

The Evolution of American Evangelicalism

TRANSCRIPT

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KRISTA TIPPETT, HOST: I'm Krista Tippett. The Reverend Richard Cizik is vice president in Washington for the National Association of Evangelicals, an umbrella group for 25 percent of American voters. Cizik has worked to expand the movement's focus to address climate change and torture as moral issues alongside abortion and gay marriage. Some conservative Evangelicals recently tried — and failed — to have him silenced. This hour, hear the priorities, passion, and forthrightness that have made Richard Cizik a symbol of what many now call "the evolution of American Evangelicalism."

REV. RICHARD CIZIK: The gospel has priority over our politics, and, at times, that means that to be biblically consistent, you have to be politically inconsistent. And you can't simply become a wholly owned subsidiary of the GOP. You can't do that and be faithful.

MS. TIPPETT: This is Speaking of Faith. Stay with us. I'm Krista Tippett.

[Announcements]

MS. TIPPETT: Richard Cizik is Evangelical Christianity's key advocate before Congress, the White House, and the Supreme Court. In March of this year, conservative Christian leaders demanded that he be silenced or removed from his post, charging that his concerns for poverty, climate change, and torture have shifted attention away from moral issues like gay marriage and abortion. But for Cizik, war and the environment are moral issues too, and his positions have been broadly affirmed by other Evangelical leadership.

This hour, we revisit my wide-ranging conversation with him that stunned our listeners in 2006, especially those who thought they had Evangelical Christianity figured out. From American Public Media, this is *Speaking of Faith*, public radio's conversation about religion, meaning, ethics, and ideas. Today, "The Evolution of American Evangelicalism."

Evangelical Christians are not a new factor in American life, but for most of the last century, they kept themselves at a distance from electoral politics and public policy. The National Association of Evangelicals, the NAE, was first formed in 1942 to provide an umbrella group for an Evangelical political and social voice. Today it represents 54 denominations, 45,000 congregations, and a quarter of American voters. The current proactive politics of Evangelical Christianity also reflects a new theology, and this has been a work in progress for all of Richard Cizik's 27 years with the NAE.

REV. CIZIK: From disengagement to engagement by the religious right, what some people call "ready, fire then aim," to a more concerted kind of new internationalism full circle now to an engagement on all the issues in such a fashion that I had a professor at UC Berkeley say to me, 'Do you realize that what you're doing in broadening the agenda for the Evangelical movement is you're retracing 100 years of American religious political history?'

MS. TIPPETT: Richard Cizik finds his spiritual forebears in revolutionary evangelicals of the 17th and 18th centuries — from nearly American Presbyterian ministers who broke with the British crown to Christian like William Wilberforce who led the anti-slavery movement.

Cizik is an ordained Presbyterian minister and a trained political scientist. He first came to Washington in the era of the Moral Majority. During the 11 years in which he has been the NAE's chief representative in Washington, an Evangelical Christian — George W. Bush — has twice been elected president. For most of that time, Richard Cizik was principally an insider, a behind-the-scenes operator. When he spoke last year for example, he was far less famous than his more conservative colleague, then president of the NAE Ted Haggard, who resigned after a sexual scandal last November.

Richard Cizik himself has now become a lightning rod, but he tells me that the painful events of recent months have prompted a constructive and necessary conversation among Evangelicals. A broad social and political agenda remains for him the only way to fulfill the Christian calling, as he puts it, "to care for humanity and the earth."

REV. CIZIK: I still happen to believe, for example, in the defense of democracy, human rights, religious freedom. And I also agree with St. Francis as a biblical Christian that every square inch on Earth belongs to Him, to Christ. And so unlike the evangelicals of the '40s and '50s, I always believe that it's a false choice preaching the gospel or doing compassionate ministry. That's a false choice. It's not one or the other. We have to both be a gospel witness, but we also have to be salt and light in society. And that's not altogether universally

shared. There are columnists today, one of whom objected, for example, to my advocacy on climate change, to say, 'There's nowhere in the scripture, in the gospel, does it say that we can, will, or should influence this Earth prior to the return of the one to whom we owe absolute allegiance, Jesus.' He said, 'There's nothing in the scriptures that says we'll ever change this world.' I said, 'Well, that's pre-1940s fundamentalism. It's not evangelicalism.'

