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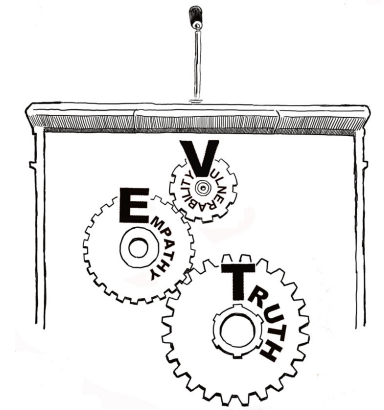
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*The Heritage Foundation's 50<sup>th</sup>,  
April 24, 2023  
Tucker Carlson*

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Thank you for having me. I love the music. Thank you.  
You're really nice. I feel a little underdressed, looking out at this crowd of handsome, well-dressed people. I just came from work. And if you wear a tuxedo, they think it's the March of Dimes. So, pardon my appearance.

V It's amazing to be in the room. This is far more people than live in the town that I live in.

I haven't been in an elevator in three years. That's how remote my life has become. So, it's very cool—or worn socks, for that matter—to be in a room full of nice people.

E And I want to thank you, Father [Paul] Scalia, that invocation for some reason, that really got me.

Yeah, it did, actually. I'll just tell you, since it was just us, and no one's watching.

It reminded me that I don't pray enough for the country, and I should, but the answer is to include the country in your prayers, and thank you for reminding us.

Anyway, thank you. I just want to start by saying that I'm grateful to be here, and I want to tell you why I am here.

V There are two specific reasons. The first and most immediate is that during this fall's midterm elections, I got almost every single call wrong.

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I typically don't weigh in on races because, you know, what do I know? I don't actually cover politics. I'm not that interested. But this time ... I thought I've just got to take some time off and think about why I was so unbelievably wrong. So, I went pheasant hunting. Not that it was the pheasants' fault, but that is kind of a way to clear your head.

And I wound up, because bird hunting really is, again, not good for the birds, but very good for you. And I wound up in South Dakota with Kevin [Roberts], among other people, including a couple of my college roommates.

And I was just so impressed by him as a person and really having spent my life in Washington, I can tell you, if you're not from here, the key question about anybody who runs any institution in Washington is: How false is this person?

God sends messages. We can't immediately translate all of them. So, I can't tell you what that meant. There clearly is meaning. The point is the man who runs Heritage is not false at all. In fact, my assessment of him was, he's completely real. He's an honest person. He means it. He's not playing a role.

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And that was so thrilling to me to see that. And by the way, it was confirmed by one of Heritage's security people who was standing backstage with me.

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And I asked him, because the security guys always know. They're all former cops. They've seen everything. They have seen humanity in various states of drunk and undress. Like, you can't shock them. And they know who's real and who's not. And I asked, "What do you think?" And one of them said to me, to my face, "I would go to war for him."

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## 'The Collapse of Leadership'

And I thought, and these are the kind of people who will tell you the truth. I mean, why would he lie to me? I don't even know his name, but he meant it. And so, to see a leader, a real leader at the helm of an institution that matters, that has the kind of throw weight that Heritage does was thrilling, was absolutely thrilling for me. Because the story of the last decade is the collapse of leadership, not of the population.

The people remain noble and decent. So far as I can tell, I still live here. I'm never leaving. We have good people. We have terrible people in charge. And not just of our government, but of the institutions that I grew up in, the Episcopal church, my high school, I can just go on and on and on. They're all run by weak people.

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And it's the same in marriage. Weak husband causes angry wife. Weak leaders cause an angry country. That's true. And to see someone who's not a weak leader at the helm of Heritage just thrilled me. So, I wanted to come for that reason, just being totally blunt with you.

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E And the second reason is to pay homage and to give some measure of thanks to Ed Feulner for giving me my first job, which changed my life.

V To say I was not a promising hire would be an understatement. It's not false modesty. In fact, if anything, I'm underplaying it. But I was leaving college without a degree or a job and attempting to marry my girlfriend, which I subsequently did, and ran into this giant roadblock in the form of her Episcopal priest father who said, "No, job first." And not only did I not have a job, I had no idea what I wanted to do.

V And so, I applied to a couple of different places. The CIA, if you can even imagine. Some boarding school in Rabat, because I thought Morocco, lower standards, maybe they'll hire me. No. And I wound up at Heritage, as you heard, as a fact-checker, copy editor at Policy Review, the quarterly magazine of The Heritage Foundation.

