

Evangelicals and Trump: A Match Made in Heaven or Marriage with Hell?

The text message was poignant and painful. An adult daughter, herself a committed Christian, could not understand how her father, himself a minister, could support a “villain” like Trump. A similar conflict is playing out in families across the nation, dividing the Church at large and separating evangelicals in particular.

In the case at hand, we have two devoted Christians, both of whom love the Lord and esteem the Scriptures. Yet their relationship is being challenged because of their diametrically opposed views on President Trump.

The daughter wrote to her dad, “What Trump stands for is the opposite of who you are and the father I have supported and loved my whole life! So when I hear you support him and champion him and make excuses or twist things to fit the narrative that Jesus is behind this, it crushes me and makes me question what I’ve always known to be true about you. I want you to be my hero forever, but what I see is my hero, my champion, supporting a villain and I cannot make sense of it.”

In response, the dad wrote to me, “I’m praying for wisdom and discernment how to break through this forcefield caused by Trump just to have a conversation like you said today [on the radio broadcast], ‘C’mon, he only gets my vote.’”

“I agree with the reasons you stated. It’s just politics! He’s just the don’t adore him nor am I tethered to daughter knows that she’s not able to disassociate all the vitriol embedded in her judgments against the president for us to have a conversation about it.”

I can sympathize with both sides.

The daughter, who has always associated her father with morality and humility and integrity and the gospel, sees him supporting a man who appears to be the opposite of those values.

The father, who recognizes that the president is fighting many important battles for the good of our nation, believes his daughter has been unduly influenced by the secular media and the widespread vilification of Trump.

And this brings us to the big question of the hour: Have the good things President Trump has done *for* evangelicals been worth the price that has been paid *by* evangelicals? Is our relationship with him a match made in heaven or a marriage with hell?

Some readers mocked me for writing the recent article, "Donald Trump Is Not the Christ and Donald Trump Is Not the Antichrist."

One said, "For the last time, Trump IS NOT our savior. No one here with a brain thinks he is."

Another commented, "You guys here at Stream are having a running argument that is in YOUR HEADS AND IN YOUR HEADS ONLY about Trump being someone's savior, or not."

"You write as if this is a question for normal people (take note: that means you are being abnormal). It's not. It is all in your freaking own head, and it is a kind of disguised and self-righteous slander on your part to imply that it is an issue in our heads, or hearts, or spirits. IT IS NOT!!!!

"So get a grip and get off it."

Little did they realize just how extreme the rhetoric is surrounding our president, both inside and outside evangelical circles. (They also failed to understand that in saying Trump

is not our Savior, I was making a positive statement to a critical world, not a negative statement.)

But be assured: Those extremes are there.

One woman tweeted in response to the article, "I write for another website whose American evangelical audience would constantly call us Satanic, leftist, or otherwise not Christian if ever we published an article saying anything less-than-glowing about Trump. Thank you to @DrMichaelLBrown for this."

So, among her evangelical readers, any comments about the president that were "less-than-glowing" were of the devil. That sounds pretty cult-like to me.

On the exact opposite side, a man felt it necessary to set the record straight. He tweeted, "I disagree. There are many biblical warnings pointing at Trump as being the possible antichrist. Like the number 666 being all over him in plain the antichrist peace covenant with Israel and 'many' (Trump is working on a peace plan with Israel and many others now)."

So, Trump *is* the antichrist after all. How in the world did we miss all those "666's"? (For those not familiar with this imagery, 666 is considered to be the symbolic number of the antichrist.)

And this brings me back to the question posed in this article: Has the relationship between evangelicals and Trump been more positive or more negative? Have we helped our cause or hurt our cause by standing with him?

To me the answer is simple (and I explore it in much more depth in my new book *Donald Trump Is Not My Savior: An Evangelical Leader Speaks His Mind About the Man He Supports As President*).

If, in our words and actions, we have tethered ourselves to

the president more than to the Lord, it is negative. If we have worshiped at the altar of Donald Trump to the point that we can never express our disagreement with him, it is negative. If we have compromised our ethics to have a seat at the table of power, it is negative. If we have put our emphasis on political change more than gospel change, it is negative.

But what if we made it clear that Trump is our president, not our Savior? That he gets our vote, while the Savior gets our life. That the gospel comes first, but politics has a role to play. That we support an imperfect man because his policies can save a lot of lives (from unborn babies in the womb to victims of ISIS in the Middle East). That our heavenly citizenship is more important than our earthly citizenship. If we have made this clear through our life and witness then, yes, our relationship with President Trump has been positive, for the good.

It was the most unlikely of relationships, and it has its up and downs, but our presence has only helped the president. (I would argue that our presence has helped him immensely.) In turn, despite his evident flaws and divisive ways, he has done a lot of good for the nation, which includes the evangelical church as well.

Perhaps this is not so hard to sort out?