

Jentezen Franklin: Why I Still Stand by Donald Trump

I am writing this piece just hours after reading the *Christianity Today* opinion piece of one man, the magazine's outgoing editor-in-chief Mark Galli. I have asked *Christianity Today* for the opportunity to present the actual reasoning of an evangelical Christian leader rather than being spoken for by a lone writer who has never asked me, or any other evangelical leader or pastor I am aware of, why they would support the current president, Donald Trump, and I speak with hundreds of national Christian leaders each month. Additionally, I would like to respectfully challenge the author's definition of morality and character within the context of firsthand observation, the social context we live in today and by the values evangelical Christians hold closest.

To miss the fact that this nation was on a slide down a slope to a cliff between 2008 and 2016 would be nothing less than turning a blind eye or political deafness. Federally funded abortion on demand was a machine raging out of control, our prisons were in desperate need of reform and a 1% GDP was the "new normal." Socialism was on the rise, and our religious liberties as citizens, business owners and even clergy were being threatened at greater levels than any other time in modern history. Make no mistake, our nation was every bit as divided as it is now, and evangelicals felt every bit of concern and even anger at the direction our nation was being driven—only Christians didn't march in the streets and respond in physical ways as we see today. Instead, we prayed, we guarded our churches and our families, and we waited for our chance to speak out at the ballot box. And on Nov. 8, 2016, we made our voices known as one of the largest voting blocks in the nation.

Most who voted that day are stronger in their resolve now than they were then, and the polls show those numbers have even expanded exponentially since that historic day. This is not because millions of evangelicals have lost their moral compass, betrayed their beliefs or turned their backs on God. It is because they see a president who has lived up to a different kind of integrity and character in a leader by keeping his promises. Add to that the fact that he is the most pro-life president in modern history, and the record of Donald J. Trump's actions speak a better testimony than 100 words or tweets spoken or written in haste.

In just three short years, over 200 conservative federal judges have replaced what was once a politically driven, activist judicial system changing the makeup of one of the most activist courts in our history, the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals. These accomplishments make a better case for a sustained drive for justice and truth that speaks every bit as strongly to the character and morality of a national leader than pious platitudes and a false bipartisanship. What we have witnessed is extraordinary leadership in the face of incredible adversity—a different kind of moral fiber, especially when 13 new federal court seats were confirmed the same day the U.S. Congress was impeaching the president.

When millions of evangelicals helped elect Donald J. Trump to be the president in 2016, the vast majority weren't looking for a political statesman; they were looking for a fighter—someone who saw the challenge for what it was: the fight of our lifetime. Men who never see a single day on the battlefield will never understand the bloody nature of an actual fight—and neither will the cold, unaffected critic who observes from a distance and lobes in criticism from the safety of a corner office.

It's a different kind of character that is found in courageous leadership, fortitude and dogged determination. There is a deeper morality in keeping your promises *after* you've been

elected. If you have the courage, you stand with the leader who stands for the very things you would hope a president would stand for: the sanctity of life, religious freedom for private citizens and business owners, conservative federal judges, standing with the nation of Israel, and a better tomorrow for those living in poverty, especially in our largest cities—the very values and policies you pray to God your president will push forward and stand on. And he has stood up for every single one. Those *are* Christian values.

It's a faulty and presumptuous notion to assume any religious leader who stands with this president has not spent hour after hour on their knees in prayer asking for God to show them where to stand and whom to stand with. It's a callous miscalculation to assume that those who are actually in the fray are not in it at the leading of the Holy Spirit or under the protection of their God. Thousands of pastors and Christian leaders stand with millions of U.S. evangelicals who stand with this president with eyes wide open and at no personal or professional gain—in fact for many, the exact opposite happens. For those of us who are at the table with the president in a prayer and advisory role are there first, because we go where we are asked to go, and second, because we sense the hour we are in, and we are down for the fight.

Citing the most recent impeachment in the House of Representatives as the reason the president should resign shows the partisan nature of the article, mimicking talking points from one side of the aisle while turning a deaf ear to every single member of the other. To assume the evangelical leaders who disagree with the outcome in Congress are not able to place truth above political agendas is the worst of assumptions and reveals a lack of objectivity. Most see the simple and pragmatic truth: Abuse of power isn't a crime; it's an opinion shared only by one side of the aisle. Obstruction of Congress is what happened with every private meeting in the basement and with every witness the Republicans were never

allowed to call. Disagreeing with the outcome doesn't prove bias or partiality—it simply means we have eyes and ears and the ability to come to our own conclusions—the same conclusions the majority of Americans have come to.

I would like to respectfully ask Christians who stand so vehemently against this president, what is your alternative? You have witnessed the policy achievements, the economy, the tax reforms and the stance opposing abortion and everything else. As you look at the choices on the other side of the ticket, what do you see that even remotely resembles the values your faith holds dearest? Socialism? Abortion on demand? Jailing Christian business owners? Is the valley between the two ends of the spectrum not wide? Is your disdain for the man greater than the policies and values that matter most to our faith? Or will you sit home and not vote at all? Indifference is one of the greatest diseases of this age, and the sin of silence, in one of the most critical times in history, is not an act of courage but rather a flaunting of a freedom men and women died to protect.

In the end, I can only pray that people of faith who read the article written by the outgoing editor-in-chief calling for the resignation of the president will see it for what it is and what it is not. What it is: Just the opinion of one man and not the formal representation of any denomination, group of religious leaders, or anyone in particular with any intentionality, which is why there are no quotes and no reference to anyone other than his own opinions.

What it is not: It is not representative of my thoughts or motives, nor the thoughts and motives of any religious leader I know or am in regular contact with every week—all across the nation.

Bottom line is this: Evangelical leaders and private citizens who are Christians all across this nation are stepping out of the shadows and onto the stage—off the sidelines and into the

game in record numbers. Mark Galli, in his own words, also once described some of us who voted for this president when he said: "These other evangelicals often haven't finished college, and if they have jobs (and apparently most of them don't), they are blue-collar jobs or entry-level work." So while the article penned as a parting shot to evangelicals who have supported Donald Trump by the outgoing editor-in-chief may represent the voice of Mark Galli, it does not represents the millions of hard-working men and women of faith or the heart or character of believers who support this president—and in no way reflects the values and heart of Christianity today in these United States of America.