## 'That Job Absolutely Changed My Life'

E And that job absolutely changed my life. I was paid \$14,000 a year, plus a hundred-dollar bill for Christmas, which Dr. Feulner gave out personally to the entire staff, at least half of whom went downstairs and bought liquor with it at the liquor store, which I think is now part of the intern housing.

V But it was a long time ago. It was so long ago, I smoked in my office. That's how long ago it was. That's riding a mule to work. Just to put it in the context of American history. Smoke in your office? Yeah, I did. In fact, Matt Spalding told me to stop one day, and I thought, "Wow, this modernization program is moving too fast for me. I can't deal with it. I've always been conservative in the truest sense. But Matt, you were right. And I quit."

And anyway, but yes, it was a long, long time ago. And in the course of that job, though, I didn't get rich, to be honest with you. I did learn what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, which was become a journalist. And that was really under the guidance of a man called Adam Meyerson who ran it, who was . . . . That was 32 years ago.

E V And to this day, he really is the kindest person I've ever worked for. Just kind and patient, and he thought I was completely nuts. He thought I was a lunatic. And I could tell he thought that.

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But he was patient with me through my entire year and a half there, helped me get my next job at a newspaper in Arkansas because no one else would hire me. But he set me up with this job. He walked into my cubicle and said, “Do you want to move to Arkansas?” And so, I called my bride who was a religion teacher at the local Episcopal school, and I said, “Do you want to move to Arkansas?” And this is what a wonderful woman she’s turned out to be. And she said, “Of course. Is that near Colorado?”

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She was willing to go there, very much Northeasterner at heart. And we did, and we loved it.

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But I got there because Adam Meyerson felt that it was his job to help me get my next job because his job was to train up reasonable people and put them in journalism, even if it meant sending them to Arkansas.

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And I was thinking about Heritage this morning in the shower. Not a place I think about it, but I did today. And what makes it great, and one of the best things about Heritage over time, longitudinally 50 years say, is that Heritage has always hired a lot of people. And that is an underrated thing. It really is.

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Giving people a job, even if it’s 14 grand a year plus a hundred-dollar bill for liquor, you change someone’s life, you put them on a trajectory. At least that’s true for me. I mean, I had not succeeded in school, to put it mildly.

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And I did not feel, I always felt like I was smart, not one other person felt that way, until I got to Heritage. I’m not sure they were super-impressed, but they treated me like an adult because they had high intellectual standards. They were standards of honesty.

## ‘We’re Fighting This War Against Other Side’

And the idea at Heritage when I worked there wasn’t just that we’re fighting this war against the other side, of course, but it did not logically follow from that at Heritage that you could say whatever you wanted. Just because the other side was rotten didn’t mean you could be rotten.

They really hew to the highest standards of factual accuracy, to intellectual honesty. They really meant it. They did. And even if you didn’t agree with them, they were very serious about it. They were intellectually serious people. Every single person I worked with.

The receptionist in the office at Policy Review was going to school at night to learn Russian. And then the week I started at Policy Review, the Soviet Union collapsed, which was an amazing thing.

The coup against Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in the third week of August 1991 was the week I started at Heritage. And in retrospect, of course, you never appreciate the significance of things as they happen.

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You can't really know what the movie's about until it ends. But at the time, we didn't really appreciate how, well, two things: One, our entire political orientation was based on this war between the United States and the Soviet Union, this Cold War, but very much a war and every part of our politics.

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As you well remember, those of you my age and older, remember every part of our politics revolved around that central conflict. That's the first lesson of history: Nothing is permanent except our own demise and God. But we didn't get that.

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If you told me then that [last] week the Department of Justice would've indicted a group of people—people I don't agree with, by the way, on a lot of different issues, black nationalist, socialists from Florida, not my demographic—but would've indicted them for criticizing the U.S. position, the Biden administration's position on the war in Ukraine and charged them with felonies for which they're each facing 10 years in prison, if you told me that could happen here, I would've laughed at you.

## With 1st Amendment, 'That Can't Happen Here'

No, we have a First Amendment. That can't happen here, but it has. That, and a lot of other things, which are gravely unsettling, actually, in people who were rooted in the Cold War story and the reality of the Cold War, again, my age, 53, kind of know where that goes.

