

Mountjoy, who, in a speech to Parliament declared plainly, "We have lost America through the Irish."

The largest ethnic group to sign the Declaration of Independence were those with Irish roots, Charles Dunlop of County Tyrone printed the first copies, and the first man to read it before Congress was Charles Thomson of Derry, Secretary of the Continental Congress. When the Continental Congress was in desperate need of finances, supporters in Dublin, Cork, and other Irish cities took up collections to help the struggling new nation. Irish-born generals ranked among Washington's most trusted officers and Irish soldiers formed the backbone of Washington's army. At Valley Forge, it is estimated that almost half the army was Irish.

In the more than 2 centuries since then, America has been enriched immeasurably by the contributions of the Irish and Irish-Americans in every field and every walk of life.

Twenty American Presidents—nearly half—can trace their lineage to Ireland, from George Washington to Barack Obama of the Kearneys of Moneygall. And the contributions go both ways. Just as the sons of Erin helped make George Washington America's first President, it was a son of America, Brooklyn-born Eamonn deValera, who, in 1921, became the first president of a free Ireland.

In December, Senators SCHUMER, LEAHY and I introduced an amendment that recognizes the special relationship between the United States and Ireland. Our Irish E3 visa amendment would allow a small number of Irish citizens—10,500 a year—to work in America for 2 years, pay taxes and contribute to Social Security.

Our proposal is an amendment to the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act, which passed the House last November with overwhelming bipartisan support. Shortly after we introduced our amendment, my colleague from Illinois, Senator KIRK, and Senator BROWN of Massachusetts introduced a similar measure.

Our proposal is a common-sense measure that would improve the fairness and efficiency of our immigration system and further strengthen America's special relationship with Ireland, a nation to which we owe so much.

Our proposal has the support of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform, Chicago Celts for Immigration Reform headed by my friend Billy Lawless of Chicago, and many other organizations.

All 53 Democratic Senators—a solid majority of this Senate—have also pledged their support for our proposal. Despite this broad support inside and outside of Congress, at this time there is an objection on the Republican side to passing our bill.

We want to work with our Republican colleagues to break this impasse and create the Irish E3 visas this year. As Prime Minister Kenny has said, Ire-

land's economy will recover from its current difficulties. But with Irish emigration higher than it has been in decades, it is in the interests of both Ireland and America that we act now, without delay, to create a fair and legal way for Irish citizens to work temporarily in America.

Twenty-nine years ago, Speaker Tip O'Neill hosted the first St. Patrick's Day luncheon in Congress. His special guest at that first Speaker's St. Patrick's Day Luncheon was another Irish American leader who said, when he visited Ireland, "Today I come back to you as a descendant of people who were buried here in pauper's graves."

That special guest was President Ronald Reagan and that first Speaker's Luncheon was arranged to try to ease tensions between the two leaders, who embodied very different political traditions, but who shared a love of Ireland and of their Irish heritage.

The plan worked. While Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill never did see eye-to-eye on politics, they formed a respectful relationship that enabled them to work together in America's interest. So I ask our Republican friends: Let us walk in the footsteps of Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill and work together to pass the Irish E3 visa bill this year.

60TH NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator PRYOR and myself, I ask unanimous consent that the transcript of the 60th Annual National Prayer Breakfast be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Senator MARK PRYOR: Good morning. Thank you all for being here. It's great to have you here. I want to thank all of you for making your way to this very special event in the life of our country and our world. We invited you, and you came, and we appreciate it. When I say "we" I mean co-chair JEFF SESSIONS of Alabama and many of the members of the U.S. Congress who are the real life hosts of this breakfast this morning. On behalf of all of us, the House and the Senate members, we certainly want to say thank you for joining us here this morning and thank you for praying and for building friendships and to try to make this a better world.

Senator JEFF SESSIONS: As with all our Prayer Breakfasts over the last six decades, we are gathering in the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth. He was open, curious, compassionate, inclusive and humble—a good example for all of us in public life and for all of us living anywhere for that matter. He was loving, in a word, and that is the way to describe the spirit in which we attempt to gather in today.

Senator PRYOR: Let us just join together in the spirit of reverent prayer: God of the universe and of each and every one of us, we welcome your presence, your truth and your love to our event. Bless us we pray with the change of heart and change of mind we all need today. We love you and we want to draw near to you this morning.

Senator SESSIONS: In the spirit of love, I pray that everything we do and say from this head table and from around each table would be pleasing to you. Thank you for the good food and fellowship we enjoy at this breakfast and may your Spirit fill this great hall, Amen.

MARK and I and many, many others have been working on, and praying for, this remarkable breakfast for months now and we are all excited to share it with you. I think we have all had two different experiences of what can happen when we bring faith into the world of government and business. Sometimes it creates conflict and when we look at our planet's history, even wars. But at other times, more often really, true faith can be a reconciling force of amazing power, a power that can make an entire society better. As Ambassador Andrew Young said last night at the Southeastern dinner, the civil rights movement, the non-violent movement that overcame bigotry and hatred in a way that could not have been done any other way, was done in the Spirit of Jesus.

We all have somewhat different religious histories. In my faith walk as I studied the life of Jesus, it seems His approach was always to see the people who are considered to be outsiders, or who had withdrawn, He tried to bring them all in. All those lepers, Samaritans and disabled people and poor people and folks like the woman at the well—they had been pushed out, or had withdrawn, but Jesus brought them in. I think that is the kind of approach we want to embrace in this breakfast and everything that flows out of it. We want to bring everyone in and to be in harmony with God's will and to share in God's love.

Senator PRYOR: Senators have been meeting in a breakfast group for over six decades now. As friends, we gather to pray every Wednesday when the Senate is in session. To give you a picture of how long that group has been in existence, the Senate breakfast group has met about one time for every person in this room. We come together to pray for each other and work for the Senate and of course for the country. Once a year we invite you all into the fellowship together to pray for world leaders and especially for our President.

Some of you have heard that things can be better in Congress and that is true. I think a good place to start would be to remember just a few simple, yet powerful words. Love one another as I have loved you. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. We don't need a constitutional amendment or some big Congressional reform, we just need to start acting better and Jesus gives us the place to start. It's simple but it's hard. We need to love and pray for people who disagree with us. We hope you will be loving and be praying for us and with us this morning in this special time today and when you return home.

I have a letter from a very special friend of ours and he writes to the folks who are attending the National Prayer Breakfast.

Letter from Rev. Billy Graham read by Senator PRYOR:

I want to convey my personal greetings to each of you assembled this morning for the National Prayer Breakfast. I miss being with you all, having been a part of this annual event sponsored by the House and Senate prayer group since the very beginning, often as a speaker. Though age and health prevent me from being there in person, I am with you in spirit and you are in my heart.

