

Joel C. Rosenberg: ‘After Much Prayer and Soul-Searching ...’

This is not easy for me. I did not get to this point lightly. Rather, it has been a matter of intense examination of the candidates and party platforms, studying the Scriptures (particularly 1 Sam. 8-12; see below), and listening to many thoughtful voices in the debate.

Anyone who has been tracking my writing during the course of this campaign knows how deeply concerned I am about Mr. Trump—his lack of experience, flip-flopping on issues, and the unkind and at times even vulgar or vitriolic language he uses against his critics. I had hoped he would be defeated in the primaries. Or challenged by a plausible third party candidate. Or would drop out after the release of the deeply offensive video of him speaking with Billy Bush.

But this is where we are. Now, it is truly is a binary choice between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. There’s no way around it, and the moment of decision has arrived.

True, I had previously stated that I could “never” vote for Mr. Trump. So I readily concede this is a reversal. I have no doubt I will disappoint some for changing my position. But this is where I am, and I want to explain how I got here.

The heart of the matter is this: I have been going through what many evangelicals are going through: an internal battle between competing convictions.

I could never support Hillary. Indeed, much of my professional life has been fighting the Clintons, dating back to when I worked for Bill Bennett and Jack Kemp at Empower America, and for Rush Limbaugh as director of research. So the question for

me has been this: Should I vote for Trump, a third-party candidate, a write-in candidate, or not vote at all? For many of my friends, this hasn't been a difficult choice. For me, it's been difficult to determine which of my deeply held convictions should be elevated as paramount, even when the others I hold so dearly are being violated.

To be sure, my vote is not more important than anyone else's. I know many Americans are struggling the same way I am. Indeed, in writing this I'm not even trying to persuade you to agree with me. I have friends whose deepest convictions tell them they simply cannot vote for Mr. Trump, that they will trust the sovereignty of God and live with the consequences. I respect them. I don't question their motives. I know exactly where they're coming from.

But for those who are interested, here are 10 reasons why I have decided to vote for the Trump-Pence ticket:

1. The most important is this: Hillary Clinton must never be elected president under any circumstances. She must be stopped. As I have written, she would be an absolute **catastrophe** for America. Should she be elected and the **Democratic Platform** enacted, this dynamic would accelerate the country toward divine judgment and implosion.
2. Hillary and her advisers may have committed federal crimes. The decision by the director of the FBI to reopen the **criminal investigation** put into sharp relief for me the gravity of the situation facing us.
3. Electing Hillary could very well lead to a **constitutional crisis** that could paralyze the federal government and make us vulnerable. These were points made this week by Doug Schoen, a senior Democrat pollster and strategist who once worked for President Bill Clinton. Schoen announced that he, a long-time Hillary supporter, could no longer in good conscience vote *for* her. This helped persuade me that I could no

longer in good conscience avoid casting a vote to stop her.

4. Aside from criminality, Hillary is the **most corrupt and flawed candidate** ever to run on a major party ticket for president. Americans are exhausted by the culture of corruption and scandal that perennially surrounds the Clintons. Four more years would distract us from tackling the serious challenges facing the American people.
5. Hillary Clinton is the poster child for “politics as usual” at a time when we need change.
6. Yes, as I stated above, I have deep reservations about Mr. Trump. I have not sugar-coated these concerns. Rather, I have written and spoken about them throughout the campaign. In January I wrote 39 reasons why a Trump presidency would be a catastrophe (see **here** and **here**). I concede this could still turn out to be true. But it also should be noted that in the 10 months since I wrote those columns, an excellent **Republican Platform** was drafted and approved. Also, Mr. Trump has made a series of very specific and attractive commitments. He has promised:
 - To pursue pro-life policies at the federal level
 - To appoint Supreme Court Justices in the model of Antonin Scalia (and has issued a specific and impressive list of names from which he promises to draw to make his appointments to the Court
 - To defund Planned Parenthood
 - To rebuild the American military
 - To protect America’s borders
 - To strengthen America’s alliances with Israel and our Sunni Arab partners
 - To repeal and replace Obamacare
 - To cut taxes, reform the tax code, revitalize American manufacturing, create jobs for blue-collar Americans, and expand economic freedom and opportunity for all Americans

