

To-do list for evangelicals under President Trump

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Under President Donald Trump, evangelicals and other Christians should be vigilant to champion the values that flow from the teachings of Jesus. Here are five important topics to monitor and contend with throughout the next four years.

1. Care for the poor and the weak

These are people Trump has called “losers.” Yet Jesus said, “... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). Everyone—Trump included, but also all of us—ultimately will be judged by how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick and the prisoners.

Well-meaning Christians disagree regarding the extent to which Jesus’ repeated teachings about poor and weak people comprise a church issue and a government issue. That’s partly why Christians participate in both Democratic and Republican parties. But even accounting for these differences, none of us should affirm any actions through which the government actively or passively harms and/or exploits the poor and the weak.

2. Unfailing support for absolute religious liberty

This is an issue on which Trump seems clueless. His threats to prohibit or restrict Muslim immigration and create a Muslim registry not only violate the First Amendment, but also counter centuries of Baptist teaching and practice.

Trump's disdain for Muslims no doubt appealed to many evangelicals, who fear not only terrorism, but also their loss of privilege as a waning majority. But that's no reason to ignore both decency and principles. Besides, any threat to the constitutional protection of one religion is a threat to all religions. A few decades of demographic shifting, and the current majority's day of reckoning will come.

3. Repudiation of racism

Trump played racism for full effect in 2016. A few endorsements to the contrary, Trump's campaign rhetoric widened America's racial divide significantly. This speaks to deep-seated fear, but it is a great travesty nonetheless.

Nothing in Trump's history indicates he will work to refute racism. In fact, he has continued to exploit race, even during his transition to the White House. The stain of racism marks most U.S. Christian communities, which is all the more reason we must stand for racial equality, justice and righteousness, even in the face of government hostility. If we say we believe the Bible, then we believe all people were created equally, and racism has no place in our lives, our government and our society.

4. Affirmation of sexual equality

Trump's misogyny dragged the 2016 campaign to its lowest point. His admission of sexual abuse, vile descriptions of women and treatment of women as objects defy our belief that both women and men are created in God's image and worthy of full respect.

If evangelicals and other Christians cannot stand up for women and tirelessly counter Trump's misogyny, then we have no right to provide moral instruction to our children. If pastors do not preach the equal value of women and men—recognizing some understand the relationship to be egalitarian while others see it as complementarian—then they have no right to expect women to remain in their congregations.

5. Protection of the “other”

Both Jesus and the prophets emphasized the absolute mandate to care for the stranger who enters the community. This hallmark principle focused on protecting those who are “other.”

This means Christians should speak with grace and compassion about immigration, as well as civil and human rights for all kinds of people, particularly myriad minorities. That's not to say we cannot advocate for immigration reform or seek to balance the rights of LGBT people and religious people. But it means we must empathize with the other and seek the greater good, not privilege for the powerful.

Christians who care for biblical principles and Jesus' values are going to be busy the next four years. The welfare of our nation requires it. The reputation of the church depends upon it.

This is an excerpt from the editorial, [“Practicing faith in the Age of Trump.”](#)

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