

WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE: COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

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1 Samuel 8

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. 2The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. 3 Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 and said to him, 'You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.' 6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to govern us.' Samuel prayed to the Lord, 7 and the Lord said to Samuel, 'Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. 8 Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and

9serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. 9Now then, listen to their voice; only—you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.'

10 So Samuel reported all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. 11He said, 'These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; 12 and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. 15 He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. 16He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. 17He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. 18 And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.' 19 But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, 'No! but we are determined to have a king over us, 20 so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out

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before us and fight our battles.’ 21 When Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. 22 The Lord said to Samuel, ‘Listen to their voice and set a king over them.’ Samuel then said to the people of Israel, ‘Each of you return home.’

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. This story highlights the uneasy transition to a new form of government for the people of Israel. Rather than addressing injustices and corruptions, there was a push for more power and security. God relents to the people’s demands, and yet sounds the alarm that injustice and corruption will not be solved by this new (or perhaps any) form of government. Turning from a trust in God toward the power of human rulers seems to be the alarm bell. We live in a very different world and political context. Even so, how might ignoring injustice and turning from God toward the power of human rulers still be a relevant temptation for us?
3. The people refused to listen to Samuel. Then the Lord told Samuel to “listen to their voice” in verse 22.

Courageous conversations take honesty, trust, and **deep listening**: listening to understand, not to reply, defend, prove or accuse. What other ingredients are important to courageous conversations? What kinds of courageous conversations have you been a part of, and how did they impact you?

4. What do you know about Christian Nationalism? **See accompanying “Definitions and Resources” page.**
5. What experiences do you have with faith and politics? How does your faith inform or guide your political engagement?
6. What role does the church have when it comes to faith and politics?
7. Christian Nationalism is about political power and social control. How does the life and teaching of Jesus present a different vision for life, community, and spirituality?
8. How can we untangle ourselves from Christian Nationalism in the church and in our country?
9. Nationalism is not the same as patriotism, which is simply caring about the well-being of a country and all its citizens. How can we be patriotic without being nationalistic?

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM DEFINITIONS

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM is a political ideology that seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America's constitutional democracy.

- Christians Against Christian Nationalism, www.christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org/faqs

WHITE CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM is an ethnocultural ideology that uses Christian symbolism as a permission structure for the acquisition of political power and social control.

- Dr. Jemar Tisby, Footnotes jemartisby.substack.com/p/is-white-christian-nationalism-christian

The concept of white Christian nationalism encompasses the many ways bigotry, prejudice, xenophobia, patriarchy, and racism show up in Christian guise.

- From the Foreword to [The Flag & The Cross: White Christian Nationalism and The Threat To American Democracy](#)

“Although we can affirm and even celebrate the role Christianity has played in America as a nation, **America can't ever be described as a “Christian nation.”** No nation-state can be a Christian nation-state, because Christianity doesn't work that way.”

- Patrick Schreiner, The Gospel Coalition www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/good-bad-ugly-christian-nationalism

White Christian nationalism is not “Christian patriotism.” White Christian nationalism idealizes the power of white Christian Americans. It is rooted in white supremacist assumptions and empowered by anger and fear... Patriotism, as the political philosopher Steven Smith explains, is first and foremost “loyalty . . . to one's constitution or political regime.” Nationalism is loyalty to one's tribe “but always at the expense of an outgroup, who are deemed un-American, traitors, and enemies of the people.” One reason the two sometimes get confused, as historian Jill Lepore explains, is that **nationalism often disguises itself as patriotism**: “Because it's difficult to convince people to pursue a course of aggression, violence, and domination . . . nationalists pretend their aims are instead protection and unity and that their motivation is patriotism. This is a lie. **Patriotism is animated by love, nationalism by hatred.** To confuse the one for the other is to pretend that hate is love and fear is courage.”

- The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy (pp. 8-9). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.

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CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM RESOURCES



CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

In 2023, the Disciples of Christ [passed a resolution](#) (scan QR code) explicitly rejecting Christian Nationalism as religiously idolatrous, socially destructive, and politically problematic. The resolution included additional context and resources.



Some excerpts from that Sense-of-the-Assembly Resolution:

“WHEREAS Christian Nationalism is a cultural framework that fuses a radically exclusionary form of Christian supremacist identity with the political and civic participation of a nation’s citizens through the appropriation of Christian language and imagery to amass political power; and

WHEREAS Christian Nationalism, while present in varying degrees throughout modern history, has taken on more aggressive and overt form in contemporary United States and Canadian public life; and...

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denounces Christian Nationalism in all its forms as a distortion of the Christian faith, and commits to opposing it wherever it appears, for the sake of the gospel and the good of the human family; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Church in all its expressions commit to educating ourselves and our constituencies about the societal and spiritual dangers of Christian Nationalism, how to talk about Christian Nationalism theologically, and how to counter it in both ecclesial and public life; and...”

CHRISTIANS AGAINST CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Sign a statement, find books, articles, and podcasts, and learn more about what you can do at Christians Against Christian Nationalism:

www.christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org



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