

A Voice in the Wilderness

Sen. Sam Brownback of Kansas is unusually outspoken about his faith. He didn't hold back when Charisma asked him about the moral condition of our country.

Samuel D. Brownback, U.S. senator from Kansas, could become the next president of the United States. During an exclusive interview recently with Charisma he said that he is "exploring" running for the presidency in 2008 and will decide early next year whether or not to seek the office. A Republican and an 11-year member of Congress, he has proved to be conservative on issues Christian voters care about.

When he arrived in Washington in 1995 Brownback was one of several freshman members of the House of Representatives who fought hard for tax cuts and a smaller government and against adult entertainment and abortion. He moved quickly into influential roles after he won a special election in 1996 to enter the Senate and fill the unexpired term of Kansas Sen. Bob Dole.

As a senator, he has aggressively defended the right to life, closely watched bioengineering research for the danger it poses to the unborn, worked to combat religious persecution abroad, and sought consistently to preserve civil and human rights internationally.

Yet Brownback is also known for being somewhat enigmatic, religiously and politically. He became a Roman Catholic in 2002 yet was raised Methodist in a rural farm town of the Midwest and attended a Baptist church during college. He is a political conservative but he embraces bipartisanship—he has initiated partnerships on Capitol Hill with powerful liberal Democrats, such as Edward Kennedy, Barbara Boxer and the late

Paul Wellstone, to pass legislation related to immigration, women's rights and sex trafficking.

A native Kansan, Brownback, who turns 50 next month, married his college sweetheart, Mary, while he was in law school, and they have five children. In 1998 he was elected to a full six-year Senate term and re-elected in 2004 to a second term that expires in 2011.

Charisma met with the senator in Washington to talk about his faith, what he believes are the key issues affecting the nation and his desire to be the next president of the United States.

Charisma: How did you come to a relationship with Christ?

Sen. Brownback: I became a Christian when I was 13 years old, on the farm near Parker, Kansas. I was heading back to feed the pigs. Not exactly the cathedral setting one might imagine.

It was a thing I had been wrestling with for some period of time. I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior and that started the journey.

I had a great Sunday school teacher and youth group leader in Parker at the Methodist church. He really encouraged me, and I sunk my roots in.

I got involved in Navigators at K-State [Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas], worked with them throughout much of college, attended a Baptist church while I was going to grad school at K-State. In law school I started a Bible

study with law students.

I interned here in Washington for Bob Dole in the summer of '79. The National Prayer Breakfast group has a house that they run here, and I stayed with them while I was here.

And then a big event happened for me in August 1995. I developed skin cancer, melanoma, and they took it off. Mentally and spiritually it really did a key thing to me. It really sunk me into my faith, just really caused me to lean into the Lord completely.

Charisma: What role do you feel prayer plays right now in the life of the nation?

Sen. Brownback: It's critical. And you're seeing a very broad, deep prayer movement in the country—whether it's groups that have organized national prayer groups or Bible study groups [that are] regularly praying for things for their families, their neighborhoods. I think the depth and breadth of it is phenomenal, what is occurring right now across this country.

Charisma: Some of the events you've participated in deal with spiritual warfare. What do you feel are America's biggest spiritual enemies now?

Sen. Brownback: The difficulty that we have, I think, in this country is discerning good from evil, right from wrong—and then opposing what is evil. Some people don't like the terminology "good" or "evil." They just think, Well, that's an antiquated type of thought—when it's not. There is good and there is evil, and we should fight against it.

To identify the lead and specific ones would be pretty hard to do. But I think you can identify evil by its fruits. We've had now about 50 million abortions in this country since Roe v. Wade. I don't think anybody would stand up and say it's good that we've had 50 million abortions in this country, and yet that has been something that's happened here.

Charisma: You have a respected record of bipartisanship on issues such as abortion, immigration, sex trafficking, human rights and human-embryo cloning. Has your biblical point of view on these issues influenced other senators?

Sen. Brownback: I think it has. I remember seeing one of my colleagues one day who's a very liberal member of the Senate—and looking at him and immediately thinking: Liberal. I don't agree with him—kind of dismissing him immediately.

