do not understand the adrenaline or madness involved when there is the constant threat of death.

I also do not understand how someone could kill another human being, but I have never been trained in the military and trained to see the people as a "they" who are nameless and are enemies. I need to have compassion on our soldiers as much as on the Iraqis we are fighting. It is hard to judge them until I have gone through what they’ve been through. At the same time it is hard for me to honor them when they fight for something that is so ingrained in my being as being wrong.

I believe as Christians there is only one just war and that is the daily battle we fight on our knees in prayer. That battle is more real than any battle on earth and yet we forget that it exists. When we forget we’re not fighting, and if we’re not fighting the enemy is winning. Christ said to pray for those who persecute you (Matt. 5:44). I don’t remember the last time I prayer for the Al-Qaeda, Osama bin-Laden, or Iraq. The message of peace is not championed in the U.S., that is seen as a message of weakness. The strong and just thing to do is to bomb our enemies, and pray for those we love. I think the true strength was shown at the cross when Christ died for everyone, even those who were nailing him there. Whether I understand what it is to be in war or not, Christ set the example and he has called me to follow him.
My Passionate Lengthy Notes (Please read)

- It would be unbelievable ungrateful to say that I am not happy to be an American.
- I feel such a mixture of disgust, wanting to distance myself from everything associated with America, and pride. Pride in all the people who have gone before to bring me to where I am now. Pride in their sacrifices. Pride in the melting pot that we are. Pride in ancestry, and in innovation. And yet I shake my head when I see the media, and magazines, and hear the people interviewed on the news who are so confident in their ignorance.
- I disagree with the Compassion book; it is good to let people know what goes on in the rest of the world. Most people don’t even take the effort to read/watch/see what is presented to them anyway. How much more would that be the case if the information were hard to find?
- What makes me ashamed to be an American?
  - We have so little regard for what goes on in the rest of the world.
  - We constantly consume, most of which are things we do not need, and then we feel we do not have the money to give to others around the world. Their lives continue even when we are not thinking about them.
  - We are so so so wasteful.
  - We are stereotyped as being ignorant, which was proved somewhat true to me when I was talking with some people from England and they knew more about my government and news than I did.
  - We are disproportionately rich, and we constantly seek out more money even when we do not need it.
  - We are a nation governed by the clock. Workaholics. There is not the same emphasis on family that there once was. Parents have daycares, and nannies, and children have electronics to disconnect from the world.
  - We are insincere. Supposedly 80% of Americans claim to be Christians, and yet because we have not experienced serious persecution, it is so easy to become comfortable and complacent.
  - Republicans and Democrats are beginning to have more similarities than differences, and people tell you that it is a waste of a vote to vote for a third party candidate.
- Why am I proud to be an American? In what do I identify? Why am I grateful?
  - I am so grateful that I can worship freely to the Almighty God. I am so grateful for the vast beauty and diversity of the land, that in one part of the country there’s snow, another desert; there are mountains and canyons, huge rivers, lakes, and ocean on either side. There are swamps, tropics, and wilderness. It is breathtakingly beautiful, and I can see God so clearly in the land that is America.
  - Because of the incredible wealth, I have incredible opportunities. I have thousands of resources at my fingertips. I can go to school, as a white FEMALE, I can go to college, I can find a job in any field that is of interest to me (though I
understand there are male-dominated fields. I can walk down the street and eat at a Korean restaurant, visit the Japanese gardens a few miles from my house, see a foreign film at the movie theater, go to a museum filled with art from around the world, and walk into target to buy a five dollar shirt from Indonesia. Globalization has made the world so much smaller. And diversity has made us so much richer.

- I am proud of the traditions I have with my family, and the role I fill in the family unit. Contrary to other cultures around the world, though I am a daughter, and the youngest, I am supported in the many endeavors I undertake, and I am encouraged to excel in school, sports, art, and anything else of interest to me. I have a say in the family. I have control over my life to choose who I want to marry, even if they are from a different race. I am encouraged to participate in political and theological discussions around the dinner table, and the other members in my family listen to me. I am active in my church in singing on the worship team and playing piano. And my parents paid for me to take lessons. I have had a ridiculous amount of privilege in my life, and it is largely due to living in America.

- I have water all around me. I can turn on a faucet and get hot and cold running water. I can drink as much water as I want, and I hardly have to walk three feet to get it, no matter what room of my house I’m in. I understand that this is true for more than just America, but I am grateful for it all the same. I am grateful for indoor plumbing, and for the emphasis on sanitation.

- I am grateful for the fact that I can use the Internet so easily, and have access to so many electronics that (sometimes) simplify life.

- For a general response in the most literal of meanings, I came to be an American through the conglomeration of numerous different cultural heritages, who came together through seeming happenstance, and through the years this mixing of blood and tradition, heritage and culture has made me. I am the mutt of Europe and beyond. It is not uncommon in America for people to list the many different countries from where their ancestors came. I am Norwegian, Scottish, Irish, English, French, Danish, Cherokee Indian, Mexican, and Canadian. A true testimony to the history of my country, that has had so many encounters with other nations and peoples, encounters which resulted in the exact mix that runs through my veins. I reflect the legacy of the people who are our neighbors, and the people who used to rule us; the people who fled here to find refuge, and the people who came looking for a better life. There are rapes in my history, mixing in blood unintentionally, but that has also made me who I am. And yet I do not know the traditions for each of these cultures. The culture I most strongly identify with is American culture. Is it accurate to identify with these other people groups? By identifying with them, does that mean that I actively participate in their customs, or that I recognize that it is due in part to them that I am here? Over it all, I am American. When I go to England, Ireland, Scotland, etc., I will not call myself English, Irish, or Scottish. I will call myself American, and they will see me as such in the way I talk, the clothes I wear, and the perspective I bring to the world. It almost seems to come back to the original nature vs. nurture argument, I have their blood, but America raised me my whole life. Which do I more resemble? I am the mutt of the world.

