

Tim Pawlenty Warns Country Not to "Turn its back on God"

Tim Pawlenty tells The Brody File that, "If the nation turns its back on God or pushes Him out of the equation, we're going to be a much poorer nation for it."

Those comments are part of the interview I did with the man who will very likely run for President. I also interview his wife Mary for The 700 Club. It airs across the country today.

Watch out for Pawlenty. He's a guy who could catch fire, and under the right circumstances be the last man standing at the Republican Convention in 2012.

You may not have heard of the name Tim Pawlenty. His name isn't familiar to most Americans, and even showing people a picture of the former Minnesota governor doesn't help.

People in Iowa and New Hampshire, however, may know him better. That's because Pawlenty is spending time and money in those two key early primary states - strong signs that he hopes to be the next Republican presidential nominee.

But will he take the presidential plunge? Even his daughter wants to know the answer!

"She says, 'Dad are you going to run for president?' And I said 'I don't know, honey. I'm not sure.' And she paused for a second and then said, 'Well, just don't embarrass the family,'" Pawlenty recalled, laughing.

The 50 year old is a homegrown original, born and raised in Minnesota, the land of 10,000 lakes. Actually, there are a lot more than 10,000 lakes, according Pawlenty. But he said Minnesotans rarely contradict the misnomer because they are humble. They don't want to tell you about all the lakes they have.

It's that humble nature and blue-collar work ethic that has defined Pawlenty from the beginning. He grew up in the meat-packing town of South St. Paul, Minn., and has known tough times.

"When I was 16, my mom passed away of cancer pretty suddenly and then not long after that my dad lost his job for awhile," he told CBN News. "And so there was a lot of concern and worry in my family.

"And I remember first of all praying fervently to God for help and for some confidence and strength and to try and help get through that," he said.

He said he got through it by putting himself through school and becoming his family's only college graduate. Then came law school and an encounter with his future wife, Mary.

"I thought he had this incredible voice, and I thought 'Who is this guy?' So I was wild about him right away," Mary Pawlenty recalled.

Pawlenty said his recollection of their first meeting was "more simple."

"She walked through the library and I thought 'wow, she's hot!'" he said, laughing.

Shortly after, life turned to politics and Pawlenty eventually became the two-term governor of Minnesota.

Recognized as a cost-cutter, Pawlenty was just one of four governors to get a grade of "A" from The Cato Institute as a fiscal conservative.

As for 2012, targeting "Obamacare" is likely to be his campaign centerpiece. As governor, he directed state agencies not to participate in any of the plan's discretionary benefits.

"I think it's one of the worst pieces of legislation in the modern history of the country," he said. "It was a bait-and-switch tactic. They said they're going to make healthcare more affordable. In fact, they're going to make it more expensive."

Ultimately, Pawlenty hopes his "regular guy" persona will be an advantage. That's a big part of his new book, *Courage to Stand*.

"He's someone who connects with people who are blue-collar, people who are really looking for someone whose life experience connects a bit more with theirs," Mrs. Pawlenty said of her husband.

"So I think he reaches a cross-section of people that perhaps sometimes other candidates may not," she added.

Veteran political reporters Jonathan Martin and Chris Cillizza talked about Pawlenty's chances recently on CBN News's "The Brody File."

"I think he probably starts off in the middle with a solid chance to get in the top. He has the advantage of geography. Minnesota, of course, borders Iowa," said Martin, a senior political writer at Politico.

"He may not be the kind of evangelical conservative like a Huckabee or a Palin way. He may not be the businessman's conservative in a Romney way or even a Mitch Daniels way, but he can kind of fuse the two," The Washington Post's Cillizza suggested.

Evangelicals may be surprised at his faith background.

"He's a Minnesota evangelical," former Minnesota Gov. Vin Weber said.

"In the south, people are a little more expressive about their faith in politics," Weber explained. "In the upper Midwest, we're a little bit more reserved."

Although Pawlenty "doesn't wear it on his sleeve, he's very comfortable talking about it both publicly and privately," he added.

Even in speeches, Pawlenty talks about how first and foremost "God's in charge."

"If the nation turns its back on God or pushes Him out of the equation, we're going to be a much poorer nation for it," Pawlenty once said.

"We believe in Jesus Christ," Pawlenty said. "We believe what Jesus taught is things that we not only believe in but try our very best to follow. Jesus is who he says he is and it's both simple, but also profound."

Cillizza said Pawlenty's faith was a side of the former Minnesota governor that is underrated.

"My guess would be most people do not know this part about Tim Pawlenty - that he has a deep faith, that he has roots in the Evangelical community, his wife (is) particularly well connected in the Evangelical community," he said.

Pawlenty's family attends Wooddale Church, one of the largest evangelical churches in the country.

"My tradition was one of, early on, understanding the importance of a relationship with Jesus and understanding how important it is to intersect your life with your faith," Mary Pawlenty said.

Presidential politics may be about to intersect into that equation as well because it's almost certain he'll get into the 2012 presidential race and has the chance to be a real factor.