



Responding to Christian Nationalism

Introduction

Dear friends,

I'm pleased to share with you a new resource on how Christians can respond to the dangers of Christian nationalism in our country. The team at BJC (Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty) created this resource to be used in conjunction with a webinar titled "Democracy and Faith Under Siege: Responding to Christian Nationalism." The program was hosted by Amanda Tyler, executive director of BJC. It explores how Christians are identifying and responding to the dangers of Christian nationalism in the wake of the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Panelists include The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church; The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Dr. Andrew Whitehead, associate professor of sociology at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

There are three lessons in this set. Users will watch clips from the webinar and then answer discussion questions provided in the materials. A corresponding PowerPoint deck of slides is available with all the necessary video clips embedded and in order of use for the lessons.

Consider **three ways** to use these materials:

- 1. Self-Study Guide:** Work through these materials on your own, watching the video clips and thoughtfully responding to the questions sequentially as they appear in the curriculum.
- 2. Group Study:** These curriculum lessons are ideal for discussion-oriented small groups (e.g., student groups, home groups, Sunday school classes). There are more questions than most groups will have the time to process, so group leaders or facilitators are encouraged to preview each lesson and choose those questions that best help their group discuss how to respond to Christian nationalism in the time they have allotted to them.
- 3. Sermon Series Resource:** Pastors planning to speak to their congregations on how to respond to Christian nationalism may choose various questions from the curriculum to correspond to their sermons. Congregations could make the materials available for individuals to work through after the sermon, or they could gather in large or small groups to discuss the questions sometime following the sermon.

We hope these lessons will assist you in responding to the threat of Christian nationalism in our country.

Protecting faith freedom for all,

Charles Watson, Jr.
Director of Education
BJC (Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty)

Responding to Christian Nationalism

Lesson One

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM?

“Christian nationalism” is a term you may have encountered recently in the press, on social media platforms and in casual conversations in your workplace, school, neighborhood or church. It is a framework of thinking that threatens our faith and our pluralistic democracy.

What is Christian nationalism in America, and how should Christians respond to it?

In this lesson, you will:

- ✓ learn a definition of Christian nationalism
- ✓ explore some defining characteristics of Christian nationalism in America
- ✓ consider some core theological perspectives that may help Christians safeguard their churches, their communities and themselves against Christian nationalism.

With others, you will watch and discuss video clips from a recent webinar titled “Democracy and Faith Under Siege: Responding to Christian Nationalism.” The webinar is hosted by Amanda Tyler, executive director of BJC (Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty). Panelists include The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church; The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and Dr. Andrew Whitehead, associate professor of sociology at Indiana University Purdue-University Indianapolis.

An Overview of Christian Nationalism

- **What do you know about Christian nationalism?**
 - To begin this lesson, let’s quickly survey what you already know about Christian nationalism.
 - *What do you currently know about Christian nationalism in America? How would you define this ideology?*
 - *Are there specific incidences that come to mind when you think about Christian*

nationalism? Think about events or situations that happened locally, regionally or nationally. What are your reactions, thoughts or feelings to these occurrences?

- **Christian Nationalism – A Troubling Ideology**

- Watch the video clip (clip #1 [2:14-3:20]) and listen as Amanda Tyler presents an introduction to Christian nationalism.
- Amanda claims two assertions about Christian nationalism. First, she says that Christian nationalism is a “troubling ideology.” Second, she states that the threat of Christian nationalism is not something that is new.
 - *When did you first hear the term “Christian nationalism”?*
 - *What do you think it means to call Christian nationalism a “troubling ideology”?*
 - *In what ways can an ideology, way of thinking or worldview distort how we view our democracy? How can it alter how we view others? How can an ideology distort how we view or practice our faith?*

A Definition and Characteristics of Christian Nationalism

- **Christian Nationalism in America – A Definition**

- Watch the video clip (clip #2 [6:14-9:31]) and see how sociology professor Dr. Andrew Whitehead defines and characterizes Christian nationalism.
- Dr. Andrew Whitehead defines Christian nationalism as “a cultural framework that idealizes and advocates a fusion of Christianity with American civic life.”
 - *What does the phrase “cultural framework” mean? What are some other ways to say this phrase?*

- **An Additional Statement Defining Christian Nationalism**

- Read the statement immediately below which provides some additional defining characteristics of Christian nationalism.

