

I'm Not Playing the New Game of 'Deny Trump to Prove Your Love for Jesus'

We hear this on a daily, if not hourly basis. Evangelicals have hurt their witness by voting for Trump. Evangelicals have lost their credibility by supporting Trump. Evangelicals can no longer be taken seriously because they're in bed with Trump. And on and on it goes.

It doesn't matter who he appoints to the Supreme Court. It doesn't matter if he improves the economy. Or strengthens the military. Or helps stabilize the Middle East.

Not at all. Trump is a heartless, misogynistic, immoral, narcissistic, xenophobic monster, and whoever voted for him (or continues to support him) is not worthy of the name "Christian."

This has almost become the new orthodoxy: Prove your allegiance to Jesus by denouncing Trump. Failure to denounce him is proof positive that you have compromised your witness.

Sorry, but I'm not playing this game. In fact, I refuse the premise of this game.

First, the very ones driving this narrative are the ones who didn't take our faith seriously before. They branded us bigots and homophobes. They criticized us as Bible-bashers and right-wing extremists. And they're the ones now saying, "We would take you more seriously if you denounced Trump."

I don't think so. They didn't take us seriously before. Why should they suddenly say, "Now that you've put a distance between yourselves and that crazy man in the White House, we'd love to hear your views on abortion and homosexuality. Yes,

please tell us why abortion is murder and why same-sex marriage is illegitimate in God's sight. You have so much to offer us."

Not quite!

This reminds me of some criticism I got for our video *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* A lot of hateful viewers vilified me as an "old man" (and much worse, of course). This prompted me to ask, "So, if I was a cool-looking young guy, would you like what I had to say?" I think not.

It's the position we take that primarily brings us rejection, not our age or appearance.

Second, there are plenty of evangelicals and conservatives who didn't vote for Trump (some were Never-Trumpers), yet they still get hated and ridiculed by the left for their conservative views. Did journalists like Ben Shapiro and David French earn the respect of the liberal world by not voting for Trump? Have they become less hated? Are liberal campuses opening their doors saying, "Please speak to us, now that you've proved your credibility by not voting for Trump"?

Third, many of us who did vote for Trump said from the start that we had grave concerns about his character. That we thought he could be very divisive. That some of his rhetoric could be dangerous. And plenty of us have expressed our disagreement with the president since he was elected.

How, then, does our vote for him impinge on our faith?

I've said repeatedly that Donald Trump didn't die for my sins and he's not my savior. And I will not sell my soul in support of him.

But you better believe I'd vote for him against Hillary Clinton any day of the week. I'd far rather have him picking Supreme Court nominees than Hillary. Or standing against LGBT

extremism. Or protecting our religious freedoms. Or standing with Israel. Or facing down Iran.

Please tell me, then, how a vote (with hesitation) for a man who would stand for the life of the unborn and resist LGBT activism in our schools and push back against the assault on our liberties and challenge radical Islam and support Israel is somehow a compromise of my faith.

Yes, when I was a Cruz supporter and a Trump opposer, I was personally sick of the line, "We're not voting for a pastor. We're voting for a commander in chief."

Yet it's true. That's who we voted for, with the hopes of him getting certain things done. Some of us loved him from the start and others held their noses as they voted. But to make this a test of our faith is nonsense.

Fourth, the media is framing the narrative and deciding when outrage is called for. "If you don't speak out against the separation of children at the borders, you're a hypocrite!"

Frankly, I don't know anyone who likes this, whether the policy goes back to George W. Bush or Barack Obama, or whether Trump is the main cause of it. Of course we want better solutions. But why are we required to join some left-wing, Trump-hating rally to prove we're not evil people?

The fact is, an incredible amount of social good is done every day by evangelicals around the country, from feeding the poor to housing the homeless to fighting human trafficking to adopting rejected children to helping addicts get free to sponsoring refugees. (This is just the tip of a giant iceberg of evangelical good works.)

We don't have to prove our morality by giving our "Amen" to the left's latest cause. (And to repeat: I don't know anyone who was pleased with kids being separated from their parents, and many of my colleagues raised their voices too. But we

don't have to dance to the media's tune.)

Of course, there are evangelicals who seem to idolize Trump, who will never differ with him, let alone criticize him, who seem to have double standards when it comes to this president. I concur with those who believe that those types of actions can hurt our witness and make us seem hypocritical. Absolutely.

But to make the denouncing of Trump a litmus test of Christian orthodoxy is utterly ridiculous. I urge my colleagues and friends not to be lured into this game.