

5 Faith Facts Every Christian Voter Should Know About Ted Cruz

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who tipped off an avalanche of 2016 GOP presidential candidates when he declared his run in March, ties every move he makes, every breath he takes, to God.

It's been that way all his 44 years – from his childhood in evangelical private schools, up through his 2012 Senate race aimed squarely at social conservatives, up to his campaign kickoff at Jerry Falwell-founded Liberty University. Here are five faith facts about Cruz:

1. He's a lot like his dad.

Ted likes to quote Rafael Cruz on the campaign trail, urging people to vote by God's values—in Christian conservative form.

Rafael Cruz was a Catholic Cuban refugee working in the energy industry when Ted was born in 1970 but in 1975 became a born-again Christian. By the time Ted was a teen, Rafael was a traveling preacher. Now, Rafael pastors a church in Dallas and directs Grace for America, ministering in the U.S., Mexico and Central America, and campaigns for Ted among pastors.

Ted's home church is Houston's First Baptist. He likes to tell folks, "I'm Cuban, Irish and Italian, and yet somehow I ended up Southern Baptist," according to The Dallas Morning News.

2. God has always been a theme in

his political roles.

“Believing is not simply sitting aside and doing a polite little golf clap,” Cruz told the congregation at his friend Robert Jeffress’ congregation, First Baptist Dallas. “Believing is putting everything you have, your heart, soul, life, putting everything (into) standing for what’s right.”

His campaign website and his U.S. Senate biography tout among his accomplishments as solicitor general of Texas that he fought for the “constitutionality of the Ten Commandments monument at the Texas State Capitol and the words ‘under God’ in the Pledge of Allegiance.”

Cruz has said he is judicious about mentioning religious views. In 2013, he told David Brody, a host at the Christian Broadcasting Network, that politicians have “a special obligation to avoid being a Pharisee, to avoid ostentatiously wrapping yourself in your faith. Because I think in politics, it’s too easy for that to become a crutch, for that to be politically useful.”

Even so, he was back this summer on Brody’s show, where he calculated that if all evangelicals – including more than half who he says sat out the last election – “will simply show up and vote our values, we’ll turn this country around. We can turn our country around, but only if the body of Christ rises up.”

3. Forget “dog whistle” politics with coded messages to religious voters. Cruz has a trumpet.

Cruz doesn’t tiptoe around God in his politics. That’s clear from his speech to a cheering crowd at Liberty University

(where students are fined if they don't show up for guest speakers, according to The Washington Post).

"From the dawn of this country, at every stage, America has enjoyed God's providential blessing. Over and over again, when we face impossible odds, the American people rose to the challenge," Cruz said.

He went on to the standard conservative checklist: repealing Obamacare and Common Core, abolishing the IRS, securing the border, protecting privacy and gun rights, honoring the Constitution and more. But he warned that this all stands on realizing "that our rights don't come from man. They come from God Almighty."

Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, who witnessed the speech, said, "Senator Cruz seems to understand that the next generation of believers is looking for conviction – not a milquetoast version of the Gospel that requires nothing."

In 2013 and 2014, Cruz has won the group's annual Values Voter Summit presidential straw poll among 2,000 social conservatives. Perkins says Cruz wins because they "are looking for leaders who will take clear, unequivocal stands on the challenges facing our nation, not nuanced politically correct speeches."

4. Religious liberty is his basic stump speech theme.

"In the past month, we have seen religious liberty under assault at an unprecedented level," Cruz told the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition outside Des Moines in April.

Like many candidates, Cruz did a video for the Circle of Protection, a group of 100 Christian leaders working against global poverty. He leveraged a call to care into an attack on the federal policies he says interfere with individual and

faith-based charities' religious liberties. Generous Americans – those who know their Psalm 72:13, who know “that the plight of the poor is close to the heart of God,” he said – need liberty from taxes and regulations that interfere with their efforts.

5. Not everyone cheers.

Cruz is an ardent Zionist. But speaking to an Arab Christian audience in Washington last September, he ran straight into a wall of disapproval by people who think Israel has taken Palestinian lands illegally and driven out Christians as well as Muslims. Politico said Cruz was booed off the stage for calling for absolute support for Israel, accusing those who disagreed of being “consumed with hate” and concluding, “If you will not stand with Israel and the Jews, then I will not stand with you.”

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