RESPONDING TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Lesson One

- ◆ “Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America’s constitutional democracy. Christian nationalism is a framework of thinking that demands Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian.” (From the Christians Against Christian Nationalism Statement.)
- *In what ways are Dr. Whitehead’s definition and this second statement similar in characterizing Christian nationalism?*
- *How could a group of people “fuse” or “merge” their Christian and American identities?*
- The statement you read suggests that Christian nationalism “demands Christianity be privileged by the State.”
 - *What are some ways in which the State (i.e., government at any level) could privilege Christianity as a religion?*
 - *By privileging the Christian faith, what effect would this have on other religions and those who affirm or practice them? What effect would this have on people or groups who do not practice any religion? What effect would it have on Christianity?*
 - *Are there negative consequences for a faith when it is supported by the government over others?*
 - *What negative consequences would privileging one religion over all others have on the U.S. constitutional democracy?*
- The second statement suggests that someone who embraces Christian nationalism believes – whether outrightly stated or not – “that to be a good American, one must be a Christian.”
 - *What do you think this phrase means?*
 - *Give some examples of persons who are good Americans, but not Christian.*
 - *What is the value in having a diverse and inclusive society that respects people who follow various religions, or who follow no religion?*

Christian Nationalism on Display

- **Characteristics of Christian Nationalism**

- Watch the video clip (clip # 3 [10:37-13:38]) and discover how Dr. Andrew Whitehead describes those who advocate and oppose Christian nationalism based on his research with his colleague Dr. Samuel Perry.
- Dr. Andrew Whitehead breaks down the U.S. population into four categories based on how they align with the ideological framework of Christian nationalism.
 - ◆ “Rejecters” (21.5 percent of Americans): These individuals strongly resist the privileging of the Christian religion by governing authorities.
 - ◆ “Resisters” (26.6 percent of Americans): Like rejecters, these individuals oppose the government endorsing or advocating for the Christian faith or values. Unlike rejecters, they may be more comfortable with some public display or use of religious symbols.
 - ◆ “Accommodators” (32.1 percent of Americans): These individuals generally endorse the favoring of the Christian religion or values by governing authorities. They often hold that America was founded as a Christian nation.
 - ◆ “Ambassadors” (19.8 percent of Americans): These individuals support legislation and rulings that privilege Christian values and protect the public display of Christian symbols and activities. They fervently assert that America was founded as, and continues to be a Christian nation.
- According to the presented research, Christian nationalism is widespread. Nearly 52% of the U.S. population are “Accommodators” or “Ambassadors.”
 - *Are you surprised by this percentage of Americans who accept and advocate for Christian nationalism? Why or why not? If you are surprised, what did you think the percentage would be?*
 - *Have you seen or interacted with individuals or groups who fit into any of these four*

categories in your community? Where do you fit within these four categories?

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS RESPOND TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM?

Having looked at a definition of and some research about Christian nationalism, we will now consider how Christians should respond to Christian nationalism.

As we continue this lesson, we will explore some theological statements that may help safeguard us against the troubling ideology of Christian nationalism. (In Lesson Two, we'll explore further Bible-based responses to Christian nationalism.)

Theological Grounds to Guard against Christian Nationalism

- **Scripture Passages and Statements**

- Watch the video clips (clip #4 [22:04-24:37] & clip #5 [39:23-41:20]) and reflect on some theological foundations that directly confront Christian nationalism.
- Read the following New Testament passages and a theological statement.
 - ◆ Philippians 2:9-11 (NRSV). Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
 - ◆ Galatians 2:16 & 19-21 (NRSV). We know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ... I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- Christians are bound to Christ and affirm Jesus is Lord, not by citizenship, but by faith. They affirm that God offers us a choice to believe or not believe, to follow or not, to affirm or deny.