I want to say a special word of encouragement to the many friends meeting today from across the country and across the world, especially President Obama and his wife Michelle and Vice President JOSEPH

BIDEN and his wife Jill for whom I pray every day as the Scriptures command us to do. The National Prayer Breakfast is one of the most amazing gatherings as people from most of the nations of the world, representing every race, color, creed, religion and political affiliation, or none, come together in the name of Jesus to focus on his teachings and follow his example of how to live and love each other.

Throughout my ministry spanning more than 60 years, I have tried to lift up the name of Jesus to audiences and individuals in many of the countries you represent today against the backdrop of polarization in our nation this election year and the tensions across the globe due to war, disease, poverty and other problems. I pray that foundation of unity you embody around the person of Jesus may be an example to the world and a catalyst for peace, freedom and reconciliation as each of us discovers in our own hearts the love and forgiveness He offers to those who seek and turn to him in repentance and faith. May God richly bless your time of fellowship and inspiration this morning. And may the Lord give each of you a special sense of the Spirit as you pray together and pray in Jesus' name, signed Billy Graham.

Senator SESSIONS: Jesus said that if we had faith as small as a mustard seed, we could move mountains. We experience a similar miracle when we hear the size of the voice that comes out of the relatively small body of our singer, Jackie Evancho. She is eleven. God has given her an extraordinary gift and we are thrilled she is here to share it with us. Please welcome Jackie Evancho.

Song "To Believe", sung by Miss Jackie Evancho

Senator PRYOR: Wow, thank you Jackie. That was phenomenal. Thank you so much. We have quite the head table here. We have the runner up to America's Got Talent, the winner of the Heisman Trophy, the winner of the Nobel Prize and the most powerful woman in American history, so thank you all for being here.

Senator SESSIONS: Pretty impressive but when we come before God, all the fancy titles are brought down and the humble regular people are raised up. We are all equally of value before our Creator. Allow me to introduce some of our presenters who will come to the podium when their turn arises. As a Senator representing the national champion Alabama—I never get tired of slipping that in—I get to introduce the football player. We are proud to have a Baylor Bear with us, Mr. Robert Griffin III, RG3, the winner of the 2011 Heisman Trophy. He excelled at finishing drives and games so we have asked him to do our closing prayer.

We always honor our nation's military each year by asking one of their own to be a part of the program. Today we are proud to have Colonel Kelly Martin, an active duty Air Force officer who serves in the operations directorate of the Joint Staff at the Pentagon. During her career as a pilot, she did countless in-flight refueling, so she knows a thing or two about prayer. She will lead us in a prayer for American national leaders.

Next is Congressman and Dr. PAUL BROWN from Georgia. Both he and Congressman MCINTYRE lead the House breakfast group. Every ship has an anchor and in our Senate breakfast prayer group, Senator DANIEL AKAKA of Hawaii has been our anchor for many years. We are going to miss him when he retires. We have asked him to say our prayer for world leaders. I have not known anyone, from Alabama or elsewhere, who has better lived their life in the Spirit of Jesus than has DANNY AKAKA. DANNY, thank you for all you do to make the Senate and our government and nation a better place.

We are also joined by our colleague, Dr. TOM COBURN who passionately represents the people of Oklahoma and the Senate. He will give us a reading from the Scriptures. If you know TOM, you know that his faith impacts his life, and we all know that. Next, I have the honor and privilege of introducing my wife, Mrs. Mary Sessions, my partner for 42 years who has enabled me to be able to serve, and has provided us with three children and five grandchildren.

We are very grateful once again to welcome the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama. None of us can even imagine the burdens that you carry as the spouse and the leader of our nation. We thank you and pray for you and honor your work on the behalf of the health of our nation's children and all Americans.

Senator PRYOR: Mr. President, did you hear the little thing about the national championship? This year it was Alabama, last year it was Auburn, it never stops. You see what I have to put up with?

What most people don't fully realize is that the government is a team sport. We are all thankful to have our tireless and passionate Vice President running all over the country and all over the world to accomplish our country's most important work, Vice President JOE BIDEN.

The next person I want to introduce is my wife, Jill Pryor, the best person in the world.

You have already met Jackie Evancho. She is going to sing one more song in a few minutes but I think after that she has to leave here and go study for a spelling test. Sitting next to her is her mother, the proudest mother in the room, Mrs. Lisa Evancho. Thank you both for being here.

Shortly we are going to hear a greeting from our counterparts who lead the House prayer breakfast group. They make those of us at the head table feel extra safe because one is a doctor and the other is a black belt in Tae Kwando. One kind of tears you up and one tears you down, namely Congressman MACINTYRE of North Carolina and Congressman BROWN of Georgia. Thank you for being here.

One of the people in the room who needs no introduction is Minority Leader NANCY PELOSI. We thank her for her inspiring service to the country and her support for the prayer breakfast over the years. We look forward to the Scripture that she is about to read, Madam Leader.

Representative NANCY PELOSI: Thank you very much to Senator PRYOR for the invitation to read from the Holy Scriptures this morning. Let us all be grateful for the fellowship that brings us all together with our President of the United States and the First Lady, the Vice President—who said after Jackie finished singing, "now I know how the angels sound, so beautiful"—the fellowship that brings us together as colleagues, our international guests and of course most of all our men and women in uniform who give us the opportunity to exercise freely our faith.

I am honored for the opportunity to read from the Holy Scriptures, from the Old Testament. When I was asked by Senator PRYOR to do so, I went right to Solomon. We all know over the ages that King Solomon has been recognized for his great wisdom, but it is really important to note that his wisdom sprang from humility, and that must be our prayer. Solomon's prayer is heralded in at least two books of the Bible, the Second Book of Chronicles and the First Book of Kings. A reading from the First Book of Kings:

God appeared to Solomon in a dream during the night. God said, "ask what you would like me to give to you." Solomon replied, "You showed most faithful love to your serv-

ant David, my father. When he lived his life before you in faithfulness and uprightness and in integrity of heart, you have continued this most faithful love to him by allowing his son to sit on the throne today. Now my God, you have made me your servant king in succession to David, my father.

"But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership and here is your servant surrounded by your people whom you have chosen, of people so numerous that its number cannot be counted or reckoned." So Solomon said, "give your servant a heart to understand how to govern your people, how to discern between good and evil, for how could one otherwise govern such a great people as yours?" It pleased God that Solomon should have asked for this. "Since you have asked for this," God said, "and not asked for long life for yourself or riches or vengeance upon your enemies, but have asked for discerning judgment for yourself here and now, I do what you ask. I give you wisdom and understanding as no one has ever had before and no one will have after you." The whole world sought audience with Solomon to know the wisdom God had put in his heart.

May our message from this reading be that we have the humility to ask God for what pleases him so that we can do his work. Amen.

Representative PAUL BROWN: Good morning. I am Dr. PAUL BROWN. I am a physician and a Representative from the 10th Congressional District in Georgia, and a Republican. And this is my friend, MIKE MCINTYRE. As Senator PRYOR just told you, he is a black belt so I am going to be careful with what I am going to say about him. He is a Democrat, a blue dog Democrat, who represents North Carolina.

