

4 Things to Consider During Tonight's Debate

Tonight is the first presidential debate, and this whole election season has me floored. Maybe you identify. Like many American Christians, I find myself in a deep quandary when faced with choosing between our presidential candidates. Frankly, it's because I don't find any of them to be very *presidential*. Are you with me?

To me, both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are deeply flawed candidates. And to be honest, I don't see any of the other candidates having as much as a snowball's chance in you know where of winning the election. What are Catholics, Protestants, Baptists and all who profess to be doing our best to follow Christ to do? For starters, we need to make sure we really are doing our best—and that's not possible if we check out and don't vote.

By saying I'm "floored," I don't mean that I'm flabbergasted. I mean I'm *on my knees*. You should be too. If you aren't seeking God, asking Him to move clearly and powerfully, you've checked out. And it's more than a shame; it's a sin. We can't care about truth and love if we aren't doing all we can to minimize lies and hatred.

As you watch tonight's debate, here are a few things to watch for that will help determine how you will vote (Click [here](#) to see a side-by-side comparison of where Clinton and Trump stand):

1. Remember that we are electing a president, not a pastor. Jesus is not running for president. And even if He were, I'm fairly confident we wouldn't elect Him. Remember how we treated Him the first time around?

Both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump identify as Christians,

but both have said and done things—often—that defy Christ-following behavior. In this election, I don't think we get to choose a candidate who models our values. *I think, instead, that we have no choice but to vote for the candidate who will best enable us to live our values as Christians and allow us to encourage others toward the same without obstruction.*

Prayerfully consider which candidate shows the greater potential to allow Christianity and Christian values to flourish. Which candidate would pose the greater *threat* to the free expression of Christianity and the support and spread of Christian values?

2. Look for what they say or imply about our Constitution, and especially the First Amendment, which recognizes and protects our God-given freedoms, as follows:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Which candidate seems more likely to protect, preserve and defend the Constitution and First Amendment? If these are regulated or belittled, your ability as a Christian to freely love and serve Christ—and to teach others to do the same—will be directly and significantly hindered.

Keep in mind that there are many persecuted and imprisoned Christians in other countries who would love to live in a country where religious freedom were a protected freedom, a right that no one could hinder.

3. Remember that it's not just about electing the president but about the appointment of Supreme Court justices and the next 30 to 50 years of America. Over the next four years, the Supreme Court will make decisions about the following:

- Planned Parenthood and the protection of the unborn
- The rights of private citizens to own guns
- The definition of marriage
- The definition of gender
- Religious freedom
- School choice

The president will also appoint dozens of lower court justices. As these justices go, so goes our nation. *Permanently*. (Here's a short video to help you understand how important the High Court is).

Look for what the candidates may say about the kinds of judges they would nominate, and their views on the issues, above.

4. Think about the America your children and your children's children will grow up in as a result of the decision we make on Nov. 8. Do you like what America has become over the past seven years? Would you like our current course to continue, or do you think we need to change course? Have the past seven years been friendly or antagonistic toward Christianity and biblical teachings? What if we have more of the same?

Think deeply. Pray hard. Act accordingly. The decision that we will collectively make on Nov. 8 will have consequences for many generations to come. If you sit this election out, and leave it up to others to decide, don't complain when the America you once loved becomes one that makes you squirm. Ignore your freedoms and they will go away. {eo}

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