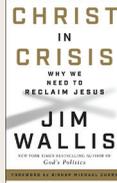
Matthew 5:9, 21-26, 38-48

Romans 12:9-21

Ephesians 4:25-32

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be a peacemaker at the interpersonal, family, organizational, community, national, or even global level? What are some examples from your own life where you either succeeded or failed in being a peacemaker, or where someone else succeeded or failed in playing that role in a conflict in which you were involved? What lessons did you take from that experience?
2. Where do you come down in the debate between pacifism and just war as Christian approaches to violent conflict? Why? Does Glen Stassen’s concept of “Just Peacemaking” successfully bridge the gap for you? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. There has been a great deal of debate in the last couple of years about the value of civility



in public life and discourse. What is your view on the value of civility toward those with whom you strongly disagree on political, moral, and religious issues? Did reading this chapter affect, inform, or change your viewpoint? If so, how? How did you react to the contents and concept of the “Covenant for Civility” described on pp. 191-193?

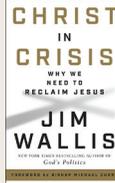
Prayer

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.*

—*St. Francis of Assisi*



Session 7

Sixth week of Lent (March 30-April 5)

The Power and Caesar Questions

Session Description

Leadership often becomes utterly defined by power and by winning and losing. But Jesus says leadership is about service and washing each other's feet. Think about traditional political leadership and what its dominant values are, then compare those values with the transformative ethic of servant leadership Jesus offers to those who would follow him. To hold up the ethos of servant leadership, translated into the ethics of public service, is a prophetic obligation of the faith community's response to political leaders.

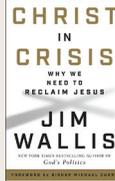
When the "Caesar test" is being defined by strongmen who say everything is about them, Jesus instructs his followers to render to Caesar only the limited things that belong to him. Everything else belongs to God. Returning to Jesus requires careful discernment between what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God in our lives and societies. Restoring a close connection to Jesus means Christians need to do a much better job in our current political reality at identifying times when following God's law means challenging and sometimes even disobeying unjust human laws.

Video and Audio Clips:

- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 5, "The Power Question," and episode 7, "The Caesar Question"
- James Forbes, the D.C. Reclaiming Jesus Vigil, May 24, 2018, clip starts at 1:03:45 and goes to 1:09:30 (5min 45sec): <https://www.facebook.com/SojournersMagazine/videos/10155616183912794/>
- "Pope Francis Urges Humble Leadership in First TED Talk," *The New York Times*, April 26, 2017 (1min 38sec): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrM55VdNsyU>
- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 7, "The Caesar Question"
- Gary Hall, Sermon on Matthew 22:15-22, Washington National Cathedral, October 19, 2014 (13min 12sec): <https://youtu.be/LgT3YAFzvnE?t=1818> (clip should start automatically at the sermon, which starts at 30:18 in the clip and goes to 43:30)
- "Christians Arrested Reading Scripture in Senate Office Building," Sojourners (2min 56sec): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0IkMd4n9XE>

Selections from the Book [Chapter 5 and Chapter 7]

- pp. 113-116 (beginning of chapter through paragraph ending with "to become a servant")
- pp. 127-130 ("The Theological Case for Democracy")
- pp. 159-167 (beginning of chapter through paragraph ending with "...immigrant families on the southern border")
- pp. 172-176 ("Was Jesus a Revolutionary?")
- pp. 184-186 ("Is This a 'Bonhoeffer Moment'?")



Scripture Passages

Luke 22:24-27

John 13:1-19

Mark 11:15-18

Matthew 22:15-22

Romans 13:1-10

Isaiah 10:1-4

Discussion Questions

1. As Jim Wallis asks on p. 113, “What does leadership look like in the world today? What should it look like? Does it matter? What does Jesus teach us about leadership and wielding power? What responsibility do power and leadership confer on those who have them?”
2. What is the relationship, in your mind, between servant leadership and public service? How are they similar and how are they different? What do you see as the biggest strengths and weaknesses of democracy in promoting public service over self-interest?
3. How do you sort out what to give to “Caesar” (government) and what to give to God in your own life? Can you talk about a time when you faced a conflict or difficult decision along these lines? What happened, and how did you resolve it?
4. What does Jim Wallis mean when he identifies this time in history as a “Bonhoeffer Moment”? Do you agree with his assessment? Why or why not? What does that mean or not mean for your response to this moment?