MS. TIPPETT: You have become quite a spokesman for Evangelical Christian concern about the environment. And, you know, I wonder if that's something that surprises you. Is that something that's on your agenda, that's on the Evangelical Christian agenda that you would not have imagined there 25 years ago or even...

REV. CIZIK: I would have never imagined it. I just would have to say I had a conversion.

MS. TIPPETT: Well, tell me about that.

REV. CIZIK: Not just to Christ, you see, many, many years ago. But in 2002, I had a conversion to the science of climate change, and, as a consequence, I've become not just a spokesperson of some sort for addressing climate change, but I happen to be articulating a re-engagement with science because our evangelical forefathers rejected science. They did so by their witness at the Scopes Monkey Trial, saying, 'No, no, no, we stand for Christianity, not evolution.' And thus they retreated en masse from engaging on a critical front that, in this time and year, 2006, we simply can't do anymore. And we can't simply say anymore, 'Well, religion and science are inevitably pitted against one another, and we opt for religion over science.' And yet that's exactly what's occurred over climate change. The third rail of politics is said to be Social Security, 'you touch it, you die.' President Bush has sort of discovered that again. But in the relationship between religion and science, climate change is — global warming, if you will — is the third rail, 'you touch it, you die.' Well, I've touched it.

MS. TIPPETT: And you're living to tell it.

REV. CIZIK: I'm living to tell the truth.

MS. TIPPETT: Well, all right. I want to talk about...

REV. CIZIK: And I believe that literally, to tell the truth. Because, you see, we have to be very careful when we understand moral principles, that we apply them in clear and reasonable ways. And what has been occurring in our movement, I think, frankly, is that we have looked at some of the moral principles that ought to guide us but not others. So we look at the sanctity of human life and the protection of the traditional family, but we virtually ignore and have, caring for God's creation, and isn't that a moral principle? And so good conscience requires a good grasp and a good application of moral truth.

MS. TIPPETT: Well, tell me about your conversion experience in 2002. What happened to make you think differently about this and think of it alongside other moral principles like the sanctity of human life?

REV. CIZIK: First of all, I met great men of science who, like Sir John Houghton, knighted by the queen, the head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, who came forward and said to me, 'You can believe in the science and be a faithful biblical Christian, and I am,' he said. And so in a humble way, not arrogantly, admitting the questions that still exist, John Houghton and many others, for three days, walked some of us that were there in Oxford, England, through all the science, through our biblical teaching and responsibility, and all I can say is, in a John Wesley kind of fashion, my heart was warmed. My heart, you know, was changed, and I realized I could no longer sit on the sidelines. Because, you see, for years, I had said, 'Well, one side says this, the other side says that. There's no reason to get involved in this fight.' And a lot has changed, it's true, in the last 10 years. The science has become so compelling that it's hard for me to believe that any Evangelical Christian is willing to say, much less a leader, as some have done, that there is no consensus on the cause, the severity nor the solutions on the subject. I just can't believe they're willing to do that.

I think that there are Evangelical Christian leaders who are taking a position on climate change today by saying, 'Well, it doesn't matter. We don't care,' not unlike our fathers who took a position on civil rights that said, 'It doesn't matter. I don't care.' And they discredited the gospel and themselves, and they had to apologize. And I dare say it won't be long before some of the Evangelical leaders who have said, 'Don't matter, don't care,' that they'll have to apologize.

MS. TIPPETT: National Association of Evangelicals Vice President Richard Cizik. I'm Krista Tippett and this is *Speaking of Faith* from American Public Media. Today, "The Evolution of American Evangelicalism."

My guest, Richard Cizik, has said that when we die, "I don't think God is going to ask us how He created the Earth, but He will ask us what we did with what He created." In 2006, several prominent conservative Evangelicals, including James Dobson and Charles Colson, stopped the NAE from adopting an official policy on climate change, arguing that global warming is not a consensus issue, like abortion, for Evangelical Christians. But since then, more than 100 prominent Evangelical leaders, including the presidents of 39 Christian

colleges, have signed an Evangelical Climate Initiative calling for action on global warming. And this past January, Richard Cizik helped coordinate an unpublicized retreat between Evangelicals and leading scientists such as E.O. Wilson. They issued a joint urgent call to action to political, scientific, and religious leaders to combat the devastation of the natural world. When I spoke with Richard Cizik last year, I asked if he was experiencing an open conversation on climate change and other kinds of issues out in the larger Evangelical world.

