

I'm Endorsing Rick Santorum for President in the Florida Primary

Four years ago I was one of the first to endorse Mike  Huckabee for president. He was a former governor of Arkansas who I felt had great leadership—and he not only shares but embodies our Christian values. But this year I took a wait and see attitude until just a few days before the Florida primary to be held Jan. 31.

I was interviewed on PBS this week for a show that airs this weekend. Kim Lawton, the respected correspondent who has interviewed me before and always reported fairly on the evangelical community, wanted to know whom I'm endorsing. I told her I'm endorsing Sen. Rick Santorum.

If you want to see what I said, [click here](#).

I've admired Rick Santorum from afar for years. I met him briefly when he spoke for Christians United for Israel. I know of all the candidates he's the strongest supporter of Israel and probably understands the danger of what he calls "Islamofascism" better than any one else in the race.

But the biggest factor is that compared to the other candidates, he's squeaky clean. It's like my good friend Rep. Scott Plakon (R-Longwood) said to me: "he's like a boy scout."

Scott decided independently of my decision to support Santorum. Like me, he knows Santorum is behind in the polls.

We know he hasn't raised as much money as Gov. Mitt Romney or Speaker Newt Gingrich. But to me that didn't matter.

I told Kim Lawton: "I want to make a statement that character is important and not think that we have to give it to somebody just because all the pundits say that they have the election wrapped up and they are the ones that can beat President Obama. I think that it is unknown."

I'm not alone. A group of evangelical leaders met in Texas recently and decided to endorse Santorum. They, like me, seem to respect Gingrich's stand on the issues and his grasp of the problems our country faces. But Gingrich's past raises questions about his character.

Kim asked me if his past would be a problem with Florida evangelicals. I said: "I think Newt Gingrich's past is a huge issue, and it isn't so much that he couldn't be forgiven. Forgiveness is the essence of Christianity, and we've all been forgiven. But it shows his character, and not once, but a couple times. I have no doubt he's changed. No doubt. But it is troubling."

As far as Gov. Romney, I respect his business acumen. "I have no criticism of Gov. Romney personally other than the fact that you have to question how conservative he is by some of the things he

did in
Massachusetts," I told Kim. "Thankfully his flip-flopping, in
my opinion, was
flip-flopping in the right direction. That is a factor, but
for me that is more
of a factor than what church he goes to."

This year I've been slow to endorse. Maybe it's because I
worked so hard for Huckabee and was disappointed when he
didn't win and also
when he decided not to run this year.

I knew there were several good candidates. I could have
endorsed Michele Bachmann or Rick Perry.

I have no illusions my endorsement will swing many votes.
But I suspect there are many like me who believe Santorum is a
good man;
believe he's right on the issues; who don't care what the
polls say and want to
make a statement that character matters in who we pick to lead
this nation.

Besides, Santorum won Iowa; Romney won New Hampshire
and Gingrich won South Carolina. So to me, it's "even" and
could go any
direction. A lot depends on what happens Tuesday in Florida.