

# INSPIRE MINISTRIES

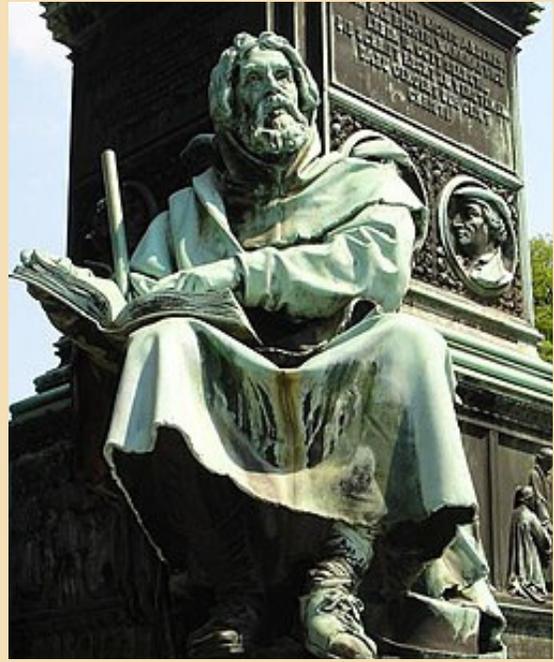
Empowering Christian Leaders for  
Lasting Impact

“Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.’” John 18:36

Constantine's Vision and the Battle of the Milvian Bridge from  
Greek manuscript (879–883 AD) of the homilies of Gregory of  
Nazianzus



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Statue of Peter Waldo at the Luther Monument in Worms, Germany

## THE EMPIRE OR THE KINGDOM

In a year when nations rattle sabers abroad and tensions flare at home, followers of Jesus face a sobering question: will we give our allegiance to the Empire, or to the Kingdom of God?

As believers, we rightly turn to Scripture for guidance in personal life and family. Yet the Bible also speaks to the complex moment when earthly powers call us to war—whether against another nation or against our own neighbors. Jesus summed up God’s law in the Great Commandment: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37–39; Mark 12:29–31). He then entrusted the church with the Great Commission: to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them to obey everything he commanded (Matthew 28:18–20). These two mandates—love and mission—must shape how we respond when any government demands our ultimate loyalty.

### Constantine and the Birth of “Christian Empire”

In 312, the Roman Empire was fractured by civil war as rival emperors struggled for power. Constantine, already a proven general, marched into Italy to confront Maxentius, his rival in the West, culminating in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge just outside Rome on October 28, 312. According to the bishop Eusebius, Constantine saw a cross of light

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the sun with the Greek words “In this, be victorious,” later rendered in Latin as “In hoc signo vinces” (“In this sign you will conquer”). That night, he reportedly dreamed of Christ, who told him to use this sign in battle; Constantine then ordered his soldiers to mark their shields with the symbol of the cross.

Constantine’s victory sent Maxentius’ troops into chaos; many drowned in the Tiber, including Maxentius himself, clearing the way for Constantine to claim supremacy in the West. In the years that followed, he ended formal persecution of Christians through the Edict of Milan (313) and progressively favored Christianity, using it as a unifying religious bond in a divided empire. Over time, what began as relief for a persecuted church evolved into imperial Christianity—Christendom—where state power and Christian symbols intertwined, often blurring the line between the cross of Christ and the sword of Caesar.

### When the Cross Became a Banner of Conquest

As centuries passed, the church in the West increasingly aligned with political and military power. In the name of defending truth and order, Christians participated in campaigns that used coercion and violence against those deemed heretics or infidels. Church and state collaborated in the Inquisition, in the burning of so-called heretics, and in colonial ventures where soldiers and priests together claimed lands in Africa and the Americas “for God” while also seeking gold and glory.

Yet this imperial Christianity sits uneasily beside the New Testament vision of the Kingdom—a people shaped by the cross, called to love enemies, bless persecutors, and overcome evil with good (Matthew 5:38–48; Romans 12:14–21). The question remains pressing in 2026: will we use the name of Jesus to preserve power, control, and cultural dominance, or will we bear witness to a crucified King who laid down his life for the world?