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V So, the purpose of my talk, which by the way, I will keep brief. I'm an inveterate talker. I can literally talk forever. You can't even imagine my capacity for loquaciousness. It's a bottomless well.

E If you dropped a quarter off the observation deck of the Empire State Building, how long would it take to hit the sidewalk? That was always what we talked about when we were kids.

V You would never hear it in my case. I can literally go on. So, I will stop, and Kevin and I are going to have a conversation so it can be much more edified.

V But I would just say two things about the present moment, because I think about them all the time, and I brood on this constantly. And then I take every afternoon because fundamentally, I'm Swedish, I take a sauna every day as a rest. I do, I'm not kidding. Every single day. Never miss it. And my whole family does.

It's our one cultural contribution. Oh, we're Swedish. Ooh. It's a very deep ethnicity. Oh, yes. A lot of Swedish traditions. You should hear our comedy. It's hilarious. But the one thing I do is take a sauna to get out of my head and get away from all this stuff, and I never can, and I just use my time in the sauna to brood more.

But here are two conclusions I've come to, which I think are slightly less depressing than the most obvious, which is the country's really going at high speed in the wrong direction, yeah, no kidding, in ways that are just unfathomable.

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E And for people my father's age, for example, who's 82 and such a decent man, and I could go forever about my dad, who I saw this morning, was born in an orphanage called The Home for Little Wanderers in Boston, and became a success in the head of a federal agency and served at the Marine Corps and lived the America that you imagine is possible for people who are smart and try hard and all that.

For people of that age, it's too much, actually ....

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E I would say two things that I think we're thinking about. The first is, you look around, and you see so many people break under the strain, under the downward pressure of whatever this is that we're going through.

E And you look with disdain and sadness as you see people you know become quislings, you see them revealed as cowards, you see them going along with a new, new thing, which is clearly a poisonous thing, a silly thing, saying things they don't believe because they want to keep their jobs.

If there's a single person in this room who hasn't seen that through George Floyd and COVID and the Ukraine War, raise your hand. Oh, nobody? Right. You all know what I'm talking about.

## 'Herd Instinct' Is 'Very Strong Impulse'

And you're so disappointed in people. You are. And you realize that the herd instinct is maybe the strongest instinct. I mean, it may be stronger than the hunger and sex instincts, actually. The instinct, which again, is inherent to be like everybody else and not to be cast out of the group, not to be shunned.

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That's a very strong impulse in all of us from birth. And it takes over, unfortunately, in moments like this, and it's harnessed, in fact, by bad people in moments like this to produce

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uniformity. And you see people going along with this, and you lose respect for them. And that's certainly happened to me at scale over the past three years.

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I'm not mad at people; I'm just sad. I'm disappointed. How could you go along with this? You know it's not true, but you're saying it anyway.

Really, you're putting your pronouns in your email. You're ridiculous. But no one else thinks it's ridiculous. "Oh no, it's the pronouns in the email."

What does that even mean? What does that even mean? You're saying things you can't define. LGBTQIA+, who's the plus? The plus is invited to my show anytime. Find a plus, and I'll interview them. What's it like to be a plus? Am I a plus? I'm serious. I feel like I'm an addition. Does that make me a plus? No one even knows what it is. And the whole society, "LGBTQIA+." All right, "What's the plus?" "Oh, shut up, racist."

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So, you reach that place and you feel, and this is one of the reasons, Father [Paul] Scalia, I was actually overcome a little bit with emotion as you prayed, because I realized that I was so upset by the behavior of some people I love, frankly, in a country I revere and always have, that I wasn't praying for the country. That's on me and we all should be.

## 'There's Counterbalance to Badness'

But back to my point. So, you see the sadness happening, but there is, as there always is, this is a fact of nature and theology and of observable reality, there is a countervailing force at work always.

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There's a counterbalance to the badness. It's called goodness. And you see it in people.

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So, for every 10 people who are putting he and him in their electronic JP Morgan email signatures, there's one person who's like, "No, I'm not doing that. Sorry. I don't want to fight, but I'm not doing that. It's a betrayal of what I think is true. It's a betrayal of my conscience, of my faith, of my sense of myself, of my dignity as a human being, of my autonomy. I am not a slave. I am a free citizen, and I'm not doing that. And there's nothing you can do to me to make me do it."