REV. CIZIK: Everywhere I go. And I'm around the country a lot, from visiting, for example, eastern Washington state for a niece's wedding and confronting the pastor at a small town in eastern Washington and saying, 'Well, you're a church of the NAE, what do you say? You read my newsletter, don't you?' He said yes. I said, 'Well, am I off the mark? Am I simply walking off the left-hand face of the Earth, as some senators on Capitol Hill have said? Am I simply walking to my own tune here or are you with me?' And around the country, Evangelical leaders and lay people and young people have said, 'No, keep it up. You're hitting the right notes.'

MS. TIPPETT: Now, you find yourself in very broad company in taking these views. You know, you find yourself, I believe, speaking with and working with groups which — from a variety of religious perspectives and also secular human rights perspectives and scientific perspectives. Is that, in itself, a new experience for the Evangelical movement?

REV. CIZIK: Oh, for sure, because we're not ecumenists, and we're not the ones, you see, who have historically reached out across faith lines to collaborate with Jews or Muslims on anything, much less mainline Protestants.

MS. TIPPETT: And I mean, on the environment, you're also in there, in some sense, with Buddhists and pagans. Right, yes.

REV. CIZIK: Oh, on the environment, well, I'm in — oh, I'm in company with those who, you see, have never considered Evangelicals their friends.

MS. TIPPETT: Part of the group, right.

REV. CIZIK: We're those reactionary folks who are itching for a fight. It's wrong to fight against environmentalists. Our battle isn't with them. When we've got our own feet on the ground and people understand that we're operating out of a biblical perspective to love God and His creation and to serve Him, when it's understood, and it will be because this is catching on fast, then we can collaborate at some point with those pagans who are so likened to be the environmentalists that are taking the road of secularism and all the rest. Now, look it. This is a bit of nonsense. They get stereotyped, we get stereotyped. And for someone who is put in a box all the time, I think we ought to be a little more careful about this.

MS. TIPPETT: So I think it's very interesting that you say it's important for Evangelicals to claim their ground, to state their ground, to be taken seriously, for others to know where they're coming from and why they're doing this. But that then, at that point, collaboration is not only possible...

REV. CIZIK: Sure.

MS. TIPPETT: ...but possibly even part of the requirement of that stance that you've taken.

REV. CIZIK: Sure. Of course. Absolutely. And so in passing, for example, 10 years ago, the International Religious Freedom Act that put religious freedom at the center of American foreign policy, protecting the persecuted overseas, we collaborated with Tibetan Buddhists, with feminists to pass a trafficking bill, with the ACLU to pass a prison rape bill, to pass the president's PEPFAR, the president's emergency plan for AIDS relief, to collaborate with gays and lesbians to do that to save lives, then surely it's not heresy to collaborate with environmentalists. A lot of environmentalists are biblical Christians.

MS. TIPPETT: I thought it was also interesting that you began talking about your change of heart and mind on this subject in talking about science because, as you well know, a lot of people in this country now think of Evangelicals as anti-science and, specifically, they're thinking about this subject of evolution. Now, in my work of conversation, you know, you talked about someone, a scientist on climate change who said to you that he believes in the science and is also a faithful Christian. And I know also that there are scientists who believe in the theory of evolution and find that to be compatible with Christian doctrine and theology. You know, how do you respond to this idea that Evangelical Christians are anti-science? Because the idea is out there that bluntly.

REV. CIZIK: I respond by saying we are, first and foremost, a people of the book, and the first four words of the book are: "In the beginning, God..." And thus I say, look, we believe in God, God created. That's what we believe. Not all of us agree on how He did it because there are theistic evolutionists.

MS. TIPPETT: Yes, there are.

REV. CIZIK: There are Evangelicals who have been evolutionists in that sense, not that they dispute that God did it all, but they don't adhere to a six-day creation. For example, one of the men that motivated Evangelicals into politics in the early '70s, the late Francis Schaeffer, who wrote a book on the environment, for example, he didn't believe in a six-day creation. And yet, today there are those who would make that the litmus test for evangelicalism. Well, that's not the litmus test. Let's not throw out science in the pursuit of biblical orthodoxy. And I'm an orthodox Christian. I'm asked by people, 'Well, which is it?' And I say, 'You decide that.'

