

A time to heal

It's hard to ignore the crushing, emotional response from many of the evangelical movement's leaders.

by [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

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It's difficult to know what will happen to the landscape of American religion after this election. [Some say](#) that the outcome was due to bad theology. It's certainly hard to ignore the crushing, emotional response from many of the Evangelical movement's leaders. Even among people who have held fast and steady to the Evangelical label are beginning to wonder if they can be associated with a movement that voted for Donald Trump. After all, many exit polls say that more than 81% of White Evangelicals voted for a man who fed off America's worst misogynistic and racist fears.

Even before the election results came in, [Brian McLaren](#) wrote about the deep grief he experienced as the Evangelicals emerged as Trump's "most dependable base":

And that, I think, explained the source of my sadness: I was losing the last shreds of my innocence about my religious heritage. I was feeling at a deeper level how much Evangelicalism had harmed me, and with me, many others.

[Rachel Held Evans](#), who has been profoundly wrestling with her evangelicalism for years, explains:

Losing your first faith is like losing a dear family member or friend, and as with any other death, you sense its absence most profoundly in those everyday moments when it used to be present—in a beloved hymn, in a Bible verse or prayer, in a strained relationship that used to be so easy.

[Shane Claiborne](#) was a bit more colorful as he articulated his frustrations:

Trying to mix Christianity with a political party can be sort of like mixing ice cream with horse manure. It might not harm the manure, but it sure messes up the ice cream.

For evangelical Christians this election, manure and ice cream got mixed together in a catastrophic way. As a result, many evangelical Christians will need a new home.

And, for me, the most surprising voice to see (perhaps because I don't know her personally), was [Katelyn Beaty](#), who used to be an Editor for *Christianity Today*:

[T]he grief has turned into a more complex emotion — something like soul abandonment. After an election in which 81 percent of my white coreligionists supported Trump, the faith that has been my home for 20 years seems foreign, even hostile.

What happens to a movement when they utterly ignore their best and brightest who cry out for change?

I can add my voice to this chorus. Although I left Evangelicalism a long time ago, I still resonate with the emotions—sadness, loss, disgust, and soul abandonment. Especially since I have spent a great deal of time recently, sorting all of it out, as I wrote [*Healing Spiritual Wounds: Reconnecting with a Loving God after Experiencing a Hurtful Church*](#). This book is my offering in the midst of our collective soul searching.

Leaving your religious home is so much more complicated than closing one door and opening the next. That sadness and loss we feel has the weight of God behind it. My hope and prayer is that we will all be able to find a better theology in this mess of White American Christianity, and that we will be able to find some wholeness, solidarity, and resonance with all those who suffer in the midst of it.