

## Brave Church/Hard Topics, 11/3 Christian Nationalism Pt 2 – Comparing Christian Nationalism to Christianity

This is the chat log of the discussion. Names and identifiable information have been removed for privacy.

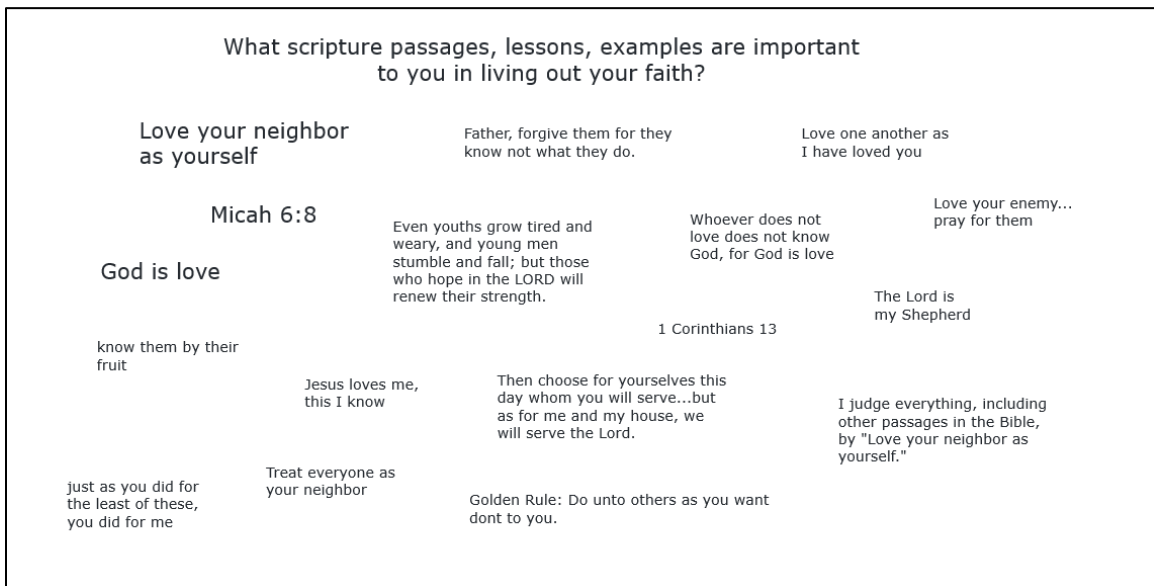
Slides mentioned in discussion topics refer to the Comparing Christian nationalism to Christianity 11-3-2022.pdf file linked from the [Brave Church-Hard Topics web page](#).

Additional information added after the discussion are identified with “**NOTE:**”

### Discussion [Slides 4-6]:

#### What scripture passages, lessons, examples are important to you in living out your faith?

**NOTE:** We tried the Whiteboard (Zoom function) again. We’re learning! A picture of the responses is pasted below.



#### How does that show up in your everyday life?

Brother and I but heads because of political views (hot-button issues). Trying to be loving in my views, even if I don't understand their situation (abortion, being transgender). My role as a Christian is to support them, even if I can't relate.

Trying to be loving in discussion w/ brother, but feel he's missing the concept.

Trying to care about my son-in-law even though I'm not happy with how he conducts himself

Try to live each day by being friendly to everyone I interact with on a daily basis, no matter what they do. Easier to be nice to everyone. If we love everyone as our neighbor, then everyone becomes our neighbor and we should love them.

Golden Rule. Helped when having some "hate fantasies."

Trying to figure out, when someone does something that makes me angry or hurts me, how to respond in a way that isn't a reflection of what they've done but is more respectful and kind. That's not very easy.

Driving in Northern VA traffic, hard to remember to be kind to others. Will spend extra on HOT lanes so traffic stress is reduced.

Know your own hot buttons and try to avoid them. Don't put yourself in situations that cause that kind of stress.

