

The One Thing a Presidential Candidate Needs to Win Faith-Based Voters and Millennials

In the last presidential election, most evangelicals didn't even show up to vote. Why are Christian conservatives so disengaged from politics, and what would a presidential candidate have to do to turn out the GOP's key voters? In a conference call with reporters, Mike Huckabee told me it comes down to one thing: authenticity. "The faith-based community has to believe that someone truly identifies with, connects to, and in a very sincere way holds to convictions that are compatible with theirs," the former Arkansas governor told us. The trouble, he said, was that the Republican Party had too often asked evangelicals to donate, campaign, and turn out their church members to the polls on election day – then they are invited to go back to church and leave the governing to the elites. "If they believe they're simply being used as political pawns or they're going to be played to be the reliable go-tos – stand out in the crowd and wave signs but then pay them no attention once the election over – I don't we can count on them to show up. And you really can't blame them for that." Personal faith is also important, Huckabee said. "In many ways, what faith based voters are looking for is authenticity, not necessarily wholesale agreement on every issue but authenticity: a person whose faith is not a political position but a core principle and a core value," he said. Ironically, the search for a candidate who speaks his mind is something Christians have in common with the least religious generation in American history, the millennials, he said. "I think authenticity is also something millennials have a longing for," Huckabee told reporters this week. "My experience in talking with millennials on campuses over the past 12 or so years – I've spent a lot of time doing it – many

of them don't agree with me on key issues. I mean, sometimes they *vehemently* disagree with me. But what they really connect with is if I can explain my views in a way that they know I've thought through them and that I can follow those views to their logical conclusion." In 2012, evangelical participation dipped for the first time in years. A total of 4.6 million Reagan Democrats stayed home rather than vote for Mitt Romney. Huckabee believes the GOP will have to put forward a candidate who articulates Christian values more clearly than it has in years if it hopes to take back the White House in 2016.