

He's Just a Man

There wasn't much time to pack when George W. Bush's campaign office called with a last-minute confirmation that he had agreed to an interview with Charisma. I threw my best suit on my bed and was rushing to choose which tie to wear when my 8-year-old daughter, Charlotte, scurried into the bedroom and plopped down next to my suitcase. She played with the zippers, then started in with her usual litany of 20 questions.

"Daddy, where are you going? Why is he named Bush? Why do you have to get so dressed up? Why are you talking to him on an airplane?"

I explained how important this interview was. I told her that Gov. Bush was very busy because he is running for president. I tried to make her understand that this interview was a high point in my journalistic career.

She wasn't impressed.

"Daddy," she said, rolling her eyes. "He's just a man."

Charlotte's words haunted me after I boarded the Bush-Cheney campaign jet and began the 3-1/2-hour trip from Texas to Maine. Halfway into the flight, when I sat down with the governor and flipped on my tape recorder, I expected to feel intimidated. After all, this Yale-educated millionaire—the privileged son of a former president—might be living in the White House this time next year.

But what shocked me was how down-to-earth Bush seemed. He didn't resemble the larger-than-life image we see on the TV screen, the candidate who talks in perfectly crafted soundbytes. No, he told jokes and admitted his flaws. I could see his gray hair and the wrinkles under his eyes. I could sense some weariness in his voice. He was frighteningly human!

When we talked about his prayer concerns it was obvious that he deals with real fears. When we chatted about his relationship with Christ, the mistiness in his eyes was not faked. When I encouraged him to meditate on Psalm 72—a prophetic passage that calls leaders to care for the poor—he jotted down the reference and said he would read it that night. I hope he did.

Some of our readers will probably be upset that we devoted more space to George W. Bush (page 44) than we did to Al Gore (page 49) in this special election issue. I can assure you it is not because Charisma has an affiliation with the Republican Party. Bush simply agreed to an interview. I did not seek an interview with Gore because the Clinton-Gore administration never responded to my numerous requests for interviews during the last eight years.

Perhaps our interview with Bush may convince you that he is more sensitive than Gore is to the concerns of evangelical Christians. I certainly believe Bush's faith is genuine, and his talk about morality, responsibility and values sounds sincere when you're sitting two feet away from him.

But we've got to remember: Both George W. Bush and Al Gore are just men. Neither of them can save us on Election Day. Our only real hope is that during the next presidential administration, the Holy Spirit will send a spiritual

awakening to the United States that will bring
all of us—poor or rich, weak
or powerful, Republican
or Democrat—to
our knees. That's what I'm voting for. *