

# 1

## Saving Our Future

Godliness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.

proverbs 14:34

Several years ago I took a trip to Alaska, and my hosts offered to send me on an excursion in their private plane to see the glaciers in the area. I was extremely excited and eagerly accepted the offer. I was less excited when I saw the single-engine prop plane that would be used by the pilot. He assured me that he had flown this mission many times and that the plane was very safe, so we headed out.

As the plane took off, I marveled at the beautiful scenery. As we flew over the mountaintop and dropped into the valley, it almost seemed as if we were on another planet. The glaciers were awe inspiring and I quietly thanked God for the opportunity to view these natural wonders.

As I was enjoying the sights, heavy cloud cover descended on the valley severely obscuring our view. The small plane was not equipped for instrument-only flight, so the pilot announced that we were going to climb through the clouds as rapidly as we could without going into a stall, and that we should clear the mountaintops that surrounded us. He spoke calmly, but I could detect the uncertainty in his voice. Deeply concerned, I entered into prayer and reminded myself that God is in charge even when we are in grave danger.

After several intense minutes of upward flight, there was a break in the clouds and we cleared the mountain peaks by just a few feet. Relieved, I thanked the pilot for his quick and decisive action that saved our lives. I was never so happy to be on the ground as when we landed at the small airstrip.

Our nation is in trouble today, and our only chance is to take quick and decisive action the way the pilot did in Alaska. Shrugging and hoping that something good would happen was not a viable choice for us as our plane hurtled toward the mountain, and it is not a wise choice for us today. Doing everything we could while beseeching the mercies of God paid big dividends in the Alaskan sky, and prayerful action could make all the difference in the problems America faces now.

Many Americans argue that our nation's future does not need to be saved and that we are in very good shape. They think that only partisans are skeptical about our future and that people say negative things in order to make the current administration look bad. They see the beautiful view that is America, but they don't have the common sense and wisdom to look for the lowering clouds that obscure the mountains.

It is true that we are enjoying the benefits of the system set up by our founders, and we are relatively quite comfortable because previous generations have made good choices. Nevertheless, the fog has been gathering for years, and we must act quickly and decisively to deal with substantial issues if we don't want to destroy our children's future.

A quick glance at a newspaper should be enough to perceive the warning signs. As far as education is concerned, we have made a lot of progress in being politically correct, but very little progress in basic education, particularly in areas like math and science. The secular progressive movement completely denies any moral backsliding and feels that we have made substantial progress as a nation with respect to great moral issues like abortion, gay marriage, and helping the poor, but in reality we are losing our moral compass and are caught up in elitism and bigotry. On top of that, our national debt and the passage of Obamacare are threatening the financial future of our nation. Worst of all, we seem to have lost our ability to discuss important issues respectfully and courteously and cannot come together enough to begin to solve our problems.

We each need to take an active role in changing the course of our nation if we are to live up to the motto "one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." We are the pinnacle nation in the world right now, but if the examples of Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Great Britain teach us anything, it is that pinnacle nations are not guaranteed their place forever. If we fail to rediscover the basic principles of common sense, manners, and morality, we will go the same way they did. Fortunately, our downward pathway is not an inexorable one. It is not too late to learn from the mistakes of those who preceded us and take the kinds of corrective action that will ensure a promising future for those who come after us.

Communities, political parties, business organizations, the news media, educational institutions, and the government can all work to turn our nation around, but the most important changes will be made by you and me, the American individuals. Each of us can control only our own behavior, but if we all take action individually, our actions will collectively have a significant impact on the direction of our nation. As individuals, we can educate ourselves and our children, cultivate the art of compromise, pray for wisdom, and hold our representatives accountable. Each of us can positively affect our nation just by making ourselves (and those in our spheres of influence) aware of the fact that we are being used as pawns by those who try to tell us what we should think as opposed to using our own common sense.

