

How the President Found God

Not all Christians like George W. Bush's politics. But most agree that he discovered faith in Christ the old-fashioned way.

Men come to faith in many ways. Some have dramatic experiences that fill them with certainty. Some cling to their parents' God from childhood. Others live through gut-wrenching cycles of doubt and belief until the latter triumphs.

Still others arrive at faith through a long process, as though a temple of the heart is being readied for a destined moment. This is how faith came for George W. Bush.

By the time he turned 40, Bush had been church-ed. He was baptized in an Episcopal church in Connecticut, trained for a decade in the First Presbyterian Church of Midland, Texas, and made to feel stirrings of faith in St. Martin's Episcopal Church of Houston.

During his high school years at Phillips Academy in Massachusetts, he was required to be in a Congregationalist-style chapel five times a week, which meant he spent as much time in church in those three years as a regular attender does in 10.

After he got to Yale, he began taking religion in smaller doses. Perhaps he needed a break.

It was his wife, Laura, who drew him in again and made him a Methodist. Not long after their marriage, he was teaching Sunday school at First Methodist in Midland, taking up offerings and sitting on committees. Whether his heart was

engaged by it or not, he had known since childhood that a good man stays connected to his faith.

A friend once remarked that if Bush had stopped going to church at the age of 40 he would still have attended more than most people do in a lifetime.

But, again, Bush was bored by the time he arrived at midlife. Laura took him to a James Dobson seminar in hopes of seeing him deepen spiritually.

It didn't take. George got up from his seat and moved next to a friend. The quips began. "What kind of pants did the Levites wear?" he whispered.

Another time, a pastor asked, "What is a prophet?" Bush sang out: "That is when revenues exceed expenditures. No one's seen that out here in years."

Bush relished being the bad boy. He once set the timer on his watch to go off in the middle of a pastor's talk to a men's class. Everyone but the pastor thought it was hilarious, and the next week all the men set their watches to go off at the same time.

By 1984, though, events conspired to help him concentrate. Oil prices started collapsing. Life in Midland changed dramatically.

The big-spending came to a neck-snapping halt, and the town in which 1 in every 45 citizens had been a millionaire began to see foreclosures, bankruptcy and fear. Bush's small firm lost

more than \$400,000, and there were more hits to come.

The economy was but one force driving Bush into confrontation with himself. To top it all off, he had never shaken his chief demon: the aimlessness, the lack of purpose, the boredom that had plagued him all his life.

He had no sense of destiny. He could party and do business and love his family, but he did not have the inner fire that makes men happy and great. He was a lightweight in almost every sense.

The story of Bush's spiritual transformation has usually centered upon his famous walk on a Maine beach with Billy Graham. Bush has said that Graham "planted a mustard seed in my soul," but if this is so, it happened only after a year of deep plowing by others.

An Encounter With the Cross

In 1984, the spiritual leaders of Midland were trying to tend the souls of a troubled community. To bring the needed healing, the city's religious leaders invited the people of Midland-Odessa to gather at the Chaparral Center during the first week of April to hear famed evangelist Arthur Blessitt—the man who had carried a 12-foot cross some 38,800 miles in 284 nations.

Billed as Decision '84, Blessitt's meetings in Midland were widely advertised on radio and television. Several days into the meetings, on April 3, Blessitt received a call from Jim Sale, an oilman, Baptist church member and one of the organizers of the crusade. Sale told Blessitt that there was

another local oilman who had heard the radio advertising and wanted to meet him.

But this was no ordinary oilman, Sale explained. This was George W. Bush, son of the vice president of the United States.

Blessitt agreed to see him, and the three met that day in the coffee shop of Midland's Holiday Inn. After a brief exchange of greetings, Bush looked at Blessitt and said, "Arthur, I did not feel comfortable attending the meeting, but I want to talk to you about how to know Jesus Christ and how to follow Him."

The evangelist reflected for a moment and asked, "What is your relationship with Jesus?"

"I'm not sure," Bush replied.

Blessitt probed. "If you died this moment do you have the assurance you would go to heaven?"

Bush did not hesitate. "No," he answered.

The evangelist then began to explain what it meant to know and follow Jesus. He quoted the Bible, verse after verse, commenting as he went, and making application to Bush's life. After he had outlined the Christian message, he said: "The call of Jesus is for us to repent and believe. The choice is like this: Would you rather live with Jesus in your life or live without Him?"

"With Him," Bush replied.