I am also a member of the Gideons, so if you didn't have a Bible in your hotel room, please let me know and we will be sure to get you one. In fact, I am a Gideon because it was a Gideon Bible that led me to the Lord. I accepted Him as my Lord and Savior some time ago. We thank you for coming to the breakfast today, especially our honored guests from all around the world. We are up here to bring greetings from our weekly Congressional House breakfast group and to give you a bit of a sense of what goes on there.

We pray, we study the Scriptures, we share our family struggles and needs and our personal needs. We even try to sing sometimes. We call it the best hour of the week because it absolutely is. It is where Democrats and Republicans can come together, put politics aside, put partisanship aside. And we are just personal friends, brothers and sisters in Christ. And we worship our God together.

Over 25 years ago Jesus Christ changed my life when I accepted him as my personal Lord and Savior. He gave me not only a personal peace but he gave me a purpose in my life to serve him and to live for him. There is no rule that says I have to check my faith when I go through the doors of the House chambers. I could not do that if I wanted to. I am always eager to talk about what God has done for me and in my life and how he has changed me, how he saved me and made me a child of God. I am thankful for our House group. The people who founded the United States were people who prayed, they knew the Scriptures. It is good for the whole nation to follow their example in honoring the God that created each and every one of us and his Son who died for us all.

Representative MIKE MCINTYRE: Thank you Paul. I am MIKE MCINTYRE. Serving in Congress is a great privilege but it is also a tremendous challenge. I am very thankful that I get to meet with my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to come together in our breakfast group where we can share heart to heart.

Washington, D.C. usually focuses just on the surface, on the labels and where you come from and who you are supposed to be identified with. Our weekly group allows us to go deeper and to build friendships. I also want to tell you about a new tradition. During the first vote of each week on Monday or Tuesday night, depending on when we go into session, several House members step across the hall in room 219 and leave labels at the door and pray like Solomon of the Old Testament for wisdom for that week so that we will make the right decisions.

When I am back in my district, I often have people come up to me and express concerns or complain about Washington, D.C. Can you imagine that? They will go on for 30 minutes and usually after I have listened carefully to all that they are saying, I will say: "Would you pray for us that we will make the right decisions; if it's that important to you or to your family or to your business or to your school or our country, would you take the time to pray for us that we will make the right decision?" I have never had anybody refuse to do that when I have asked them. Like Nehemiah in the Old Testament, we want to build a wall of prayer around our nation's capital. You can put a stone or a brick in that wall of prayer if you would take five minutes each week to join us in prayer, and you could choose the time. If you go to the Congressional Prayer Caucus' website and say, "You know what, Mike, I will pray for you and for our President and all our leaders at all levels of government." It is that important. Because you see, the true source of power is not found in the halls of Congress or in the Oval Office of the West Wing or in the chambers of the Supreme Court. It is found when we are on our knees before the throne of grace, before all mighty God asking for his help. Would you please join us in that effort? That is something you can do that would go beyond today. I think you will agree that our country is worth it. God bless you all and thank you very much.

Colonel Kelly Martin, U.S.A.F.: Please join me now in a prayer for our national leaders. Lord, it is with a humble heart that we come before you today and ask for a special measure of grace and wisdom to be given to the men and women who lead our nation. For you know that it is the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom and understanding. And it is by your grace and love that you arm us with the strength and guide our steps towards what is perfect. Leadership is not easy and good leadership is rare and of great value, but great leadership comes only from you. Throughout our nation's history, you have blessed us with a legacy of leaders who served with excellence and we are grateful that this blessing continues today. Thank you for each and every one of our leaders and their willingness to serve our nation, its' people, and, ultimately, to serve you. I ask that in the heat of battle, you give our leaders clarity of mind and the courage to make right decisions especially when it is not convenient or expedient. Give them the faith to always seek you, a hope that will always sustain them and, most importantly, give them a love that will unite them. We ask that you bless our leaders, protect and watch over them, give them a peace that passes understanding; bless their families and continue to bless the United States of America. I pray this in your Son's name, amen.

Senator TOM COBURN: Good morning. I have the privilege of reading from the New Testament Scriptures. The passage that I want to read today has to do with the most powerful force the world has ever known, love. In this room, we have people from well over 100 different countries, all colors, all aspects of faith and maybe from a few different points of view.

Jesus said to him, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and the greatest commandment and the second is like it, that you should love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the law and the prophets. A new commandment I give to you that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. This is my commandment to you that you love one another as I have loved you, greater love has no one than this than to lay down one's life for his friends.

The power of love is manifested in the subtleness and the happiness of our heart because as we give love and sacrificial love, that is the only way, our lives are truly fulfilled, by giving away our life. We have great examples of that in our military, in our leaders as they sacrifice their life and time and families, but the fact is, we are commanded to do that. May God bless the reading of his Word.

Senator DANIEL AKAKA: Let me add my aloha and welcome to all of you gathered here at the 60th National Prayer Breakfast. Let us pray. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are filled with your glory. We come to you to pray for world leaders. Give them your wisdom to deal with the challenging problems of our time; may your Spirit rest upon them as they seek to empower people to lead quiet and peaceful lives in all Godliness and honesty. Send out your light and lead our world leaders with your truth. Bring them through strife and warfare to lasting peace, uniting them for the glory of your name. As they put aside selfish ambition, make them instruments of your will to carry out your purposes in our world. We pray this in your sovereign name, amen.

Senator PRYOR: When we take the long view of history, it is pretty clear that ideas are more powerful than money or guns or even governments. So if we follow that logic, ideas about God would be the most powerful of all. One of the most precious resources of the community of faith are those women and men who help us think deeply and clearly about God, about truth and about responsibility. Eric Metaxas has been a friend of this breakfast for many years, so let that be a warning to all of you, if you come too often, we may ask you to speak. He has written two New York Times best sellers, 30 children's books, has been part of the Veggie Tale series, and he has also debated the existence of God in academic settings all over the world. I first became aware of him through his book, "Amazing Grace," about William Wilberforce whose life makes a great guide book for anyone who is serving in government. I just finished another book of his, about another great public role model, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy". Ladies and gentlemen, Eric Metaxas.

Mr. Eric Metaxas: Good morning to all of you, honored guests from around the world, from this great nation, mostly to our President and First Lady. What an honor to be here. Now, I have to ask, I want to know how many people are here if you don't mind, just indulge me, would you raise your hand if you are here and I just want to get a quick . . . okay, well that was four. All right, well they said four thousand.

Let me just say up front, I am not a morning person but it is nonetheless an honor to speak at this august extraordinarily early gathering. I know it is an august gathering because they charged 175 dollars for breakfast. I don't want to start out by being negative but I think there may be some kind of money laundering thing kind of happening here. I am speaking truth to power people, the price gauging, it needs to stop. Even as

a member of the elite one per cent, I cannot afford this.