No one should be coerced —especially by the State — to follow or affirm any religious creed or practice.

- *How do these verses and this statement offer theological help in confronting the ideology of Christian nationalism?*
- In the video clips, both Bishop Eaton and Bishop Curry emphasize the confessional statement that “Jesus is Lord” as a core theological safeguard.
- *Why do you think they put so much emphasis on that short confessional statement?*
- *How can following the example of Jesus be foundational for Christians responding to Christian nationalism?*

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

- *What have you learned about the threat of Christian nationalism? What information from this lesson especially caught your attention?*
- *Can you define Christian nationalism to someone who is curious about it? What would you say to someone else in your church or someone in your community if they ask you what it is?*
- *Are you more concerned about the threat of Christian nationalism now than you were prior to this lesson?*
- *How do the presented verses and theological statement that affirm Jesus is Lord and propose that no one should be coerced into any religion guide or inform your response to Christian nationalism?*

In the next lesson, we’ll look at some additional scriptural and practical responses to the threat of Christian nationalism.

On the next page you will find the Christians Against Christian Nationalism Statement. Please use this as a supplemental resource as you respond to Christian nationalism.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTIANS AGAINST CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

As Christians, our faith teaches us everyone is created in God's image and commands us to love one another. As Americans, we value our system of government and the good that can be accomplished in our constitutional democracy. Today, we are concerned about a persistent threat to both our religious communities and our democracy — Christian nationalism.

Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America's constitutional democracy. Christian nationalism demands Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian. It often overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation. We reject this damaging political ideology and invite our Christian brothers and sisters to join us in opposing this threat to our faith and to our nation.

As Christians, we are bound to Christ, not by citizenship, but by faith. We believe that:

- People of all faiths and none have the right and responsibility to engage constructively in the public square.
- Patriotism does not require us to minimize our religious convictions.
- One's religious affiliation, or lack thereof, should be irrelevant to one's standing in the civic community.
- Government should not prefer one religion over another or religion over nonreligion.
- Religious instruction is best left to our houses of worship, other religious institutions and families.
- America's historic commitment to religious pluralism enables faith communities to live in civic harmony with one another without sacrificing our theological conviction.
- Conflating religious authority with political authority is idolatrous and often leads to oppression of minority and other marginalized groups as well as the spiritual impoverishment of religion.
- We must stand up to and speak out against Christian nationalism, especially when it inspires acts of violence and intimidation—including vandalism, bomb threats, arson, hate crimes, and attacks on houses of worship—against religious communities at home and abroad.

Whether we worship at a church, mosque, synagogue, or temple, America has no second-class faiths. All are equal under the U.S. Constitution. As Christians, we must speak in one voice condemning Christian nationalism as a distortion of the gospel of Jesus and a threat to American democracy.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you are interested in additional resources on this topic, go to **ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org**. There you will find webinars, podcasts, and a variety of other community and church resources. Also, if you haven't already, consider signing the Christians Against Christian Nationalism statement. If you have already signed it, encourage others to do so as well by sharing about it on social media or in your conversations.

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Responding to Christian Nationalism

Lesson Two

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM?

In lesson 1, you learned that Christian nationalism is a troubling ideology that seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America's constitutional democracy.

In this lesson, you will:

- ✓ explore Biblical passages that help Christians respond to Christian nationalism
- ✓ consider some practical responses to Christian nationalism.

Like lesson 1, in this lesson you will watch and discuss video clips from a recent webinar titled “Democracy and Faith Under Siege: Responding to Christian Nationalism.” The webinar is hosted by Amanda Tyler, executive director of BJC (Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty). Panelists include The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church; The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America; and Dr. Andrew Whitehead, associate professor of sociology at Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis.

