

Pastors and Christian Ministers, Don't Tie Your Reputation to a Political Leader

As leaders in the body of Christ, nothing is more important than your personal testimony—your hard-earned reputation for soundness in life, faith and practice. You are a representative of Jesus in a formal and public way, with believers looking to you for guidance and unbelievers scrutinizing you for godliness.

That's why it is so important that we don't hitch our wagons to political leaders, lest their misbehavior tarnishes our reputations. And even if they don't misbehave— if they don't lie or sell out or act in some duplicitous way—if we become more associated with them than we are with the gospel, we dilute, if not destroy, our witness.

Back in 2015, I endorsed Sen. Ted Cruz for president. I did this at the personal request of his father, Rafael, and I even brought a gospel-related message at a couple of his campaign stops in North Carolina.

But I quickly realized there was a price to pay for my endorsement, and not because of anything that Cruz had said or done. In that regard, he did not disappoint me.

Rather, I was no longer seen as objective when talking about political candidates on my daily radio show or in writing. Instead, I was perceived as a "Cruz guy" and therefore biased.

This compromised my ability to be an uncompromised, unbiased voice, which is an essential part of my own ministry calling. And that's why I quickly realized that I could never again

endorse a political candidate. (I'm not saying others cannot; I'm simply relating my own experience here.)

In the months that followed, I did make clear that I would be voting for Trump, explaining why I preferred his policies to those of Hillary Clinton. I also challenged Christian voters on the issues themselves, asking how they could cast a vote for someone who advocated for the legal slaughter of the unborn.

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But like a broken record (and to the perpetual consternation of Trump supporters), I added caveats regarding his behavior, making clear that I regretted some of his statements and actions.

I also did my best to shout to the world at the top of my lungs that, "Jesus is my Savior and Lord, to whom I owe everything and for whom I live and will die." Then, in very small print (or softly and quietly when speaking), "And Trump gets my vote for president." There could be no confusing the two issues.

We have one Savior and Lord who is infinitely higher than we are.

We have an endless stream of political leaders, all of whom are deeply flawed human beings, like the rest of us, and none of whom are worthy of our adoration.

They're just people—some better people than others, and some more gifted than others—and nothing more.

We cannot hitch our wagons to them. We cannot put our hopes in them. We cannot look to them to save our nation. And we dare not tie our personal testimonies to them.

To do so is to risk defaming the Lord and degrading our high

calling as representatives of Jesus.

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It's one thing for pastors and Christian leaders to educate their constituencies about candidates and issues. This is very important to do during election seasons, especially since our elections have massive implications for our day to day lives, not to mention for the fate of the world.

The elections can affect what's taught in our children's schools. They can affect whether a baby in the womb can be protected. They can affect how much money we bring home to feed our families. They can affect our national security. They can affect our religious liberties. Need I say more?

Here in America, it is our sacred privilege to vote and to participate in the electoral process, and pastors and Christian leaders do well to equip their flocks to vote in the most informed and righteous ways possible.

But, to repeat, as Christian leaders we dare not hitch our reputations or our ministries or our churches or our denominations or our organizations to a political candidate. The moment we do, we are guilty of mixing politics with faith, joining the perfect to the imperfect, also risking the tarnishing of our own reputations in the process.

That's because every time that candidate speaks or acts, people will associate us with him (or her). If they say something stupid, we now have to answer for it. If they are vulgar or nasty or are caught in a lie, that now reflects on us. And this means that the name of Jesus gets tarnished, and our witness to the world becomes compromised.

Nothing in this world—and I mean nothing, from political power to boatloads of money to social media influence—is worth that.

Nothing.

So, do not kiss the ring. Do not get seduced by the media spotlight. And do not let anything defile or degrade or diminish you.

As an old man of God used to urge me (citing the words of Jesus in Rev. 3:11), let no one steal your crown.{eoa}

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