"Jesus changes us from the inside out," Blessitt continued. "The world tries to change us from the outside in. Jesus is not condemning you. He wants to save you and cleanse your heart and change your desires. He wants to write your name in the Book of Life and welcome you into His family, now and forever."

Blessitt then asked Sale to share his testimony, believing that Bush would relate to the story of a fellow oilman. When Sale was done, Blessitt said: "Mr. Bush, I would like to pray a prayer for you and then lead you in a prayer of commitment and salvation. You can become a follower of Jesus now."

Bush had some questions, though, and the two men took time to answer each one until he seemed satisfied.

The evangelist pressed again: "I want to pray with you now."

"I'd like that," Bush said.

Blessitt then prayed, asking Bush to repeat each phrase after him. When the prayer ended, Bush was smiling, and Blessitt began rejoicing. It was an "an awesome and glorious moment," the evangelist recalls.

Blessitt read Luke 15:10 to Bush, which says there is joy in the presence of God's angels over one sinner who repents. He then gave Bush a pamphlet titled *The New Life*, which explained how to grow as a young Christian. After a few more pleasantries, the two shook hands and parted.

Over the next two years, they spoke by phone several times, but Blessitt's long seasons of travel abroad caused them to lose contact.

Sale and Blessitt kept silent about the meeting for 17 years. They assumed it was private and not for them to speak publicly of Bush's spiritual life. When *A Charge to Keep* was published in 2001, with Bush so strongly writing about his faith in its pages, Blessitt decided it was appropriate for him to begin telling of the meeting in Midland. He published his recollection on his Web site and has often spoken in his sermons of the prayer with Bush.

Sale, the only eyewitness, confirms that "what happened is precisely as recorded in Blessitt's testimony." Indeed, Sale adds that given the 17 years Blessitt went without "saying a word, there is real humility and integrity here that bears witness to the authenticity of the testimony."

Deeper Conviction

For Bush, the encounter with Blessitt was but one in a series of events in those years that pressed the message he had known since childhood even more deeply into his heart. More revealing is how intensely Bush was searching out matters of the Spirit.

He obviously felt so uncomfortable with evangelistic meetings that he couldn't bring himself to attend the one in Midland. He was so moved by what he heard Blessitt say on the radio that he sought a meeting with the man to ask him how to follow Jesus. Clearly Bush was hungry for something he had yet to

find in all of his religious experience.

Yet the meeting with Blessitt did not bring Bush's search to an end. When Billy Graham asked him a year later if he was right with God, he answered, "No."

If Bush was hungry, the conversion of his friend Don Jones, the president of Midland's fastest-growing bank, was about to make him hungrier.

Bush knew Jones well. He was on the board of Jones' bank, and the two often drank together. Jones had often joked that he was "raised Episcopalian, and where you find four Episcopalians you'll usually find a fifth."

They also attended First Methodist Church together. For Jones the Episcopalian, the choice of a Methodist church was a compromise with his Southern Baptist wife.

Not unlike his friends at the time, Jones had a low opinion of the "born again" variety of Christians. He thought of them as flashy televangelists with overdone jewelry and side-showman suits: "I sure didn't want to be one," he laughs.

But a sense of moral neediness and some of the spiritual happenings in Midland led Jones in 1985 to make a New Year's resolution to give up drinking and start reading the Bible. It was while home alone on January 10 that he was reading the Gospel of John and came upon the words, "'Unless a man is born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God.'"

Immediately, an overwhelming sense of conviction and need for

God's grace came over him. There were tears and a crushing sense of his sinfulness. He prayed and cried and prayed some more. By evening, he felt peace, a sense that "the burden of his sins had been lifted from his soul."

His wife came home to find a different man. Jones developed a virtual addiction to the Bible. He got even more involved in his church and, in November, he started attending Community Bible Study, the Midland branch of a Bible-study movement started in Washington, D.C. The change in him was immediately evident to everyone who knew him, including Bush.

Jones gave his testimony wherever he was invited, and soon nearly all of Midland knew that the prominent banker had been "born again." That Jones was a respected businessman and that he had such a pleasant way of talking about his faith made him easy for men like George Bush to relate to. Still cautious, however, they watched Jones closely over the months and in time decided that the change in his life was real.

It was just as Bush was marveling at Jones' transformation that the famous walk on the beach with Billy Graham took place. In the summer of 1985, the Bush clan vacationed together at Kennebunkport in Maine. Graham joined them for a weekend and preached at the small summer church, St. Ann's by the Sea.