We joke, but I know who puts this event on. They are a highly secret, indeed a nefarious organization. They call themselves "the family." You see, the family not only runs this event, they run everything that is happening in the world. We, and of course I mean the President and I most specifically, are all their puppets. The President knows what I mean. He cannot admit this publicly, obviously, but appearing here this morning we are simply doing their bidding. Every U.S. President has been elected by them except for Warren G. Harding. No one knows how Warren Harding was able to buck that trend but we know that he paid dearly for it, most notably by being saddled with the name Warren G. Harding.

I am not a politician so when I see a dais like this, I immediately think of those wonderful Dean Martin roasts from the 70's. That was my favorite show next to Sanford and Son. I am being honest with you now and forgive me if I pretend that I am up here with Ruth Buzzi, Bob Hope, Jimmy Stewart, Red Buttons, Charlie Callas, Foster Brooks and Rich Little. I am being honest, that is who I wish were up here. And to those of you who are actually up here, I apologize from the bottom of Don Rickles' heart, I am sorry.

Okay, it is a National Prayer Breakfast, maybe we should get serious and say something about prayer . . . nah. Okay, seriously though, what is prayer? The real question is what is prayer? Prayer is real faith in God, it is not phony religiosity. It is not, 'oh wouldst thou who art sovereign of the universe take this arcane verbiage as evidence that we believe that thou art an old fashioned and unpleasant and easily annoyed and even cranky deity, and that to get thy magnificent attention and so as not to annoy thee, we must needs employ wooden and archaic and religious sounding language.'

That, my friends, is not prayer. That is, to use the current terminology, a lot of pious baloney. Who said that, I believe it was NANCY PELOSI? It was someone on the couch, but I can't remember. But the point is, pious baloney is not prayer, it is not faith in the God of Scripture. Imagine talking to Jesus that way—he would almost laugh at you. Imagine if we talked to him that way. Prayer is from the heart. We don't try to fool God with phony religiosity. Adam and Eve tried that with a fig leaf once that did not go so well.

And this gets to my theme this morning—the difference between religion or religiosity and real faith in God. We all know people who go to church but who do not show the love of Jesus. We know people who know Scripture but sometimes use it as a weapon. Real prayer and real faith is not religious, it is from the heart. It is honest, it is real. I have had the privilege of writing about two men, Wilberforce and Bonhoeffer, whose lives illustrate the difference between what mere religiosity and actually knowing what serving God is. Let me first quickly tell you personally how I came to see the difference between these two utterly different things.

First of all, I am the son of European immigrants who met in an English class in New York City in 1956. And I thank the Lord that my parents are in the room this morning. My dad is Greek, hence my surname, Metaxas. My mom is German, hence my deep love for Siegfried and Roy. Now, when you have one Greek parent, you are raised Greek, forget about the German stuff. Greeks believe that being Greek is the most important thing in the world. Now I am 50 per cent Greek but I have always tried to be more than 50 per cent Greek but I have never been able to break the fifty per cent barrier, a little bit like brother Mitt.

I grew up of course in the Greek Orthodox Church. I was an altar boy and had a modicum of faith, a mostly nominal, cultural faith. I thought of myself as a Christian but then I went to Yale University. Of course, it is the dream come true for every son of working class European immigrants. But the reality is that Yale, and most of our other universities but especially Yale, is a very secular place, aggressively secular. What little modicum of faith I had was seriously challenged. The idea of God really is ignored or even sneered at. By the time I graduated I was quite sure that it was wrong to be seriously about the Bible or to take Jesus seriously, that it was hopelessly parochial and divisive. I was not sure what was supposed to replace it but I was confused. I guess I was lost. I wanted to be a writer. I was not terribly successful. I floundered and then I drifted, then I floundered some more, then I drifted and floundered together, which you think is easy.

Eventually things got so bad I moved back in with my parents, which I do not recommend. I specifically do not recommend moving in with my parents. I joke, but it was in fact a very tough time for me. I am being serious now. I suffered then, during that period, from real, genuine depression. I still struggle with that. This was a very painful, soul searching time in my life. I took a really depressing job which my parents forced me to take, thank you very much. And while I was at this job, this miserable job, thank you mom and dad, I met a man of some faith. And he begins to share his faith with me, this secular Yale agnostic, and I was in enough pain that I was willing to listen a little bit to what he had to say. He was an Episcopalian and I figured it was safe—they don't really believe that stuff anyway. So I said "yeah, you can keep talking." But he turned out to be one those Episcopalians who actually believed this stuff and knew the Bible backwards and forwards and I was really challenged. We would have a lot of conversations.

I was not ready to accept what he was saying, not ready to pray, to attend a Bible study, to go to church or to become a weird born again Christian. But I was in enough pain to keep listening. This friend of mine said to me that I should pray that God would reveal himself to me—which seemed absurd because I thought: I don't know if he's there so I don't really want to pray to the oxygen in the room, to whom shall I pray if he is not there? It is a conundrum you see. But sometimes when you are in enough pain, and I was, you do silly things—and I did pray. And I said, in my anguish, and it was very real anguish. I said, "God if you are there, please reveal yourself to me; punch a hole through the sheetrock, wave to me, say hello, show yourself to me." I was desperate. Every now and again I would pray that prayer, I would be jogging and I would pray that prayer, "God help me, I need help." It was an honest prayer. And prayers come from a place of honesty, not religiosity. If you can say "help me Lord," God hears that prayer.

Then one night during this time, around my 25th birthday, I had a dream. We don't have time to go into it this morning but it was an amazing dream. If you want to hear the story of this amazing dream you can go to my website: EricMetaxas.com. It is an amazing thing and it changed my life. God came into my life, Jesus came into my life, and it is all true except the part about the UFO and the Sasquatch which I made up. But seriously, watch that if you don't mind because it really happened, it is not made up.

And when God came into my life overnight and He answered that prayer, I wondered why hadn't I heard this before? Why did I have to suffer not knowing? Why? I think

part of the reason is that I had rejected a phony religious idea of God. Not God as he really is because when I encountered God as he really is, I knew that is what my heart is longing for. That is the answer. He is the answer to my pain and all my questions. He is real and He loves me despite everything I have done. He is not some moral code. He is not some energy force. He is alive. He is a person. He knows everything about me and about you. He knows my story; He knows your story, every detail. He knows your deepest fears. He knows the terrible selfish things you have done that have hurt others and He still loves you. And He knows the hurt that others have caused you. He knows us. He is alive. He is not a joy killing bummer or some moralistic church lady. He is the most wonderful person, capital "P", imaginable. In fact, his name is Wonderful. Now, who would reject that?

