

EXCERPT



Disarming Leviathan
Loving Your Christian Nationalist Neighbor

July 2, 2024 | \$18, 216 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0851-5

Christian nationalism, a worldview rooted in un-Christian ideas about power, race, and property, has taken over large swaths of the United States. Introducing the basics of Christian nationalism and its talking points, pastor Caleb Campbell equips Christians to confront these claims with compassion and the truth of the good news of Jesus.

A Mission Field to Reach, Not an Enemy to Attack

For me one of the most painful revelations of 2020 was that many within the American church were not placing their ultimate hope in Jesus but were instead buying the false promises of Christian nationalism—a movement that calls Christian followers to take government power at all costs to advance their preferred way of being in the world. For a few this term (and its eponymous movement) is not new. They have seen similar nationalistic movements rise in the past. But for the vast majority of us, including me, this was a newly discovered phenomenon. While it may seem novel, this great beast of Christian nationalism—which seeks to destroy dissidents, misappropriate Scripture for its purposes, and encourage acts of aggression, racism, and hatred—has been lurking in the shadows of the American church for years, spoken of in whispers behind closed doors. All of that notably changed in 2020 when the beast reemerged from the darkness.

Scripture often attributes such currents of evil to greater forces being at work in the world. These powers are often envisioned as a serpent, beast, or dragon—or sometimes, the Leviathan, an ancient mythical sea monster that lives in the disordered abyss (Job 3:8; 41:1; Psalm 74:14; 104:26; Isaiah 27:1). To the ancients Leviathan was a vivid symbol for cosmic chaos and the evil powers that oppose the loving, orderly ways of God. They recognized that humans could choose to align with this dragon-like power to the point of becoming like dragons themselves. Leviathan captures both the material and spiritual reality of present-day American Christian nationalism.

But how did so many of our loved ones fall prey to this monstrous power? How could so many Jesus followers support such fear-mongering, rage-inducing, Bible-distorting, arrogant, deceitful, dehumanizing behavior?

In the recent atmosphere of political and social upheaval, many of our neighbors found comfort in the promises of American Christian nationalist leaders; they began looking to them for guidance, hope, and power. They were choosing to be shepherded not by spiritual leaders that look and act like Jesus but instead were being disciplined daily (sometimes hourly) by organizations that championed Christian nationalists and by media outlets that leveraged anxiety about Covid-19, demonstrations for racial justice, and a contested presidential race to incite viewers and expand their influence. These organizations then sold American Christian nationalism as a godly solution that would protect followers' faith, family, and, of course, firearms. And a multitude of evangelicals bought what they were selling, supporting organizations that propagate this false gospel with time, energy, and money.

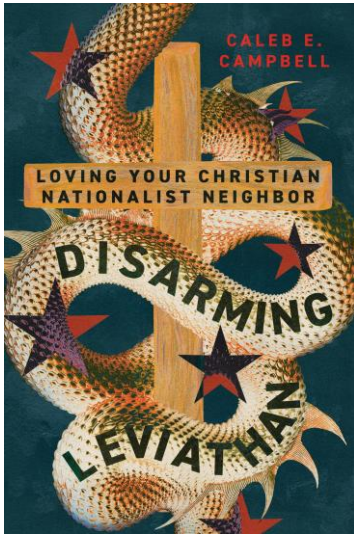


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"This urgent and gracious book is an answer to prayer for those of us heartbroken by the power of Christian nationalism over our loved ones. Now we have a resource brimming with practical wisdom to equip us to approach family and friends with the liberating gospel of Jesus."

David Swanson, pastor and author of *Rediscipling the White Church*

As a pastor of a suburban nondenominational Bible church, I felt like I had a good handle on the political leanings of my fellow evangelicals. I assumed most (but not all) would continue to endorse candidates that supported politically conservative policies. However, I was shocked to discover just how many of them were happily giving full-throated support to the ungodly leaders and organizations promoting American Christian nationalism.

I wondered how these beloved Christians could give allegiance to a movement that blatantly disregards the true ways of Jesus and instead embraces the power of Leviathan. It seems to me that they, like the first humans in the Garden of Eden, had been deceived into thinking that the way of the dragon is more powerful than the way of God.

It was in this apocalyptic season that I began to ask the Lord, "What should I do?"

In time, I realized that people influenced by American Christian nationalism were not an enemy to attack. They were a mission field to reach. So, I set out to be a missionary to American Christian nationalists.

Many of us who recognize American Christian nationalism as incompatible with the way of Jesus are feeling deep grief at the fractures within our communities. How do we move forward? How do we heal the broken relationships with our friends and family? How do we heal the fractures within the church?

I believe that we can approach American Christian nationalists as a mission field using the two-thousand-year-old methods of Jesus and his earliest followers. Our role as missionaries to American Christian nationalists is simply to point them back to Jesus, who loves them and you very much.

