

# An Inaugural Moment

**I believe God is giving Christians an open window for four more years.**

Because Christians and their values played such a big part in the re-election of President George W. Bush, I wanted to witness his inauguration January 20. I admit I watched his speech on a large-screen television in a warm place on that cold day—partly because I had attended the Ask for America Inaugural Prayer Breakfast across town at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, hosted by Carol and Stephen Poulos of Ask for America, and I couldn't be two places at once.

To me, it was significant to pray for this president, whose faith has become a driving force not only in his personal life but also in the policies of his administration. And pray we did. A long list of well-known Christian leaders prayed for every conceivable aspect of public life. They even asked me to pray for the media.

The event went largely unnoticed by the media, even though more than 1,500 attended. It was overshadowed by the pageantry of the day, the unprecedented security, the few protesters who seemed to get far more coverage than they deserved and the tendency of the media to downplay anything “religious.”

They couldn't ignore it completely because of the prayers, the religious songs and the remarks the president made in his speech. He spoke of the “longing of the soul” and of having “mercy, and a heart for the weak.” He pointed out that “God moves and chooses as He wills.” He said we “bear the image of the maker of heaven and earth.”

In a nod toward our pluralistic society, Bush also mentioned the Quran. Later the Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell, senior pastor of Houston's Windsor Village United Methodist Church, prayed a powerful benediction that closed with the words, "Respecting persons of all faiths, I humbly submit this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

Americans have long embraced a tradition of referring to the deity in public even when there was little belief behind it. But true Bible-believing Christians have generally been marginalized. That is changing because we have a president who claims his favorite philosopher is Jesus.

But it's changing also because Christians are becoming a part of the process. Though ministries are hampered by laws preventing them from being "too political," individual Christians can speak up—and did during the recent election—by voting for righteousness. Even political pundits credited moral values as the factor that determined which candidate was chosen.

The mood was upbeat at both the prayer breakfast on the morning of the inauguration and the Christian Inaugural Eve Gala the night before, sponsored by Lou Sheldon's Traditional Values Coalition. The latter was a fancy affair held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel and attended by more than 800 people, including evangelicals D. James Kennedy and Ralph Reed and charismatics Keith Butler and Jan Crouch. Politicians such as Karl Rove, Bush's senior adviser, and Ken Mehlman, newly elected Republican National Committee chairman, and media personalities such as Janet Parshall showed up. Outgoing Attorney General John Ashcroft made one of his final appearances before retiring to private life.

Attending these events was fun but sobering. Our nation faces many threats from without and within. Terrorism threatens our way of life, but so does an ultraliberal agenda that wants to legitimize homosexuality and take all references to God out of public life.

Charismatics and Pentecostals have traditionally been more interested in foreign missions, correct theology and personal piety than they have been in politics. But the time has come when we cannot stand on the sidelines.

I believe God is giving us an open window for four more years. This is a time to change laws, put in new judges, elect godly officials and regain lost ground in what many have called the cultural wars.

As people of prayer, we must pray not only for our president but also for all those in authority (see 1 Tim. 2:1-2). And we must get involved.

It's time to be "silent no more," as Rod Parsley prayed eloquently at the Inaugural Prayer Breakfast, "because our times demand it, our history compels it, our future requires it, and ... because You, Almighty God, are still watching."

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Stephen Strang is the founder and publisher of Charisma.