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And I hope it won't come to that, but if it does come to that, here I am. Here I am. It's [the apostle] Paul on trial. Here I am. And you see that in people, and it's a completely unexpected assortment of people.

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And I'm really interested in cause and effect. And as I noted at the outset of my remarks and my ability to predict the future, working on that, but because I'm paid to predict things, I try and think a lot about what connects certain outcomes that I should have seen before they occurred.

And in this case, there is no thread that I can find that connects all of the people who've popped up in my life to be that lone, brave person in the crowd who says, "No, thank you."

You could not have known who these people are. They don't fit a common profile. Some are people like me. Some of them don't look like me at all. Some of them are people I despised on political grounds just a few years ago. I could name their names, but you may not even know about their transformations, and I don't want to wreck your dinner by telling you who they are.

But there's in one case someone who I made fun of on television and certainly in my private life in vulgar ways, who was really the embodiment of everything I found repulsive, who in the middle of COVID decided, no, I'm not going along with this.

## 'Truth Is Contagious'

And once you say one true thing and stick with it, all kinds of other true things occur to you. The truth is contagious. Lying is, but the truth is as well. And the second you decide to tell the truth about something, you are filled with this, I don't want to get supernatural on you, but you are filled with this power from somewhere else.

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Try it. Tell the truth about something. You feel it every day. The more you tell the truth, the stronger you become. That's completely real. It's measurable in the way that you feel.

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And of course, the opposite is also true. The more you lie, the weaker and more terrified you become. We all know that feeling. You lie about something, and all of a sudden, you're a prisoner of that lie. You are diminished by it. You are weak and afraid.

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Drug and alcohol use is the same way. It makes you weak and afraid. But you look around, and you see these people, and some of them really have paid a heavy price for telling the truth. And they are cast out of their groups, whatever those groups are, but they do it anyway.

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And I look on at those people with the deepest possible admiration. I am paid to do that. I face no penalty. Someone came up to me [and said,] "You're so brave." Really? I'm a talk-show host. It's like I give any opinion I want. That's my job. That's why they pay me.



It's not brave to tell the truth on a cable news show. And if you're not doing that, you're really an idiot. You're really craven. You're lying on television. Why would you do that? You're literally making a living to say what you think and you can't even do that. Please.

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E But how about if you're a senior vice president at Citibank? I'm serious. At Citibank, and  
E you're making \$4 million a year, and you've got three kids in Bedford and two are in boarding  
E school and one's starting at Wesleyan next year. And you need this job, honestly, and your  
whole sector's collapsing and you know that.

## On Left, a Disincentive to Tell Truth

There is no incentive whatsoever for you to tell the truth about anything. You just go into the little reeducation meetings and you're like, "Yeah, diversity is our strength. That's exactly right. We need equity in the capital markets." OK. All right.

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V So, if you're the one guy who refuses to say that, you are a hero, in my opinion. And I know  
some of them. In fact, my job is to interview them. And I sit back, and I look at these people,  
and I give them more credit than I do people who display physical courage, which is often  
impulsive by the way.

E And I'm not denigrating physical courage, which I deeply admire, but you interview people  
who do amazing things, who rush into the proverbial burning building. And every man is  
trained from birth to fantasize about what he would do when the building catches fire, and  
you hear a baby crying. You run inside.

No one is trained to stand up in the middle of a [diversity, equity, and inclusion] meeting at Citibank and say, "This is nonsense." And the people who do that, oh, they have my deepest admiration.

And so, their example really gives me hope. It thrills me. I talk to them all day long, people like that. That's the first thing.

We should, in this sad moment of profound and widespread destruction of the institutions, that people who share our views built, by the way—earlier generations that would agree substantially with every person in this room, they built those, and now they're being destroyed.

And oh, that's so depressing. But we can also see rising in the distance, new things, new institutions led by new people who are every bit as brave as the people who came before us. Amen.

## ‘Reassess Terms We Use’

Here’s the second thing I’d like to say before I get to the conversation with Dr. Roberts, which is that it might be time to start to reassess the terms we use to describe what we’re watching.

So, when I started at Heritage, the presumption was, and this is a very Anglo-American assumption, that the debates we’re having are rational debates about the way to get to mutually agreed-upon outcomes.

So, we all want the country to be more prosperous and free, and people to be less oppressed or whatever. And so, we’re going to argue about tax rates. And I think higher tax gets us there. I’m a Keynesian and you disagree, you’re an Austrian or whatever, but the objective is the same.