INTRODUCTION

- To begin this lesson, review some discussion from lesson 1. You explored some defining characteristics of Christian nationalism and some ways Christians can respond to it.
 - *What about the threat of Christian nationalism struck you most from lesson 1?*

BIBLICAL RESPONSES TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Three Biblical Passages that Offer Responses to Christian Nationalism

- **A Biblical Commandment to Consider**

- Watch the video clip (clip #1 [37:42-38:51]) and listen as Bishop Eaton discusses Christian nationalism and presents theological responses to it.
 - *According to Bishop Eaton, what is the theological line where Christian nationalism becomes “extremely dangerous”?*
 - *What is your reaction or response to Bishop Eaton’s statements?*
- Read the following verses.
 - ◆ Exodus 20:3 (NRSV). You shall have no other gods before me.
 - ◆ Luke 4:8 (NRSV). Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”
- While enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites were introduced to an Egyptian religious culture with a multitude of gods. The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 are given soon after the Israelites are liberated from Egypt.
 - *How might the Israelites have understood the commandment given in Exodus 20:3, which Jesus paraphrases in Luke 4? Why do you think this commandment important for the Israelites at this point in their history?*
- In our contemporary western culture, many “gods” or “idols” compete for people’s ultimate loyalties.
 - *Where have you seen or experienced people placing their ultimate loyalties somewhere other than God? What behaviors demonstrate this misplaced loyalty?*
 - *What are some examples of how Americans make their political identities or political leaders “idols” to be worshipped or served?*

- **A Biblical Example to Follow**

- Watch the video clip (clip #2 [23:00-24:37]) and listen as Bishop Curry shares about the

importance of following the example of Jesus.

◆ Read Luke 10:25-37 (NRSV).

- Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

- The lawyer in this passage asks Jesus how one can inherit eternal life.
 - *What are the two key elements of Jesus’ initial response? Why are both elements important for spiritual formation or growth?*
 - *What specific steps did the Samaritan take to care for the needs of the man who was robbed?*
- Bible scholars assert that in the first century, Samaritans and Jews experienced ongoing conflict over theological and cultural identity and displayed deep antagonism toward each other.
 - *How does this cultural conflict make the action of the Samaritan more surprising in this parable? What do you think Jesus’ audience was expecting to hear about the Samaritan’s reaction to the Jewish victim?*

- In this parable, empathy and sacrificial action are shown to be central characteristics to manifest for those who choose to follow Jesus.
- *How was empathy demonstrated in this passage? What specific sacrificial actions were demonstrated by the Samaritan? To whom was empathy and sacrificial action provided in this parable?*
- *What are some lessons that you think Jesus was trying to teach this lawyer and his own disciples about being a neighbor? What lessons might you consider as you confront Christian nationalism today?*

• **A Biblical Admonition from the Teachings of Jesus**

- Read the following Bible verses.
- ◆ Matthew 5:43-46 (NRSV).
 - You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?
- This passage is taken from Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount.”
- *What distinction is Jesus making between the culturally acceptable teaching of his day (i.e., “you heard that it was said”) and his radical way of treating others?*
- American culture tends to create many “us versus them” divisions, unnecessarily framing complex issues as binary choices.
- *What are some examples of an “us versus them” framework in American culture? What do these verses have to teach you about loving and hating those who differ from you?*
- *As you think of your neighborhood, community and country, who are some people or groups of people who you might love more and pray for more regularly?*

