



Why a book on Barack Obama?

We've been getting that question a lot in the past few days. So here's our take on why this is a necessary book.

History has unfolded before our eyes. On Tuesday, November 4, 2008, the United States of America elected an African American president. While we may not all agree with his politics, it's hard to disagree with the fact that his story is an unlikely and inspirational one.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that this country was thrown into civil war over issues of slavery and race. 1965 was the first year that African Americans couldn't be discriminated against in the voting booth. 1965. Just over 43 years ago. Why did we do this book? Because we are literally in the process of creating history. ([Please check out the story Amanda Jones...109 years old and the daughter of a slave](#)).

We also can't lose sight of another fact. The [polls](#) indicate that 75 percent of evangelicals voted for John McCain ([the map](#) that *Christianity Today* mashed with evangelical voting returns and Google maps is incredible). This is a moment to search our faith and understand what our responsibilities are as Christians and citizens of this country. We have the opportunity to lead and lend our hands to continue building the United States alongside those with whom we don't full agree. This is part of our calling.

Also, the question "why?" is rooted in a belief that we shouldn't enter the political fray. ("We need to stick to youth ministry and that's all.") The reality is, this *is* youth ministry. Your students will be living under the next president for the next four years. They will see decisions made and actions taken and will need to talk about what's going on. It's our call to help them understand and make sense of the world around them. We may not agree with all of Obama's policies and decisions, but we still have responsibilities as Christians—among them, to pray for him and love him as we're called to.

This is an historic moment for our nation. That is why we chose to publish this book.

Check out these quotes (and the links at the end of this document) for more understanding regarding this moment and our response as Christians:

[Richard Cizik](#), vice president for governmental affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, on next steps:

"I suspect that millions upon millions of evangelicals around the world are extremely proud of America tonight. I'm confident that Barack Obama wants to unite this country. I hope the better angels of Obama's nature triumph, and I...suspect there will be actions he takes I don't agree with. I think it's important to have the right attitude—the attitude of Christ—which is he needs our prayers and our support, even if we don't agree with him."



[Joel Hunter](#), pastor and author, on Barack Obama:

"I think we're going to be invited into many conversations. He is a consensus-oriented type of leader. We need to be able to respond to those invitations. Part of our role is to speak truth to power. That certainly is part of our role. The most effective way of doing that is not to be so narrow and combative. It's to be part of the conversation. It's not to back down on any moral convictions that we have. By the same token, we've got to understand that we can be much more effective in getting our point across and realizing our goals if that prophetic language comes with a degree of understanding and respect."

What does the book cover?

The book covers President-Elect Obama's story. It truly is an American story; one that we believe contains valuable lessons and the ability to inspire a generation of youth to change the world around them. It's a concise biography that will help dispel the half-truths and rumors that your students have heard from their friends. It's a story that is deeply rooted in Obama's faith.

When asked what he prays about, [President-Elect Obama replied](#):

"I ask in the name of Jesus Christ that my sins are forgiven, that my family is protected and that I am an instrument of God's will. I'm constantly trying to align myself to what I think he calls on me to do. And sometimes you hear it strongly, and sometimes that voice is more muted."

We believe the story of his life, faith, and accomplishments are inspirational and can be helpful in understanding this newly elected president.

Other voices on the election:

[David Kuo](#), author and former special assistant to the President in George W. Bush's White House

[Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell](#), spiritual advisor to President Bush and pastor of Windsor Village United Methodist Church

[Jim Manzi](#)

[Mark Matlock](#)

A few examples of the content, and the public statements of President-Elect Obama:

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Perhaps most importantly, Obama's story is one that is profoundly rooted in his faith in Jesus Christ. As one supporter has noted, Barack Obama's narrative is one of reconciliation and hope. In his book, *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama writes about what happened to him after he submitted himself to



God's will and dedicated himself to discovering God's truth. Obama describes this discernment as an "ongoing process for all of us in making sure that we are living out our faith every day." Obama has consistently pointed to his faith as the primary motivator for his career of working for the common good. In a July 2008 interview with Newsweek magazine, Obama spoke to this directly:

I am a big believer in not just words, but deeds and works. I don't believe that the kingdom of God is achievable on Earth without God's intervention, and without God's return through Jesus Christ, but I do believe in improvement.

With his strong rooting in the African-American church, Obama has been able to express his beliefs in a community drenched in religion. Throughout its story in America, the African-American church has found God together as a people, a faith perspective that follows God in the community. This faith tradition has called followers of Jesus to foster a profound sense of community, rather than the individualism and materialism that sometimes marks much of the contemporary church culture.

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Obama was asked by the online site BeliefNet if he had any particular routines or rituals before he takes to a podium for a political speech. His answer pointed to the centrality of faith in his own life:

The prayer that I tell myself is a fairly simple one: I ask in the name of Jesus Christ that my sins are forgiven, that my family is protected and that I am an instrument of God's will. I'm constantly trying to align myself to what I think he calls on me to do. And sometimes you hear it strongly and sometimes that voice is more muted.

Steeped in a personal history perhaps unique to politics, but by no means uncommon in the eclectic communities stretched across this nation, Barack Obama's life is driven by a strong faith and the same "fierce urgency of now" that Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of four decades earlier. Today, he stands on the cusp of becoming the first African-American president of the United States, eager to lead the country toward a better tomorrow. Guided by a belief that change must start with ordinary citizens and not rich, removed politicians, he is urging all generations to hope—courageously

Pages 58-59:

In an interview with Christianity Today magazine, Obama said this about his decision to accept Christ, "What was intellectual and what was emotional joined, and the belief in the redemptive power of Jesus Christ, that he died for our sins, that through him we could achieve eternal life—but also that, through good works we could find order and meaning here on Earth and transcend our limits and our flaws and our foibles—I found that powerful."