So at that point, I realized everything I rejected about God was actually not God. It was just dead religion. It was phoniness. It was people who go to church and do not show the love of Jesus. It was people who know the Bible and use it as a weapon, people who do not practice what they preach, people who are indifferent to the poor and suffering, people, who use religion as a way to exclude others from their group, people who use religion as a way to judge others. I had rejected that, but guess what? Jesus had also rejected that. He had railed against that and called people to real life and to real faith. Jesus was and is the enemy of dead religion. Jesus came to deliver us from that. He railed against the religious leaders of his day because he knew that it was all just a front, that in their hearts they were far from God his Father. When he was tempted in the desert, who was the one throwing Bible verses at him? Satan. That is a perfect picture of dead religion. Using the words of God to do the opposite of what God does. It is grotesque when you think about it. It is demonic.

That summer as I came to faith, the guy who shared his faith with me, Ed Tuttle, gave me a copy of "The Cost of Discipleship" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. And he asked me if I had ever heard of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I said, "no." He said, "Bonhoeffer was a pastor who because of his faith in Jesus stood up for the Jews of Europe." I was shocked. My mother is German. She grew up during this period. Why had I never heard this amazing story about Bonhoeffer before? I remember thinking somebody really ought to write a book about Bonhoeffer.

I was not interested in writing biographies. I am far too self-centered to spend that much time focusing on someone besides myself. I went on to have a strange career writing children's books, I wrote humor for the New York Times, I worked for Veggie Tales. And then I wanted to share my faith and I wrote a book with the ridiculous title "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about God but Were Afraid to Ask". Actually now it's a trilogy, three books. And one day I found myself being interviewed on CNN about this book and I was expecting one of those tough questions like, how can a good God allow evil and suffering? But instead, I got a softball question. The host on CNN said to me, "you know there is something here about Wilberforce"—and I had two sentences in the book about Wilberforce—"Can you talk about that?" Suddenly I am on CNN being asked to talk about Wilberforce. All I knew about Wilberforce was in the book—that he was someone who took the Bible so seriously that he changed the world forever.

So I start talking about him briefly and next thing I know a publisher calls me up and says "there's a movie coming out called 'Amazing Grace'." And I was asked to write a book about Wilberforce. Amazingly, I

wrote a biography about Wilberforce and everywhere I go talking about Wilberforce people would say to me, "who are you going to write about next? Who are you going to write about next?" Some people asked me about "whom will you next write?" As a Yale English major, I want to recommend the word whom. If English is your first language, you may want to use the word whom. You can get it free as an app on your iPhone, you just download it. You use it as much as you want. "Eric, about whom will you next write?" And I thought well, there is only one person besides Wilberforce, only one about whom I would write if I were to write a second biography. I remembered Bonhoeffer and I did write that book. And I have to tell you, nobody is more shocked by the reception of the book than I. No one is more grateful to the Lord for the people who are reading and talking about this book. I know that it was read even by President George W. Bush who is intellectually incurious as we have all read. He read the book. No pressure. [Hands President Obama a book.] I just want to say no pressure. I know you are very busy, Mr. President, but I know sometimes you take plane rides and you have got time to kill, so here. [Hands President Obama another book.] No pressure. No pressure at all. Who am I to pressure you?

Nonetheless, the lives of both of these men illustrate the difference between phony religiosity and really believing in God in a way that is real—that changes your life, that must change your life, and the lives of others. Wilberforce is best known for leading the movement to end the slave trade. Now, why did he take that on? Do you know why? I am here to tell you it is not because he was just a churchgoer, because there were plenty of churchgoers in England in the day of Wilberforce. And everybody in that day seemed to have no problem with the slave trade or slavery, people who went to church. The reason Wilberforce fought so hard was because around his 26th birthday, he encountered Jesus. England paid lip service to religion in those days. Everybody said "I am a Christian, I am English, yeah, we are Christians." But they really seemed to think—most of them—that the slave trade was a fine thing. So keep in mind that when someone says, "I am a Christian", it might mean absolutely nothing. But for Wilberforce it became real. It was not about Christianity, it was about the living God and serving Him. And Wilberforce suddenly took the Bible seriously—that all of us are created in the image of God. He took this idea seriously—that it was our duty to care for the least of these. And he said, "Lord, I will obey."

Now he fought politically, he fought hard and you know the only people really fighting with him at this point were the fanatical Christians. Did you know that? All the churchgoers, all the religious people, they were not alongside him. Who was alongside him in those days? The born again nuts, the Quakers, the Methodists that people made fun of. They were in the trenches because they knew they had no choice but to regard the Africans as made in the image of God and worthy of our love and respect. Everyone else was just going with the flow, all the people who just went to church. As I say, they got it wrong. They had not seen Jesus.

Wilberforce took these ideas, these foreign ideas, from the Bible and brought them into culture. You can read about it, and not just in my book, which the President may read. But you can read about it. This is historical fact. This is not my spin, this is true. Wilberforce, because he believed what the Bible said and because he obeyed what God told him to do, changed the world.

Today we argue about how to help the poor. Some say, "Oh, the public sector, government, is the answer." Others say, "The

private sector, free enterprise." But today, we argue about how to help the poor, not whether to help the poor. Praise the Lord. The idea to care for the poor, the idea that slavery is wrong; these ideas are not normal human ideas. These are Biblical ideas imported by Wilberforce at a crucial time.

Human beings do not do the right thing apart from God's intervention. We always do the phony religious thing. We go with the flow. In Wilberforce's day going with the flow meant supporting slavery, that Africans are not fully human. In Bonhoeffer's world, in Nazi Germany, it meant supporting the idea that Jews are not fully human. So whom do we say is not fully human today? Who is expendable to us? My mother lived through this. There are people in this room who lived through this. I was in Germany last week; I met people who lived through this period. It was an extraordinary thing to be there, to meet people who were the sons of heroes fighting against Hitler. This was a moment ago that this horror happened.

Bonhoeffer was born in 1906 and he was born into an amazing family. His father was the most famous psychiatrist in Germany. This was a big, important amazing family. At 14, he announces he wants to be a theologian. He got his doctorate at age 21. Bonhoeffer was a great theologian but he decided in the midst of being a great theologian that he wanted to get ordained as a Lutheran pastor. And then one day at age 24, he went to America to spend a year in New York City. And he went to study at Union Theological Seminary. One Sunday a fellow student named Frank Fisher, an African American from Alabama, invited Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Harlem to a church called Abyssinian Baptist Church. He said, "why don't you come with me?" And Bonhoeffer went with him and for the first time in his life, in that church, he saw something that was clearly not mere phony religion. He saw people worshipping a living God. He saw people who understood suffering and whose worship was real. Bonhoeffer said that in New York, in America, he did not hear the gospel proclaimed. Think about this, he visited many, many churches, yet he did not hear the gospel proclaimed except, in his words, in the Negro churches. That was the only place he saw the true gospel. He saw true faith, living faith, people living it, preaching the gospel of Jesus, living the gospel of Jesus. He saw this among the suffering in Harlem and it changed his life.