RESPONDING TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Lesson Two

- People who embrace Christian nationalism often desire to establish Christianity as the dominant religion in America, using power and sometimes even the threat of violence. According to academic studies by sociologists Dr. Andrew Whitehead and Dr. Samuel Perry, Americans who embrace Christian nationalism are more likely to:
 - ◆ Approve of authoritarian tactics like demanding people show respect for national symbols and traditions
 - ◆ Fear and distrust religious minorities, including Muslims, Atheists, and Jewish people
 - ◆ Condone police violence toward Black Americans and distrust accounts of racial inequality in the criminal justice system
 - ◆ Believe racial inequality is due to the personal shortcomings of minority groups
 - ◆ Report being “very uncomfortable” with both interracial marriage and transracial adoption
 - ◆ Hold anti-immigrant views
 - ◆ Fear refugees
 - ◆ Oppose scientists and science education in schools
 - ◆ Believe that men are better suited for all leadership roles while women are better suited to care for children and the home
- What are your initial reactions, thoughts and feelings to this list? In your personal experience and in your relationships, where have you seen any of these behaviors or attitudes demonstrated, either overtly or subconsciously? What are some more subtle manifestations of these actions and attitudes by those who embrace Christian nationalism?
 - *In what ways do the actions and attitudes listed above defy the neighbor-loving ethics of Jesus?*
 - *In the current politically divisive environment, what does it mean to you to be a “neighbor”? As a Christian, who are some “neighbors” in your world that feel as foreign or far away*

from you as a Samaritan would have to a Jew during the days of Jesus? What actions or attitudes would a Christlike neighbor consistently exhibit?

YOUR RESPONSES TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Practical Responses to Christian Nationalism

- **Proposed Responses to Christian Nationalism**

- Watch the video clip (clip #3 [39:24-41:20]) and listen as Bishop Curry presents three practical responses to Christian nationalism.
- Review his three practical and positive responses as a group. They are:
 1. As Christians, we must recenter ourselves on the teachings, example, and spirit of Jesus of Nazareth.
 2. As Christians, we must call on our common humanity, understanding that we are all children of God.
 3. As Christians, we must work to rebuild relationships intentionally with those around us, especially those unlike us.
- Discuss these practical responses to Christian nationalism.
 - *What is your reaction to each of these responses? How would each help address the destructive ideology of Christian nationalism?*
 - *Is your church doing enough to intentionally rebuild relationships with others in your community? Are you personally seeking to intentionally rebuild relationships with others in your community? Why is this response so important? Why is this response difficult for many?*
 - *Are there additional practical responses not mentioned by Bishop Curry that your group*

should consider?

- *What practical steps can your group and church take to advocate for minority groups of all kinds in your neighborhood, community or country?*

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

- *What have you learned about responding to Christian nationalism? What discussion from this lesson especially caught your attention?*
- *Determine with each other some of the practical next steps you will take this week to stand against Christian nationalism.*
- *Rehearse some possible scenarios of ways you can respond to Christian nationalism when you see it in your community, church or family.*
- *How can you tell others what you've learned about responding to Christian nationalism? How will you start a new conversation this week?*

In the next lesson, we'll look more closely how Christian nationalism intersects with racism and white supremacy.

On the next page you will find the Christians Against Christian Nationalism Statement. Please use this as a supplemental resource as you respond to Christian nationalism.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTIANS AGAINST CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

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- Religious instruction is best left to our houses of worship, other religious institutions and families.
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- Conflating religious authority with political authority is idolatrous and often leads to oppression of minority and other marginalized groups as well as the spiritual impoverishment of religion.
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Responding to Christian Nationalism

Lesson Three

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM?

In lesson 2, you discussed three Bible passages and three practical responses to Christian nationalism.

Now we will consider how Christian nationalism overlaps with racism and white supremacy, creating a destructive alliance.

In this lesson, you will:

- ✓ define and discuss examples of racism and white supremacy
- ✓ explore connections between Christian nationalism, racism and white supremacy
- ✓ discuss the importance of confronting Christian nationalism in your neighborhood, community and country.

Like lesson 1 and 2, in this lesson you will watch and discuss video clips from a recent webinar titled “Democracy and Faith Under Siege: Responding to Christian Nationalism.” The webinar is hosted by Amanda Tyler, executive director of BJC (Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty). Panelists include The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church; The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America; and Dr. Andrew Whitehead, associate professor of sociology at Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis. We will also use an audio clip from a podcast interview between Amanda Tyler and Jemar Tisby, an author, historian, Christian and expert on anti-racism.