As an example of cloudy thinking that threatens common sense, consider the recent furor over voter ID cards. I travel to many nations of the world, and recently I've taken it upon myself to ask citizens of those other countries how they prevent voter fraud. I have yet to find a nation that does not require some type of official voter identification card or mechanism to ensure that the voter is who they say they are. This is basic common sense, yet some members of our society who have co-opted the media have convinced ordinary Americans that there is some type of discrimination going on when we require the same thing of those voting in our country. This would not even be an issue if political groups weren't trying to curry favor with certain groups of voters. Instead of being whipped into a frenzy over a nonissue, it is my hope and prayer that individual Americans will educate themselves on this issue, seek to understand one another's values, allow common sense to prevail, and reject those who try to politicize almost everything to their own advantage.

When I was a child, there was a common saying: "Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me." I'm not sure that children today have ever heard that expression and certainly the adults don't seem to know it any longer. Special interest groups tell our country's citizens

that they should be easily offended by simple words or suggestions. By taking umbrage so readily, people shift the discussion from the subject matter to the person making the comment, which is a desirable thing to do only if you don't have a good argument. This is also a good way to keep people at one another's throats constantly so they can't form a united front and deal logically with the many real issues facing the nation. Individually, Americans need to choose to be the bigger person, overlook offense, and be willing to have candid discussions about volatile issues.

There have been many stories recently about the bullying epidemic that seems to be occurring in our public school system. We should not be terribly surprised by this because children emulate what they see adults doing. One does not have to look at television for very long or listen to the radio for an extended period before one sees supposedly rational and mature adults vehemently attacking one another, calling each other names and acting like third graders. I have grown used to dealing with people who resort to name-calling at the drop of a hat by saying, "Now that you have had an opportunity to engage in a gratuitous attack, is it possible for us to return to the subject matter at hand?" I refuse to engage in the grade-schoolyard tactics of name-calling and mean-spirited comments when we have so many important issues to solve. We can help our nation quite a bit if we refrain from getting into our respective corners and throwing hand grenades at each other, and instead try to understand the other's viewpoint, reject the stifling of political correctness, and engage in intelligent civil discussion.

A suitably thick skin, common sense, and manners are of limited use without education. I'm always fascinated by some of the "man on the street" episodes on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno or Watters' World on Fox, where Jay or Jesse asks people for very basic information regarding the significance of a particular day or some historical event and many of them have no clue about the right answer. Our nation's founders felt very strongly that our system of government could only survive with a well-informed and educated populace. They understood that if the populace reached the point of not being able to critically analyze information, it would easily fall prey to slick politicians and unethical news media. All citizens need to arm themselves with a basic knowledge of American history and stay abreast of current events, analyzing them with respect to history. Knowledge is power and at a time when the people are becoming increasingly impotent while the government grows larger and more powerful, it is vital that we arm ourselves with knowledge.

Finally, each of us must have courage. I have encountered countless thousands of Americans, as I've traveled around the country recently giving speeches, who resonate very strongly with the concepts that I'm putting forward but who have been beaten down. They have mistaken the false unity of political correctness and submission for the true unity that comes with liberty, justice, and responsibility. This unity doesn't succeed without some conflict, but it is far healthier than silence and is worth the fight. I've been spreading the word that we must have enough backbone to stand up to the secular progressives who insist on fundamentally changing America into something that we would not recognize as our hard-won government of, by, and for the people. Because there are consequences for standing up for your beliefs in the current distorted version of America, one has to be very courageous when standing up to malicious influences or even while engaging in healthy dialogue with our neighbors about important issues.

The bottom line is that our country is in the process of undergoing fundamental radical changes while rapidly moving away from the “can-do” attitude that made us the most prosperous and beneficent superpower the world has ever known. If each of us sits back and expects someone to take action, it will soon be too late. But as of today, it is still not too late to join the battle to save our nation and pass on to our children and grandchildren something we can all be proud of.