When he got back to Germany, people could see that he was different. He was not intellectually different, but his heart had been changed. He began to speak publicly about the Bible as the word of God, the living word of God through which God who is alive wishes to speak to us. So, he understood from the black church in Harlem the idea of a personal faith, that God is alive and wishes to speak to you. And it had a political component because it is now 1932, the Nazis are rising. Bonhoeffer begins to say things that you would not hear in Germany, even in the churches in those days. He spoke of Jesus as the man for others. He said "whoever does not stand up for the Jews has no right to sing Gregorian chants, God is not fooled." His whole life was about this idea that you have to have a living relationship with God and that it must lead you to action—that you must obey God, that you will look different.

Now of course dead religion demonizes others, I just said that, and apart from God's intervention, that is what we do. So don't think that you won't do that. You will do that. We are broken, fallen human beings so apart from God—that is what we do. Do you think that you are better than the Germans in that era? You are not. Not in God's eyes

you're not. We are the same. We are capable of the same horrible things. Wilberforce somehow saw what the people in his day did not see, and we celebrate him for it. Bonhoeffer saw what others did not see, and we celebrate him for it. Now how did they see what they saw? There is just one word that will answer that, it is Jesus. He opens our eyes to his ideas which are radical and which are different from our own. Personally, I would say the same thing about the unborn. That apart from God we cannot see that they are persons as well so those of us who know the unborn to be human beings are commanded by God to love those who do not yet see that.

We need to know that apart from God we would be on the other side of that divide fighting for what we believe is right. We cannot demonize our enemies. Today, if you believe that abortion is wrong, you must treat those on the other side with the love of Jesus. Today, if you have a Biblical view of sexuality, you will be demonized by those on the other side who will call you a bigot. Jesus commands us to love those who call us bigots; to show them the love of Jesus. If you want people to treat you with dignity, treat them with dignity.

So finally, Jesus tells us that we must love our enemies. That, my friends, is the real difference between dead religion and a living faith in the God of the Scriptures, whether we can love our enemies. Wilberforce had political enemies but he knew that God had commanded him to treat them with civility. He knew that he had been saved by grace. He was not morally superior to the people on the other side of the aisle. Martin Luther King told the people on the buses that you must not fight back, that you must be willing to turn the other cheek or get off the bus. Branch Rickey told Jackie Robinson that if you want to win the battle, you need to do as Jesus commanded and to be strong enough to not fight back; that is how your enemies will know that there is someone, capital "S", standing behind you, that it is not just you.

So if you can see Jesus in your enemy, then you can know that you are seeing with God's eyes and not your own. So, can you love your enemy? If you cannot pray for those on the other side, if you cannot actually feel the love of God for your enemies, political and otherwise, my friends, that is a sure sign that you are being merely religious. That you have bought into a moral system but you do not know the God who has forgiven you. Only God can give us that supernatural agape love for those with whom we disagree. That is the test. It is an impossible standard apart from the grace of God. We all fail that test. But thank God for the grace of God. The grace of God is real. God wants to shed it abroad in every heart, not just on some, on every heart. It is the only thing, the grace of a living God, that can bring left and right together to do the right thing.

So can we humble ourselves enough to actually ask him in a real prayer to show himself to us, to lead us to do what is right? Can we do that for our country? For the world? This is a Bonhoeffer moment. If we will humble ourselves, ask God, cry out, *Cri du coeur*, cry from the heart, Lord lead us, will you ask him to help you? The amazing grace of God is there for everyone. You know Jesus is not just for so called "Christians", Jesus is for everyone. The grace of God is for everyone. I hope you know that.

When I was 21 years old, I worked at the Boston Opera House and Garrison Keeler showed up and he gave a talk. And at the end of his talk he asked the audience if they wanted to sing. They didn't, but he made them anyway. He led them in a song called

"Amazing Grace" and that a capella rendition has stuck with me my whole life. I thought maybe some day I will get some people to do that, not today of course. But then I thought you know, if the President can sing Al Green, then maybe you can sing with him. So we are going to try this, if it goes well I will leave with my head up. You ready? If you don't know the lyrics, pretend that you do. I want to hear harmonies.

All singing: Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found. Was blind but now I see.

God Bless you.

Senator SESSIONS: Thank you Eric, you have indeed blessed us. You got our attention and gave us spiritual food. Now it is my great honor to introduce the President of the United States. Mr. President, we thank you for your one hundred percent support that you have given to this prayer breakfast; being here every single year and when you were a member of the Senate with us. Mr. President, I personally want to thank you for the way you strive for the betterment of all Americans. You give your life to that. It was Abraham Lincoln who first used the phrase that we are a nation under God. If we are going to be a nation under God, then we have to recognize the precious worth of every single person. Thank you for your leadership. Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

President Barack Obama: Well, good morning everybody. It is good to be with so many friends united in prayer. And I begin by giving all praise and honor to God for bringing us here together today.

I want to thank our co-chairs, MARK and JEFF; to my dear friend, the guy who always has my back, Vice President BIDEN. All the members of Congress and my Cabinet who are here today, all the distinguished guests who have traveled a long way to be a part of this. I am not going to be as funny as Eric but I am grateful that he shared his message with us. Michelle and I feel truly blessed to be here.

This is my fourth year coming to this prayer breakfast as President. As JEFF mentioned, before that I came as senator. I have to say, it is easier coming as President. I don't have to get here quite as early. But it has always been an opportunity that I have cherished. And it is a chance to step back for a moment, for us to come together as brothers and sisters and seek God's face together. At a time when it is easy to lose ourselves in the rush and clamor of our own lives, or get caught up in the noise and rancor that too often passes as politics today, these moments of prayer slow us down. They humble us. They remind us that no matter how much responsibility we have, how fancy our titles, how much power we think we hold, we are imperfect vessels. We can all benefit from turning to our Creator, listening to Him, avoiding phony religiosity and listening to Him.

This is especially important right now, when we are facing some big challenges as a nation. Our economy is making progress as we recover from the worst crisis in three generations, but far too many families are still struggling to find work or make the mortgage, pay for college, or, in some cases, even buy food. Our men and women in uniform have made us safer and more secure, and we are eternally grateful to them, but war and suffering and hardship still remain in too many corners of the globe. And a lot of those men and women who we celebrate on Veteran's Day and Memorial Day come back and find that, when it comes to finding a job or getting the kind of care that they need, we are not always there the way that we need to be.

It is absolutely true that meeting these challenges requires sound decision-making, requires smart policies. We know that part of living in a pluralistic society means that our personal religious beliefs alone cannot dictate our response to every challenge we face.

But in my moments of prayer, I am reminded that faith and values play an enormous role in motivating us to solve some of our most urgent problems, in keeping us going when we suffer setbacks, and opening our minds and our hearts to the needs of others.

We cannot leave our values at the door. If we leave our values at the door, we abandon much of the moral glue that has held our nation together for centuries, and allowed us to become somewhat more perfect a union. Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, Jane Addams, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, Abraham Heschel—the majority of great reformers in American history did their work not just because it was sound policy, or they had done good analysis, or understood how to exercise good politics, but because their faith and their values dictated it, and called for bold action—sometimes in the face of indifference, sometimes in the face of resistance.

