

What Factor Will the Weather Be in Iowa?

There's an old saying about Iowa: "If you don't like the weather, wait 15 minutes, it will change."

Unfortunately, as it applies to the first-in-the-nation Iowa Caucuses, the opposite is also true. Here's how the National Weather Service office in Johnston, Iowa, puts it:

A warming trend will send temperatures climbing into the upper 30s and 40s into the weekend. A few sites may approach 50. A cold front will slide through the state late Saturday night into Sunday. This system will bring a chance for some light precipitation to the state. Light rain mixing with snow will be possible across northern Iowa. A potential winter storm is still on track to impact the state late Monday night mainly after midnight, and continue into Wednesday. Heavy snow will be possible across much of Iowa, with strong gusty winds picking up Tuesday into Wednesday. Travel may become hazardous due to the possibility and combination of heavy snow, gusty winds and blowing snow.

Right now, that means there's a small window, which coincides with the caucus, during which there won't be any precipitation, and travel conditions should be good for those wanting to get out. But, it's a very narrow window; if the system moves into Iowa a few hours earlier than predicted, it could have a big impact on turnout.

So, for now, our projections for Caucus Night remain intact. Monday morning, however, we should have a much better idea about the timing, which will give us a crystal-clear picture of how turnout could be affected in key areas of the state.

How I Lost 250 Pounds and Kept It Off With God's Help

I've gone through a total metamorphosis, a transformation from the inside out (see Romans 12:2). It's a change which couldn't have happened unless I addressed the core issues holding me back. Today I'm living in victory and it's such a great feeling.

Many are impressed when they learn I've lost over 260 pounds. However, to me the more important thing is I've undergone a total lifestyle change of a slow, steady weight loss that lasts. I talk about how to do this in my new book, *Sweet Freedom: Losing Weight and Keeping It Off With God's Help*.

Once weighing 430 pounds, I've kept 250 pounds off for more than three years. Now I've lost more than 260 pounds and am continuing to lose. I finally realized quick fixes do not work.

In the past, my way of operating was to diet, lose weight and gain that weight back again, plus another 25 pounds or so. One step forward, three steps back. It was a frustrating way to live.

Overcoming emotional barriers has been a major key for me on my journey. In this process, God provided tools, truths and His leadership to heal emotions that held me back for years. In *Sweet Freedom*, I share how God used these in my life to show me the path to my own freedom.

God's Help

With God's help I'm tearing down the barriers that had

previously prevented me from keeping the weight off. Most of them are now behind me—a string as far as the eye can see. I'm sure some are ahead of me still. That's all right. I know how to cooperate with God for their removal.

The barriers in my life caused me to run to food for comfort. I also allowed those same foods to become strongholds and take control of my life.

Others seek comfort in activities such as taking drugs, drinking alcohol, viewing pornography, having affairs, gambling, smoking, lying, gossiping, shopping, overworking and the list goes on.

Those caught in different addictive cycles also will be able to see themselves in *Sweet Freedom*. My prayer is for anyone in any struggle to be able to identify the barriers and learn how to walk in freedom with God's help.

God set me free when I shut the door to the things that had become strongholds to me, the things I was allowing to take control of my life. Strongholds are perpetuated by the evil one, the thief (see John 10:10). He wants me to run to food instead of God. In the end, it is always my choice. I can close the door on strongholds. This choice is only possible with God's help and only when I admit my weakness to Him (see 2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Sweet Freedom Study Guide

Also available will be a separate *Sweet Freedom Study Guide*. In addition to a chapter-by-chapter guide, there will also be a section describing the principles of inner healing used in the book.

Included will be topics such as forgiveness, renouncing lies, hearing God's truth, tearing down walls or barriers and facing doors. There are many other tools. These are the primary ones which have helped on my journey.

Any inner healing journey is designed to draw us closer to God. We can only do that when we know how to listen to Him and follow what He shows us.

Whole, Healthy, Happy Woman

In 1994 at Freedom Seminar, appropriately named, I joined with others declaring who they were. I made the prophetic proclamation that I was a whole, healthy, happy woman. At close to 430 pounds, I felt more like I a broken, close-to-death, extremely sad blob.

More than two decades later, I can finally say I have stepped into that self-prophecy. I have learned my words are powerful. What I tell myself, as long as it aligns with God's desires for me, I will become.