7. Do I have concerns as to whether Mr. Trump will keep all of these promises? Yes. But I have come to believe it is worth electing him in the hopes that he will keep his word. I am certain Hillary will aggressively pursue an agenda that goes against everything I believe.
8. I believe Governor Mike Pence would make a superb vice president.
 - Lynn and I know Mike and Karen and have the highest respect for them. In our personal time with them, we have been deeply encouraged by their humility and character.
 - Mike and Karen are devout evangelical Christians.
 - Mike is a principled conservative and is deeply knowledgeable and experienced in economic, social and foreign policy matters.
 - Karen is a great friend, soulmate and counselor to her husband.
 - More recently, we spent time with them in Jerusalem when the governor led a trade delegation to Israel. They love Israel deeply. They love the Jewish people. Mike gets the seriousness of the threats posed by Radical and Apocalyptic Islam and is serious about countering them. He has deep respect for our Sunni Arab allies and understands the importance of working together with all our allies in the Middle East to counter Iran and ISIS.
 - Mr. Trump was wise to choose Gov. Pence to serve as vice president and deserves credit for the choice. If this is a signal of the type of leaders he will appoint in office, this would be a good thing.
9. Hopefully, Mr. Trump would also appoint solid, experienced conservatives to key positions throughout the Cabinet and Executive Branch. I know for certain Mrs. Clinton would appoint hardcore liberals if she is elected.

10. Finally, I have been studying **1 Samuel 8-12** as I've been wrestling with the question, "Can I vote for a candidate for whom I have serious reservations?" In this fascinating passage, the Hebrew judge and prophet Samuel is grieved by the direction ancient Israel is going. He is grieved by Israel's rebellion against the Lord. They want an earthly king, someone tall and strong and decisive—rather than the Lord—to govern them, lead them, protect them and solve their problems. Samuel goes to the Lord with great anguish to protest, but the Lord tells him three times to "listen to the voice of the people." The Lord even directs Samuel to publicly anoint and bless a seriously flawed and woefully inexperienced man named Saul to be the king. The Lord does this even though He knows that Saul will fail the people and need to be replaced. But the Lord gives Samuel one further directive: Make sure the people understand what they are doing, and how urgently they need to turn back to the Lord—not to a man—to see their nation blessed and saved. "Now then, listen to their voice," said the Lord. "However, you shall [also] solemnly warn them." Did God tell Samuel to support a flawed man for the highest position of leadership in the nation even though it went directly against Samuel's conscience? Yes, He did. But Samuel was never to stop calling the nation back to the Lord until the day he died. Now I am not Samuel, and Mr. Trump is not Saul. The details are different. But the principle is intriguing, and it has been helpful to me.

Today, I live in Israel and am a dual citizen. But I was born and raised in the United States. I am an American citizen and profoundly grateful for this birthright. Heroic men and women have laid down their lives to give me the right to vote, and I am grateful. I can't say I am happy with the choices I have, but I am finally at peace about what I should do.

To be clear, I am not endorsing Mr. Trump. I am simply saying

I am going to vote for him (by absentee ballot) because Hillary must be stopped.

In the meantime, I will continue to pray faithfully and earnestly for the Trump, Pence, Clinton and Kaine families and for their teams. I will pray the Lord has mercy on them, and mercy on each and every American.

Finally, I will also keep meditating on a sobering passage of Scripture at this critical moment—**1 Samuel 12:22-25**—and encourage other believers to do the same:

“As befits His great name, the Lord will not abandon His people. For it has pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. But I will teach you the good and the right way. Fear the Lord; serve Him in truth with all your heart, and consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king will be swept away.” {eo}

Note: This column is based on Rosenberg’s personal beliefs and opinions. He shared them in his personal capacity as an American citizen and an author. They do not necessarily reflect the views of The Joshua Fund, which is a nonprofit organization and takes no political or legislative positions.

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