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(Unedited Transcript)

Thank you so much. Let me first of all say thank you for the invitation to come and share in the Eisenhower Foundation presentation on public morality, and to be a part of the diversity and makeup of the panels, in relation to an African-American perspective in public policy and morality, and conventional wisdom, which of course we have experience out of our own upbringing.

Let me give to you a basis for our understanding of morality, as we teach it and as we embrace it.

It is founded in the Judeo-Christian belief that we have embraced coming up in the church, founded in the Bible, which we believe is the Word of God, as a book of morals, or rules of righteousness, for living and engaging our lives with others who live with us.

Out of the Scripture we have been taught very profoundly that the basis of morality comes down to what we call the Golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And of course at the basis of the Golden rule is undergirded by empathy, and not sympathy. Which often I believe is substituted for an empathetic approach to the needs the people have, rather than what often is embraced is a sympathetic approach to the needs of the least, the left-out, and often the lost; those who fall beneath the cracks, in a society and in America that promises so much more.

Morality teaches us that we are not to be felt sorry for, but that we are to be undergirded by an empathetic approach to our position, our status in life. Of course, the teachings of Jesus lead us to recognize that those who are the ones whose needs need to be met are often those who are mostly ignored in society, centered around legislation, centered around the political process, as is the history with African-American people in this country, who had to fight for the right to vote, and about time we got that, there was figured out another strategy to keep us even out of the voting process by disenfranchising many of us who vote even now, and whose votes are not legitimate because those votes are not often counted. Or those votes are manipulated by politicians.

Morality again teaches that you do unto others as you would have it done unto yourself. Strong influence in the African-American community by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, who was a visual example to us, and challenged America as a morally bankrupt nation. Because he said it's called a Christian nation by lip, and not by life, not by living out the very principle that demonstrates true morality; he said that being the activity of love.

And of course, using agape -- the Greeks had several definitions for love. Eros, of course, which comes from the word, "erotic," and leads to often love in a perverted sense. Filia, which is a brotherly love that leads to a personal and self-defined love.

But he talked about agape, which is an unconditional love that is mostly seen as a public demonstration, and of course, that love affect is what challenged this nation to become real in its love for all people, no matter race or gender, or religious persuasion, but for all people who live in this country, and have the right to embrace the American dream.

And thirdly, morality was taught to me by my own mother and father, coming up in our home, that taught us and gave us a foundation for respect, and the real appreciation for relationship and diversity. That was the basis of it.

Someone mentioned earlier that the budget of our country is a moral document, and I want to say amen to that. I'm a preacher of course, so I got to get a little of that in.

(Laughter.)

The Bible says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." When we look at the budget of the United States, we conclude that the heart of America is really breaking the heart of God, because that budget does not reflect the kind of real equality and opportunity given every citizen of this country.

If morality is doing unto others as you would have others do unto you, then let me suggest that immorality has got to be doing unto others whatever you want to do to them. And we see that in so many ways. The question then raised, simply as a governing movement in the life of those who make the decisions in this country, that affect the lives of the people: What would they have done in their own lives, in relation to the decisions that are made, the legislation that is pushed, the priorities that are established, in relation to that which is financial? And what would be the action steps needed to see the reality of what individuals really want in their lives?

Morality really says that, "I want for you what I want for myself." And of course there are many challenges in America where we just simply don't see that as being true. In this last Katrina situation in Louisiana, we saw obviously that there were people who had the power to make a difference, who did not do for others the least. Those who needed the most, often were ignored by those who would not have wanted that done unto themselves.

This current administration -- I'll just say it like that, that's a good way to say it -- but when we think about public morality, we hear a lot about family values, and I want to close by really raising this as a real concern, and a real consideration: What about family values when the public-policy framers are silent when it comes to the head of black households, the head of black families? Which of course is the black man.0204

And then the obvious illustration of the lack of real commitment to family values, when we see how the black man in this society is fed into a system that is designed to keep him from developing. We see it in racial profiling, which is still a reality in cities, urban cities, rural cities, all across this country. Where there is no respect, no relationship as it relates to black men as they are racially profiled. And there are numbers that identify this as not just a whim, but a truism in our community.

What about family values when the prison-industrial complex has laws to imprison many, many black men that are put in jail for crimes that are so similar to others who are put in jail, often of another race and gender; when we look at the fact that black young men can be picked up on the corner and given many, many more years before being caught with crack cocaine; and another can be picked up with cocaine in the powder form, and given a lesser sentence. It kind of brings to mind what we saw in Louisiana when a black individual took food to feed himself, and it said that he was stealing. And a white brother

took food, and it was said that he was just getting that which he needed to feed his family.

The inconsistencies of the definition of morality leave us in a great chasm. We look at the whole design for no reentry, for those who come out of prison. The University athletic recruitment programs, designed to take our young black men, use their physique and their physical gifted ability, and then look at the number of them that actually graduate from that college. Look at the fact that there is no job training, and no career recruitment.

If family values are the real test of morality, then that part of morality has failed significantly to produce in this society those who can embrace the American dream, and live it at its best.

So I suggest again that morality has to be based on what we have embraced in the Word of God. And as a Christian nation, come back to that simple principle of simply doing unto others as you would have them do unto yourself.