

Civil Forum

CIVIL FORUM ON THE PRESIDENCY

AUGUST 16, 2008

BY PASTOR RICK WARREN

LAKE FOREST, CALIFORNIA

BY PASTOR RICK WARREN:

Q Thank you. Be seated. Well, welcome to the Saddleback Civil Forum on the Presidency. I guess you got my invitation. We're here at Saddleback Church here in Lake Forest, California. And tonight we're going to use the interview format with these two candidates.

Now, we believe in the separation of church and state, but we do not believe in the separation of faith and politics because faith is just a worldview and everybody has some kind of worldview and it's important to know what they are.

Now, what I've decided is that to allow for proper comparison, I'm going to ask identical questions to each of these candidates so you can compare apples to apples.

Now, Senator Obama is going to go first. We flipped a coin. And we have safely placed Senator McCain in a cone of silence. Now, each of the interviews will be segmented into four different sections. We're going to

Civil Forum

look at four different things, and the number of questions answered in each segment will depend on how succinct the Senator is.

I have to tell you up front, both these guys are my friends. I don't happen to agree with everything either of them teach or believe, but they both care deeply about America. They're both patriots and they have very different views on how America can be strengthened.

Now, in America, we've got to learn to disagree without demonizing each other and we need to restore civility. We need to restore civility in our civil discourse and that's the goal of the Saddleback Civil Forum so let's get started.

And will you welcome Senator Barack Obama. All right. Thank you. Good to see you. How are you doing?

A Good.

Q Good to see you. I'm glad you are here. Thank you for being here.

A Thank you. Thank you.

Civil Forum

Q If you were a tree --

A Pretty good crowd you got here.

Q I got a good crowd.

A It's a nice looking crowd.

Q We're going to talk about four different issues tonight, Barack. The first issue is on leadership.

A Right.

Q These first set of questions deal with your personal life as a leader. And I'm not going to do this with any other segment, but as a pastor, I've got some verses that have to do with leadership. And the first issue is the area of listening. Now, there is a verse in Proverbs that says, "Fools think they need no advice, but wise listen to other people."

Who are the three wisest people you know in your life and who are you going to rely on heavily in your administration?

A Well, first of all, let me thank you for having me here, Rick.

Q You're welcome.

A And I love the ministries that are taking place here at Saddleback. This is the second time I've been here and the first time we had a wonderful time.

Excluding you, of course, as one of the --

Q And your wife.

A Oh, I was going to say.

You know, there are so many people that are constantly helping to shape my views and my opinions. You've mentioned one person I'd -- I'd be listening to and that's Michelle, my wife, who is not only wise, but she's honest. And one of the things you need -- I think any leader needs is somebody who can get up in your face and say, Boy, you really screwed that one up. You really blew that.

Q Your wife's like that too?

A Yes. Yes. So -- so that's very helpful.

Another person in that category is my grandmother who's an extraordinary woman. She was -- never went to college. She worked on a bomber assembly line during

World War II when my grandfather was away, came back, got a job as a secretary and worked her way up to become a bank vice president before she retired. And she's just a very grounded, common sense, no fuss, no frills kind of person. And when I've got big decisions, I often check in with her.

Now, in terms of the administrations or how I would approach the presidency, I don't think I'd restrict myself to three people. There are people like Sam Dunn, a Democrat, or Dick Luger, a Republican, who I'd listen to on foreign policy.

On domestic policy, you know, I've got friends ranging from Ted Kennedy to -- to Tom Colbert who don't necessarily agree on a lot of things, but who both, I think, have a sincere desire to see this country improve.

What I found is very helpful to me is to have a table where a lot of different points of view are represented and where I can sit and poke and prod and ask them questions.

Q Yeah.

A So that I'm not -- so that any blind spots I have or predispositions that I have, that my assumptions are challenged and I think that that's -- that's extraordinarily important.

Q Okay. All right. Let's talk about personal life. The Bible says that integrity and love are the basis of leadership.

This is a tough question. What would be, looking over your life -- everybody's got wings, nobody's perfect -- would be the greatest moral failure in your life and what would be the greatest moral failure of America?

A Well, in my own life, I'd break it up in stages. I had a difficult youth. My father wasn't in the house. I've written about this. You know, there were times where I experimented with drugs and I drank in my teenage years. And what I trace this to is a certain selfishness on my part. I was so obsessed with me and, you know, the reasons that I might be dissatisfied that I couldn't focus

on other people.

And, you know, I think the process for me of growing up was to recognize that it's not about me, it's about --

Q I like that. I like that.

A It's about -- absolutely. So -- so -- but look, the -- when I -- when I find myself taking the wrong step, I think a lot of the times it's because I'm trying to protect myself instead of trying to do God's work.

Q Yeah, fundamental selfishness.

A And so that, I think, is my own failure. Now --

Q What about America?

A I think America's greatest moral failure in my lifetime has been that we -- we still don't abide by that -- that basic precept in Matthew that whatever you do for the least of my brothers, you do for me.

Q You do for me, yeah.

A And -- and that notion of -- that basic principle applies to poverty. It applies to racism and sexism. It applies to, you know, not having -- not thinking about

providing ladders of opportunity for people to get into the middle class. I mean, there is a pervasive sense, I think, that this country, as wealthy and powerful as we are, still don't spend enough time thinking about the least of these.

Q Okay. We've talked about his before, about the common good and the common ground and common good.

Can you give me an example of a time -- you know, a lot -- I've seen that a lot of good legislation gets killed because of party loyalty. Can you give me a good example of where you win against party loyalty and maybe even win against your own best interest for the good of America?

