

It's What Donald Trump Did Say That Concerns Me

Donald Trump has been under constant fire since the town hall meeting recently when he failed to address some problematic statements raised in the first audience question. As he tweeted out over the weekend, "This is the first time in my life that I have caused controversy by NOT saying something."

Actually, it's what he did say that troubles me.

The questioner stated this: "We have a problem in this country. It's called Muslims. You know our current president is one. You know he's not even an American. But anyway, we have training camps growing where they want to kill us. That's my question. When can we get rid of 'em?"

In response, Trump did not address: 1) the charge that Muslims in general are the problem; 2) the charge President Barack Obama is a Muslim; or 3) the charge that the president is not an American.

For this he has been grilled by the press and attacked on social media, and his defense (coming directly from him or from his team) is that: 1) It's not his job to defend President Obama, so if people claim Obama is a Muslim or not even American by birth, so be it; 2) Trump has good friends who are Muslims who are amazing people, and the majority of Muslims are fine people; it's the radical Muslims who are the issue; and 3) he missed part of the question stating that Muslims in general are the problem.

Be that as it may, although I do believe in a setting like that it's important to respond to any misstatements for the sake of your listening audience.

But what really concerns me is what Trump did say, and it has

to be one of the worst, most ambiguous, non-substantive answers I've heard in a while: "A lot of people are saying that and a lot of people are saying that bad things are happening out there, we're going to be looking at that and plenty of other things."

To be sure, Trump has already distinguished himself with his non-answers to direct questions, in particular when it comes to the Bible.

To paraphrase: "Mr. Trump, since you say that the Bible is your favorite book by far, what's your favorite verse?"

"I can't give you one. It's too personal."

"Can you tell us which you prefer more, the Old Testament or the New Testament?"

"Same." (This was beyond classic to the point of being pathetic. "Same"? How about saying what you like best about each one? And could it be that if he dared say, "Old Testament" or "New Testament" he would have been asked why?)

More recently, when asked again about his favorite verse, he responded by saying that his favorite chapter in Proverbs was "never bend to envy," not only a non-existing chapter but also a non-existing verse.

His exact words were, "There's so many things that you can learn from it [the Bible]. Proverbs, the chapter 'never bend to envy.' I've had that thing all of my life where people are bending to envy."

Well, at least he knows that Proverbs is in the Bible, although his reason for liking this non-existent verse is curious, to say the least. (Can you imagine saying, "My favorite verse is, 'You shall not steal,' since all of my life, people have tried to steal from me"?)

But getting back to his controversial answer last week, let's

look at it carefully: “A lot of people are saying that and a lot of people are saying that bad things are happening out there, we’re going to be looking at that and plenty of other things.”

A lot of people are saying what? That Muslims are the problem? That we need to get rid of Muslims? Or that there are radical Islamic training camps in America that we need to get rid of? And who are the “lot of people” who are saying this, whatever “this” is?

Then, “a lot of people are saying that bad things are happening out there.”

Again, who are these “lot of people”? And what “bad things” is he referring to? And where, specifically, is “out there”? Is it possible to be vaguer than this?

Finally, “we’re going to be looking at that and plenty of other things.”

Looking at what? And what does he mean by “plenty of other things?” How does this answer the question?

Lest you think I’m being overly critical, remember that Donald Trump is running for the office of the president of the United States, running to be the most powerful political leader in the world, and running in the midst of an international crisis with radical Islam.

So it’s not too much for us to expect an answer with substance as well as one that doesn’t allow potentially dangerous, very public comments to stand (such as the idea that Muslims, in general, are the problem in America and that we need to get rid of all of them).

Like many evangelical believers, I have serious concerns about Trump’s moral base and about the depth of his alleged conservative values.

But even his most ardent supporters need to ask themselves if non-answers like this shouldn't cause them concern as well. (Here's my relevant video commentary.)