

What Is The Evangelical Voting Block?

Sunday Evening Bible Study

February 7, 2016

Q1 What is an evangelical?

A1 An evangelical is a person who holds to the four following tenets:

1. Conversionism: The belief that lives need to be transformed through a “born-again” experience and a life long process of following Jesus.
2. Activism: the expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reforms.
3. Biblicism: a high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority.
4. Crucicentrism: a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity. (Source: National Association of Evangelicals, nae.net).

Q2 How are evangelicals identified in polling by the NAE and LifeWay Research?

A2 Agreement with the following statements:

1. The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.
2. It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.
3. Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.
4. Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation.

Q3: Who were the original evangelicals?

A3: Jesus and the apostles of course!

1. Authority of the Bible: Lk. 22:37; 24:25; Jn. 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:2
2. Encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus: Mt. 4:23; 24:14; Mt. 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:15; Acts 5:42; 19:18. Being “born again” is inseparable to trusting Jesus (Jn. 3:3). **Note:** “Gospel” translates *euangellion* which means “good news.” “Preach” translates *euangellizo* which means “announce good news.” This Greek word is where we get the term “evangelical.”
3. Penal Substitutionary Atonement on the Cross: Isa. 53:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Ro. 3:25; 1 Cor. 1:18; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 2:16; Col. 2:14.
4. Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation: Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5; Gal. 2:21

Q4 Who are the founding fathers of modern evangelicalism?

A4 Jonathan Edwards (Calvinist Congregationalist), George Whitefield (Calvinist Anglican), and John Wesley (Arminian Methodist). Evangelicalism transcends denominational and creedal barriers.

Q5 What is the brief history of evangelicalism?

A5 See below.

- 1740 Whitefield concludes American preaching tour in Boston; 23,000 people.
- 1741 Edwards, “Father of American Evangelicalism” preaches “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” in Enfield, Connecticut to unconverted church members during the First Great Awakening.
- 1742 Wesley arranges for publication of Edwards’ “Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival.” Wesley stresses “heart religion,” small groups, personal holiness.
- 1793 After reading Edwards’ “Life of David Brainerd,” William Carey, “Father of Modern Missions” leaves England for India.
- 1825 Charles Finney, “Father of Modern Revivalism,” begins revivals in New York during 2nd Great Awakening. Appeal to emotion and aisle-walking.

- 1861 Charles Spurgeon moves his church to Metropolitan Tabernacle which seated 5000 and had standing room for 1000. The “Father of Megachurch Pastors”
- 1910 General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in the USA produced the “Five Fundamentals:” 1. Inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture; 2. Virgin birth; 3. Vicarious atonement; 4. Bodily resurrection of Christ; 5. Reality of Christ’s miracles. “Fundamentalists” begin to retreat from active engagement with society into separatism, legalism, anti-intellectualism; pessimism, division.
- 1942 The National Association of Evangelicals is formed as a corrective to fundamentalism, advocating evangelical ecumenicalism and scholarship.
- 1947 Billy Graham begins preaching “crusades” in huge stadiums with altar calls.
- 1950 Billy Graham forms the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.
- 1956 *Christianity Today* magazine is started to unite evangelicals.
- 1979 Jerry Falwell, a fundamentalist, forms the Moral Majority lobby group in response to IRS intervention in churches and Christian schools, initially over segregation, then abortion. Thousands of white evangelicals engage and evangelicalism is linked to the Republican Party. Consequently, Reagan is elected in 1980.
- 2015 After three decades of intramural debate (fights) within evangelicalism, Pew Research reports the decline of the church. All mainline denominations are in decline, losing the millennial generation. But evangelicals are holding steady.
- 2016 Numerous presidential candidates seek ways to court the evangelical voting block by referring to God and the Bible, quoting Scripture, mentioning Jesus, going to church, meeting with influential evangelical leaders and seeking their endorsements. Donald Trump is endorsed by Jerry Falwell Jr. and semi-endorsed by Robert Jeffers, Pastor, First Baptist Dallas. Others who met with Trump: David Jeremiah, Kenneth Copeland, Jan Crouch...

Q6 What is the evangelical voting block?

A6 A block of voters who vote for those who support evangelical interests and values.

- 1. About 29% Americans self-identify as evangelicals.
- 2. About 41% of Americans self-identify as evangelicals or born again.
- 3. The actual number based on the four characteristics is probably closer to 10% (Barna says 7%).
- 4. Either way, pollsters generally consider the Evangelical voting block to be one of the largest at 58 million eligible voters. Only 30 million of them voted in the 2012 election.

Q7 What are the dangers in evangelicalism?

A7 In what is often an honest attempt to share our faith and “see people come to Christ,” we can be vulnerable to these excesses.

- 1. Emotionalism: Leaning heavily on subjective, personal, religious experiences without the guiderails of sound and substantive doctrine. Anti-intellectualism; distrust of scholarship.
- 2. Revivalism: Seeking to manage the Holy Spirit and manipulate people to “make decisions” through big, slick, well-organized events; from crusades to conferences. Building public worship around “seekers,” creating the right mood.
- 3. Entrepreneurialism: An overly pragmatic approach using innovation and trendiness (hipster) focused on “market share.” Catering to a consumer mentality, giving people what they want. “Chronological snobbery” that too easily discards the lessons of church history and traditions.
- 4. Politicization: Bringing about the Kingdom of God by the power of the political process. Falling for the seductive allure of political power, flexing political muscle, and having influential connections. Trusting in political power plays. Selling out the gospel for moralism. Hitching the church’s God-given agenda too closely to a political party or dishonorable candidates.