

Pray for the President

One man cannot transform U.S. politics. Our president needs godly people around him.

The last few years of the Clinton presidency were marked with controversy. "He lied!" was the conservative Christian refrain when reports surfaced that he had, in fact, had an affair with a White House intern.

Yet the search for truth was at best a Pyrrhic victory. The impeachment process proved costly both in time and money (nearly \$80 million). At the end of Clinton's second term, I was disappointed with the man, the media and the political machine that offered his head on a platter.

President Bush's candidacy and policies offered a glimmer of hope that things would change. Electing a truly Christian president had been the dream of many believers for years. Well-known ministers from almost every denomination gave Bush rave reviews for his authenticity and candor. Some leaders actually proclaimed that we had stayed the hand of God's judgment by choosing the right man.

But the honeymoon has come to an end. The president and staff have changed, but the media feeding frenzies and the endless partisan bickering have not. It seems we are doing the same old political dance with different partners.

Despite my respect for President Bush, I have concerns about the controversy over the weapons of mass destruction and the exposure of one of our loyal CIA operatives. The chorus of the Clinton years is now being sung again: "He lied!"

Like many other Christians, I find myself called to pray for the president. Yet I'd like to take more than the standard "Lord, give him wisdom" approach. Having been taught to make specific requests based upon the Word, I searched the Scriptures for a similar situation. I wanted a pattern to help me understand the nuances of our dilemma.

Recently, I remembered the story of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah (see 2 Chr. 18-19). I discovered some truly amazing parallels between his struggle and our president's.

Though best known for a great victory in war through praying, fasting and seeking God (see 2 Chr. 20:1-37), Jehoshaphat is also remembered for challenging his nation to return to the ways of the Lord. He also changed religious instruction (see 2 Chr. 17:7-9) and the justice system of his day (see 2 Chr. 19:6-9).

The only known blemish on Jehoshaphat's record was that early in his reign he made an alliance with the infamous couple Ahab and Jezebel. This move was based on "political wisdom." In a season of national danger, he came to their rescue by going to war with them against Ramoth Gilead.

Jehoshaphat wanted to protect the lives of innocent people, no doubt. There was just one problem: God did not want Jehoshaphat to align himself with these wicked leaders.

Jehoshaphat's motives were noble, but he did not discern God's perfect will. Our president may face the same potential dilemma.

In Bush's case, internal alliances may be creating a

credibility gap. Notwithstanding their impressive credentials and great track record, some of Bush's dream team of advisers and staff may not actually be of God's choosing.

Some may have hidden agendas. Secret "Ahab's" or hidden "Jezebels" may work against the interests of God and His blessing on our nation. The president needs discernment, truth and wisdom. It's difficult to know whose character to trust, whose information to believe and whose policy recommendations to follow.

I have decided to pray that Bush's team would not fall into four temptations found in the accounts of the Garden of Eden and the wilderness temptation of Christ. They are (1) the temptation to seek personal gain, (2) the temptation to seek personal glory, (3) the temptation to gratify physical appetites outside of God's will, and (4) the temptation to vindicate one's name or prove one's calling.

I am convinced that President Bush is on track to become a man who leaves a godly mark on our nation. Unfortunately, one man cannot transform U.S. politics. The president needs a host of competent, godly people around him. As believers, it is our responsibility to follow Jesus' clear command in Matthew 26:41 to watch and pray.

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