Prayer

Leadership is hard to define.

Lord, let us be the ones to define it with justice.

Leadership is like a handful of water.

Lord, let us be the people to share it with those who thirst.

Leadership is not about watching and correcting.

Lord, let us remember it is about listening and connecting.

Leadership is not about telling people what to do.

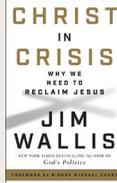
Lord, let us find out what people want.

*Leadership is less about the love of power,
and more about the power of love.*

Lord, as we continue to undertake the role of leader let us be

affirmed by the servant leadership we witness in your son Jesus.

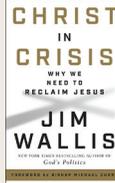
Let us walk in the path He has set and let those who will, follow.



*Let our greatest passion be compassion.
Our greatest strength, love.
Our greatest victory, the reward of peace.*

*In leading, let us never fail to follow.
In loving, let us never fail.*

—*Center for Mission and Identity* at Xavier University



Session 8

Holy Week (April 6-12)

The Discipleship Question

Session Description

When wealth and power become the definitions of society and politics, Jesus makes the extraordinary judgment that the ultimate measure of our lives, including God's evaluation of the kings of the nations, is what we have done for "the least of these." Jesus tells us that how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the stranger, the naked, and the prisoner is how we treat him. The "least of these" should therefore be at the top of our political agendas when, most of the time, those are the very last people whom candidates and politicians talk about.

Video and Audio Clips

- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 9, "The Discipleship Question"
- "Water for the Thirsty at the U.S.-Mexico Border," Sojourners (3min 20sec): <https://sojo.net/media/water-thirsty-us-mexico-border>
- "The Matthew 25 Pledge" Sojourners (1min 31sec): <https://sojo.net/videos/matthew-25-pledge>
- Tony Campolo, the D.C. Reclaiming Jesus Vigil, May 24, 2018, clip starts at 33:50 and goes to 38:30 (4min 40sec): <https://www.facebook.com/SojournersMagazine/videos/10155616183912794/>

Selections from the Book [Chapter 9]

pp. 211-220 (beginning of the chapter through paragraph ending with "than he had ever felt before")

pp. 220-225 ("Applying Matthew 25" and "The Matthew 25 Movement")

pp. 226-231 ("The 'Stranger' in Washington, DC, and Southern California")

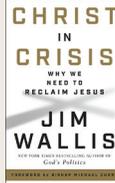
Scripture Passages

Matthew 25:31-46

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Discussion Questions

1. Jim Wallis describes Matthew 25:31-46 as his "conversion passage" that brought him back to Christianity. What is your relationship with this text? Do you remember when and how you first read it or heard it preached or taught on? What stuck out to you then? Has your understanding of the text changed at all since you first read it?
2. Had you heard about the "Matthew 25 Pledge" described on pp. 221-225? What is your re-



action to the approach and proposed actions laid out in it? What other ways have people acted in defense of vulnerable people in the last few years? Which approaches and actions do you think have been the most effective, and which have been less so? Why? What other groups of people can you think of besides the three initial groups identified by the pledge who are especially vulnerable in the United States or elsewhere in the world today?

3. What lessons or insights do you take from the experience of the Mateo 25 group in Southern California's efforts to get Pastor Noe Carias released from detention? What about the work of those providing water for the thirsty at the U.S.-Mexico border in the video clip? What are the advantages and drawbacks of these approaches to helping vulnerable people? What are the advantages and drawbacks of advocacy work aimed at changing local, state, or federal laws and policies in ways that will help vulnerable people?

Prayer

*We name you gracious Master and our God,
Great Redeemer and King.
You offer us the kingdom, Lord Jesus;
a realm where the hungry are fed,
the thirsty are given something to drink;
and the homeless are housed.*

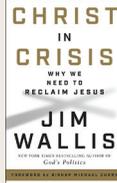
*You offer us a realm where
those who are shivering are clothed,
the sick are visited,
those in prison hear good news.*

*We wonder how we are to receive such a gift:
Will you require of us more than what we are already doing?
Will you judge us for what we have done
and what we have left undone?
Will you leave us out of your community of salvation?*

*In your great love and mercy,
move us beyond fear;
move us beyond guilt;
move us beyond our anxious worry.
Move us deeper into your surprising grace;
Heal the blindness that does not see you
when you come to us in distressing disguise.*

Set us free from serving lesser gods.