Bush remembers that his father asked Graham to answer questions from a big group of family gathered for the weekend. As Bush told Skip Hollingsworth of Texas Monthly: "It was this beautiful Maine night and Billy just sat there and talked to us, and we asked him questions and shared our thoughts. He and I had a visit afterward it was just a real personal religious visit and I started reading the Bible."

The “visit afterward” was a walk that Graham and Bush took at Walker’s Point the next day. During the conversation, Graham turned to Bush and said, “Are you right with God?”

“No,” Bush replied, “but I want to be.”

It is typical of Bush that he remembers how he felt being with Graham rather than much of what he said. “I knew I was in the presence of a great man,” he recalled in his biography, *A Charge to Keep*. “Billy Graham didn’t make you feel guilty; he made you feel loved.”

The weekend changed him. “Reverend Graham planted a mustard seed in my soul,” Bush later wrote of those few days, “a seed that grew over the next year. I had always been a religious person, had regularly attended church, even taught Sunday school and served as an altar boy.

“But that weekend my faith took on new meaning. It was the beginning of a new walk where I would recommit my heart to Jesus Christ. I was humbled to learn that God sent His Son to die for a sinner like me.”

He must have shared something of his experience with his family because sometime later he overheard his mother, Barbara, talking to someone on the phone and saying: “I’ve got some exciting news. George has been born again.”

New Convictions

When he returned to Midland, he found himself possessed by a

new hunger for the Bible. His friend Don Evans gave him a Bible with daily readings from both Testaments, Psalms and Proverbs, organized for every day of the year.

He also joined the Community Bible Study that Jones was part of. The group had begun meeting the year before, around the time of the Blessitt meetings. By the time Bush joined, in the fall of 1985, almost 120 men were gathering to study the New Testament writings of Luke.

It is possible that Bush did not fully understand the enormity of what he had joined. The Community Bible Study (CBS) ministry began in 1975 with a group of women who wanted to see “effective” Bible studies serving the Washington, D.C., area. The first class began at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland, with more than 500 women gathering to study the Gospel of John.

The leader was Lee Campbell, who had been deeply influenced in her faith by Christian theologian-historian Francis Schaeffer. The curriculum involved a verse-by-verse study of each book of the Bible. Students were required to spend several hours outside of class, answering questions, meditating on the verses and even turning the words to prayer.

CBS became wildly popular. Within four years, there were classes in 10 states and London. Eventually, there were 19 classes in the Washington area alone. But it wasn't just growth that distinguished CBS. It was influence. Early participants included Jack Kemp's wife, Joanne; Jim Baker's wife, Donna; and Elizabeth Dole.

As the movement's own literature explains, “The studies had an

impact in shaping the thinking of key players in the Reagan Revolution of the eighties.” Though nonpolitical and nondenominational, CBS often provided the biblical content that educational programs of local churches lacked.

This was certainly the case for Bush, who found himself now challenged to explore Scripture in a manner he never had before. Every week Jones would drive Bush to the Bible study and marvel at his growth. The truths he was learning and pressing into his heart through prayer and meditation were clearly changing him.

There was a new gravity and maturity in Bush. George the lightweight was becoming a man of serious faith.

Christian theology teaches that salvation is instant, but sanctification—the process of cleaning up a believer’s conduct and thinking—takes time. For Bush, a man of habit and routine, the renewing of his life wasn’t going to be easy.

“It was like a long struggle up a steep hill for George,” Jones says. It would take years for some habits to go. His tendency to strong language, for example, would die hard. Yet, his famed struggle with alcohol ended quickly, and it says much about the man he was becoming.

Bush has joked that he is so cheap he only stopped drinking when he saw the bar bill. The truth is that his moral compass and sense of values were being reconfigured by his deepening faith. He knew of Jones’ decision to stop drinking and the good that it had done in his life. Still, getting drunk was the sin, not drinking alcohol, and he saw no reason to stop completely.

The change in his thinking came just after his 40th birthday. The Bushes joined their friends the O'Neills and the Evanses for a trip to the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

After the night of drinking at the Broadmoor, he went for a run, assuming exercise would help overcome the effects of alcohol. It didn't.

Bush wrote: "For the past fourteen years, I had run at least three miles almost every day. This run was different. I felt worse than usual, and about halfway through, I decided I would drink no more. I came back to the hotel room and told Laura I was through."