If I were sitting across the table from you right now, I'd ask you, "Who are you? Who do you want to be?" That desire within you to become different than you currently are will profoundly direct you on your journey.

Losing weight is good. Keeping it off is awesome. Being close to God, though, is truly where the sweetest of freedoms can be found.

***Teresa Shields Parker** is a wife, mother, business owner, life group leader, speaker and author of Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor and Sweet Grace Study Guide: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Overcome Sugar Addiction. Get a free chapter of her memoir on her blog at . Connect with her there or on her [Facebook page](#).*

The NFL Player Who's Not Ashamed to Call Christ His Leader

The Carolina Panthers head to Super Bowl 2016 hoping to raise the Lombardi Trophy for the first time in franchise history.

They'll be led by electrifying quarterback Cam Newton, whose big passes and quick footwork have made for one of the highest scoring offenses in the NFL.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the ball, the team's defensive captain is making strides of his own off the field.

Cherry Starr, the wife of iconic NFL quarterback Bart Starr, informed the team their linebacker, Thomas Davis, is the 2016 winner of the prestigious Bart Starr Award, exemplifying outstanding character and leadership at home, on the field and in the community.

Cherry Starr congratulated Davis by saying, "You have to be a pretty special person to receive this award."

Davis is thrilled with the honor.

"It goes back to doing things the right way," he said. "You know, being a good father, being a good, productive citizen, knowing that I have kids at home that are watching my every move. I have young kids in our community that are watching everything we do and they're trying to imitate us. So that's something I try to live my life by."

Davis, who was among 10 nominees, was voted in as the award's 29th recipient by his peers, both NFL opponents and teammates.

His teammate, Pro Bowl cornerback Josh Norman, says, "He's that leader you want in the locker room. I think for all 32

teams, I can say that if they had a Thomas Davis in there it would be a different team.”

Pro Bowl linebacker Luke Kuechly added: “He impacts everyone’s life in different ways. He’s got camps. He’s got back-to-school drives. He feeds people around Thanksgiving and the holidays. His on-field stuff is great, but off the field is when you really get to see Thomas Davis.”

Davis values the support from his peers, who know the man he is, saying, “You know we don’t go out and do the work in the community to gain recognition. We go out and do it because we care about the families and want to make a difference.”

“And people understand when it’s genuine and you’re doing something from the heart,” he continued. “So many moms struggling to raise their kids right now, you know. I watched my mom cry, sometimes struggling to raise me and my sister, and living that, you know that there are people going through it so you want to reach out.”

It’s been a season of reaching new heights. The Panthers enter the Super Bowl with rising expectations as the top-seeded team in the NFC. At the core of their defensive success is Davis, earning his first Pro Bowl appearance while also becoming the franchise’s all-time leading tackler.

Davis reflected on his remarkable season, saying, “I couldn’t have written a better script for things to go the way they have in my career. You know, all of the things I had to endure – coming off three ACL tears, not really understanding or knowing if my NFL career would be able to continue.”

With three tears over three seasons all in the right knee, Davis is the only NFL player to successfully return after three ACL injuries.

Davis recalled, “Not really knowing if the team would be willing to stick by me. A depressing time in my life. If I

didn't lean on the Lord, I never would have made it through it. All the times I've had to cry on my wife's shoulder and we prayed together and asked God to give me the strength to continue to fight through it. It turns into motivation. It turns into drive."

The guy the players call TD, Thomas Davis, is clearly the heart and soul of the Super Bowl-bound Panthers' defense. But the Panthers' captain has his own leader.

When asked, who he follows, Davis simply and emphatically said, "Christ. Without a doubt, you know, trying to strive for perfection, trying to do things the right way on a daily basis, all the while following Christ."

"Jesus Christ has changed my life in so many ways," he said. "To send my wife, Kelly, my way – I would look at that as the biggest thing that has allowed me to become the person that I am. We started to grow in our faith together."

Together, Thomas and Kelly tackle hopelessness through their Defending Dreams Foundation, leading the charge to defend the dreams that children hold dear, and helping to make those dreams become a reality.

Davis explained what compels him to give.