### **Discussion [Slides 8-11]:**

#### **How do the ideological principles of Christian nationalism compare with Jesus in the Gospels?**

#### **How do we articulate the differences for others?**

A new Pew research poll: 45% of Americans say the US should be a Christian nation; 60% believe the US was originally founded as a Christian nation; 33% believe the US is not a Christian nation

**NOTE:** Here's a link to that Pew poll: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/10/27/45-of-americans-say-u-s-should-be-a-christian-nation/>

There are a lot of folks who adhere to some CN principals.

Jesus did not spend his life trying to separate people. He tried to include people. He ate with the Pharisees, tax collectors, sinners, etc. Didn't try to set up different levels of society. CN wants people to be in their "proper place." American CN need to be one race.

On results of some surveys: People who were asked could have responded from the perspective that, if the majority of the US is Christian, we should be following Christian values. But doesn't follow with forcing one religion on others.

One of things that stands out: Jesus was clear about not trying to create political power for himself. Jesus was not a politician and was not interested on being in a position of imposing his ideas on others. CN seems to be an effort to amass power, impose a particular ideology on people.

Here's a podcast from The NY Times that discusses how conservatives in Wisconsin have taken over the state govt. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/20/podcasts/run-up-wisconsin-midterm-elections.html?searchResultPosition=3>

The conservative republicans are being taken over by radicals

NY Time podcast - started 10 yrs ago when Republicans in WI gvt gerrymandered districts in the state to the extent that minorities were clustered, whites spread out - even though Dems outnumbered Reps in state, statewide votes, still ended up w/ more Rep representatives than Dems in state govt. Supreme Ct justices being elected statewide. Stronger grp to vote in. Perpetuating, growing their influence. How can conservative Reps keep from being overrun by radicals?

Scary thinking about how Hitler created an "Aryan religion" and subverted Lutheran churches in Germany, combining Christianity w/ German nationalism.

Which version of the Christian religion will be the "right" one if the Christian Nationalists win?

What came to my mind on Michael Curry statement [Slide 11]: we tend to compare with how each side feels and neither side moves. What would be interesting is if both sides sit down and compare what they want to do with the Gospel of Jesus.

A lot of discourse on CN conflates it with Trumpism (e.g., MAGA). Is that inherent to what CN is? Is it possible that some form of CN that would be a good thing? Imagine a CN that argues for more Christian principles in our nation, courts, legislatures, laws. If we focused on taking care of the poor, carrying out justice fairly, etc, would that too be bad?

**NOTE:** From the first week's presentation, there is a lot of overlap between CN and Trumpism. Trump appealed to a lot of the rhetoric, stoking fears of losing heritage. [see: ]

Response: In order to have more a just society... what about Jewish, Muslim, other faiths, non-faiths who are also committed to just society? We can't assume Christians are the only one who wants a just world.

What constitutes Christian? Which denomination?

There's more to it than what version Christianity you're advocating

Leading from which version of Christianity - have a hard time on how some denominations extrapolate their views on abortion, LGBTQ/homosexuality, when these weren't an issue 2000 years ago.

The Unitarians came out of Christians who were examining the common principles among the major religions. That is why many interfaith couples join the Unitarians.

All religions have a lot of the same moral values. Should drop Christian and focus on moral values. CN want to define who the others are - instead of allowing them to define ourselves. If comparing among different ideologies, which version of Christianity do you use for comparisons?

Which version of Christianity should we advocate? It is more than what we believe. We are in dangerous territory, violating humility, if we say we want our beliefs to be the rule of the land. Jesus didn't see equality with God as something to pursue. Didn't use his power to insist the world be run the way he wanted to.

On nonviolence: Jesus could have wielded his power to avoid being hung on the cross. This was not what Jesus wanted his disciples to do.

Wielding power was one of the 3 temptations.

I think CN threats are incidental to the threats in this country - beliefs that are false, conspiracy theories, Q-ANON are what's behind the violence in this country.

How do we interact with someone with these beliefs? How do we show we are Christian with what we believe? You can find too many different sources of information/misinformation these days that support some of these conspiracy theories. Q-ANON is still a major influencer of what people think. We as a nation have lost faith in our institutions. That is going to be the hardest thing for use as a country to restore. Concern is that we as Christians may inadvertently lead us down a path we don't want to go.