The decision to quit alcohol is a major turn in Bush's life. It reveals more than what he felt about his health or his father's campaign. It reveals the kind of man that faith was making him. Whether he quit because he found it something he couldn't control or so he wouldn't embarrass his father, the all-important point is that he disciplined himself to serve a cause greater than himself.

He had been arrested for drunkenness, and it hadn't stopped him. His wife had asked him to stop, and he hadn't. He even had made a fool of himself socially on more than one occasion. That hadn't worked either.

But after he had come to faith, he found both the purpose and the discipline to do something that nothing else in his life could induce him to do: sacrifice pleasure on the altar of a greater cause. This new discipline, fueled by a growing sense of purpose, was beginning to make him an exceptional man.

It is also important to note the way Bush stopped drinking. The New York Times said he did it in “a characteristic way: decisively, impulsively and without much evident introspection.” This would increasingly become a theme of both his personal life and his brand of leadership. When he recovered his inner moral compass and understood its signals, he obeyed it by doing what he thought was “the right thing.”

Certainly he was flawed and would at times choose unwisely. Still, Bush the man without purpose was passing from the scene. In time and it would take torturous steps over the course of years he would become Bush the man with a charge to keep.

Saturated in Prayer

More than any other president in American history, George W. Bush is prayed for daily by thousands of Christians.

An estimated 2.8 million Americans pray for President Bush, and that number is growing. Many of these prayer warriors are members of the Presidential Prayer Team (PPT), an initiative organized in Phoenix seven days after 9/11. Using the Internet, PPT is able to alert Christians of time-sensitive requests about the president’s travel, family needs and even current military operations.

“He is in the midst of making crucial decisions on our behalf,” PPT President John Lind told Charisma. “We think it is very important to pray for him.”

Lind stresses that the prayer team is not focused on Bush’s

re-election. "We are nonpartisan and nonprofit. We pray for him, his presidential team and our military so that our nation, our people, will have peaceful lives in an unpeaceful world," he says.

PPT members log on at to read specific points for daily petition. Membership is free and open to anyone.

The prayer team has now blanketed the United States and touches 125 countries where Americans live. This summer it launched a partnership with publishers of Christian books, music and gifts to produce a prayer devotional and journal, as well as a framed inspirational artwork titled Prayer Over the White House.

Other Web sites—smaller, slower, but as steady and fervent as PPT's—were built before 9/11. Pray for Our President () is a site that receives as many as 70,000 daily visitors. Founded by Terry Posey, a Baptist writer from Greenville, South Carolina, it offers prayer reminders about Bush and his decisions that affect Iraq.

Dennis Pisani, pastor of the Glory Tabernacle in Washington, D.C., actively recruits intercessors for the president as he represents the Strategic Prayer Network (SPN), which is led by Cindy Jacobs and Chuck Pierce. SPN can be reached at .

In Richmond, Virginia, Bob Sjogren sustains a daily prayer watch for Bush at A Presbyterian, Sjogren says he hopes prayers for the president will "keep him accountable when the evil one seeks to sidetrack him from his commitment to the Lord."

Other Internet-driven presidential prayer vigils include , a site built two days before Bush was elected. Its organizers believe that "God used the 2000 election and will continue to use George W. Bush as a catalyst for spiritual awakening in the church and ... in the world."

"The many calls to prayer for the president are serving to awaken us to our responsibility," says Dutch Sheets, a pastor in Colorado Springs, Colorado, who organized a huge prayer effort for Bush during the 2000 election recount. These prayer efforts, Sheets told Charisma, "are also bringing an awareness to the church that we indeed have the power to make a difference through prayer."

"We have a long way to go but progress is being made," he says.

In October 2002, Sheets sent out through his Web site, , a prayer alert for the U.S. Senate. In June he issued a prayer alert for the nation's judiciary.

"I am called to governmental intercession and will certainly call for prayer regardless of the person or party in office," Sheets adds.

Bush, who has stated publicly that he prays every day, is aware that massive numbers of people intercede for him. During a White House press conference in March, after the collapse of diplomatic efforts to get the United Nations to support a regime change in Iraq, a reporter asked Bush about how faith guides him.

Bush responded: "One thing that's really great about our

country is there are thousands of people who pray for me that I'll never see and be able to thank. It's a humbling experience to think that people I will never have met have lifted me and my family up in prayer. And for that I'm grateful."

Thunder on the Right

Although conservative Christians helped elect George W. Bush, many of them today dislike his political views.

President Bush envisions a "road to peace" in the Middle East. But that road got bumpier when conservative Christians who helped put Bush in office began to criticize his foreign policy decisions.

