



Spiritual Warriors: Decoding Christian Nationalism at the Capitol Riot

Video Discussion Curriculum

Audience and Format

This video is appropriate for use in the following learning situations:

- High School Social Studies or Humanities classrooms
- College, University or Seminary classrooms
- Congregational adult or high school education programs
- Adult learning groups (e.g., senior centers)

Learning Goals

- Understand the development of the New Apostolic Reformation
- Identify some of the key figures in this movement of Christian nationalism
- Understand why Christian leaders would promote a candidate who does not hold many of their religious values
- Consider how to respond to this threat to democracy and religious pluralism

Time Frame

- 60 minutes for just viewing the video and short discussion
- 90 minutes for video viewing plus warm-up, discussion and closing activity.

Suggested Program

WARM UP ACTIVITY

With your full group or in pairs, ask your group to consider either of the following questions:

- Based on what you have heard in the media or have read, how would you define Christian nationalism?

- Do you believe that the United States is a Christian nation? What does that mean?
- Optional Activity (see below): Take the PRRI/Brookings Institution Christian Nationalism Survey to see whether you might be a Christian nationalism Rejector, Skeptic, Sympathizer or Adherent.

INTRODUCE VIDEO

Share with your audience the following information:

This video was produced by ICJS, the Institute for Islamic, Christian and Jewish Studies, which has a mission to advance interreligious dialogue and understanding in order to build bridges between people and communities and to dismantle religious bias and bigotry. The video presents the research of ICJS scholar Matthew D. Taylor into a little-known charismatic Christian movement called the New Apostolic Reformation, and investigates the role it played in instigating the 2021 Capitol riot, as well as its continuing political influence.

Following the video, we'll discuss what we heard.

VIEW VIDEO (APPROXIMATELY 25 MINUTES)

Available on [YouTube](#).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is your reaction to the threat of Christian nationalism as presented in *Spiritual Warriors*? Share one word that describes your state of mind.
- How does this film match or contradict your prior impressions of American Christianity and Christian nationalism?
- What are your impressions of the Christianity/Christian nationalism on display around the US Capitol on January 6th, 2021?
- Have you encountered religious nationalism before in your own tradition or in others'? If so, what did it look like?
- When you hear the statement, "America is a Christian nation," what does it mean to you? What is someone affirming if they agree with this statement? Does that necessarily mean

they are a Christian nationalist?

- If one is a Christian and they love their country, does that make them a Christian nationalist? What is the difference between patriotism and Christian nationalism (or any religious nationalism)?
- Do you have members of your family, colleagues, neighbors, or old friends who have Christian nationalist views? How do you engage them? Or have you decided to avoid them on the issue?
- In the United States, there is great leeway given for religious freedom and religious expression, but religious voices can also espouse deeply anti-democratic ideas that do imperil our democratic order. Have we got the balance right between freedom of expression and protecting democracy? If not, what would be a better way to protect religious freedom and protect democracy at the same time?
- What is the relationship between spiritual violence and real-world violence?
- What role can interreligious dialogue play in dismantling theologies of violence or conflict that arise in our religious traditions?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY FOR CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS:

Using the resource here, read and discuss any of the Scripture passages and discuss how they strengthen the case against Christian nationalism.

[How does the Bible inform Christian opposition to Christian nationalism](#) (From Christians Against Christian Nationalism)

CLOSING ACTIVITY:

Using the list below—or adding your own idea—name something you can do to counter Christian supremacy.

What Can We Do?

- Spread the word about the threat of Christian supremacy

- Share the Spiritual Warriors video with friends and on social media. Share other resources on Christian nationalism.
- Engage people who are sympathetic to Christian nationalism in humanizing, constructive dialogue
 - Use questions and curiosity to gently explore their thoughts and opinions.
 - Ask them if they have considered the consequences to religious minorities —or even to Christians who aren't like them—if Christian nationalists were to overturn American pluralism.
- Prepare yourself to defend democracy
 - Political scientist Eitan Hersch says it is too easy for Americans to be [“political hobbyists”](#)—those who treat politics as sport, but don't do the hard work or organizing, lobbying, speaking out, and even getting to know our neighbors and our community. Democracy and the rule of law must be defended through peaceful means and mobilizing citizens.

Extend the Conversation

- ICJS Resources:
 - [The Violent Take it by Force: The Christian Movement that is Threatening Our Democracy, by Matthew D. Taylor](#)
 - [Charismatic Revival Fury](#), a five-part audio documentary on the New Apostolic Reformation, created and hosted by Matthew D. Taylor
 - Check out the ICJS minicourses [Christian Nationalism \(Un\)defined](#) and [The Roots and Realities of U.S. Christian Nationalism](#).
- Suggested Reading:
 - [A Christian Nation? Understanding the Threat of Christian Nationalism to American Democracy and Culture](#), a report by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) and the Brookings Institution.
 - [The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism](#), by journalist Tim Alberta.
 - [The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism](#), by Katherine Stewart. The documentary film [God & Country](#) (directed by Rob Reiner) was based on this book.
 - [The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy](#), by Philip S. Gorski and Samuel L. Perry.
- Resources for Christian Congregations
 - [How does the Bible inform Christian opposition to Christian nationalism](#) (From Christians Against Christian Nationalism)
 - [Politically Divided Congregations: A Curriculum for Reconciliation and Transformation](#) (From Sojourners)

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

- Take the [PRRI/Brookings Institution Christian Nationalism Survey](#). Where do you fall on the Christian nationalism scale?

Pick one of the four options for each question.

A. The U.S. government should declare America a Christian nation.	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
B. U.S. laws should be based on Christian values.	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
C. If the U.S. moves away from our Christian foundations, we will not have a country anymore.	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
D. Being Christian is an important part of being truly American.	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
E. God has called Christians to exercise dominion over all areas of American society.	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree

Tally each answer with the following score:

Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
0	0.33	0.67	1.0

Add all five scores and divide the total by 5. This is your Final Score. Compare your score with the chart below.