"It all starts by taking that first step," he said. "And in order to accomplish anything in life you have to step out. It's not going to happen by you sitting back dreaming. If you dream it, you have to live it. And if you're going to live it, you have to believe in what you're doing."

Donald Trump Draws Committed and Curious, but Did It Help or Hurt His Chances in Iowa?

Donald Trump shunned Thursday night's debate of the Republican presidential candidates hosted by Fox News and instead filled an auditorium a few miles down the road, trying to prove his widespread support only days before Iowa kicks off the U.S. nominating voting process.

Trump, with just one day's notice on a weeknight, was able to fill to capacity a hall at Drake University that holds 700.

"I didn't want to be here, to be honest, I wanted to be about five minutes away" at the debate, Trump told the crowd. "When you're treated badly, you have to stick up for your rights – whether we like it or not."

The back-and-forth between Trump and Fox News continued even after the debate had begun.

Trump said he skipped the debate because he would not be treated fairly by Fox News anchor and debate moderator Megyn Kelly.

He told the crowd that Fox News made repeated calls to try to persuade him to change his mind. He said officials, presumably the network's chairman, Roger Ailes, called him until moments before the debate began.

Fox News told the story differently.

The network acknowledged that Ailes had three conversations with Trump but said in a statement that Trump had offered to participate in the debate only if Fox News donated \$5 million to his charity.

Fox News declined to make the payment, calling it a “quid pro quo” in its statement.

Trump has made such a demand previously, telling CNN when it hosted a Republican debate that it should donate \$5 million to charity from the profits gained from advertising. CNN turned down that demand.

Trump was able to garner a tremendous amount of attention on Thursday without having to share much of the spotlight. Cable news networks CNN and MSNBC provided extensive coverage of his event.

In deciding to hold a competing event, Trump said the gathering would be to benefit veterans and he welcomed his rivals to attend. Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee and former U.S. Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania joined Trump after participating in the undercard debate held for the Republican candidates at the bottom of the polls. Both men spoke briefly about the need to help the nation’s veterans.

Trump told the crowd that in one day he raised more than \$5 million for a veterans group, although his campaign did not say which group was getting the funds. At the conclusion of the event, Trump announced that the total raised for veterans had risen to \$6 million.

Trump said he personally donated \$1 million.

THE COMMITTED AND THE CURIOUS

Trump’s decision to skip the debate was sharply criticized by his opponents.

U.S. Senator Ted Cruz opened the debate by mocking Trump in his absence. “I’m a maniac and everyone on this stage is stupid, fat and ugly,” Cruz said, imitating Trump. “And Ben, you’re a terrible surgeon. Now that we’ve gotten the Donald Trump portion out of the way.”

There are risks in holding his own event for Trump, who several recent polls have shown barely leading Cruz.

If Trump wins the Iowa caucuses, the move will be lauded as proof that he has built a movement capable of circumventing establishment media. If he places second, the skipped debate will be blamed as a fatal tactical error that allowed opponents to paint him as weak in the face of tough questions.

Trump acknowledged that he did not know whether the event would ultimately hurt or help his campaign.

Supporters and some curious onlookers waited in the sub-freezing cold in a line that wrapped around the building and down a block. Trump's campaign erected a large Jumbotron outside the auditorium to allow an overflow crowd to watch his remarks.

Before Trump took the stage, some of his well-known supporters spoke. Lynnette "Diamond" Hardaway and Rochelle "Silk" Richardson, two women with a large online video blog following, urged the crowd to back Trump.

Randy Bowling, a Trump supporter from Ottumwa, Iowa, said some of his friends who are undecided in the Republican contest said Trump's decision to not participate in the debate raised doubts about supporting him.

"We have mixed emotions," Bowling said. "We caught a lot of flak from our friends who are on the fence."

Sharon and Richard Lode drove three hours from Sioux Rapids, Iowa to see Trump's event, deciding they would make the drive with only one-day's notice.

Sharon Lode, who is 65, was not worried that skipping the debate could hurt Trump on caucus day.

"It took a lot of guts to stand up to them," she said.

Steven Doran, 19, was one of the many students and other curious area residents who attended the event with no plans to ultimately support Trump. Doran plans to participate in the Democratic caucus.

“The spectacle,” Doran said, when asked why he was there. “I’ve never seen Trump in person.”