Mentally I was chastised because I was judging him, and I prayed, "Forgive me for that judgment." I found when I said, "Forgive me for judging him," I could then reach out to that individual and start to do these things in working with him.

Like Paul Wellstone [the late Democratic senator from Minnesota] on sex trafficking. I remember saying to one news reporter: "I believe every person, every child, at whatever stage, is beautiful, unique, sacred and a precious child of the living God. And that includes Paul Wellstone and Ted Kennedy." And Paul, of course, was killed in a plane crash.

Paul came up to me the day that article appeared in the paper and said: "I read that. I thought it was a pretty good line." He was as far left as there is in the Senate, and yet we got what I consider one of the best pieces of legislation I've

been a part of on sex trafficking.

If we'll follow those biblical principles of not judging another person and of loving your enemy, you can end up working with a whole bunch of people that you can't otherwise. I've worked with Barbara Boxer on women's rights issues in Afghanistan. I've worked with Madeleine Albright [former U.S. secretary of state] on global health initiatives. We got the African-American museum of the Smithsonian through John Lewis [D-Ga.] and I working on that.

These biblical principles that operate so contrary to a political system work very well in a political system.

Charisma: What do you foresee as the key issues coming our way in stem cell research and embryonic cloning?

Sen. Brownback: At the root of it is whether the youngest of humans is a person or a piece of property. You've got this basic debate, which mirrors the very debate about slavery—whether the slave was a person or a piece of property.

On the stem cell debate a lot of people want to look at the embryo as property. One of the ways that you can do that is to say: "Well, we can research on it. We can patent it."

And I look at that and say: "No, you can't do that. This is a person. You can't patent a person. You can't research on a person without their permission."

We're seeing a strong push for cloning, but there is an issue that is probably in the long-term more potent. It's chimeras.

That's the science of bringing outside genetic material into the human species.

We currently can do it and do do it in animals and plants. We are going to be able to do it in humans too.

[Chimeras] has a side issue associated with it, this notion of perfection of humanity. Right now, we are in a genocide—or infanticide—of the unborn child, particularly those who have any genetically detectable defect.

We've been killing 80 percent to 90 percent of our children diagnosed with Down Syndrome in utero. Easy genetic test—it's often wrong, but once they get it, the system pushes that child to be aborted.

We're now getting to the point where we will have about 100 different genetic tests. And you're going to be able to test and see, "Well, this child has a 20 percent chance of breast cancer as an adult," and people making a choice to abort. Why? Because they want a perfect child.

Add to that chimeras. Now we can add a gene that can cause you to be able to see like an eagle or increase your intellect. We've got to get the gene from an elephant, we've got to get the gene from soybeans—and insert that into the human species. What does it do when we create ourselves in our own image?

I've got a bill to ban the chimeras issue [Human Chimera Prohibition Act of 2005].

Charisma: Senator, do you intend to run for president?

Sen. Brownback: I am currently exploring running for president. I have traveled to several of the early primary states. I have gotten excellent initial feedback.

Charisma: Why will your candidacy be different or better than that of others who may be running?

Sen. Brownback: What I'm saying to people is, I'm a full-scale conservative, but I really do push the cultural issues from a standpoint that you've got to get the basics right. Get the basics right, your problems further down the road are diminished. Get the basics wrong, and they go wrong.

I am getting a good reception from that standpoint of pushing the need to renew the American culture—renew marriage, renew family, renew commitments to life, renew commitments to each other.

Let me give you one specific vignette on that. We have spent over \$3 trillion on the war on poverty since we started it in 1965. The number of people in poverty in 1965 was about 12 percent of the population. The percentage of people in poverty now is about 12 percent of the population—\$3 trillion later.

The model has not worked. What's happened during that period of time? The number of people in poverty and the number of people across the United States who are not married has gone up.

The key to ending poverty, really, is getting at least a minimal education, getting married, not having children until you are married, and keeping the child. The number of people

in poverty that have done those four basic things is very, very small. That's what I mean about renewing the culture.