MS. TIPPETT: So this, for you, is not, as you say, it's not a litmus test for the National Association of Evangelicals.

REV. CIZIK: Never has been.

MS. TIPPETT: OK.

REV. CIZIK: And to those who want to engage on all these issues, I say take a lesson from Jesus. What did He do in the temple? Wow, He listens to others, genuinely wants to know what they think. Not for the purpose of tripping them up, having an argument or embarrassing them, but to draw them into a dialogue. And that's what is so fun about Washington. That's what's so fun about politics. And, ultimately, that's so much fun in being a Christian, in my opinion. It allows you to engage with people about what are the most important issues of all of life.

MS. TIPPETT: Ironically, I think for many people outside Washington, the images that are most familiar are not of dialogue, but of argument and polarization that seems irreconcilable.

REV. CIZIK: Absolutely.

MS. TIPPETT: And I think that there are many images of Christianity, particularly with Evangelical faces and voices, a few — right? — a few strident memorable faces and voices that also do not evoke dialogue.

REV. CIZIK: Oh, they don't. 'It's my way or no way.' It's, you know, 'Take it the way I say it or you're out of here.'

MS. TIPPETT: Reverend Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals.

MS. TIPPETT: I was looking through our mail today, and here's an e-mail that we received on a program we did with a couple of Evangelical voices. And this is someone writing who says, 'One knows or hopes one knows that there are voices of reason within the Evangelical Christian Church. As an individual, however, I don't see it as the fault of the media that lots of us see Evangelical Christians as mean-spirited, hate-filled, judgmental people. A few days ago, I was subjected to more than a...' — oh, she says she's been a librarian for 30 years. 'A few days ago, I was subjected to more than a half-hour of being screamed at because our collection contained a biography of Darwin and the periodical Esquire. Among other things, I was called 'spawn of the devil' and told that people like me should not be allowed to live by a person who kept telling me that he was a Christian.' You know, she goes on and tells another story about Evangelicals who've been harassing, as she says, homosexuals in the community. She says, 'Ten or 20 people like that loudly proclaiming their Christianity can leave thousands of the rest of us trying to figure out ways to distance ourselves from them while still trying to live within the precepts that were taught by Christ and joining in worship with neighbors who see themselves as Christians.'

There're so many stories like that out there in our culture right now.

REV. CIZIK: Of course.

MS. TIPPETT: So how do you respond to those stories?

REV. CIZIK: I simply say that don't look to people. Look to the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus. Religion is both the problem and the solution. It can be a great problem, especially in the way people behave. I, of course, reject that kind of strident, narrow-minded kind of bigotry that leads people to reject the Savior. Of course, I find that appalling. But I urge people to see in the person of Jesus someone they can follow. I say that to Muslims as well. I was just overseas with ayatollahs from a country which we don't have relations with. Those ayatollahs, I say, 'Consider not America the great Satan, but something else, a person.' But it's hard. People become the offense. People — it's one thing when the gospel becomes an offense; that will happen at times because its claims are exclusive. There's one way. But that's a different story than becoming an offense ourselves.

MS. TIPPETT: The claims of the gospel are exclusive, you're very clear on that, and Evangelical Christianity is clear on that. And I want to know what challenges does that present, or is that a challenge as you live in this pluralistic political culture of Washington and, as you say, you are now, with the National Association of Evangelicals, you're a force in the world and you're dealing with Muslims and secular environmentalists. And so talk to me about how your theology interacts with that reality.

REV. CIZIK: Well, in a post-modern society, we have to really be humble and especially consider whether we can cling as Christians to earlier notions of power, especially in a pluralistic society. Earlier notions of power being that, 'Well, we're the majority.' Well, if you look at what people really believe, you would have to say, despite the numbers, well, we are in a post-modern world where truth is relative. And so, to embody the love of God today calls, I say, for Christians to be the community of the cross. And that requires that we obey God's account of reality rather than Caesar's. God's account, not Caesar's. And too often, the gospel becomes identified with a political agenda, and that's what people are turned off by, as well, even overseas.

MS. TIPPETT: National Association of Evangelicals Vice President Richard Cizik. This is *Speaking of Faith*. After a short break, how the evolution of American evangelicalism might affect its partisan orientation.