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Why the Harbingers Will Not Destroy America

The harbingers are warning signs of God’s judgment, but that doesn’t mean they will destroy America.

Rather, the contrary is true, according to Rabbi Jonathan Cahn and evangelist Kenneth Copeland.

In an episode of Copeland’s *Believer’s Voice of Victory*, Cahn and Copeland discuss how these harbingers have saved America as they follow a biblical precedent.

And much of it radiates from Ground Zero, which Cahn says was originally consecrated to God during the foundations of America.

“The warning—the warning ends up saving—saving—shaking and saving the nation and protecting the church. It was the church where they were there,” Cahn says, according to a transcript.

“And so, you know, what happened is that after 9/11—and I was there, you know, there. I watched it, you know. But after 9/11, people were flocking from all over to go to that church.

You know, they didn't realize. Nobody—it was like—it was like God, by—by 9/11, He caused the entire focus of the nation to turn back to the ground where it had been dedicated to God, I mean, without even us knowing it," Cahn continued.

Watch the video to see more.

Even in His Absence, Donald Trump Was a Presence at GOP Debate

Even in boycotting a debate with his Republican rivals, front-runner Donald Trump managed to upstage the event on Thursday with a typical dramatic flourish.

Instead of attending a seventh debate, the former reality TV star held a competing event across town that he said raised \$6 million for U.S. military veterans. In doing so, he cast a shadow over his rivals, who frequently tossed barbs his way.

Trump's gamble that he could leave the battlefield to his rivals for one night appeared to pay off, with just days to go before Iowa holds the first nominating contest of the 2016 election season. No one appeared to emerge as a central challenger to him during the two-hour face-off in Des Moines.

Trump's refusal to participate in the debate out of anger that Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly was a moderator prompted a flurry of last-minute phone calls with Fox News Chairman Roger Ailes that failed to resolve their dispute.

A Fox News <FOXA.0> statement said Trump requested that Fox contribute \$5 million to his charities in exchange for his

attendance, which the network turned down.

The debate was the type of event Republicans would routinely have without the flamboyant Trump on stage, and it lacked the electricity that he brings to the party's search for a nominee for the Nov. 8 election.

Without Trump on stage, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie found themselves with more room to make their case to voters seeking a more mainstream candidate.

Both men have an eye on the Feb. 9 first-in-the-nation primary in New Hampshire, which comes on the heels of the Iowa caucuses on Monday and where an establishment Republican like them might have a better chance of standing out.

Senator Ted Cruz from Texas and Senator Marco Rubio from Florida, the two top challengers to Trump in Iowa, engaged in squabbles over immigration and national security and did not appear to threaten Trump's lead. He holds the edge over Cruz in polls of Iowa Republicans.

Trump's rivals mocked his decision to sit out the debate and found ways to criticize him.

"I'm a maniac and everyone on this stage is stupid, fat and ugly, and Ben, you're a terrible surgeon," Cruz told his rivals, including Ben Carson, a retired neurosurgeon, as the debate opened. His next sentence began: "Now that we've gotten the Donald Trump portion out of the way."

Bush, who has been a frequent target of Trump's attacks, turned a question about religious tolerance into an attack on Trump's proposed temporary ban on Muslims entering the United States.

"Donald Trump, for example – I mentioned his name again if anybody was missing him – Mr. Trump believed in reaction to

people's fears that we should ban all Muslims. Well, that creates an environment that's toxic in our own country," Bush said.

Cruz, after a series of questions, said: "If you ask me one more mean question, I may have to leave the stage."

In a swipe at both Trump and Cruz, Rubio chimed in: "Don't worry, I'm not going to leave the stage no matter what you ask me."

SOCIAL MEDIA FAVORITE

With his veterans' event drawing live TV news coverage on Fox News competitors CNN and MSNBC, Trump absorbed plenty of media attention.

He clung to his insistence that Fox News had treated him badly. He has complained that Kelly insulted him at a debate in August and that a statement from the network earlier this week had belittled him.

Two other Republican candidates, Rick Santorum and Mike Huckabee, joined Trump on stage after participating in a debate of low-polling candidates.

Not so former Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore.

"I'm not about to go across town tonight to carry the coat for some billionaire," he said at the "undercard" debate.

