

Rick Perry Invokes God's "Calling" to Prepare Presidential Run

As Rick Perry's prayer rally kicks off in Houston's Reliant Stadium tomorrow, Perry continues to consider whether he is being "called" to run for president. The Republican Texas governor's presidential considerations have added to questions about the intention of his prayer rally and his recent meeting with a group of conservative Christian leaders.

Earlier this summer, Perry announced Saturday's event, dubbed "The Response," as a time to "call upon Jesus to guide us through unprecedented struggles, and thank Him for the blessings of freedom we so richly enjoy."

While talking with EthicsDaily.com in June, evangelist James Robison took credit for inspiring Perry to host a national prayer event.

Robison [said](#) he took the initiative after Republican Ohio Gov. John Kasich suggested Perry should lead such an effort. Kasich's office did not respond to an EthicsDaily.com request for comment.

Last month, EthicsDaily.com [broke](#) the news that Perry spoke to a behind-closed-doors meeting of nearly 80 conservative pastors and leaders organized by Robison. Perry also [participated](#) in a conference call with a number of conservative Christian leaders, which Robison mentioned to EthicsDaily.com.

Perry's motivation for Saturday's rally has been questioned by many as he moves closer toward a presidential run and works behind the scenes to mobilize a base of support. If he runs, his involvement with Robison's group will likely be an asset to his campaign.

Perry recently [indicated](#) that he will announce his presidential intentions later in August. A recent fundraising email from a Perry staffer [said](#), "Perry is poised to

enter the presidential race.” Perry also suggested last month that he thought God wanted him to run.

“I’m getting more and more comfortable every day that this is what I’ve been called to do,” Perry [said](#). “This is what America needs.”

“I am a man of faith,” Perry [added](#) when asked if his statement about being called was meant to be religious. “I don’t make any apologies about my faithfulness. ... So the idea that do I look for signs, and do I look for good Scripture that tells me how to live my life – absolutely I do that.”

Perry’s language of being “called” by God echoes claims made by other presidential candidates.

One of Perry’s potential opponents, Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.), [said](#) she believes God called her to run for president. Similarly, Robison said George W. Bush expressed his feeling in 1999 that God was calling him to run for president.

“I feel like God wants me to run for president,” Robison [claimed](#) Bush said. “I can’t explain it, but I sense my country is going to need me.”

Several of those involved with Robison’s group and Perry’s prayer event recently praised Perry’s ability to speak about his faith as a political asset.

“I think that was very important for George W. Bush that he talked about his faith,” [said](#) Family Research Council President Tony Perkins. “Rick Perry actually seems to be even more comfortable. ... Prior to his call for the prayer, there was not a lot of discussion about him being a presidential candidate. ... I think this gave rise to that, which speaks to the fact that people are recognizing his leadership in this area.”

Perkins, who is part of Robison’s group and is an honorary co-chair for “The Response,” also quickly [defended](#) Perry on Twitter after some conservatives attacked Perry for [declaring](#) support for individual states to decide whether to legalize same-sex marriage.

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Perry since [shifted](#) his position by calling for a national constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

Another individual praising Perry is Richard Land, head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. Land participated in Robison's group and is also an honorary co-chair of "The Response."

"He knows how to talk like an evangelical," [said](#) Land, who has been [talking](#) about the need for Perry to run. "His heart is in the right place. On most [culturally conservative] issues he's had a good record as governor. He will appeal to evangelicals."

Perry and other organizers of Saturday's rally have frequently said the event is not political, but Land made a clear political connection between "The Response" and the 2012 presidential election.

"I believe this is the most important election in American history since 1860," Land [said](#) on his radio program "Richard Land Live!" "What better time for Americans to come together for prayer. So on August the 6th, tens of thousands are going to gather in Reliant Stadium in Houston, Texas ... to pray for a historic breakthrough for our country and a renewed sense of moral purpose."

Land said he will be part of the program.

Others [mentioned](#) by Perry as part of the program include Robison, James Dobson, former SBC President Ed Young, Tony Evans and Beth Moore.

Evans, another honorary co-chair, is part of Robison's group. Several other leaders of Robison's group are also [involved](#) in promoting the event.

Like Land, other organizers of "The Response" said they desire to see "tens of thousands" come to Houston for the prayer event.

Perry even [told](#) Dobson, another honorary co-chair, that the event would result in "filling up Reliant Stadium."

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However, earlier this week it was [reported](#) that only 8,000 people had registered to attend, which would leave the 71,000-seat stadium mostly empty.

Additionally, Perry invited the other 49 state governors - and other elected officials - to join him at the event. Only Republican Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback said he would attend, although there are [reports](#) he may not attend after all.

After some of the rally planners - especially leaders at the controversial American Family Association - received criticism, Perry distanced himself from his fellow organizers. In fact, Perry might [not](#) even speak at the event he initiated.

"I'm sure that through my elections in the past that there have been some groups that have endorsed me publicly, that I appreciate their endorsements, but their endorsements of me doesn't mean I endorse what they believe in or what they say," Perry [said](#).

Perry's non-endorsement of his religious allies stands in stark contrast to the approach used by then-Republican presidential nominee Ronald Reagan at an August 1980 rally in Dallas led by Robison.

"I know you can't endorse me ... but I want you to know that I endorse you and what you are doing," Reagan famously [declared](#) after being urged by Robison to say that line.

Saturday's event might provide clues as to whether Robison will find his prayers for [another](#) Reagan answered.

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