Visit our award-winning Web site, speakingoffaith.org, to hear behind-the-scenes clips of my conversation with Richard Cizik and read his response to the recent controversy over his leadership and agenda at the NAE. Also subscribe to our podcast — an iTunes "Best of 2006" — for a free download of this and each week's program. Our podcast now includes audio clips from my new book, *Speaking of Faith*. I'm Krista Tippett. Stay with us. Speaking of Faith comes to you from American Public Media.

[Announcements]

MS. TIPPETT: Welcome back to *Speaking of Faith*, public radio's conversation about religion, meaning, ethics, and ideas. I'm Krista Tippett. Today, "The Evolution of American Evangelicalism."

We're revisiting my conversation with Reverend Richard Cizik, the vice president for governmental affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, or NAE, an umbrella group that represents 25 percent of American voters. The members of the board of the NAE resisted conservative Christian calls for Cizik's removal last month. The board adopted an evangelical declaration against torture, something Richard Cizik had championed. And the NAE has this year also unanimously reaffirmed the 2004 policy document that Cizik helped to draft titled, "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility." This details guiding areas for Evangelical Christian political engagement. They include in this order: the protection of religious freedom and liberty of conscience, nurturing family life and children, protecting the sanctity of human life, seeking justice and compassion for the poor, and working to protect the human rights and the creation. I asked Richard Cizik about this agenda.

MS. TIPPETT: It strikes me when I look at the points of concern and the priorities also on the documents on the NAE site, that the moral values that are associated with the Evangelical movement and our culture, it strikes me that the order of those has had more to do with political and cultural dynamics in this country, more than driven by the priority that certain issues have biblically. You know, for example, there has been much more of an emphasis on the sanctity of life, on the abortion issue, which has been in this culture for decades.

REV. CIZIK: Yes.

MS. TIPPETT: You're now starting to talk more about poverty, which, as several people have pointed out in my interviews, is overwhelming biblically.

REV. CIZIK: And the two are related. And here's one statistic, Krista. Here's one statistic. Cut the poverty rate by 10 percent and you'll cut the abortions by 30 percent. And there are analysts on Capitol Hill who've persuaded me it's true, and they've shown so. And so, if you care about the sanctity of human life, then I say care about whether people live desperate lives and care about whether the mercury being emitted from coal-burning power plants is infecting pregnant women. One out of six bear children with birth defects. One out of six in America, in the greatest country, I believe, in the history of mankind, one out of six children are born with forms of mental retardation and other disabilities associated with mercury that comes from air pollution? What in the world is going on? Is that not a sanctity of life issue? Of course it is!

MS. TIPPETT: Well, and that goes right back to Genesis.

REV. CIZIK: Back to Genesis. And who owns this place we call Earth? I don't think it's owned by the power companies and others.

MS. TIPPETT: Is what you're speaking for kind of a sea change, kind of a realignment or a revisioning of priorities of the Evangelical movement?

REV. CIZIK: It's a revisionism that goes back not to a kind of mainline Protestantism that evangelicalism has always rebelled against, but to a 17th- and 18th-century evangelicalism that merges the exclusivity of the Christian message that says, yes, by the gospel of Christ and His death on the cross you are saved, but also, not without works and not without a compassionate caring for the world around us.

And you can't simply live in the world we live in today — I share this conviction with Bono — this...

MS. TIPPETT: Did you think you'd be sharing convictions with rock stars when you took this position?

REV. CIZIK: I never thought that would happen either. But it happened at the Prayer Breakfast this past January. But go to bed at night and say that over a billion people live on \$1 a day and can't go to bed themselves with a full stomach, can you live as a Christian happily in your suburban home, driving your SUV? No, of course not, not as a Christian, not as a real Christian. And if, by the way, you happen to be a liberal, conservative or centrist, I don't care. The gospel has priority over our politics. And, at times, that means, to be biblically consistent, you have to be politically inconsistent. And you can't simply become a wholly owned subsidiary, the Evangelical movement, that is, of the GOP. You can't do that and be faithful.

MS. TIPPETT: Are these questions being posed within the Evangelical movement?

REV. CIZIK: Well, let me not the major newspapers, which I don't think, by the way, are simply all driven by somebody's liberal agenda, but they're not easily able to reflect the conversation, the colloquy that's going on.

MS. TIPPETT: Right, the internal — yes.