There was some mystery as to which veterans' groups would receive the money raised at the event, which included \$1 million from Trump himself. His campaign did not say which group was getting the funds.

Trump, with just one day's notice on a weeknight, was able to fill to capacity a hall at Drake University that holds 700.

"I didn't want to be here, to be honest, I wanted to be about

five minutes away” at the debate, Trump told the crowd. “When you’re treated badly, you have to stick up for your rights – whether we like it or not.”

Trump dominated social media during the debate, leading the entire Republican pack in Twitter mentions throughout the first half of the debate, according to data from social media analytics firm Zoomph.

Trump was by far the most-searched-for candidate on Google during the first half of the debate, at one point outpacing the second-most-searched-for candidate, Rubio, by nearly four-to-one, according to Google Trends data.

Trump’s support in opinion polls, much of it from blue-collar men, has not wavered for months despite him insulting Mexican immigrants and Muslims and clashing with Republican establishment figures like Senator John McCain.

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Can Marco Rubio’s Faith Win Over Iowa Evangelicals?

Marco Rubio is relying in part on his Christian faith in his quest to win the Republican nomination for president. The Florida senator recently hired a director of faith outreach, assembled a religious advisory committee, has been interviewed in *Christianity Today*, and used a faith-based television ad to appeal to prospective voters in Iowa.

In November, Rubio appointed Eric Teetsel, a millennial Wheaton College graduate, to lead his effort to reach out

aggressively to religiously devout Americans, especially evangelicals and conservative Catholics. In January, Rubio formed a religious liberty advisory board that includes such prominent evangelicals as theologian Wayne Grudem, National Hispanic Leadership Conference President Samuel Rodriguez, and California megachurch Pastor Rick Warren. In his *Christianity Today* interview, as well as in his 2012 memoir, Rubio talks candidly and cogently about his faith journey, his religious convictions and the impact that his faith has on his political positions. "The purpose of our life," Rubio declares in his Iowa ad, "is to cooperate with God's plan." Rubio adds that his faith influences "everything that I do," and affirms the evangelical position that salvation depends on accepting "the free gift ... offered to us in Christ."

Although Rubio is not polling nearly as well with potential evangelical voters in Iowa as Donald Trump or Ted Cruz, he has very strong support from many evangelical leaders. Since July 2015, *World* magazine has surveyed more than 100 prominent evangelicals each month about their choice for president. Rubio has led every poll by a sizable margin and in the January 2016 survey was favored by more than 70 percent of respondents. As Karen Swallow Prior, a Liberty University professor, explains, Rubio's "record on issues like abortion and gay marriage," "commitment to making court appointments that will uphold conservative principles" and "sheer electability" appeal strongly to evangelicals.

The Republican senator's eclectic religious background and positions on issues make him attractive not only to evangelical leaders but also to many Catholics and Mormons. The son of Cuban immigrants, Rubio was raised in Miami as a Roman Catholic. When he was 8 years old, however, his family moved to Las Vegas, and his mother began taking her children to the Mormon Church. Along with his mother and sister, Rubio was soon baptized, and he joined the Cub Scout pack the congregation sponsored. About four years later, though, his

family went back to the Catholic Church.

Impressed by Miami's Christ Fellowship's "phenomenal" preaching, efforts to bring "people to Jesus" and "fantastic children's programs," Rubio and his wife, Jeanette, worshipped almost exclusively at this large Southern Baptist congregation from 2000 to 2004. Today, they primarily attend Catholic churches in Washington, D.C., and Miami on Sunday and occasionally worship at Christ Fellowship on Saturday evening.

Although his experiences at Christ Fellowship strengthened his relationship with Jesus, Rubio returned to his Catholic roots in large part because he missed participating in the Eucharist. He carefully studied Catholicism and concluded that its sacraments and traditions were intended to teach people that God yearns to have a personal relationship with them. Rubio emphasizes that he was baptized, raised, confirmed and married in the Catholic Church and never truly left it.

Rubio explains that his faith has always been important to him, although at times he has been more dedicated to it and more involved in the life of the church. The senator says that he cannot point to a definitive conversion experience, but his faith became more vital to him as he recognized his responsibility to teach his children about Jesus, Christianity and salvation.