I think my candidacy has a lot of strength to it because it appeals to a very basic set of values that we've walked away from.

Charisma: What will be the key elements of your platform?

Sen. Brownback: I talk about the Republican Party being a party of hope and ideas. I think we can do a lot under that area.

One that I'm pushing is that we really go after cancer. It's a personal matter to me—but almost every American knows somebody who's had cancer, has cancer or has died of cancer. I want us to set a goal that within the next 10 years we will eliminate deaths by cancer.

We recently had a group of 92 senators sign a letter pushing that the American cancer community believes this is achievable. What a great goal to unite us. That's a party of hope and ideas.

I support a series of economic measures that I think we need to do to create a growth platform in America. I support a flat tax, but I think what we should do is leave the current tax code in place and just create an alternate flat tax—to create growth and opportunities within this society.

I think we're going to have to do work in our health care system overall. I want to get us into a system of a lot more

health savings-accounts and health insurance that people carry throughout their lifetime.

Foreign policy, I do strongly believe we've got to continue to conduct

aggressively the war on terrorism but that we also have to emphasize human rights around the world. And we're best when we're standing on principle. We have to stand on principle whether it's against the North Koreans or the Saudis, if they're not standing for the basic human rights.

I support a constitutional amendment on marriage. I am going to push strongly on life in its broadest sense—that all life is sacred, all stages of it. I think that will be an inclusive thing.

I want to work as well on issues of poverty reduction, but target it from a standpoint of how you change the system we're in and try to encourage people's behavior with those systems—responses and actions that will make them more likely to succeed and their children more likely to succeed rather than to fail.

Charisma: How did you arrive at the decision to possibly seek the presidency?

Sen. Brownback: I felt a deep calling about it. It's not something I lust after. I am a very happy man, married with five children in a wonderful job, a United States senator representing the great state of Kansas. I am blessed.

Jimmy Stewart, Charisma managing editor, and Stephen strang,

founder and publisher of Charisma, interviewed Senator Brownback at his office in Washington, D.C.

A Resolution of Apology

Prayer leaders say a national apology to Native Americans could bring revival to the U.S.

Republican Sen. Sam Brownback of Kansas believes there is power in an apology. That's why in 2004 he introduced a Resolution of Apology to the Native Peoples in hopes that it would be a "first step toward healing the wounds that have divided us for so long" and serve as "a potential foundation for a new era of positive relations between Tribal governments and the federal government."

The measure calls on Congress to acknowledge and apologize for the government's "long history of official depredations and ill-conceived policies toward Native peoples." It does not authorize the settlement of any claims against the U.S. or include reparations.

Thousands of Christians have been mobilized to pray for the resolution's passage through a Web site, , set up by a coalition of volunteers to encourage prayer and advocacy. "Many great [prayer] leaders have said revival will come to the land when the Native American people of the land are reconciled with," says Negiel Bigpond, who with fellow Native American minister Jay Swallow founded the Two Rivers Native American Training Center to teach ministers how to evangelize Native communities.

Gary Bergel, president of Washington, Intercessors for

America, is one of several ministry leaders who are encouraging Christians to support the measure. "The church has been given the ministry of reconciliation, and it's got to start with our First Nations people," Bergel says. "The ethnic issues in America are not going to go away; they're intensifying. But the way they will be resolved and resolved with compassion is if we will pay attention to this great woundedness and the lack of reconciliation with the First Nations peoples."

Swallow says an apology would help Native Americans release deep-seated bitterness, much like he did in 1997 when intercessors with Oklahoma Concerts of Prayer asked his forgiveness for the pain inflicted on him, his Cheyenne people and members of the Arapaho tribe through the Sand Creek and Washita River massacres. "Every tribe that I ... present this to, you can see a look of hope, a feeling of awe, and they say, 'I wonder if this could happen to us,'" Swallow says.

Charlene Johnson, Two Rivers' Washington, D.C., liaison, is urging Christians to support the measure by contacting their elected representatives. She says both Brownback's resolution (S.J. Res. 15) and a similar measure in the House (H.J. Res. 3) are waiting to be put up for a vote.

Adrienne S. Gaines