



Illustrations by Ben Jones

Countering Christian Nationalism

Loving God and Neighbor in Polarizing Times

INTRODUCTION

The [September-October 2024 issue](#) of *Sojourners* focuses on Christian nationalism—what it is, why it matters, and how we can address this rising force. *Sojourners*' president Adam Russell Taylor (p. 9) introduces the dangers of Christian nationalism and how some are responding. Amanda Tyler, executive director of Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty and author of the forthcoming book *How to End Christian Nationalism*, further defines the threat to democracy and religious liberty (p. 14), but also offers the assurance that “working to end Christian nationalism does not mean working to end Christian expression in the public square.” It’s about how we bring our faith to civic engagement.

Our feature section (p. 20) opens with several perspectives on how to understand and confront Christian nationalism. Fuller Seminary professor Soong-Chan Rah then explores how the Pentecost story in Acts calls the church to self-sacrificial service, rather than the blind pursuit of power. Finally, sociologist Tony Tian-Ren Lin analyzes myths and facts about how faith intersects with right-wing politics among Latino Christians and other communities of color.

We hope you will share the Sept-Oct issue of *Sojourners* wherever people of faith and conscience meet to discuss issues of consequence.

Thank you to the Luce Foundation for support that helped make this special issue possible. —The Editors, *Sojourners* magazine

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

(AND WHAT IS IT NOT)?

Weaponized Christian nationalism seeks a “Christian” theocratic government that would erode civil rights and undercut election integrity and democratic principles. It endorses the use of violence to obtain or maintain power; embraces white supremacy; and distorts Christian language, symbols, and identity into tools for political manipulation and gain.

At the same time, beliefs about “God and country” exist on a wide spectrum. White Christian nationalism is sometimes supported by people who are not “white.” And stifling all participation by people of faith in civic life is not a suitable alternative to nationalism.

In other words: It’s complicated. You are not alone if you are confused, concerned, or dismayed by these topics. Hopeful action, however, is possible and necessary.

A key question is: How does Christian nationalism show up in politics and policy?

Americans who embrace Christian nationalism are more likely to approve of authoritarian tactics; fear and distrust religious minorities; condone police violence toward Black Americans; believe racial inequality is due to the personal shortcomings of minority groups; are “very uncomfortable” with both interracial marriage and transracial adoption; hold anti-immigrant views; fear refugees; oppose scientists and science education in schools; and believe that men are better suited for all leadership roles. (Information from *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* by Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry).

These beliefs are cultural, not religious. But since Christian nationalism claims to be rooted in our faith, Christians have a particular responsibility to confront and resist Christian nationalism as a heresy.

As you read the various perspectives on Christian nationalism in the Sept-Oct 2024 *Sojourners*, consider the questions below.



SEE-STUDY-PRAY-ACT

1. Were you raised in a religious culture or family? How did that benefit you, your character, or your faith in God? Has religious culture ever become an obstacle in your relationship with God?
2. How would you define American culture? What are the best virtues in American culture? What are the worst?
3. What is Christianity's relationship to American identity and civic life?
4. What should Christianity's relationship to national identity and civic life be?
5. Can religious traditions strengthen democratic values and principles? Why or why not?
6. How does religious supremacy erode democratic values and principles?
7. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prevents the government from "establishing" a state religion and protects citizens' right to practice their religion as they please, so long as it does not undermine "public morals" or a "compelling government interest." How does Christian nationalism relate to this founding principle?
8. What are the virtues or practices of your religious faith that you most cherish? How do they guide you in your civic life? Consider putting your responses in the form of a prayer to share.
9. Having read some of Christian nationalism's policy implications, what actions are you already taking that publicly model an alternate set of values? What actions would you like to take? Are there actions you are afraid to take? Are there actions you can take with a group?

 Post your action photos to Instagram and tag @Sojogram!

PLUS

[Are You Accidentally a Christian Nationalist?](#) by Mitchell Atencio (sojo.net)

[10 Ways Christians Can Protect Democracy](#) by Maria J. Stephan (sojo.net)

[Faith and the Authoritarian Playbook](#) by Maria J. Stephan (*Sojourners*, July 2024)

[A 'Nonconforming Minority' Can Defeat Christian Nationalism](#) by Adam R. Taylor (sojo.net)

[How To End Christian Nationalism](#) by Amanda Tyler

[Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States](#) by Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry

[White Poverty: How Exposing Myths about Race and Class Can Reconstruct American Democracy](#) by William J. Barber II

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