

# Tony Perkins Explains Why Candidates Can't Ignore Evangelicals

During a TV appearance after last week's Iowa Republican Caucus victory secured by U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Family Research Council President Tony Perkins was asked to explain why evangelicals were such a force to be reckoned with in American politics.

FOX Business Network host Stuart Varney, who said he is a believer, wasn't sure that as an Episcopalian, he met the criteria of "evangelical." He asked Perkins to explain what it means to be an evangelical, which in turn led to an explanation for how they are becoming an important part of the American electorate.

"That is a technical term, 'evangelical,' there is established criteria," Perkins said. "In a nutshell, it is one who believes that the Word of God, the Bible, is the infallible inerrant Word of God, and that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. One must confess their sins, seek forgiveness and then walk according to God's Word as it is laid out in Scripture."

Varney then pointed out that it is because evangelicals walk in accordance with God's Word that they take their faith with them into the voting booth. Perkins agreed, and added:

"They take it everywhere. And there are 90 million evangelicals in this country. They represent about 50 percent of primary voters and about a third of general election voters. So you can't ignore them and expect to win an election."

In New Hampshire, evangelicals make up a significantly smaller

percentage of Republican primary voters. However, they do make up an even larger portion of the GOP voters in Iowa and South Carolina, which bodes well for candidates such as Ted Cruz, Ben Carson and Marco Rubio, who talk freely about their faith.

Exit polling from Iowa suggests evangelical voters were energized and turned out on Caucus Night, which directly impacted the top three candidates in the final vote. Asked the next day by FOX News Channel's Megyn Kelly to discuss the exit data, Perkins said the main takeaway from the Iowa Republican Caucus was "don't listen to the polls—vote your values."

That exit data suggested 64 percent of voters in Iowa self-identified as evangelicals. Traditionally, a similar number of South Carolina voters identify as evangelicals. If South Carolina sees a similar increase—roughly 8 to 10 percentage points—Feb. 20 could be a huge day for Christian candidates.