### Waldo and a Different Way of the Kingdom

Across the centuries, God has always raised up men and women who chose the Kingdom way over imperial religion. In the late twelfth century, a wealthy merchant in Lyon, France—Peter Waldo (or Valdes)—heard the words of Jesus to the rich young ruler, “Go, sell what you possess and give to the poor... and come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21), and took them to heart. He distributed his wealth, embraced voluntary poverty, and began preaching the gospel publicly in the streets and villages, calling ordinary people to follow Christ.

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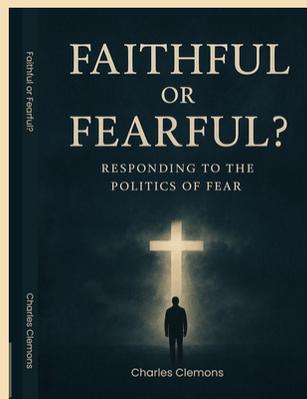
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Waldo's followers, later known as the Waldensians or the Poor of Lyon, prioritized Scripture, lay preaching, and a simple, lived obedience to Jesus across Europe. Because they preached without approval from ecclesiastical authorities, they were branded heretics; medieval accounts note that when ordered to stop, they replied with the apostolic conviction: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Hunted and persecuted, they nevertheless continued to spread the gospel from village to village, embodying a faith not confined to buildings or political power, but carried on footpaths and in homes by ordinary believers.

### Two Visions of Christianity in 2026

Those two streams still run through the church today. One stream adopts the logic of Empire—using Christian symbols, language, and identity to protect status, secure rights, and dominate enemies, even when that means turning against the very neighbors we are commanded to love (Luke 10:25–37). The other stream walks the quieter path of the Kingdom—meeting people where they are, serving the sick, the poor, the stranger, and the enemy, so that they might see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Inspire Ministries, hospital chaplaincy, and our daily encounters all offer us a choice: will we cling to the empire of self-protection, or will we join Jesus in advancing his Kingdom of self-giving love? By God's grace, let us reject the temptation to baptize domination in Christ's name and instead follow the Lamb who was slain, proclaiming his good news in word and deed until people from every tribe and village are gathered into his Kingdom (Revelation 5:9–10).



# Faithful or Fearful?

## Responding to the Politics of Fear

### *Why This Book—Why Now*

Across the political spectrum, fear is being used to manipulate people, divide churches, and distort Christian witness. *Faithful or Fearful? Responding to the Politics of Fear* calls believers to recognize fear-based manipulation and respond instead with confidence in God's sovereignty, biblical discernment, and love for neighbors who differ from them. Rather than retreating into a siege mentality, this book invites Christians—especially within evangelical communities—to re-center their hope in Christ and His kingdom, not in any political party, ideology, or personality.

### *What the Book Is About*

Drawing from Scripture and church history, *Faithful or Fearful?* explores how political fear replaces faith with anxiety, love with suspicion, and truth with propaganda. It challenges believers to resist fear-driven narratives and to practice courageous, compassionate discipleship in public life—marked by truth, humility, and trust in Jesus.

### *A 5-Week Reading & Discussion Plan*

Designed for Sunday School classes, small groups, or ministry cohorts. Groups may adapt pacing as needed.

#### *Week 1 – Naming the Problem: Political Fear and the Christian*

Read: Preface; Chapters 1–2

Focus: How fear operates in politics and why Christians are vulnerable to fear-based narratives.

#### *Week 2 – Scripture's Call: "Do Not Be Afraid"*

Read: Chapters 3–4

Focus: Biblical foundations for trusting God rather than fearing earthly powers.

#### *Week 3 – History's Witness: Faithful Responses in Hard Times*

Read: Chapters 5–6

Focus: Historical examples of believers who resisted fear and remained faithful under pressure.

#### *Week 4 – Examining Our Hearts and Communities*

Read: Chapters 7–8

Focus: How fear distorts Christian ethics, especially toward immigrants, minorities, and ideological opponents.

#### *Week 5 – Practicing Faithful Presence*

Read: Chapters 9–10

Focus: Living without fear—discerning media, engaging neighbors, and bearing Christ-centered witness.

### *Sample Discussion Starters*

- Where have you felt political fear, and how has it shaped how you view others?
- Which Scriptures most challenged your assumptions about fear and faith?
- What would it look like for your church or group to become a non-anxious presence in a fearful political climate?
- What is one concrete practice God may be calling you to adopt—or release—in your political engagement?

*Faithful or Fearful?* reminds us that Jesus—not fear—must shape our public witness, our relationships, and our hope for the future.



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