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM, RACISM AND WHITE SUPREMACY

Connections between Christian nationalism, racism and white supremacy

- **What is the relationship between Christian nationalism and racism?**

RESPONDING TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Lesson Three

- *On a scale from 1 (easiest) to 10 (most difficult), how challenging is it for people to talk about racism? Why is that?*
- In this lesson you explore the relationship between Christian nationalism and racism.
- Listen to the audio clip from a podcast conversation (clip #1 [5:33-7:55]) as Jemar Tisby discusses racism and white supremacy.
- Jemar Tisby says that “racism is a system of oppression based on race” and “racism is prejudice and power.” In his explanation, he emphasizes the words “system” and “power.”
- *Why are “system” and “power” critical words in defining racism and white supremacy? When in our country have power and systems been used to subjugate others? Who in the history of our country has held the power to create systems that subjugated others?*
- *Where have you personally seen or experienced racism as a “system” and a “power” to dismiss, dehumanize, exploit, exclude, or limit others – even yourself?*
- *Can racism exist even when groups or individuals don’t realize they are being racist? Can groups or individuals hold power over others even without realizing it?*
- Jemar Tisby gives the illustration of the grocery store’s “ethnic” aisle to highlight the idea that “white is the center” or “normal.”
- *Can you think about some other examples of a “white is normal” framework in our culture? If you are white, what are things you think of as “normal” that might not be “normal” to others? If you are not white, what are things you think are “normal” that often have labels attached to them? Discuss how your or Jemar Tisby’s examples perpetuate racism. In these examples, how is a person’s or group’s “worth” elevated or diminished by racial prejudices?*
- The Christians Against Christian Nationalism statement says, “Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America’s constitutional democracy. Christian nationalism demands Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian. Christian nationalism often overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation.”

RESPONDING TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Lesson Three

- *What are your initial reactions, thoughts and feelings to the statement that “Christian nationalism overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation”?*
- *How does this connection and ideological overlap create additional concerns for you about Christian nationalism?*
- Watch the video clips (clip #2 [29:08-30:54] & clip #3 [32:52-36:52]).
- Bishop Eaton discusses the “Doctrine of Discovery,” which justified the taking of land by Christians from people already inhabiting the land. This form of white supremacy and superiority elevated the humanity of European Christians over all others and asserted that only these Christians were entitled to land rights. Bishop Curry recounts his own memories of the KKK as well as how his denomination’s history includes their condoning of slavery by perverting theological and biblical principles. He states that this misuse of Christianity to enslave, demean or dehumanize others has been a pattern in American history.
- *What stands out to you from these presentations from Bishop Eaton and Bishop Curry?*
- *How does Bishop Curry’s statement about the KKK inform you about the confluence of racism, white supremacy and American Christianity?*
- Bishop Curry suggests that the beliefs or convictions of the church in America have often been influenced by political and cultural instincts, not just biblical texts.
- *What is your reaction to Bishop Curry’s statement that culture strongly influences religious beliefs?*
- *Give some examples of when the church in America has been influenced by political or cultural pressures. How has your church and denomination been formed or influenced by political or cultural pressures?*
- *How has white Christianity in America benefited from racism? How has the Black church in America been oppressed by racism?*
- *Beyond historical examples, how is this true today?*

- Read the following New Testament verses.
 - ◆ Galatians 3:26-28 (NRSV).
 - For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.
 - *In this New Testament passage, what specific cultural walls and divisions are broken down or eliminated? Given this was written in the days of the early church, why are these specific distinctions listed?*
 - *What does the phrase “for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” mean to you? How does that understanding influence how you relate to people who are racially or ethnically different from you?*
- These verses talk about both cultural differences and our equality in Christ. Unfortunately, some individuals or groups use differences as a justification for inequality. Christians don’t deny cultural differences, instead they celebrate both differences and equality in Christ.
 - *How can Christians affirm other’s differences and affirm each other’s equality?*
 - *What walls does Christian nationalism seek to build that would separate people? How does this verse provide a biblical challenge to Christian nationalism?*

YOUR RESPONSES TO RACISM, WHITE SUPREMACY, AND CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

How do I show up and speak out?