REV. CIZIK: The internal discussions about who we are as a movement, which is a big topic of conversation. Who are we? I happen to think that we know precisely who we are.

MS. TIPPETT: Well?

REV. CIZIK: And we are the people of the book who know that the conscience still speaks, and we have to guide it in such a way to be faithful to objective standards of word and truth. Right? But the conscience still speaks, and it speaks — that is, the moral law of God — it speaks not just to us but to others in society. It's also possible for those within society to understand where we're coming from, as conservative Christians, and respect us, even though they don't accept everything about our gospel, and collaborate with us. And to those people, by the millions in this country, I say, 'Hear our voice and our cry. We aren't what you think we are. And hear us for who we really are, as humble people who love God and want to serve our fellow mankind. Hear that cry, not the boisterous, arrogant televangelist that asserts he knows everything.'

MS. TIPPETT: National Association of Evangelicals vice president Reverend Richard Cizik.

Evangelical Christians has been more supportive of the war in Iraq than other Americans according to polls, though that is changing. Last year, I asked Richard Cizik if he was aware of internal Evangelical soul-searching over moral issues raised by this war.

REV. CIZIK: That's why, for example, I signed a statement that an Evangelical Christian cannot support torture.

MS. TIPPETT: You did?

REV. CIZIK: At any time. I absolutely did. And by the way, the association very clearly did not, not, take a stand on this war. And why? Lest millions of Muslims believe, in that part of the world, that we're engaging in some kind of a religious war. For that very reason the association did not take a stand on this war. And while individual Christians have disproportionately more than others supported this, I have to say and have said so publicly elsewhere that they're at a tipping point, and it's going south for the president on this war because Evangelicals are perceiving that it's becoming a religious conflict within Iraq and our soldiers are at risk. And willingly admitting, I do willingly admit that, while I had said at the time I trusted the president's perception of the threat, I was wrong. I was wrong to trust the president's assessment of the security threat to the United States posed by weapons of mass destruction. I don't mind admitting I said I trusted it and I was wrong. Now, others were wrong, too. But there has to be some honest soul-searching here, you're exactly right, an admission when we're wrong, and I think this war's gone badly. Who wouldn't acknowledge that?

MS. TIPPETT: And again, you know, I think what, if Evangelical Christians describe themselves and see themselves as moral actors in the political sphere, then people would want to see moral deliberation. And, you know, maybe that's the kind of thing we can never see inside any movement. But I guess I'm wanting you to enlighten us on that, on that conversation. I'm hearing very clearly how you think about this, but, you know, among your colleagues, when you're out there in churches in the rest of the country?

REV. CIZIK: Oh, I'm quite confident to say, absolutely, that that conversation is going on, that we can't simply, as Evangelical Christians, assert the first thing that comes into our heads. Because that's what we see by some leaders, popping off with whatever comes off the top of their head. Where is the moral reflection in that? Of course, there isn't much. So we need a call to conversion ourselves and, in so doing, exhibit a real sign of humility. We can deceive ourselves, and that idea sits uncomfortably with those who see conscience as the only guide. It can be...

MS. TIPPETT: It doesn't sit uncomfortably with a theology that has an idea of human brokenness and original sin? Right? I mean, within the theology is the presumption that human beings will have to correct their course.

REV. CIZIK: Exactly. Christian conscience is formed; it just doesn't immediately, upon conversion, occur. It is formed by study and reflection, and I believe study and reflection of the word of God first. But Evangelicals have never put much stock in moral theology. In other words, we jump straight from scripture, you see, to the political prescriptions without ever pausing to spend any time in the development of moral theology. And that is what's called for in these days that are so complex.

MS. TIPPETT: Is that kind of a new chapter in this history that you and I began talking about that, for you, you know, what you want to trace back to the 17th and 18th centuries? You know, this line that Evangelical Christians are walking now in this country has never been easy, between faith and political responsibility, and great theologians and ministers have wrestled with that throughout Christian history.

REV. CIZIK: Yeah, that's right. Evangelicals need to re-evaluate — myself included — what it means to truly be a follower of God in this, the 21st century. We are citizens, as Augustine said, in the city of man and the city of God, both, one foot in each, and living it is hard.