This is no different today for millions of Americans, and it is certainly not for me.

I wake up each morning and I say a brief prayer, and I spend a little time in Scripture and devotion. And from time to time, friends of mine, some of who are here today, friends like Joel Hunter or T.D. Jakes, will come by the Oval Office, or they will call on the phone, or they will send me an email, and we will pray together, and they will pray for me and my family, and for our country.

But I don't stop there. I would be remiss if I stopped there; if my values were limited to personal moments of prayer or private conversations with pastors or friends. So, instead, I must try—imperfectly, but I must try—to make sure those values motivate me as one leader of this great nation.

And so when I talk about our financial institutions playing by the same rules as folks on Main Street, when I talk about making sure insurance companies are not discriminating against those who are already sick, or making sure that unscrupulous lenders are not taking advantage of the most vulnerable among us, I do so because I genuinely believe it will make the economy stronger for everybody. But I also do it because I know that far too many neighbors in our country have been hurt and treated unfairly over the last few years, and I believe in God's command to "love thy neighbor as thyself." I know that a version of that Golden Rule is found in every major religion and every set of beliefs—from Hinduism to Islam to Judaism to the writings of Plato.

And when I talk about shared responsibility, it is because I genuinely believe that in a time when many folks are struggling, at a time when we have enormous deficits, it is hard for me to ask seniors on a fixed income, or young people with student loans, or middle-class families who can barely pay the bills to shoulder the burden alone. And I think to myself, if I am willing to give something up as someone who has been extraordinarily blessed, and give up some of the tax breaks that I enjoy, I actually think that is going to make economic sense.

But for me as a Christian, it also coincides with Jesus's teaching that "for unto whom much is given, much shall be required." It mirrors the Islamic belief that those who have been blessed have an obligation to use those blessings to help others, or the Jewish doctrine of moderation and consideration for others.

When I talk about giving every American a fair shot at opportunity, it is because I be-

lieve that when a young person can afford a college education or someone who has been unemployed suddenly has a chance to retrain for a job and regain that sense of dignity and pride, and contributing to the community as well as supporting their families—that helps us all prosper.

It means maybe that research lab on the cusp of a lifesaving discovery, or the company looking for skilled workers is going to do a little bit better, and we will all do better as a consequence. It makes economic sense. But part of that belief comes from my faith in the idea that I am my brother's keeper and I am my sister's keeper; that as a country, we rise and fall together. I am not an island. I am not alone in my success. I succeed because others succeed with me.

And when I decide to stand up for foreign aid, or prevent atrocities in places like Uganda, or take on issues like human trafficking, it is not just about strengthening alliances, or promoting democratic values, or projecting American leadership around the world, although it does all those things and it will make us safer and more secure. It is also about the Biblical call to care for the least of these—for the poor, for those at the margins of our society.

To answer the responsibility we are given in Proverbs to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." And for others, it may reflect the Jewish belief that the highest form of charity is to do our part to help others to stand on their own.

Treating others as you want to be treated; requiring much from those who have been given so much; living by the principle that we are our brother's keeper; caring for the poor and those in need. These values are old. They can be found in many denominations and many faiths, among many believers and among many non-believers. And they are values that have always made this country great—when we live up to them; when we don't just give lip service to them; when we don't just talk about them one day a year. And they are the ones that have defined my own faith journey.

And today, with as many challenges as we face, these are the values I believe we are going to have to return to in the hope that God will buttress our efforts.

Now, we can earnestly seek to see these values lived out in our politics and our policies, and we can earnestly disagree on the best way to achieve these values. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "Christianity has not, and does not profess to have a detailed political program. It is meant for all men at all times, and the particular program which suited one place or time would not suit another."

Our goal should not be to declare our policies as Biblical. It is God who is infallible, not us. Michelle reminds me of this often. So instead, it is our hope that people of goodwill can pursue their values and common ground and the common good as best they know how, with respect for each other. And I have to say that sometimes we talk about respect, but we don't act with respect towards each other during the course of these debates.

But each and every day, for many in this room, the Biblical injunctions are not just words, they are also deeds—every single day, in different ways, so many of you are living out your faith in service to others.

Just last month, it was inspiring to see thousands of young Christians filling the Georgia Dome at the Passion Conference, to worship the God who sets the captives free and work to end modern slavery. Since we have expanded and strengthened the White House faith-based initiative, we have partnered with Catholic Charities to help Americans who were struggling with pov-

erty, worked with organizations like World Vision and American Jewish World Service and Islamic Relief to bring hope to those suffering around the world.

Colleges across the country have answered our Interfaith Campus Challenge, and students are joined together across religious lines in service to others. From promoting responsible fatherhood to strengthening adoption, from helping people find jobs to serving our veterans, we are linking arms with faith-based groups all across the country.

I think we all understand that these values cannot truly find voice in our politics and our policies unless they find a place in our hearts. The Bible teaches us to "be doers of the word and not merely hearers." We are required to have a living, breathing, active faith in our own lives. And each of us is called on to give something of ourselves for the betterment of others—and to live the truth of our faith not just with words, but with deeds.

So even as we join the great debates of our age—how we best put people back to work, how we ensure opportunity for every child, the role of government in protecting this extraordinary planet that God has made for us, how we lessen the occasions of war—even as we debate these great issues, we must be reminded of the difference that we can make each day in our small interactions, in our personal lives.

As a loving husband, or a supportive parent, or a good neighbor, or a helpful colleague—in each of these roles, we help bring His kingdom to Earth. And as important as government policy may be in shaping our world, we are reminded that it is the cumulative acts of kindness and courage and charity and love, it is the respect that we show each other and the generosity that we share with each other that in our every day lives will somehow sustain us during these challenging times. John tells us that, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

MARK read a letter from Billy Graham, and it took me back to one of the great honors of my life, which was visiting Reverend Graham at his mountaintop retreat in North Carolina, when I was on vacation with my family in a hotel not far away.

And I can still remember winding up the path, up a mountain to his home. Ninety-one years old at the time, facing various health challenges, he welcomed me as he would welcome a family member or a close friend. This man who had prayed great prayers that inspired a nation, this man who seemed larger than life, greeted me and was as kind and as gentle as could be.

And we had a wonderful conversation. Before I left, Reverend Graham started to pray for me, as he had prayed for so many Presidents before me. And when he finished praying, I felt the urge to pray for him. I didn't really know what to say. What do you pray for when it comes to the man who has prayed for so many? But like that verse in Romans, the Holy Spirit interceded when I didn't know quite what to say.

And so I prayed—briefly, but I prayed from the heart. I don't have the intellectual capacity or the lung capacity of some of my great preacher friends here who have prayed for a long time. But I prayed. And we ended with an embrace and a warm good-bye.

