



**From The
Pastor's Heart**

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I just read an article about the beheading of a U.S. civil engineer in Iraq, Eugene Armstrong of Michigan. He was beheaded by a group over there demanding the release of Iraqi Muslim women who are being held in U.S. custody, and as I write this article, they're planning to execute two more people if the women are not released.

My heart goes out to the families of Mr. Armstrong and the others who are still being held hostage. Let's keep them and their families lifted up in prayer.

I'm not pro-Bush, but my heart also goes out to our President and other officials who have to make decisions about the war in Iraq. President Bush is in a difficult position. It is understandable that the families of the hostages and other U.S. citizens would pressure Mr. Bush to call for the women's release. If one of my family members were held hostage, I'd probably push for the same thing. But there are so many issues with this situation. One of them is that both of the women were supposedly directly involved in developing Anthrax. I'm sure we remember what it has done here in our country.

If these women are released, the hostages may go free, but at

the same time, the door to more deaths by way of wicked bioterrorism may be opened wider also. Whenever we're trying to make a decision, we need to always question what doors our decisions may possibly open. It has been said, "You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions."

Most of us are not in favor of our presence in Iraq. Although a serious can of worms has been opened with our going over there, the hard truth is that we're there and our nation's leaders need our prayers.

Pray, first of all, that the President, himself, will continue to pray. I believe he's a praying man and my prayer is that he will continue to call upon the name of the Lord as he leads our country. I'm not saying that I believe God led us into Iraq, but I know God can order a President's steps just as He can yours and mine. Leaders who pray can trust God to work things out even when they make poor decisions.

Secondly, pray that God's wisdom will influence his decisions. At a time like this, wisdom is certainly needed. The word of God says of wisdom, "Rulers lead with my help, and nobles make righteous judgments" (Proverbs 8:16 NLT).

Let me pause here for a minute, because wisdom is important. Wisdom is what will make a leader consider the possible consequences of their decisions. It is what makes one question what they may be getting innocent people into with the decisions they

make. This is often missed by many of us in leadership.

When the four lepers were sitting outside the gate of Samaria, they began to weigh all of their options and the corresponding potential outcomes of each possible decision (II Kings 7:3-5). They were starving to death and contemplated going into Samaria to get food, but a famine had produced a serious food shortage. Going into Samaria, therefore, opened the door to certain death, so they ruled that out. Sitting still at the gate would open the same door. Oftentimes in life, sitting still and doing nothing about certain situations will do that to you—open a door to certain death. In considering going to the enemy's camp, they knew they'd risk opening the door to possible death, but also to possible life. They took a risk and went to the enemy's camp and lived.

This brings up the third thing we need to pray for—that the President will not be afraid to take risks. Taking bold, calculated risks is a part of leadership.

Finally, let's pray that the President will always be open to wise counsel from others. I pray that God will keep him surrounded with praying, experienced, Godly leaders. Everyone in leadership needs to be surrounded by persons who can bring Godly counsel to the table. The Bible says, "Without wise leadership, a nation falls; with many counselors, there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14 NLT).

Our leaders need constant prayer. Let's continue to keep them all uplifted in prayer.