Although evangelical Christians often refer to Bush as "our friend and brother in Christ," they have vocally opposed his position on Israel, his soft response to the Islamic faith and his decision to invade Iraq.

Opinion polls show that Bush still enjoys strong support among white evangelicals, but African Americans who are born-again believers don't share that sentiment. Polls have indicated at various times that Bush would barely squeak by in a general election.

Will his strongest base of support continue to erode? Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals says Bush could lose the Christian vote if his advisers ignore the core concerns of conservatives. "But I don't think conservative critics will desert him," Cizik adds. "I doubt that his

popularity among Christians will be eroded.”

Most evangelicals supported Bush and not Al Gore for the White House in 2000. They have been praying for him all during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Yet in American politics, they staunchly oppose efforts to take land from Israel for a Palestinian state.

Christian broadcaster Pat Robertson has characterized Bush’s Israeli peace plan as futile. “Land for peace has never worked yet, and I don’t think it’s going to work now,” Robertson says.

Gary Bauer of the conservative American Values think tank has warned that Bush is making a mistake by ignoring the Christian Right’s position on Israel. Evangelicals will avoid the polls if they see any pressure put on Israel, he says.

Two dozen prominent Christians including Jerry Falwell, John Hagee, James Kennedy, Richard Land and Elwood McQuaid have further criticized Bush’s Middle East peace plan as a formula for disaster.

Land, a Bush ally and president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, has called the “road map to peace” distressing to American Christians because it would “entangle” America with the United Nations.

There’s no question that Bush walks a tightrope when it comes to pleasing religious leaders. He angered some conservatives last year when he called Islam a peaceful religion. Then, liberals affiliated with the National Council of Churches

called on him to rebuke “religious leaders who demonize the faiths of others”—a reference to Franklin Graham, who called Islam “evil and wicked” after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Yet anti-war liberals are not the only religious leaders who opposed the war in Iraq. Christopher Alam, a former Muslim who is now a Pentecostal evangelist based in Pennsylvania, has been critical of what he calls “Bush’s rush to war.”

Alam told Charisma: “The Bush campaign to rid the world of Saddam seems to me a foundational hypocrisy and duplicity in American dealings with other countries. Christians should have no human enemies because the enemy today can be our brother in Christ tomorrow.”

In the midst of all this tension, Colorado pastor Dutch Sheets—who mobilized a massive prayer campaign for the president in 2000—says he hopes Christians will do less criticizing and more praying.

Says Sheets: “I don’t believe we have the right to criticize Bush if we are not consistently fulfilling the mandate of 1 Timothy 2:1-2 to ‘first of all’ pray for him and government leaders. If he makes a mistake, shouldn’t the nonpraying Christian share the blame?”

Mixing God and Government

President Bush’s critics have blasted his plan to give government funds to church-based relief programs. But the program is still very much alive.

When George W. Bush first proposed his plan for “faith-based initiatives” during his presidential campaign, liberal politicians criticized him for mixing religion and politics. But with his characteristic tenacity, Bush has not backed down from his plan—and it is slowly gaining acceptance among lawmakers.

After being stalled in the Senate, a modified version of the CARE Act (for Charity, Aid, Recovery and Empowerment) passed in the Senate April 9 in a 95-5 vote. Nixed were provisions that would have prohibited government agencies from discriminating against groups because they had religious names or displayed religious icons.

Christian leaders say the plan has been part of Bush’s public agenda since his second week in office. That’s because the president believes that churches and religious groups can help people much more effectively than government bureaucracies.

Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., who along with Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., introduced the bill in the Senate, says the legislation will help some of the nation’s most troubled neighborhoods.

“We’re going to be getting those resources that are much needed to those grass-roots organizations,” the senator told the Associated Press.

Bush’s efforts have uncovered a deep-seated bias against religious organizations in grant awards, says Dave Donaldson, head of We Care America, a Washington, group that helps Christian organizations access federal funds. A 2001 White House study found that a fraction of grant funding was

distributed to faith- and community-based organizations—about one-third of 1 percent of the Justice Department’s grant funding—while such groups are widely viewed as playing “large and vital roles,” the study said. In a statement released after the vote in April, Bush said he hoped to improve the legislation.

“America’s charities face tough times, and we can do more to support their efforts,” Bush said. “I look forward to continuing to work with Congress to improve the CARE Act legislation, and I continue to urge Congress to take additional steps to end discrimination against faith-based organizations that have a proven record of helping people in need realize a better life.”

