

Broad Range of Faith Leaders Support COVID Vaccine

Franklin Graham, Pastors John Hagee and Greg Laurie as well as other faith leaders have come out in support of vaccination against COVID-19—with words, actions or both.

Graham told ABC News this week that he believes pastors should urge their congregations toward vaccination. “I would hope that the pastors in the pulpit would tell people how they can be saved from God’s judgment,” he said. “I think for a pastor to tell someone not to take the vaccine is problematic because what would happen if that person got coronavirus and died?”

The president of Samaritan’s Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association also pointed to the example of his late father, renowned evangelist Billy Graham, who lost several family members in the 1918 flu pandemic. “Anytime there was a vaccine or something that could help protect you, he was an advocate for, he took it,” said his son Franklin Graham. “I think if there were vaccines available in the time of Christ, Jesus would have made reference to them and used them.”

Pastor John Hagee of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio was infected with the coronavirus last year. During his recovery period, he reportedly told his congregation, “We have a vaccine; the name is Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

But Hagee Ministries recently clarified his position in a statement to ABC News, saying those words were taken out of context.

“Pastor Hagee himself is taking the vaccine,” said Hagee Ministries spokesperson Ari Morgenstern. “Pastor Hagee believes in both the power of prayer and modern medicine. These are not mutually exclusive.”

More than two dozen clergy members from the Washington, D.C., area were vaccinated in the Washington National Cathedral Tuesday as part of an interfaith “vaccine confidence” effort, The Associated Press reports.

“Melissa Rogers, executive director of the newly reinstated White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, said working with faith communities is vital to the vaccination effort because many people are more comfortable getting their shot in a house of worship and religious leaders are among the most trusted leaders in their communities,” per the AP story. That office has been holding a weekly call with thousands of faith leaders nationwide to discuss strategies for working with clinics to administer the shots.

In a December sermon, Pastor Greg Laurie of megachurch Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, California, and the Harvest Crusade ministry, addressed congregants’ potential concerns about the vaccine. He doesn’t believe the vaccine is the biblical mark of the beast, he said.

“You have two choices at a moment like this in human history,” Laurie said. “You can look up, or you can freak out. ... We should not be looking for Antichrist; we should be looking for Jesus Christ. That’s where our focus should be right now.”
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