And so, we write our papers, and they write their papers, and may the best papers win.

I don’t think that’s what we’re watching now at all. I don’t think we’re watching a debate over how to get to the best outcome. I think that’s completely wrong.

And I should say at the outset, I’m an Episcopalian, so don’t take any theological advice from me because I don’t have any. I grew up in the shallowest faith tradition that’s ever been invented. It’s not even a Christian religion at this point, I say with shame. But I’m just saying this as an observer of what’s going on. There is no way to assess, say, the transgender movement with that mind-set.

Policy papers don’t account for it at all. If you have people who are saying, “I have an idea. Let’s castrate the next generation. Let’s sexually mutilate children.” I’m sorry, that’s not a political debate. What? That’s nothing to do with politics. What’s the outcome we’re desiring here? An androgynous population? Are we arguing for that? I don’t think anyone could defend that as a positive outcome, but the weight of the government and a lot of corporate interests are behind that.

Well, what is that? Well, it’s irrational. If you say, “Well, I think abortion is always bad. Well, I think sometimes it’s necessary.”

## Abortion, Transgenderism as ‘Child Sacrifice’

That’s a debate I’m familiar with. But if you’re telling me that abortion is a positive good, what are you saying? Well, you’re arguing for child sacrifice, obviously. It’s not about, oh, a

E teen girl gets pregnant, and what do we do about that and victims of rape. I get it. Of course, I understand that, and I have compassion for everyone involved.

But when the Treasury secretary stands up and says, “You know what you can do to help the economy? Get an abortion.” Well, that’s like an Aztec principle, actually. There’s not a society in history that didn’t practice human sacrifice. Not one. I checked. Even the Scandinavians, I’m ashamed to say. It wasn’t just the Meso-Americans, it was everybody. So that’s what that is.

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Well, what’s the point of child sacrifice? Well, there’s no policy goal entwined with that. No, that’s a theological phenomenon.

And that’s kind of the point I’m making. None of this makes sense in conventional political terms. When people, or crowds of people, or the largest crowd of people at all, which is the federal government, the largest human organization in human history decide that the goal is to destroy things, destruction for its own sake, “Hey, let’s tear it down,” what you’re watching is not a political movement. It’s evil.

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So, if you want to assess, and I’ll put it in non ... And I’ll stop with this. I’ll put it in nonpolitical or rather non-specific theological terms, and just say, if you want to know what’s evil and what’s good, what are the characteristics of those?

And by the way, I think the Athenians would’ve agreed with this. This is not necessarily just a Christian notion, this is kind of a, I would say, widely agreed-upon understanding of good and evil. What are its products? What do these two conditions produce?

Well, I mean, good is characterized by order, calmness, tranquility, peace, whatever you want to call it, lack of conflict, cleanliness. Cleanliness is next to godliness. It’s true. It is.

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And evil is characterized by their opposites. Violence, hate, disorder, division, disorganization, and filth. So, if you are all in on the things that produce the latter basket of outcomes, what you’re really advocating for is evil. That’s just true. I’m not calling for religious war. Far from it. I’m merely calling for an acknowledgement of what we’re watching, which is not one ...

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E And I’m certainly not backing the Republican Party. I mean, ugh. I’m not making a partisan point at all. I’m just noting what’s super-obvious. Those of us who were in our mid-50s are caught in the past in the way that we think about this. One side’s like, “No, no, I’ve got this idea, and we’ve got this idea, and let’s have a debate about our ideas.”

They don't want a debate. Those ideas won't produce outcomes that any rational person would want under any circumstances. Those are manifestations of some larger force acting upon us. It's just so obvious. It's completely obvious.

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And I think two things: One, we should say that and stop engaging in these totally fraudulent debates, where we are using the terms that we used in 1991 when I started at [The Heritage Foundation], as if maybe I could just win the debate if I marshaled more facts.

I've tried. That doesn't work. And two, maybe we should all take just 10 minutes a day to say a prayer about it. I'm serious. Why not?

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And I'm saying that to you not as some kind of evangelist, I'm literally saying that to you as an Episcopalian, the Samaritans of our time. I'm coming to you from the most humble and lowly theological position you can. I'm literally an Episcopalian. And even I have concluded it might be worth taking just 10 minutes out of your busy schedule to say a prayer for the future, and I hope you will.