Rubio argues that Catholics and evangelicals both stress that Christ's sacrificial death on the cross is the basis of God's "free gift of salvation" and that without it "all of us would be doomed." Rubio asserts that he has accepted Christ as his Savior and argues that Christians should allow God to shape them into "instruments of His will."

Rubio declares that his faith "is the single greatest influence in my life" and claims that it strongly shapes his policies, especially his opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage and his efforts to help the less fortunate, hungry

and imprisoned. Rubio calls for balancing compassion toward illegal immigrants with ensuring that the nation's laws are followed. He insists that the government must "protect the right of every American to worship as they see fit, and to live out the teachings of their faith." In dealing with other nations, Rubio argues, the United States must consistently follow moral principles and not make pragmatic decisions based simply on economic and political considerations.

Rubio insists that Christians' faith should influence every aspect of their lives. Christians should "glorify God in everything we do," "primarily by the way we live our lives," and serve as "ambassadors of Christ." Every day, Rubio asserts, he asks for "God's guidance, direction, strength and courage."

Rubio admires Pope Francis and applauds his desire to aid immigrants. He disagrees, however, with the pope's perspectives on climate change and the best way to reduce income inequality. Rubio argues that when the pope discusses moral issues such as the sanctity of life and the importance of marriage and the family, he "speaks with incredible authority." His views on economic issues, by contrast, simply express his personal perspective. Rubio contends that he has the same goal as Francis—to increase "prosperity and upward mobility," but he maintains that this is best accomplished through the free-enterprise system rather than redistributionist measures.

Rubio's religious background and convictions position him well to appeal to many religious conservatives. Whether this will help him to win the Republican presidential nomination remains to be seen.

Dr. Gary Scott Smith chairs the history department at Grove City College and is a fellow for faith and politics with The Center for Vision & Values.

What Determines Who You Are

I haven't been myself lately. Maybe you can relate.

For me, my health is the issue. I'm used to being very active, working out at One-on-One Fitness two or three times a week, visiting with friends over dinner, working and writing in my office, and traveling a lot to meet needs through speaking. Other than some time spent in my office, I've done none of these for the past six weeks.

I don't like not feeling like myself. I'm not used to sitting around and not being able to just get up and go. I've had to work at being still and obedient to my doctors' orders. I have to work to keep an underlying stress at bay all because I don't feel like me.

I've been teaching something relevant to my current reality for years. Maybe you've heard me, or you've read it in one of my books. Identity controls behavior. I'm experiencing this truth in significant ways. Our identity – who we think we are – is a key to our behavior.

The only way I can behave differently is if I get in touch with who I really am now. I'm sick. After surgery in about two weeks and my recovery, I will again be well. But, the reality is that I'm not well now. I have to own that. Respect that. Not live in denial. Otherwise, I'd be getting worse as I ignored the order to rest.

Is any of this relevant to you in anyway? I think so.

We need to have an accurate understanding of who we are because identity is so powerful. If you know you're creative, you'll look for ways of serving with that talent. If you know

you need lots of sleep to function well and tomorrow is an especially big day, you'll leave a party earlier than others might. If you know what's challenging for you, you'll avoid certain circumstances and possibly ask for help during others.

When you or your children seem stressed and unsure of yourselves, ask whether there's been a change in identity that needs to be realized. It may be temporary, like my situation, but you still need to recognize it and make adjustments. This may be especially true when children move from "I can't do this" to "I can do this." For example, you don't want them behaving like math facts are still hard for them when they've actually memorized them and are quite quick. Right? This is among the reasons I teach parents and teachers to be very specific when affirming children.

In a related issue, if your children go through a time where attitudes and actions are inconsistent, and you don't know what to expect from them, it almost always indicates an identity change is taking place. They're trying to decide where to land – do they want to stay the way they've been or are the new attitudes and actions comfortable? Watch them and talk with them. Work to direct them toward the identity you believe is truest to who they currently are and will be healthiest for them.

Guard against the new identity seemingly making all others irrelevant. In my case, I must remember that I am more than sick. I'm still a writer. I'm still creative. I'm still a friend who can reach out in different ways. The only way this happens is if I don't think about and talk only about my health.

Related to that idea, we also must not exaggerate any of our identities. I am sick, but I'm not dying. I can still go to my office. I just have to stay for shorter amounts of time and have lowered expectations for what I'll accomplish. If I only sit around and become acutely aware of every pain, I'll think

I'm sicker than I am.

