

# Evangelicals: Losing Faith to Gain Power

Evangelicals have been drifting away from addressing critical matters using divine thoughts for decades.

Increasingly, they have created a cognitive framework built more on attaining political power than on a theological conscience rooted in divine love, grace and justice.

Granted, evangelical leaders claim their convictions are rooted in the Bible, but a closer look reveals that while they allude to the Bible often, they are not “rooted” in a complete hermeneutical process of interpretation.

Evangelical convictions give a nod to parts of the Bible that fit their agendas, while completely ignoring other parts that contradict their conclusions. In addition, it should be noted that some progressive Christians also are guilty of such hermeneutical neglect.

As Martin Luther King Jr. encouraged all Christians, the church should be the best place for “deep, critical thinking” to take place.

Christians who take the Bible seriously should always strive to use the best and most thorough resources available to interpret and apply the Bible.

Unfortunately, right-wing evangelicals have recently neglected that concept.

For example, evangelical patriarch Pat Robertson [suggested](#) that the Trump administration should not risk “\$100 billion worth of arms sales” for the sake of one man’s death, alluding to journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was apparently murdered in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul.

Saudi Arabia [signed an agreement](#) in May 2017 to purchase nearly \$110 billion

worth of arms from the U.S. Therefore, according to Robertson, one man's unjust death is not worth risking a potential cash windfall made from weapon sales.

To reach such a conclusion, Robertson must ignore Jesus' words about peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) and the importance of every sheep (Matthew 18:12).

Jerry Falwell Jr., another evangelical leader who is president of Liberty University, recently [tweeted](#), "Conservatives & Christians need to stop electing 'nice guys'. They might make great Christian leaders but the US needs street fighters like @realDonaldTrump at every level of government b/c the liberal fascists Dems are playing for keeps & many Repub leaders are a bunch of wimps!"

What about the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11) and the Apostle Paul's encouragement for disciples to seek after the mind of Christ (Philippians 4:7)?

Finally, Robert Jeffress, a Fox News contributor and pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, [asserted](#) in March, "Evangelicals know they are not compromising their beliefs to support this great president." These comments were made in response to a question during a Fox News interview about allegations of Donald Trump's affair with Stormy Daniels.

Jeffress and others are currently embracing the un-Christlike rhetoric and actions of the president in their desire to have access to power and the potential to control the decisions of the president.

While they hesitantly criticize his immoral behaviors and most controversial policies (such as separating families at the border), they praise him as a decisive and strong leader.

Jesus warned his followers about such deceptive preachers and leaders: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ... For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander" (Matthew 7:15; 15:19).

Robertson, Falwell and Jeffress have every right to support whatever president they choose to follow. I genuinely respect that right and appreciate the freedom given them to do so.

However, they should stop justifying that support by using their Christian witness and stop attempting to defend un-Christian and unbiblical rhetoric and policies by the Trump administration.

They must either completely set aside the Bible or pervert their interpretations of it to reach the conclusions they are proclaiming.

More recently, Doug Pagitt, another evangelical pastor and executive director of Vote Common Good, criticized evangelical leaders in a USA Today [column](#).

“These are not positions informed by the teachings of Jesus Christ - to the contrary, they are antithetical to what Jesus preached,” he wrote. “My faith does not call me to be Republican or Democrat. My faith calls me to love God and love my neighbor as I love myself. I am called to vote for the common good, for justice and humanity.”

Jesus used harsh language to condemn religious leaders who were more interested in seeking worldly power than distributing his love to the masses (Matthew 23:1-36). He called the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites” and a “brood of vipers,” more interested in the world than accepting the rejected and sacrificing for the poor.

Afterward, Jesus turned to the City of David and lamented, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you, desolate” (Matthew 23:37-38).

It seems that modern-day evangelicals would rather have loads of cash, tough guys and access to power than to humble themselves to become more like the

Lord.

According to this construct, Jesus missed an opportunity. He should have supported Pilate's agenda, endorsed Caesar and lobbied for politicians to be appointed to the Roman Senate to gain more influence and a larger following.

While I fear evangelicals have lost their faith to gain power, I offer an alternative to their worldly construct - a spiritual understanding of the world that seeks the kingdom of God and God's will "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

This is possible through striving to follow the example of Jesus: humbling oneself, sacrificing for others and providing hope to the marginalized (Philippians 2); bringing good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19); denying oneself and taking up one's cross daily (Mark 8:34-36).

Following this path may cost us the world, but we will regain our faith. We will no longer depend on "the rulers, the authorities and the cosmic powers of this present darkness," but rather we will rely on the Holy Spirit.

No longer bound by a lust for power, we will depend on faith to walk and hope to run. We will see the true identity of false prophets and listen to those who espouse freedom, love and hope for all people.

Then, and only then, will the "day of the Lord's favor" be upon us.