MS. TIPPETT: National Association of Evangelicals vice president Richard Cizik. I'm Krista Tippett, and this is *Speaking of Faith* from American Public Media. Today, "The Evolution of American Evangelicalism" my 2006 conversation with Richard Cizik, who has become more controversial recently within the Evangelical movement for his outspokenness on issues such as climate change and torture. In some tension with the U.S. policy before a watershed G8 meeting last year, Cizik and other Evangelicals passionately advocated for the U.N. Millennium Development Goals aimed at eradicating global poverty by 2025.

MS. TIPPETT: I know that you have been very involved in the issue of poverty in Africa, or else — and globally in meeting with President Bush before the G-8 meeting. You know, I mean, is that something that would have surprised you as being on the agenda of the National Association of Evangelicals a few years ago or is that something that's been happening that, again, the rest of us just haven't known about?

REV. CIZIK: Evangelicals have always been great advocates, globalizers, taking the gospel overseas. But to make an impact, you have to be institutionally engaged. Most Evangelicals are still not institutionally minded. They're willing to support the efforts of their local church, even willing to go overseas, not recognizing, you see, that we have a greater obligation and that is to use the instruments of power, when possible, on behalf of the poor and oppressed, and those you see in Africa, probably the most dispossessed of all continents. And so, yes, I happen to think, and have challenged leaders to do so. I had this incredible experience, meeting this summer with Gordon Brown, the prime minister-to-be in the UK.

MS. TIPPETT: Yes. Was that before the G-8 meeting?

REV. CIZIK: Just before the G-8 meeting in London. And he is, Gordon Brown, the chancellor of the exchequer, the future prime minister of Britain, is, he said, the son of a pastor. By the way, you know who also is, Angela Merkel from East Germany.

MS. TIPPETT: Oh, I guess I knew that, yes. OK, all right.

REV. CIZIK: I met her recently on a trip to Germany. Both the son and daughter of a pastor and both incredibly committed to facing these issues of the 21st century in new ways. Evangelicals have to be challenging our leaders on these subjects.

MS. TIPPETT: On poverty, specifically, is that what you mean? Economic inequities?

REV. CIZIK: On poverty, specifically. Especially. And so I'm strong, as are other Evangelical leaders, the millennium development goals, the millennium challenge accounts. In other words, to whom much is given, much is expected.

MS. TIPPETT: I remember hearing Jim Wallis speak at an event in Washington, and he's an Evangelical on the left side of the spectrum. I believe he was — was he with you in that meeting with Gordon Brown?

REV. CIZIK: Yes, yes.

MS. TIPPETT: And that Gordon Brown talked about his personal commitment and his British government's commitment to eradicating poverty, to taking that seriously. And I think that Jim Wallis said that you or someone reached across the table and said, 'Mr. Chancellor, if you take that route, we American Evangelicals will be behind you.'

REV. CIZIK: Yeah, we'll support you.

MS. TIPPETT: Is that right? Did you say that?

REV. CIZIK: Yup. Absolutely, yeah, I said that to him. "We'll support you, Mr. Brown." And I'm absolutely committed to that. It would be easier if the word "love" was exclusively a noun, but it's not. It's also an active verb. Love your neighbor as yourself is an in-your-face concept. It's taking the love of God and applying it to otherwise fearful situations. And God's love is nondiscriminating. And yet we discriminate. We discriminate in the allocation of our resources. You have to love not just your family and friends who agree with you, but you have to love those you don't agree with and love those who you don't know. Our neighbor is anyone — on another continent. And so that's why, among other issues, it's impossible to separate global hunger from global warming because the emission of, you know, 7 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases annually is creating a warming effect, which is producing desertification in Africa, more and more people losing land to the desert. I know. The king of Morocco made his plane available for my wife and I to fly out into the desert of the Sahara to see what has occurred. And more and more acres by the tens of thousands are lost each year, and, in not a long period of time, the fresh water available in sub-Saharan Africa is going to be gone, gone, and we are going to experience wars over water. Now, this is an awful thing to imagine. So loving your neighbor means doing something about that.

MS. TIPPETT: You do know, I'm sure, that what you choose to talk about and how you choose to talk about it are not — you know, they're not the Evangelical sound bites that are frequently out there. And I choose my words carefully because I never think that sound bites give us the whole story about anything. Do you speak about these things in non-Evangelical audiences often and, you know, are you met with skepticism? Are you met with surprise?