One more important idea. Because what people say to us and how they react to us influences our identity, key people in our lives should know about these types of changes we're going through. This is true whether we're going through them willingly or not.

For example, many people in my church know about my health. Some have more details than others, but many have seen my Facebook prayer requests. Others don't know anything. That's fine. It's "key people" who benefit from knowing – for their good and ours. Yesterday, I was most comfortable interacting with those who know I'm not well. They didn't expect me to be my normal chipper self. Their expressions of care and concern lifted my spirits.

If you or your children are experiencing growth and change, make sure to let key people know so they can support what's happening. Grandparents, for instance, can ask different questions and choose different reactions to behavior. This can help the growth continue and feel natural.

Identity controls behavior. Who we think we are is who we will be.

Dr. Kathy Koch is the author of *Screens & Teens: Connecting With Our Kids in a Wireless World*.

A Letter to Friends in Iowa, New Hampshire and South

Carolina

There are 310 million Americans, and of them, 129 million voted in the last presidential election. So when the general election rolls around, our individual votes rarely make a difference. (Of course, in Florida in 2000, only 537 votes made a difference for George W. Bush becoming president.)

However, my friends in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina can have a huge impact. Help me get this message to your friends in those states!

Here's why: The Iowa Caucus next Monday followed by the New Hampshire Primary eight days later and the South Carolina Primary on Feb. 20 will likely determine the nominee for the Republican Party, who I think will certainly win the election in the fall.

Our own Bob Eschliman, who writes for our Charisma Caucus, gave a very interesting analysis of the situation in Iowa, which you can read [here](#). He predicts there will be fewer than 1,000 votes between Ted Cruz and Donald Trump. Is it possible that the readers of *Charisma* and this e-newsletter could provide the difference?

We can only speculate on that. But it seems that Pentecostals and charismatics tend to be passive when it comes to politics. It's said that many of them stayed home rather than voted for a Mormon in 2008. That, along with other conservatives who stayed home for the same reason, may have been the reason Barack Obama won by only 500,000 votes in three key states.

There is a lot to like about some of the things Donald Trump brings to the table. But it is important that we think clearly about who we're wanting to lead our country. There are a lot of things that cause questions, which Michael Brown clearly articulated in this thoughtful column.

Contrast that with Ted Cruz, who is a principled conservative, a strong believer and a fighter who will not be intimidated by those who I believe are dragging our country down.

Most of my readers do not live in these three states where the victor, I believe, will carry momentum through to the other primaries and on to the nomination. But most of us know people in those states or have social media connections there. So let's forward this e-newsletter to potential voters in those three states. Let's motivate them to talk to their friends and go to the caucus in Iowa and to the polls in New Hampshire and South Carolina. It's said many of us have around 300 contacts on our cellphones. Can we encourage others to see the seriousness of getting involved and to believe we can make a real difference?

I have identified those who read our magazines in these three states, and I will be sending this to all of them, including some who may be reading this newsletter now. It is my way of trying to create a groundswell of support—overseen by the political pundits or the secular media—of quiet, God-fearing, Spirit-filled Christians who want to give the momentum to a man like Ted Cruz. He is so close to winning the Iowa Caucus. Polls show he won't win in New Hampshire, but it is predicted he will finish second or third. He can then head into South Carolina and win, which would give him the momentum he will need to earn the Republican nomination.

I could be wrong. The political scenario could play out very differently. *Charisma* is a spiritual magazine, not a political magazine. Although we comment on the political process, never before have we endorsed a candidate in the primaries or tried to motivate our readers to go to polls like this. But I believe our readers are concerned about the direction of our nation. I believe this a moment in which we can make a real difference.

We probably cannot swing the general election, but I think

that things are so close in Iowa that we can give Ted Cruz the momentum he needs. I make this point in an earlier Strang Report. I also invite you to listen to my four-part Strang Report exclusive interview with Ted Cruz on the Charisma Podcast Network. Here are parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 of that interview.

Will you take a few moments to forward this e-newsletter to your friends or put it on social media? You may connect with someone who gets really motivated and connects his or her network. We never know what can be the tipping point. It might be you.