If we try to define a more just society, what do we do about something that doesn't fully conform to our beliefs but is close? Do we accommodate or, in enforcing our belief, push a more dictatorial path?

Right in worrying about that, partly because distrust in our institutions has been caused by some Christians. Do you really trust the Supreme Court?

What is a bigger motivator - love or fear? Jesus's ministry in the Gospels was based on love, not fear. Fear is often used as a motivator - the fear of hell and damnation, the fear of others, the fear of losing. But is fear a long-term reason for believing something? It seems Jesus opts for love, not fear.

Fear is a very strong motivator, even stronger than love.

Is fear more of a short-term or long-term motivator?

A lot of denominations base things on fear - going to hell with no chance of redemption. Fear could work for a while, maybe even for a long time. If your public looks at this and goes, "what about love?" then the whole fear thing falls apart. Are we going on fear or are we going on love?

## Discussion:

**What might “an outbreak of discipleship” look like today [see Michael Gerson’s article, Slide 12]?**

**Where do you see signs of it today?**

Regarding Gerson’s point that people who value the same ideals can come to different policy conclusions: This is what we used to have in Congress. Republicans and Democrats would still have congenial discussions with each other. That doesn’t happen today and the animosity has to go away in order for us to have reasoned discussions.

We have to get politicians to talk to all people, not just their base. Politicians now are appealing to fear in characterizing the other. Both sides are stoking fear within their base.

The election is keeping me up at night -- in fear!

I remember when Democrats and Republicans used to sit down and talk about "the common good." What is the common good between millionaires and those in poverty? What is the common good across the diverse spectrum of race, sex, age, sexual orientation today? We don't seem to have a common experience. That requires some compromise for the common good.

We have a lot of good in common. It's the not-so-good that is breaking us apart.

How do we get to the point where we can answer the question of what is the common good? We've managed to convince each other that the pie is only so big. We need to learn there's enough for everybody. We need to break the ideology that is all too common. e.g. "I'm tired of paying for everyone else." We have to break that mindset. We also need to break the mindset that "I can keep getting."

Part of the problem is that this country has gotten all out of whack because the people who have much continue to take from those who don't and then blame them for not having. There are plenty of stories in the Gospels about how what you have will go around, about sharing with others. We have so many stories about that. We need to compare these ideas to what Christ is doing in the gospel.

We're having a conversation about Trumpism. Is that the same as CN? The positive vision we're talking about - maybe we should reclaim the term "Christian nationalism." Reclaim Evangelism, patriotism. The kind of nationalism we want is an egalitarian country w/ separation of power, church and state. Equitable policies through democratic means in the public square.

Maybe we just need to reclaim Jesus and Christianity from the distorted spins.

Defining distinctions between patriotism and nationalism are important. If we had to choose between faith/following Jesus and patriotism, what would we choose?

Maybe the conversation needs to be on what is the true Lord of your life and how does that impact how you participate in the political structure of the country?

The importance of being Christian in what we do - we can act in Christian ways as members of our government and political system. That doesn't necessarily mean we have to impose our beliefs on others. How do we act in a Christian way in what you do? Let others see how you do things.

YES!! Jesus never forced anyone to convert.

We all have to live in this country. We don't gain by trying to define Christianity. Our fidelity should be to the constitution.

That!

These are big decisions we have to go through in our heads - all rhetorical. Our class had to write an essay on whether we'd rather be red or dead. We decided we'd rather be red because we could be subversive.

If our fidelity is to the constitution is that rendering unto Ceasar? Does our faith or support to the constitution come first?

### **Closing Comments**

We covered a lot of ground, and some of it we'll revisit in next week's discussion.

**Next week:** How do we have meaningful conversations with that relative/friend who espouses the principles of Christian nationalism? How do we change the conditions in which Christian nationalism thrives? How do we provide a counter-narrative to the exclusionary rhetoric of Christian nationalism, both as individuals and as a church?