REV. CIZIK: Oh, I was — oh, yes, some have said, I've never heard anybody speak the way you speak. Almost every occasion, somebody comes up to me and my wife will affirm that. Sometimes they're just shocked. Other times, they — sometimes they're reactive and not always positively. I had a wonderful conversation for, oh, well over an hour, at Sherith Israel Congregation in downtown San Francisco just a few weeks ago with women, predominantly, though some men, who just went after me on the subject of abortion and contraceptives and the rest. And it was a frank conversation. And yet, everyone at the end agreed, wow, this is what everybody in America ought to have is a conversation like this, especially with that neighbor who you know votes the other way, based upon the bumper sticker on his car. Now that...

MS. TIPPETT: Right. We do conduct too much of our conversation by bumper stickers, don't we?

REV. CIZIK: Yeah.

MS. TIPPETT: So are you the real story? Is this the real Evangelical story?

REV. CIZIK: I'm just a reflection of what is also occurring by the thousands and tens of thousands, I say even millions in America. And I say that, not on my own word, but on the basis of other leaders who have affirmed the same message and say we're all on the same page in this sense. We're all speaking, you see, in a way that hasn't been spoken before, and we cite...

MS. TIPPETT: You mean as Evangelical Christians who've never spoken before?

REV. CIZIK: As Evangelicals. And not as — never spoken this way before. But look, second Timothy 1:7 says, "God has not given us a spirit of fear but of love, power and a sound mind." And, frankly, when it comes back to science and other issues, He's given us the wherewithal to speak with a sound mind. But the place to start is with a disciplined study of the elements of one's own faith and belief system and through a study of religion — imagine that — a faith that becomes easier, yes, to even to achieve humility.

MS. TIPPETT: If this very fluid conversation is taking place and this process of collective discernment, which I hear you describing, you know, is it possible that, as we move into other elections in other years, these party affiliations might look different, that voting patterns might reflect that? How do you think about that political future?

REV. CIZIK: I think that anything can happen. Look, political ideologies are functionally religious, and by that is meant that they explain the past, identify humanity's ills, and they seek redemptive solutions. And thus, every ideology, left, right or center, is shown to contain some apprehension of the world as it is, but also contains errors that distort human life and lead, inevitably, to flawed, some would say even tyrannical, public policies. And yet, I happen to think that good theology can drive out bad theology, and good theology leads to solutions for everyone. For example, I don't think we're going to solve the problems in Iraq with more soldiers, with more weapons. I think the solution, for example, to 9/11, you know, I'm suggesting that there's going to have to be a political solution in Iraq, not a military solution. And I'm also suggesting by these comments that the best antidote to 9/11 is good theology, and thus, I'm engaged in dialogue with Muslims internationally. I have to be.

MS. TIPPETT: Richard Cizik is vice president for governmental affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals and editor of its monthly publication, "Washington Insight." He has not made many public statements in response to recent attacks on his positions. But at the news that we would be rebroadcasting this interview with him he sent an

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with Krista Tippett

e-mail. He wrote, "The controversy over my 'speaking out' on these issues, while at times painful, nonetheless prompted a very constructive and widespread conversation in our movement that is a long time coming. ... The end result is that millions of Evangelicals have risen out of their pews to say 'amen' to a broad agenda of concerns in a way that wouldn't have happened otherwise. Your program was about the 'evolution of American Evangelicalism' and this trend has taken off in a way not even I could have imagined." Finally, Richard Cizik mentions that the National Association of Evangelicals will co-sponsor an event at the National Press Club on Earth Day later this month, urging churches to seek status as "green buildings" and to devote attention to creation care and global warming in Sunday schools.

We'd love to hear your thoughts. Contact us at speakingoffaith.org. The companion site for this program features more of my conversation with Richard Cizik and his response to the recent criticism of his priorities. Our podcast includes an mp3 of each week's show, and now we are adding exclusive content beginning with audio excerpts from my new book, *Speaking of Faith*. Discover more at speakingoffaith.org.

The senior producer of *Speaking of Faith* is Mitch Hanley with producers Colleen Scheck and Jody Abramson, and associate producer Jessica Nordell. Our online editor is Trent Gilliss. Our consulting editor is Bill Buzenberg. Kate Moos is the managing producer of *Speaking of Faith*. And I'm Krista Tippett.

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