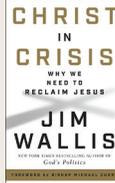
*Most of all, form in us the mind of Christ,
so that we see the world through your eyes,
so that our hearts are broken by the things*



*that break your heart, and
so that we delight in the things that delight you,
and you create in us courage enough not to duck.*

We ask in your life-giving name.

—**Christine Jarrett**, courtesy of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



Session 9

First week after Easter (April 13-19) Becoming Salt, Light, and Hope

Session Description

To live by the teachings of Jesus is to become the “salt” and “light” that societies desperately need, especially when they are in crisis. Followers of Jesus are like salt when they preserve and deepen the important values that undergird healthy human societies. Followers of Jesus are also like light when they shine into the darkness and reveal what is wrong, unjust, and in need of changing. Just as following Jesus gives the courage to act as salt and light in the world, it is also the source of our hope, which is not a feeling but a decision we make based on faith.

Video and Audio Clips

- Reclaiming Jesus Now podcast, episode 10, “Becoming Salt, Light, and Hope”
- Jim Wallis, the D.C. Reclaiming Jesus Vigil, May 24, 2018, clip starts at 10:30 and goes to 18:00 (7min 30sec): <https://www.facebook.com/SojournersMagazine/videos/10155616183912794/>
- “Black Church Food Security Network,” Sojourners (3min 35sec): <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=333354814175268>
- “We Asked One Question at the March For Our Lives,” Sojourners (3min 31sec): <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155480622007794>

Selections from the Book [Chapter 10 and Epilogue]

pp. 245-249 (beginning of chapter through paragraph ending with “no better time for that spiritual vocation than right now”)

pp. 262-266 (“Time to Go Deeper” and “Hope Is a Door”)

pp. 269-271 (“The Road Ahead”)

pp. 278-290 (from paragraph beginning with “As we look toward what the future will hold” through paragraph ending with “but will have the light of life (John 8:12)”)

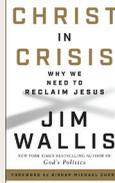
Scripture Passages

Matthew 5:1-16

Hebrews 11:1-40, 12:1-2

Discussion Questions

1. How do you understand Jesus telling his followers that they are the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”? Has the analysis in this chapter changed that understanding? If so, how?
2. Beyond the examples given in this chapter and the video clips, what salt and light can you



point to in your community or that you're aware of from local, national, or international news? What gives you hope in our present political, religious, and moral crisis?

3. What are you doing to reclaim Jesus in your life, family, community, and nation? What can you commit to doing from now on that you aren't currently doing? What are you currently doing that you will commit to keep doing?

Prayer

Oh God, we come to you this day with full hearts.

Hearts full of concern for all our brothers and sisters who languish in the grip of poverty, hunger, prisons, and refugee camps.

Hearts full of concern for those caught up in wars, and in political and economic corruption, and in endless waiting periods for immigration.

Hearts full of concern for those caught up in cultural biases regarding race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion; biases that deny your image and the humanity found in every person. Biases that inevitably create, feed, and abet social, spiritual, and political violence against the weak and vulnerable.

O God, may our hearts of concern and anger not become hearts of hatred, but help us convert our concern and anger into constructive action, action that demands fairness and justice for all, action that calls our selves, our churches, our nation, and our political leaders to repentance and transformation.

Transform our hearts and all hearts, especially those that have been hardened to the suffering of your children, especially those who somehow seek to justify their own hardness of heart by perverted readings and interpretations of your word.

We have just begun to understand what it means when we read that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God." How quickly and easily we who have wealth and privilege can justify that wealth and privilege by considering ourselves and our nation exceptional.

Open the hearts of America, that we may hear your desire for justice, may see your grace and healing poured out across our land and the globe, may come to understand our wealth and privilege as a call to service and humility, remembering that of those who have much, much is required.

*O God, comfort your people, and make us each an instrument of your grace and peace. Instruments of justice, instruments of healing in this weary land, for the sake of all your people.
Amen.*

—**Rev. Richard L. Hamm**, Reclaiming Jesus vigil, May 24, 2018