

Bush Whackers

Sparks fly when you mix religion and politics. We all know that, but I was surprised by the explosion that occurred after we published a cover story last fall about President Bush's faith. The angry letters keep pouring in, and our interview with Bush this month (page 50) probably will ignite more protests.

Our readers have called Bush a warmonger, a draft-dodger, a failure, a liar, an election-stealer and a hypocrite. And they've accused him of playing up his religious views just to get re-elected.

Maybe I shouldn't be shocked that Christians are so critical. A recent Time magazine poll showed that more than a third of the people who consider themselves "very religious" plan to vote for Sen. John Kerry in November.

I can understand why Hollywood leftists hate Bush, since he opposes gay marriage and wants to appoint judges who uphold the sanctity of unborn life. But I don't understand why so many Christians dislike a president who shares their moral values.

I suspect it's because they've been ingesting a steady diet of slanted news coverage from CBS, NBC and The New York Times. Anyone who relies on the mainstream media's selective sound bites is bound to conclude that the whole "mess" in Iraq is "Bush's fault."

I don't believe that. People who have been there know the facts:

1. Iraqis are thankful for American intervention. At least 90 percent of Iraqis don't want American troops to leave. A vocal minority—including terrorists from Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia—are responsible for 90 percent of the damage to the country's infrastructure.

2. Weapons of mass destruction are a fact. You don't have to prove to Iraqis that WMDs existed. They have the mass graves to prove it.

We may never know if Saddam Hussein planned to aim his weapons at us, but we do know he gassed his own people. CBS should take its camera crews to these graves and count the skulls.

3. Iraq is opening up to the gospel. Many people there resent the pressure to embrace Islam. They are interested in what faith in Jesus offers. One missionary who just returned from Iraq said a high-level official admitted he is a Christian and then pledged to help protect churches.

I know Bush has made mistakes, and we shouldn't view him as a political savior. But I intend to defend him when anti-Christian forces attempt to undermine what he stands for.

Four years ago I interviewed Bush during his first presidential bid. The night before the interview, when I was praying in a hotel room in Austin, Texas, I felt drawn to Psalm 72.

This psalm celebrates the godly leadership of King David, but I felt it had prophetic application to George W. Bush. So the next day I shared the passage with him, and he jotted down the reference and said he would read it during his devotions.

Months later—after Bush’s election, the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan—I reread this psalm. Verse 9 jumped off the page: “Let the nomads of the desert bow before him, and his enemies lick the dust” (NASB). I felt the Lord showed me that during Bush’s administration God would begin to unravel the demonic power of Islamic terrorism.

That process started during Bush’s first term, and it hasn’t been without a price. But history will prove, I believe, that God orchestrated world events to open up the Middle East to the gospel. I hope Bush’s Christian critics won’t complain about that.