—adapted from Chapter 1, "The Apocalypse"

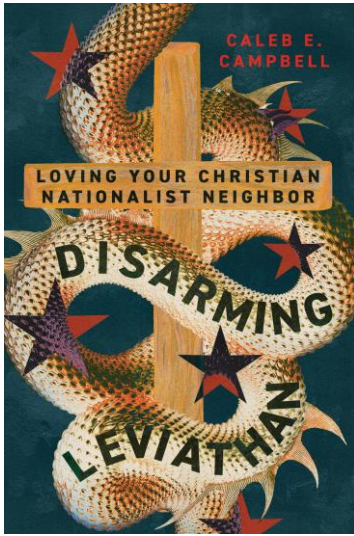


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ENDORSEMENTS



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"When so much divides us, in both our nation and the church, Caleb Campbell helps us find a way forward as followers of Jesus. That way, unsurprisingly, is the way of love."

Michael W. Austin, author of *American Christian Nationalism: Neither American Nor Christian*

Praise from Diverse List of Advocates and Academics

"Finally! A book that equips us to respond to Christian nationalism with hope and practical advice. This wisdom comes from an author who has not only studied the subject but who, for a time, embraced its message until a dramatic change of heart. This is the book to hand to anyone who has a friend, family member, or church member caught up in Christian nationalism."

—**Jemar Tisby**, author of *The Color of Compromise* and *The Spirit of Justice*

"This is a book that moves beyond critique and into action, giving concerned Christians the resources they need to confront Christian nationalism in their communities. *Disarming Leviathan* is the theological and pastoral response to Christian nationalism that the church desperately needs."

—**Kaitlyn Schiess**, author of *The Ballot and the Bible* and *The Liturgy of Politics*

"This is the book I've been waiting for! Around the country, Christians who lament how Christian nationalism has gripped their families and churches are asking, 'What can we do?' The answer, as Caleb Campbell reminds us, isn't war but a commitment to love, conversation, and in a word, ministry."

—**Samuel L. Perry**, coauthor of *Taking America Back for God* and *The Flag and The Cross*

"Caleb Campbell provides a necessary service for the church. He makes what was once hidden plain to see—a revelation of an insidious movement that has grown root and flourished in our midst. He accomplishes this act of prophetic revelation with thoughtfulness and grace, offering a pastoral path forward."

—**Soong-Chan Rah**, Robert Munger Professor of Evangelism at Fuller Theological Seminary and author of *Prophetic Lament*

"The current decade has been defined by heightened political tensions that are increasingly framed through polarized religious communities. The approach of this book to engage Christian nationalism as a mission field is a fresh approach that can give hope and direction to those who have struggled with this phenomenon."

—**Vince L. Bantu**, assistant professor of church history and Black church at Fuller Theological Seminary, Ohene of Meachum School of Haymanot

"Caleb has taken the time to understand the movement from the inside, and he offers practical ways to engage in substantive conversation without shutting people down. If you share our concern that Christian nationalism distorts biblical principles, then this book will show you what to do about it. It's not enough to disagree. We need to engage."

—**Carmen Joy Imes**, associate professor of Old Testament at Biola University and author of *Bearing God's Name*



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Q & A



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Caleb Campbell has been a pastor at Desert Springs Bible Church in Phoenix, Arizona, since 2006 and lead pastor since 2015. He is a doctoral student at Fuller Theological Seminary and serves as the regional director for the Surge Network.

Adopt a Posture of Table-setting over Table-flipping

What about your experience as a pastor prompted you to write this book?

Caleb Campbell: As a pastor of an evangelical church torn apart in 2020 by political division, I was seeking resources to help congregations reach out to their Christian nationalist loved ones with the hope of the good news of Jesus. While there were many great resources that examined American Christian nationalism, I didn't find any that gave practical coaching on how to missionally engage them.

What is your aim for this book?

Caleb: I am striving to generate empathy for those caught up in American Christian nationalism. We must recognize that they are simply reaching for "sword power" over "cross power," which all of us are prone to do (though our "swords" might look different).

What is one of your favorite quotes from the book?

Caleb: *"Ignoring problems won't make them go away, distancing ourselves from others can lead to further entrenchment in their convictions, and arguing about facts rarely results in true change. Genuine transformation always starts with the heart."*

Name five things you hope readers will learn from reading your book.

Caleb: I hope readers gain the following from reading my book:

1. Christian nationalists are anxious that their way of being in the world is under threat of erasure.
2. Most of the work needing to be done to reach American Christian nationalists in my life is in my own heart.
3. Galatians 6:1-2 offers guidance on how we can approach our Christian nationalist neighbors.
4. While many of us choose to take the posture of table-flipping (e.g. Jesus in the Temple), it is better to take the posture of table-setting; leading with hospitality instead of hostility.
5. American Christian nationalism, like all other idolatries, is promising to fulfill our core desires of safety, Belonging, and purpose. Needs that only Jesus can meet.



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