In the meantime, Donaldson is urging Christians to reach out more assertively to their communities—with or without federal funding.

“Ultimately this is not about money,” he told Charisma. “It’s about people. Secular groups are providing treatment to socially broken people. The government has been trying to provide hope without faith.”

Both Donaldson and Bishop Harold Ray, who founded the National Center for Faith-Based Initiatives to help funnel federal funds into urban church and parachurch groups, spend much of their time teaching Christian organizations how to apply for grants.

Ray believes the \$65 billion the White House says is available for religious groups to compete for could serve as “at least a foot in the door of access for those who have been looking to

make their dreams and visions a reality.”

Both men speak as if the Christian community may miss an unprecedented window of opportunity. Donaldson, admittedly, hopes to incite a “revolution of compassion,” which is also the title of his recently released book.

For Ray, “faith-based initiative” has become synonymous with what he believes is a prophetic transfer of wealth in the spirit of Acts 4:34-37. He travels across the country, to 40 cities so far, offering free training mostly to urban ministries, showing them how to access government money in an initiative funded by a grant of his own from the president’s Compassion Capital Fund.

Ron Sider, chair of Christians for Faith-Based Initiatives and the Evangelicals for Social Action, said Christians face a historic opportunity. “The larger society is begging Christians to get involved,” he told Charisma. “There obviously is some risk, but I believe the risk is not as great as the opportunity.”

Donaldson agrees.

“The CARE Act is just one piece of legislation,” Donaldson says. “We’re at the beginning of the beginning. Christians must understand what’s at stake. It’s not billions of dollars; it’s millions of souls.”

Adrienne S. Gaines

His Faith Isn’t Hidden

A new book uncovers the president's evangelical beliefs.

For those who might question whether our current president has genuine faith, the new book *The Faith of George W. Bush* will be full of surprises. Author Stephen Mansfield and his team of researchers uncovered some fascinating and little-known information about Bush's conversion, his sense of divine calling and how faith helped him kick his drinking habit.

"People are very interested in the president's faith, but they also have a lot of questions that need to be answered," says Mansfield, a former senior pastor at the charismatic Belmont Church in Nashville, Tennessee. Among the intriguing facts included in the book:

- * Bush first heard "the call" to run for president during a sermon by the Rev. Mark Craig at Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas. Craig was describing Moses' reluctance to lead God's people, and Bush's mother, Barbara, turned to him and said, "He was talking to you."

- * Before Bush announced his candidacy, he invited Texas-based evangelist James Robison to meet with him. Bush told Robison that he had given his life to Christ and that he felt God wanted him to be president. He also confided in Robison that he felt "something was going to happen" and that the country would need his leadership in a time of crisis. The 9/11 tragedy struck just nine months after Bush's inauguration.

- * Bush is close friends with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, also an acknowledged Christian. The two have shared

Scripture and prayed together.

* On Palm Sunday 2002, the president's cabinet organized an impromptu worship service aboard Air Force One. National security adviser Condoleezza Rice led worship and close Bush aide Karen Hughes, who is an elder in her church, gave the Bible lesson.

* As a partial fast, Bush refused to eat sweets while American troops were engaged in war in Iraq.

The Faith of George W. Bush, which will be released November 11, is a unique publishing co-venture between Charisma House and Penguin Group (USA) Inc., the world's largest publishing empire. That means it not only will be available in Christian bookstores but also in most general market stores, including B. Dalton, Waldenbooks and Borders.

The book releases a year before the 2004 elections, and Mansfield believes it could convince some skeptics that Bush should remain in office four more years.

Says Mansfield: "Whatever else George W. Bush is remembered for, his attempt to apply faith to presidential leadership will form a major part of his legacy. It is important for people to understand his faith, then, and to do so before the next election."

He expects interest in the book to be widespread, due primarily to Bush's strategic importance in world affairs. "He is the most powerful man in the most powerful nation on earth and he says he is guided by his faith. Surely, understanding what that faith means to him will be of interest to many."

And, Mansfield adds: “It is also the story of how faith answers the empty heart and provides a sense of purpose. I think many will find this to be an inspiration in their

Stephen Mansfield grew up primarily in Europe as the son of a U.S. Army officer, an experience that gave him an early love for history and international affairs. He is the author of numerous books on history and leadership, including *Never Give In: The Extraordinary Character of Winston Churchill* (Cumberland House). He lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and directs the Mansfield Group, a publishing and research firm.