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Pray Before You Vote

By Kathy Simcox

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I was hesitant to share these words out of a concern of turning them into a religious sermon or political plight. But then I decided to share them anyway because, thanks to President George W. Bush, I am still free to speak my mind the way I choose.

I consider myself to be a woman of very strong faith. Being actively involved in a wonderful Lutheran church, I can not think of a better way to spend my Sunday mornings. But despite my religious convictions, I am human, after all, prone to wander, make wrong choices, and be, well, human. But it is my faith that carries me through those oh-too-often human moments in my life. It is that wondrous Amazing Grace that finds me each time I am lost and that same Amazing Grace will eventually carry me home.

It is within this strong faith that I find my peace, whether I'm singing with my church choir, kayaking down a lazy river as the mist rises from the water, hiking alone among the sweet-smelling pine trees of some forest, or doing something so simple as playing with my cat Sophie. I look around me and marvel at God's miraculous creations and I realize how fortunate I am to be an American, free to enjoy everything this beautiful life has to offer.

As my sense of peace grows, so does my spiritual maturity, again, despite my imperfections. As more years stretch out behind me, the more I seem to understand how God works. I don't profess to know how Something, or Someone, so profound as God thinks; no, that is a feat left for academia to ponder. But evidence of how He works can be seen in His people. I don't mean to narrow this down to the Christian God; indeed, the God of all religions has something special to share with the world and all do so in His own unique way. But because I am a Christian, there is, and will be, no other God before me. Which is why I must say this:

I do not care what happened on that fateful election night in the year 2000. I don't care what was counted, how many times it was counted, what was not counted, or who did the counting. By the very convictions of my own faith and with every ounce of my heart I believe that God was looking out for America that night. He chose the right man at the right time. If anyone else had been chosen, it is true

Pray Before You Vote

that we might not be at war right now. No one likes war, whether they have the tremendous responsibility of declaring war or actually fighting in one. It's ugly business. But to not go to war would've been the gravest mistake in American history; indeed, in world history. Why? Because it is never a mistake to protect the freedoms within God's creation – not just American freedoms, but those of the entire world. Regardless of what God a person worships, I guarantee that that God wishes everyone in His creation could praise his name without fear, fear of torture, prison, deadly gases, or even death. Freedom from fear is what this war is all about. And again, thanks to President Bush and our superior military forces, one of the world's worst initiators of this fear left his power buried in a little spider hole.

But this is only the beginning. We are waging a battle against an evil more destructive, more soul-damaging and heart-wrenching, than we've ever experienced before. This is not an enemy that

can be dealt with by using sensitivity and negotiation. No, a "kum-by-yah" approach will not satiate this enemy. A "kum-by-yah" approach will not keep our country safe. George W. Bush will. Giving these terrorists a big group hug is not in our President's agenda. Keeping America safe from fear, however, is, and he does what it takes to make sure this is done right. This is what a strong, confident, and faith-filled leader does. This man loves the same creation as I do – the gently flowing rivers, the thick canopied forests, the spirit-filled choirs singing hymns of praise. And as I journey down life's road, savoring each precious, free, moment that I am given, my soul will rest in the joy of knowing that I walk under the same sky with a man who loves God, loves all of God's people, and will remain strong in order to protect them.

About the Author Kathy Simcox, Columbus, Ohio, United States hrdude28@hotmail.com Kathy works as an Administrative Assistant in the College of the Arts at The Ohio State University. She holds a BA in Psychology and is currently working on a second BA in Religious Studies. In addition to writing, her passions include hiking, biking, kayaking, photography, and singing in her Lutheran church choir. She is also known to read an occasional book.

A New School Year

By Kimberly Chastain

Depending on where you live school will be starting this month or next month. A new school year is usually exciting and scary at the same time. Most children won't admit it, but they are ready to get back to school and see their friends. As much as I love not having a rigid schedule in the summer, I do miss the structure of the school year. We get up later in the summer and go to bed later as well.

When you think of a new School Year what are your first thoughts? Back to school shopping for clothes and school supplies. A big transition from elementary to middle school, or to high school, even college. A new teacher who you heard is strict or not strict enough? There can often be lots of anxiety with a new school year for parents as well as children.

Can I offer a few suggestions for your back to school list? Remember whose children they are. Yes

Pray Before You Vote

they are our children, but they are God's children. He cares about them and loves them more than we ever could. Pray for your children. Pray for their academics, choice of friends, study habits, and wisdom to make Godly choices. Pray for their teachers. If their teachers are not Christians, pray that God can use you to be an example to their teachers. Pray for the administrators in your child's school. Pray for the safety of your child and all the children at their school. Pray that your children will see a Godly example in you, with how you handle school difficulties or problems with your children. Begin praying with other mothers for their children as well. We don't have to carry the burden alone. Above all remember God is in control. I often have a difficult time remembering that principle.

In closing, God is a mighty God and he cares about our concerns. I often pray on the way to taking my children to school. I pray when my children are having difficulties with friends. God cares about everything in our lives and He truly cares about our children. My mother is a prayer warrior for my children and myself. May we all become prayer warriors for our children. Take your problems to Him and leave them there.

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Kimberly M. Chastain, MS, LMFT is the Christian Working Mom Coach and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who specializes in helping Christian women make the most of their lives. She is the author of the on-line course, "I Can't Say No" and Pearls of Encouragement for Christian Working Moms, a free e-book. If you suffer from "I Can't Say `No" Syndrome, visit Kimberly's site today for the details on an exciting email course that's sure to set you free!

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