And I thought about that moment all the way down the mountain, and I have thought about it in the many days since. Because I thought about my own spiritual journey—growing up in a household that was not particularly religious; going through my own

period of doubt and confusion, finding Christ when I was not even looking for him so many years ago; possessing so many shortcomings that have been overcome by the simple grace of God. And the fact that I would ever be on top of a mountain, saying a prayer for Billy Graham—a man whose faith had changed the world and that had sustained him through triumphs and tragedies, and movements and milestones—that simple fact humbled me to my core.

I have fallen on my knees with great regularity since that moment—asking God for guidance not just in my personal life and my Christian walk, but in the life of this nation and in the values that hold us together and keep us strong. I know that He will guide us. He always has and He always will. And I pray his richest blessings on each of you in the days ahead.

Thank you very much.

Senator PRYOR: Thank you, Mr. President, for sharing your heart and your faith with us. You have a room full of people here who are praying for you and your family. God bless the President of the United States of America.

Speaking of powerful people, let's hear one more time from Jackie Evancho.

"The Lord's Prayer" sung by Miss Jackie Evancho.

Senator SESSIONS: Thank you, Jackie, and may God's blessings continue with you. My thanks to the President, Eric, all our speakers up here this morning. You have given us a lot to think about. Now it is our job to ponder these things in our hearts and to turn those good ideas into action.

Senator PRYOR: Being a part of this National Prayer Breakfast is a great privilege and now it becomes a great responsibility. I believe God is counting on you and me to love and pray where we are. Let's complain a lot less and let's pray and love a lot more so God can use us to make a better world. And now to close us in prayer is Robert Griffin III of Baylor University.

Mr. Robert Griffin, III: Before I close in prayer, I would just like to say, "Sic em, Bears." And to the President, if you ever get a little tired of running the country or anything like that, a little bored, I would love to play you in basketball. It would be a friendly competition because I wouldn't want anyone to feel like I was trying to hurt you or anything, so I wouldn't dunk on you at all. This has been a really long breakfast. The longest I have ever been a part of. I guess everyone up here got the memo except for me because both of my cups are empty because I drank them. No one else drank anything and I really have to use the bathroom. So will go ahead and close this out so we can all go ahead and do that.

If you could bow your heads, please. Father God, we thank you for this day as a day you have made and we rejoice and we are glad in it. Today has truly been a great day, many great speakers and a lovely singer who has blessed all of our hearts and brought many to tears. Father God, in Jesus' name, we thank you that we could sit up here and thank you for so many different things and be here all day. But most of all, we thank you above all for having the ability to make a difference in everyone's lives and giving us the power to go out and change the world. And we thank you for your love, your grace and your mercy and as we leave today, we thank you that we take those qualities that can show the world not only with our words but with our actions. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

CONVICTION OF DHARUN RAVI

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week, a jury in New Jersey convicted

Dharun Ravi for violations of New Jersey criminal laws against bias intimidation and invasion of privacy. Mr. Ravi had used a Webcam to spy on and then publicize an intimate encounter between his college roommate, Tyler Clementi, and another man. Tragically, Mr. Clementi became so distraught that he took his own life.

Young men and women should not be bullied or shamed because of their sexual orientation. It is incumbent on every segment of society to do what we can to stop bullying in schools and in our communities. As Tyler Clementi's father said after the jury verdict was announced:

To our college, high school and even middle school youngsters, I would say this: You're going to meet a lot of people in your lifetime. Some of these people you may not like. But just because you don't like them does not mean you have to work against them.

I can only imagine the Clementi family's grief and suffering over their loss. I applaud the efforts they are making to raise awareness about the real dangers of bullying on American campuses.

The Senate is also taking steps to address the growing problem of bullying. I am pleased to be a cosponsor of Senator CASEY's Safe Schools Improvement Act, which requires schools to establish bullying prohibition policies and would help educators identify and address any conduct based on a student's actual or perceived race, color, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. Another bill that I support is the Student Non-Discrimination Act introduced by Senator FRANKEN, which would define harassment as a form of discrimination in our public schools. Both bills have more than 35 cosponsors and deserve full consideration by the Senate. It has been well documented that students who are paralyzed by fear of bullying cannot effectively learn. Congress should help ensure that States and schools have the tools they need to prevent or punish bullying in any form. We must do more to ensure that all students are protected and can thrive in their schools.

In the aftermath of Dharun Ravi's conviction in New Jersey, there has been some commentary on hate crimes laws generally. Some have wondered whether hate crimes laws criminalize thoughts or beliefs and have the effect of chilling free speech. Others have expressed confusion whether Mr. Ravi could have been prosecuted under our recently passed Federal hate crimes law.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, let me clarify the scope of Federal hate crimes statutes. First, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act protects the constitutional right of every individual to have her own thoughts and beliefs and express them in a lawful manner. The law does not prohibit or punish speech, expression, or association in any way—even hate speech. The

Constitution does not permit us in Congress to prohibit the expression of an idea simply because we disagree with it.

The Matthew Shepard Act punishes physical violence, not speech. The law requires the defendant to have caused or attempted to cause bodily injury to the victim while being motivated by the victim's sexual orientation or another defined characteristic. Importantly, the defendant in a Federal hate crimes case must have acted willfully. In other words, the defendant must have voluntarily and intentionally caused bodily injury to the victim. From what we know of the Ravi case, the defendant could not have been prosecuted under the Matthew Shepard Act because Mr. Ravi did not willfully cause bodily injury to Tyler Clementi, nor did he willfully cause the victim to take his own life.

We know that the consequences of bias-motivated violence extend beyond the victim. Hate crimes instill fear in those who have no connection to the victim other than a shared characteristic such as race, religion, national origin, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. Preventing such consequences is the reason I offered the Matthew Shepard Act as an amendment to the Defense authorization bill more than 2 years ago. The law has already resulted in several Federal criminal convictions. For example, two Arkansas men were convicted after they targeted five Hispanic victims at a gas station and rammed their car off the road causing serious injuries. Two other men in New Mexico were convicted under this statute for branding a disabled Navajo man with a swastika while writing the words "KKK" and "white power" on his body.

The Ravi prosecution was brought under New Jersey's laws, which are different from our Federal hate crimes laws.

TRIBUTE TO ADMIRAL ROBERT F. WILLARD

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today I rise to honor a distinguished naval officer and a true patriot. Having just passed the torch of command for U.S. Pacific Command, Admiral Robert F. Willard will hang up one last time the uniform he first donned almost four decades ago. On the eve of his retirement, it is fitting to memorialize in the annals of this chamber Admiral Willard's years of selfless service to our Nation.

A Los Angeles native, Admiral Willard graduated from the United States Naval Academy and was commissioned in 1973. After he completed flight training and qualified as a naval aviator, he served in F-14 fighter squadrons operating off of the aircraft carriers USS *Constellation*, USS *Ranger*, and USS *Kitty Hawk*. Admiral Willard's proficiency in the cockpit led to his assignment to Navy Fighter Weapons School, more commonly known as