Let's do what we can to put a principled conservative with a strong biblical worldview into the nation's highest office.

Groundswell of Support for Ted Cruz Continues to Build

Presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) continues to rack up the endorsements, picking up four more in the past 24 hours.

They include Dr. Chuck Harding and Pastor Michael Creed, leaders of a Christian ministry committed to the education, engagement and encouragement of the nation, particularly among Independent Baptists. Also, he's been endorsed by U.S. Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) and Eddie Calvo, the governor of Guam.

In a written statement, Harding and Creed praised Ted Cruz for his integrity, his grasp of the Constitution, his defense of the unborn, and his economic platform. "Ted Cruz is the man who can lead America back to moral and financial strength,

restore cultural unity and re-establish the principles which this great nation was founded upon," they concluded.

Harding is a missionary evangelist. He has conducted Constitutional Awareness conferences throughout the United States for the past 14 years, educating people of faith about their role in the political process and opportunities to impact public policy. Creed has pastored the Independent Baptist Church in Clinton, Maryland, for 22 years.

Together, they enlist fellow Christians in encouraging lawmakers spiritually. They also host annual conferences for pastors and their congregations at the U.S. Capitol, facilitating an understanding of government, defending religious liberty and Christian values, and praying for government leaders.

"Both my father and I have been encouraged by the ministry of Dr. Harding and Pastor Creed," said Cruz. "Their work to mobilize Christians and cultivate integrity in government is desperately needed, and their impact in Washington is tangible. I am grateful to have their support and look forward to working together to awaken people of faith in our nation."

The Cruz campaign touted Meadows, who is in his second term, as "part of a new group of consistent, principled conservatives in the House pushing for limited government, fiscal responsibility, and restoring the rule of law and respect for the Constitution." In a press release regarding his announcement, the Cruz camp said Meadows has been a leading voice for strengthening national security, protecting life at every stage and growing the economy by reducing burdensome and ineffective regulations.

"We are approaching a historic election that has the potential to fundamentally change our nation as we know it. Ted Cruz is the principled, conservative leader we need in the White House," Meadows said. "On issue after issue, Cruz has told the

truth and done what he said he was going to do. It may not make him a lot of friends in Washington, but it is exactly what the American people expect of their leaders. Folks across this great nation are sick and tired of the Washington way and demand real change. Ted Cruz is the best-positioned leader to restore power to the people and uphold the Constitution at this historic moment in time.

"I've worked closely with Ted on a number of issues from pro-Israel initiatives to fighting for school choice, and I know that he always puts the interest of the country first. That's his consistent record. I am proud to join with the millions of conservatives coalescing around his campaign, coming together to force Washington to finally listen to the American people. I look forward to working with Ted in North Carolina and around the country to make him the next president of the United States."

While residents of Guam do not vote in the General Election, because it is a U.S. territory, not a state, its voters may participate in the Republican presidential nominating process. Calvo, who is in his second term as the territorial governor, will lead Cruz's effort to win delegates there.

"Ted Cruz is listening to voters in Guam like no other candidate," he said. "He uniquely understands the issues facing not just Guam, but other Pacific Islanders. Guam will proudly vote to nominate Cruz as our party's nominee at the Republican National Convention."

Calvo previously served five terms as a senator in Guam's territorial legislature, where he served as vice speaker, acting speaker and chairman of the legislative finance, public works and health committees. As governor, he has been a strong fiscal conservative and champion of the Second Amendment and has set in place strict fiscal reforms to pay down and refinance Guam's huge budget deficit.

"I'm honored to have the support of Governor Calvo," said Cruz. "He is a proven leader who hasn't been afraid to fight Washington to ensure a better, brighter future for Guam."

Additionally, the Cruz campaign has released an expanded list of its Iowa leadership team ahead of the first-in-the-nation Iowa Republican Caucus. It includes 130 Iowa pastors, 12 state legislators, and 260 county chairs and co-chairs across all 99 Iowa counties.

"This campaign is about standing for principle and coalescing conservatives to work together to fight for our shared values," Cruz said. "The grass-roots army that has come together here in Iowa is being replicated all across the country. The members of this team represent not just the thousands of Iowans who have come together to support our campaign, but also the tens of thousands of people who are engaging to help restore the promise of America."