

The evangelical response to Trump

by [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

October 9, 2016

We have now heard [Donald Trump's words](#), literally ad nauseam, as he boasted about forcing himself on women, kissing and grabbing them.

"When you're a star, they let you do it," Trump said as he describes his conquests. "I don't even wait...."

Now, while the Republican Party implodes and breaks away from their standard bearer, many conservative [evangelicals are brushing off](#) the comments.

Eric Metaxas:

"BREAKING: Trump caught using foul language, combing his hair oddly. Could this be the end of his campaign?"

Wait. Metaxas is a Bonhoeffer scholar, right? Did he skip over *Life Together*? Because I cannot forget the words:

"Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons others to their sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one's community back from the path of sin."

Certainly, bragging about grabbing a woman's p— without consent should not be compared to combing hair. That is a leniency we cannot abide.

David Brody from the Christian Broadcasting Network:

"This just in: Donald Trump is a flawed man! We ALL sin every single day. What if we had a 'hot mic' around each one of us all the time?"

Yes, we all sin every day, but I guarantee you, if I had a hot mic on me twenty-four hours a day, for the rest of my life, you would never hear me talk about grabbing a man's intimate member without consent. Which makes me wonder, *Is this*

acceptable behavior for CBN? Is this the level on which Brody operates? Is this kind of behavior normal in his world?

Ralph Reed:

“I think a 10-year-old tape of a private conversation with a TV talk show host ranks pretty low on [evangelicals’] hierarchy of their concerns.”

Donald Trump was almost sixty years old, wearing a mic, and getting ready to walk on a television set. Reed says that’s a private conversation? Everyone who wears a mic understands that when you release that clip, the conversation is not private. And gloating about sexual assault is pretty low on the evangelical’s list of concerns? **Then evangelicals need a new list.**

Women are assaulted on a regular basis in our country—low stats are at one out of four. I, personally, count myself in that number. Ralph Reed may not know the embarrassment, shame, and fury that mingle when a man forces himself upon you, but those of us who have endured it will never forget. Sometimes the man is a stranger, and you cannot retaliate. Other times, he is another student or a colleague, and people don’t believe you when you tell them it’s happened. Once, when I complained of a man assaulting me at the workplace, my boss said, “How did you get so lucky?”

I imagine it is an instant thrill for the perpetrator, because of the conquest, the surge of power, as he claims something that is not remotely his. The subjugation, shock, and embarrassment of the woman give him an exhilarating moment of triumph. Assault is never about love, or even attraction—as Trump seems to tell himself—it is about power. The raw force of dominating another human and getting away with it. This is one reason why sexual assault is such an effective means of warfare.

It’s difficult to understand how so many Christian leaders would take this so lightly, until we realize that some conservative evangelicals have entwined patriarchy with religion so tightly, that they think women should submit to men. They think that women shouldn’t even be in the pulpit, much less in the Oval Office. They believe that a woman should not be in charge of her own body and decisions, to such a degree that they think giving a boss management over women’s birth control is an actual religious freedom. And now, **they deign to suggest that we should all wink and nod at having a powerful man grab intimate body parts to feed his fragile ego, as if that’s on a par to combing his hair the wrong way.**

I left the evangelical church two decades ago, precisely because they were so stubbornly deaf to women. I know that [not every evangelical believes that sexual assault is a small concern](#), but the movement as a whole has not heeded women for a very long time. But when women stop doing all of the work in evangelical churches, when we all stop giving money, and when we all walk away, perhaps they will learn that our bodies, lives, and voices are of consequence.