

And because of this, I felt compelled to speak today.

We are about to open the 104th Congress with great hope and expectation. This is not very different from the opening of previous Congresses. This is my eighth start of a new Congress and I still feel a sense of anticipation and excitement.

So today, as we begin this new Congress, I want to focus on what kind of leaders we should strive to be. I have considered this question often for my self. There are several principles I have learned from my observations and experience as a Member of Congress, as a father and husband, from reading the Scriptures and from listening to individuals I respect. Four of these I want to share with you today. They are ones that I believe are important to acknowledge as we begin this new Congress.

1. The problems in our country have a moral base, and the solutions are not purely political.

2. As leaders, we need to be men and women of character.

3. We must foster reconciliation within our country.

4. While we serve in this 104th Congress, we must not forget those that matter most to us—our spouses and our children.

MORAL ROOT OF PROBLEMS

We all know that we face many serious problems in this country and we as leaders need to diagnose and manage them realistically.

I want to suggest a simple proposition to keep in mind as we lead: The problems we face in America have one thing in common—they are at their core moral. In our culture today, many believe there is no difference between vice and virtue. However, we must recognize that there are transcendent standards of right and wrong.

Samuel Johnson once said many years ago when his butler told him a guest was coming to dinner who believed morality was a sham. He said, "If he really believes that there is no difference between vice and virtue, let us count the spoons before he leaves."

So, if we believe that transcendent truths exist, what is our role as members of Congress? Government is not the source of right and wrong, nor is it the ultimate answer regarding questions of right and wrong. The thing that I fear most is that we will believe that we can solve all of our problems politically. If we do believe this, we will fail as we always have. That's not to say we cannot improve things greatly, because we can. But in our political activity what we should focus on is creating a climate where conscience is cultivated and character can be built. It is to that end that public policy, political and social, must be directed.

CHARACTER IN LEADERSHIP

My second point today concerns character. As I enter the 104th Congress, I need to examine my heart—what kind of member do I want to be. The name of Moses is carved in the wall across from the Speaker's rostrum in the House. When Moses was choosing helpers to lead Israel, his father-in-law Jethro gave him this advice in Exodus chapter 18, verse 21: "Select capable men from all the people, men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain."

Isaiah chapter 1, verse 17 says, "learn to do right, seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless. Plead the case of the widow."

And Micah chapter 6, verse 8 says, "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to have mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

I challenge myself to follow these guidelines—to be a person who fears God, to be trustworthy, to be a person of integrity and

character. I must ask myself do I want to be a man of excellence or a man of expedience, a man of principle or one who seeks to be popular, a man who looks for the right thing to do and does it, or a man who finds the easy way around whatever I'm facing.

I'm reminded of what William Penn said, "Government, like clocks, go from the motion men give them, and as governments are made and moved by men, so by them they are ruined too . . . Let men be good, and the government cannot be bad; if it be ill, they will cure it. But if men be bad, let the government be never so good, they will endeavor to warp and spoil it."

RECONCILIATION

My third point concerns reconciliation, a sometimes difficult task in Washington. As we govern, it is important to work in a spirit of cooperation. What we need in the country and world, as well as in the Congress, is reconciliation—between races, countries, spouses, between children and their parents.

Today regardless of your religious views, consider the teaching of Jesus who is one of the greatest authorities on reconciliation. He stressed the importance of forgiveness and of loving one's enemies. In Matthew Chapter 18, verses 21 and 22, Peter asks Jesus, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven."

When I think of reconciliation in the political arena I think of one person who did it well. His name was William Wilberforce, who got together a group of members of the British parliament from across the political spectrum to abolish the slave trade in England at a time when the country's economy was dependent on it.

Today there are many who are committed to reconciliation. Here in Congress there are a number of groups where members from both sides of the aisle meet for fellowship and prayer. For example, a group I'm in on Thursday afternoon (Republicans and Democrats) meets in the House chapel for fellowship and Bible study. The friendships that have been formed and the respect that has changed how we treat one another has been extraordinary. When people meet together respectfully and begin to listen to each other and work toward reconciliation, it changes the nature of the way they conduct their business on the floor of the House and in committee meetings. If you pray with and for someone, and they pray for you, it is hard to then turn around and attack them, and much easier to work with them. In this spirit of cooperation, we can work toward helping the people of America.

My last point concerns our personal priorities. People generally serve in the Congress because they desire to help other people. But we need to remember that while we serve in the 104th Congress trying to help others, we not forget those who matter most to us—our spouses and our children.

People who are working to meet the needs of others many times neglect to meet the needs of their own families. (Ministers, Doctors, Social workers) I heard of an individual who spent his entire life in service to others at the expense of his family. After he died his sons went to the cemetery and urinated on his grave. What a tragedy. As members, and husbands and wives, and mothers and fathers, we want to be sure to put our families first.

In closing, I want to share a quote [by Dr. James Dobson] from a book I read on the family. It says:

"I have concluded that the accumulation of wealth, even if I could achieve it, is an insufficient reason for living. When I reach the end of my days, a moment or two from now,

I must look backward on something more meaningful than the pursuit of houses and land and machines and stocks and bonds. Nor is fame of any lasting benefit. I will consider my earthly existence to have been wasted unless I can recall a loving family, a consistent investment in the lives of people, and an earnest attempt to serve the God who made me. Nothing else makes much sense."

CLOSING PRAYER

(The Honorable Tillie K. Fowler)

Let us pray. Father in heaven, we humbly ask for Your help and guidance as we undertake the important work that lies before us during the 104th Congress.

Give us wisdom, that we may make the right decisions on behalf of the American people; and give us compassion, that we never forget the human impact of those decisions.

Reinforce in us the knowledge that with leadership comes enormous responsibility, and give us strength to undertake the tasks that lie ahead with joyful determination.

Enable us to transcend the boundaries of politics and partisanship to work together for the common good, and keep us ever mindful that we were elected not to accomplish our own selfish ends but to serve the people. For we must always remember that the office we hold is a sacred trust; and that our actions have the power to change the lives of our brothers and sisters for better or for worse.

Lord, the Psalmist tells us that "unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain, and unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain." As we make the laws of our land, help us remember that—unless we hold ourselves to the standard of your law—our work, too, is in vain.

Thank You for Your many blessing to us and to our nation, and for Your help in being wise stewards of the bounty You have bestowed upon us. In Your holy name, amen.

HYMN—BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC

(Julia Ward Howe)

THE PINE FORGE ACADEMY CHOIR OF PINE FORGE, PA, LLOYD MALLORY, CHOIR DIRECTOR, JOHN STODDART, ORGANIST

First Verse:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:

His truth is marching on.

Fifth Verse:

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,

With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me;

As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,

While God is marching on.

THE BENEDICTION

(The Honorable Bill Barrett)

Along with the words and the message of the Battle Hymn of the Republic,

May the Strength of God pilot us;

May the Power of God preserve us;

May the Wisdom of God instruct us;

May the Hand of God protect us;

May the Way of God direct us; and

May the Shield of God defend us.

Amen.