- **Two next steps in confronting Christian nationalism**
 - Watch the video clip (clip #4 [41:26-42:40]) as Dr. Andrew Whitehead explains why it is important to oppose systemic racism.

RESPONDING TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Lesson Three

- *What are some ways that you and your group or church can learn about systemic racism and how it manifests in your community?*
- *List some ways that you and your church can oppose systemic racism. What are some steps that you as a group — not just individually — can take to advocate for the rights of others?*
- Watch the video clip (clip #5 [50:30-52:24]) and listen as Bishop Curry calls Christians to reclaim Christianity by standing against racism, white supremacy and Christian nationalism.
- *According to Bishop Curry, how will Christians reclaim Christianity? Do you agree? How might this best happen?*
- *Why is standing against racism and white supremacy difficult for many white Christians? What steps might white Christians take to overcome these difficulties?*
- *What practical steps can you and your church take to stand up to racism, white supremacy and Christian nationalism?*

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

- *What have you learned about responding to racism, white supremacy and Christian nationalism? What information from this lesson especially caught your attention? What has been the most helpful?*
- *How have your views of racism and white supremacy changed during this lesson or the previous two lessons?*
- *Determine with each other some of the practical next steps you will take this week to stand against racism, white supremacy and Christian nationalism. How will you share these steps or actions with others?*
- *What are some general lessons you've learned during these discussions on Christian nationalism? What questions do you still have about Christian nationalism? How have you been most impacted by these studies?*

RESPONDING TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Lesson Three

Thank you for participating in these lessons on responding to Christian nationalism. Please find additional resources at ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org.

On the next page you will find the Christians Against Christian Nationalism Statement. Please use this as a supplemental resource as you respond to Christian nationalism.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTIANS AGAINST CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

As Christians, our faith teaches us everyone is created in God's image and commands us to love one another. As Americans, we value our system of government and the good that can be accomplished in our constitutional democracy. Today, we are concerned about a persistent threat to both our religious communities and our democracy — Christian nationalism.

Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America's constitutional democracy. Christian nationalism demands Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian. It often overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation. We reject this damaging political ideology and invite our Christian brothers and sisters to join us in opposing this threat to our faith and to our nation.

As Christians, we are bound to Christ, not by citizenship, but by faith. We believe that:

- People of all faiths and none have the right and responsibility to engage constructively in the public square.
- Patriotism does not require us to minimize our religious convictions.
- One's religious affiliation, or lack thereof, should be irrelevant to one's standing in the civic community.
- Government should not prefer one religion over another or religion over nonreligion.
- Religious instruction is best left to our houses of worship, other religious institutions and families.
- America's historic commitment to religious pluralism enables faith communities to live in civic harmony with one another without sacrificing our theological conviction.
- Conflating religious authority with political authority is idolatrous and often leads to oppression of minority and other marginalized groups as well as the spiritual impoverishment of religion.
- We must stand up to and speak out against Christian nationalism, especially when it inspires acts of violence and intimidation—including vandalism, bomb threats, arson, hate crimes, and attacks on houses of worship—against religious communities at home and abroad.

Whether we worship at a church, mosque, synagogue, or temple, America has no second-class faiths. All are equal under the U.S. Constitution. As Christians, we must speak in one voice condemning Christian nationalism as a distortion of the gospel of Jesus and a threat to American democracy.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you are interested in additional resources on this topic, go to **ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org**. There you will find webinars, podcasts, and a variety of other community and church resources. Also, if you haven't already, consider signing the Christians Against Christian Nationalism statement. If you have already signed it, encourage others to do so as well by sharing about it on social media or in your conversations.

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