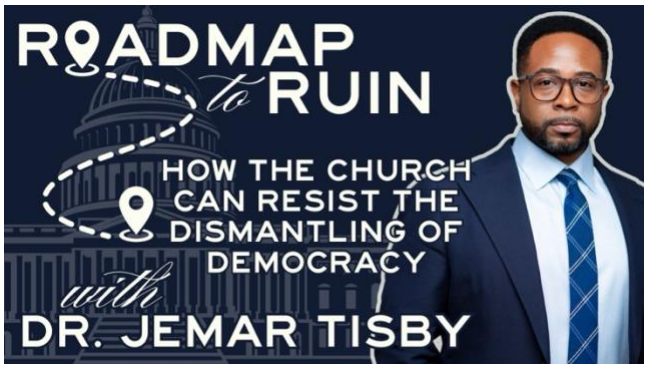
Roadmap to Ruin: How the Church Can Resist the Dismantling of Democracy

A Study Guide for Church Groups



Overview

The Roadmap to Ruin series uncovers the urgent threats to democracy in the United States and the role of the church in resisting these anti-democratic forces. Dr. Jemar Tisby examines the deliberate efforts of individuals, organizations, and movements working to undermine democratic principles—focusing on white Christian nationalism, authoritarian agendas, and the erosion of civil rights. This study challenges Christians to recognize these dangers and respond with biblical justice, advocacy, and action.

Through four episodes, participants will learn how the road to ruin has been paved, who is behind it, and how churches can resist. The study emphasizes that this is not merely a political battle but a spiritual one—requiring awareness, relationships, and commitment (The ARC of Racial Justice). This guide equips churches to take informed action, rejecting fear-based nationalism and embracing a Christ-centered approach to justice, truth, and democracy.

Session 1: The Roadmap to Ruin

Key Themes: The urgency of the moment, threats to democracy, political vs. partisan engagement

Discussion Questions:

1. What emotions did you feel when hearing about the threats to democracy outlined in this episode?
2. In what ways does the church's history of political involvement (or lack thereof) shape how it should engage in politics today??
3. What's the difference between being political and being partisan? How can Christians engage without aligning with a political party?
4. In what ways is the current political regime undermining democracy? Which signs of ruin stood out most to you?
5. How can churches prepare for the inevitable challenges of speaking truthfully about these issues?

Bible Reflections:

• Micah 6:8 – "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

- What does it look like to "act justly" in the face of threats to democracy today?

• Proverbs 31:8-9 – "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

- Whose voices are the "destitute" in our current political moment? Pray for them specifically.

Session 2: The Architects of Ruin

Key Themes: The people and organizations behind democracy's decline, five pillars of the anti-democratic movement

Discussion Questions:

1. Who are some of the key funders and organizations working against democracy? How do they operate?
2. Which of these roles do you think has the most influence in the church and Christians? Why?
3. What other lesser-known individuals or organizations should be exposed for their role in dismantling democracy?
4. Why is it important to recognize that this movement is not just about one political leader but an entire infrastructure?
5. How can churches educate themselves on the long-term strategies being used to undermine democracy?

Bible Reflections:

• Ephesians 5:11 – "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."

- How can your faith community actively expose these injustices in ways that are truthful, courageous, and faithful to Christ?

• Isaiah 10:1-2 – "Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people."

- How does this passage speak to modern efforts to suppress voting rights, dismantle education, or marginalize vulnerable communities?

Session 3: The Roadmap to White Christian Nationalism

Key Themes: The history and theology of white Christian nationalism (WCN), its distortion of Christianity, and its impact on democracy

Discussion Questions:

1. How does white Christian nationalism differ from the Christianity of Christ?
2. What are some other historical roots of WCN the church should be aware of? How have these events, ideas, or individuals shaped U.S. politics?
3. In what specific ways does white Christian nationalism violate Christian scripture and the teachings of Jesus?
Why do some people of color support white Christian nationalism?
4. Why is asking the question "Is white Christian nationalism Christian?" not very helpful? What is a more effective way of framing the question?
6. How can congregations educate their members about the dangers of WCN?
7. What does it look like in this moment to practice a faith that aligns with Jesus' teachings rather than nationalist ideology?

Bible Reflections:

• Matthew 7:15-16 – "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them."

- How can we recognize "false prophets" in today's political and religious climate? What "fruit" should we be looking for?

• Galatians 3:28 – "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

- In what areas of my life or thinking do I still struggle with the boundaries that this verse calls me to dismantle?

Session 4: Roadmap to Resistance

Key Themes: Spiritual resistance, the ARC of Racial Justice (Awareness, Relationships, Commitment), and faith-based activism

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is resisting the dismantling of democracy a spiritual battle? How does thinking of it in these terms shift your understanding of how to face this moment?
2. What spiritual gifts has God given you to engage in justice work?
3. How can churches cultivate partnerships and solidarity across racial, ethnic, and cultural divides?
4. What tangible actions can churches take to provide a counter-narrative to white Christian nationalism?
5. How can churches go beyond awareness to sustained commitment to shift policies and systems?
6. How your faith community use the ARC of Racial Justice to provide a practical framework for engagement?
7. What next step of faith can you take this week to move from discussion to action?

Bible Reflections:

• Ephesians 6:12 – "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

- When we see the architects of ruin, how do we resist villainizing individuals while still holding them accountable?

• 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 – Spiritual gifts are given for the common good.

- Which spiritual gifts are present in our group? How can they be used synergistically to pursue the common good and resist the dismantling of democracy?