

Breaking Point

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

We've created additional resources to support and enrich your community's commitment to resisting white Christian nationalism. In addition to these conversation starters, visit AugsburgFortress.org/webinars/WCNwebinar to read excerpts from each panelist's book and delve into the reading list we've curated from other experts on the topic.

You may watch each episode at AugsburgFortress.org/webinars/WCNwebinar.

After watching each webinar session, use these questions to unpack the conversation further with your group. Depending on your group's dynamic and time, you may choose to adjust some questions or not discuss them all.

We've created space on these pages for people to take notes if you choose to print them out for your small group.

SCAN FOR MORE INFO



Night 1

During their opening remarks, the panelists talked about what brought them to their work in this area. What precipitated your own interest in and concern about white Christian nationalism?

Amanda Tyler described Christian nationalism as “the single biggest threat to religious freedom in this country.” In what ways is Christian nationalism threatening free religious expression in your local community? (timestamp: 11:15)

Angela Denker pointed to John 18:31-38 as an object lesson in how certain rhetoric can deny truth, avoid directly answering questions, and create a shared affinity over who we hate and who is not like us. How do you see this rhetoric functioning in the scripture story, and how do you see it functioning in public discourse today? (timestamp 18:50)

Brad Onishi described how “Christian nationalism invites people into a narrative and gives them a character to play...” (timestamp: 22:55). He went on to say that the story of white Christian nationalism is way more “epic” than the story others might want to tell, about living a neighborly life (timestamp: 25:00). How can those of us who oppose nationalist rhetoric and values tell a better and more compelling story?

Greg Jarrell spoke about his research on urban renewal (timestamp: 35:10). What do you know about the history of the land you live on now? The land your church occupies?

Amanda remarked that “Christians have been departing from the teachings of Jesus in service of the power of Christian nationalism for centuries... We can grow closer to Jesus if we reject Christian nationalism in favor of *Christianity*” (timestamp: 41:10). If you are a person who professes Christian faith, how could your rejection of white Christian nationalism help you grow in that faith?

Angela closed out her remarks with a reminder that if you think that Christian nationalism is not in your midst, it absolutely is (timestamp: 58:30). Where do white Christian nationalist values show up in your own families and congregations?

Brad challenged listeners to do one thing we’re not doing yet (timestamp 55:30). What is one thing you’re going to do in response to this webinar and discussion?

Night 2

During their opening remarks, each of the panelists reflected on their reactions to the events of January 6, 2021, and how their work helped them understand what led up to such a moment. What was your experience of witnessing the insurrection, and what understanding did you have at the time about the roots of that movement? What have you learned since?

John Fanestil suggested that in each religious tradition, there is extraordinary power and extraordinary temptation (timestamp: 13:20). John describes this in his writing as a double-edged sword. What sorts of double-edged swords do you see in your own tradition or community?

Aaron Scott's book *Bring Back Your People* gives readers tools to understand and approach their proverbial "cousin Randy" (who has become a foot soldier for white Christian nationalism) with love and compassion. But he made clear in his remarks that love isn't a free pass to enact harm. In fact, it is dangerous to love people, because it puts you at risk (timestamp: 21:45). What risks would you take on if you engaged with more love and compassion with those in your own community who have been pulled into white Christian nationalism?

Matthew Taylor pointed to a surge of Christian nationalism globally and argued that what's happening in the US is part of that global trend. To get the perspective we need, he suggested paying attention to the ways other democracies have combatted Christian nationalism (timestamp 30:50). What Christian nationalist movements globally are you familiar with? What do you notice about those movements? How do they look similar/different to what's happening here in the US?

Pamela Cooper-White described the conscious and unconscious motivations that draw people to white Christian nationalism (timestamp 53:10). Does her description of the psychological factors at play help you better understand how folks are drawn in?

Matthew made the point that Christians aren't the ones most threatened by Christian Nationalism, and that when we have relationships with people from other faiths, we see the impact in a bigger way (timestamp: 1:00:00). How does viewing these trends from the perspective of non-Christians awaken your conscience on these issues?

Pamela described white Christian nationalism as "pseudo-Christianity," and John described it as an idolatrous or heretical version of Christianity. How, in your view, does white Christian nationalist ideology subvert the true message of Christianity?

Aaron pointed out that without a long-term relationship and presence with a person, they won't tell you the truth about "where it hurts," instead pointing to easy scapegoats (timestamp 1:07:00). How can you invest in these kinds of long-term relationships in your own community?