- When I think of America, I think of privilege, and thus I think of great great responsibility.
I have the responsibility to know the history of this country, which has brought me to where I am now. If one battle had gone differently, I would be speaking French instead of English, and our culture would be dramatically different. If women in the 1920s had decided they liked their position in life, and had not protested for rights, I might not be in the college I am, getting an education, and able to vote for who I want to represent me. If Martin Luther King had never waged nonviolent war, if Malcolm X had not let his voice reverberate through the empty halls of injustice in protest of racism, I might not have had the opportunity to go to a high school with no racial majority, with equal amounts of white, black, and Asian kids. I would not have learned from them, grown with them, and been challenged by the way they view the world. If some pilgrims in 1620 had not chosen to leave England for the opportunity to practice their faith in the way they deemed correct, I might not hear the things I hear from the pulpit on Sunday. If the founding fathers had not been influenced by the global unrest and political changes in the late 1700s, I might not celebrate Independence Day, and read the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights which afford me many of the freedoms I have today. If thousands of young men throughout history had decided to stay home with wife and family and not go to war, many going to never return, I might not call myself American, but rather Indian or French. If great thinkers like Ford and Edison had not been so persistent in their innovations, I might not be in California, using the technology I have at hand. If there is anything I appreciate about the life I live, I must see the process that has brought those things to pass.

Why does the rest of the world often hate us? We have a history that includes imperialism, barbarism, injustice, power plays, greed, world policing, and arrogance. There are those who feel it is our duty as a nation of power and wealth to help those nations who are suffering, like Iraq, under horrendous dictators. There are others who ask why we did nothing to help Sudan, going through genocide at the same time. What are our motivations for aid?

I am so sick and tired of politicians, who often do not give a direct answer to a question, who change what they stand for to reach a bigger audience though it may not reflect their personal beliefs, who are no longer honest with the American people about what is going on, (what happened to weapons of mass destruction? What does “victory” look like in a war on terror?) and who spend millions of dollars campaigning while people elsewhere die for unnecessary causes. What is our responsibility as Christians in such a situation? Is our allegiance to the government, or to the cross of Christ? Do those ever coincide?

I hate the American culture that is intolerant of intolerance. I am proud to be intolerant. I am proud to have the right to voice my beliefs. As a Christian I am called to intolerance.

I am so ashamed of America when we were one of the only, if not the only country in the UN to refuse to sign the ban on land mines, I am ashamed when we drill in Alaska and Antarctica for oil, when the president feels the need to respond to violence like 9/11 by giving violence like war, when we drop an atomic bomb, when we left the Hmong people in Laos to be slaughtered by the Khmer Rouge after we promised to aid them for their assistance to our soldiers at the expense of their lives, when we so quickly moved on from destroying the country of Afghanistan to beginning war in Iraq and left the Afghani people in ruin and political turmoil, when we assassinated the democratically elected presidents in South America because we did not like them (where is democracy in that?), when the news that Britney Spears cut her hair made headline news for TWO WEEKS
and the genocide in Chad went unmentioned, when Bush passed legislation to grant
permission for lumber companies to have rights to previous forest reserves, when the
Enron scandal was brought to light and justice seemed able to be bought by the highest
bidder, and when in the last election around 50% percent of Americans voted, and that
was seen as an accomplishment and improvement from other elections.

- I was born in lower middle class. Growing up, I had free/reduced lunch in school,
because I was the youngest of five kids and we didn’t have as much money.
Nevertheless, in comparison to the rest of the world, I am wealthy beyond measure in the
opportunities and privileges I have. Now we are not lower class. We have more than
enough to make a comfortable life. I will never worry about going hungry because there
are so many aid services like Salvation Army, Dorothy Day, Union Gospel Missions, and
church soup kitchens that I can go to if I were in dire need. In other countries that is not
the case. Here there are orphanages and foster homes for children. In Puebla, Mexico
where I lived working at an orphanage, the orphanage was started because there were no
orphanages for the thousands of kids on the streets. The kids had no birth certificates so
they could not go to school. They were the refuse of society, and the government
personnel told the founder of the orphanage to forget the kids, there was nothing he could
do. That is not the case here. Here there are always resources at hand. There is aid; there
is help, for those who seek it out.

- What most shames me is that I am so often a hypocrite, who realizes what I have, but can
easily be sucked into American desires and values that are so often in conflict with the
values of God. America says that to succeed is of the utmost importance; God says the
least will be the greatest. America says that wealth is what we should spend our lives
working to attain; Jesus said to sell all your possessions and give it to the poor. America
says to consume consume consume; Jesus said not to worry about what you eat, or
whether you will have something with which to clothe yourself, for God will provide.
America says that sex, drugs, and violence sell. The Bible says to be Holy as the Lord
your God is Holy. America says it is fine to wage war on a people who attacked you first;
Jesus said to turn the other cheek, and love your enemies. America says to focus on the
here and now, and live your life in whatever way will make you happy. Jesus said to take
up your cross and follow Him, and your reward will be eternal. I am called to higher,
greater things.

- Proud or not, American is who I am. It is as much running through my veins, through the
very fabric of my life as is the biological blood of my ancestors. That does not put me in
a box, or ultimately defines who I am, because I identify first and foremost with Jesus
Christ and His kingdom. That identity spans culture, race, gender, and country.