A Well, you know, I'll give you an example that, in fact, I worked with John McCain on and that was the issue of campaign ethics reform and finance reform. That wasn't probably in my interest or his, for that matter, because the truth was that both Democrats and Republicans sort of liked the status quo. And I was new to the Senate and it

didn't necessarily engender a lot of popularity when I started saying, you know, we're going to eliminate meals and gifts from corporate lobbyists.

I remember one of my colleagues whose name will be unmentioned who said, Well, where do you expect us to eat, McDonald's? And I thought, well, actually, a lot of your constituents probably do eat at McDonald's so that wouldn't be such a bad thing. But I think that we were able to get a bill passed that hasn't made Washington perfect, but at least is -- has started moving things forward.

And, you know, I guess the other example where -- I'm not sure that this was a -- more of a partisan issue, but it was something that I felt very deeply, was when I opposed the initial decision to go into war in Iraq. That was a -- not a popular view at the time and I was just starting my campaign for the United States Senate and I think there were a lot of people who advised me, you should be cautious. This is going to be successful. The president has a very high approval rating and you could

end up -- you could end up losing the election as a consequence of this.

Q Let me ask it this way. A lot of times candidates are accused of flip-flopping, but actually sometimes flip-flopping is smart because you actually have decided a better position based on knowledge that you didn't have.

A Right.

Q What's the most significant position you held ten years ago that you no longer hold today; that you've flipped on, you've changed on because you actually see it differently?

A Because I actually changed my mind.

Q You change your mind, exactly.

A Well, you know, I'm trying to think back ten years ago. I think that a good example would be the issue of welfare reform where I always believed that welfare had to be changed. I was much more concerned ten years ago when President Clinton initially signed the bill that this

could have disastrous results.

I worked in the Illinois legislature to make sure that we were providing childcare and healthcare and other support services for the women who had -- who were going to be kicked off the rolls after a certain time. It had -- it worked better than I think a lot of people anticipated. And, you know, one of things that I am absolutely convinced of is that we have to have work as a centerpiece of any social policy.

Q Okay.

A Not only because -- not only because ultimately people who work are going to get more income, but the intrinsic dignity of work, the sense of purpose --

Q We were made for work.

A We were made for work. And the sense that you are part of a community because you are making a contribution, no matter how small, to the well being of the country as a whole, that is something that Democrats generally I think have made a significant shift on.

Q What's the most significant -- let me ask it this

way. What's the most gut-wrenching decision you've ever had to make and how did you process that to come to that decision?

A Well, you know, I think the opposition to the war in Iraq was as tough a decision as I've had to make not only because there were political consequences, but also because Saddam Hussien was a real bad person and there was no doubt that he meant America ill. But I was firmly convinced at the time that we did not have strong evidence of weapons of mass destruction.

And there were a lot of questions that, as I spoke to experts, kept on coming up. Do we know how the Shiites and the Sunnis and the Kurds are going to get along in a post Saddam situation. What's our -- what's our assessment as to how this will affect the battle against terrorists like Al-Qaeda. Have we finished the job in Afghanistan. So I agonized on -- over that.

And I think that questions of war and peace generally are so profound. You know, when you meet the

troops, they're 19-, 20-, 21-year-old kids and you are putting them into harm's way. There is a solemn obligation that you do everything you can to get that decision right.

And now, as the war went forward, there were difficult decisions about how long do you keep on funding the war if you strongly believe that it's not in America's national interest at the same time you don't want to have troops who are out there without the equipment they need.

So all those questions surrounding the war have been very difficult for me.

Q Okay. We'll be back and we're going to talk about worldview in the next section.

(Commercial break.)

BY PASTOR RICK WARREN:

Q. Everybody's got a worldview. A Buddhist, a Baptist, a Secularist, an Atheist. Everybody's got a worldview. I wrote or invited people who get my newsletter to write in their questions. We have about 200,000 questions that came in --

A. Let's see how much time we have.

Q. -- and I only have 500 in this section. So no matter how you answer these worldview questions, somebody is not going to like them because we're all different kinds of worldviews in America, but as -- people want to know what your worldview is. So as we go through it, these minefields, let's just kind of tick them off, the minefields of America.

The first one is Christianity. Now, you've made no doubt about your faith in Jesus Christ. What does that mean to you? What does it mean to you to trust in Christ, and what does that mean on a daily basis? I mean, what does that really look like?

A. Well, as a starting point, it means I believe in -- that Jesus Christ died for my sins and that I am redeemed through him. That is a source of strength and sustenance on a daily basis. I know that I don't walk alone, and I know that if I can get myself out of the way, that, you know, I can maybe carry out in some small way what -- what he intends. And it means that those sins that I have on a fairly regular basis hopefully will be washed away.

But what it also means, I think, is a sense of obligation to embrace, not just words but through deeds, the expectations I think that God has for us. And that means thinking about the least of these. It means acting -- well, acting justly and loving mercy and walking humbly with our God. And that -- I think, trying to apply those lessons on a daily basis knowing that you are going to fall a little bit short each day and being able to kind of take note and say, Well, that didn't quite work out the way I think it should have, but maybe I can get a little bit better.

It gives me the confidence to try things,
including things like running for president that --
where you are going to screw up once in a while.

Q. Okay. Let's go through the tough ones. Now
the most --

A. I thought that was pretty tough.

Q. No, that was a freebie. That was a gimme.
That was a gimme.

Okay. Now, let's deal with abortion.
40 million abortions since Roe v. Wade. You know, as a
pastor, I have to deal with this all of the time. All
of the pain and all of the conflicts. I know this is a
very complex issue. 40 million abortions.

At what point does a baby get human rights in
your view?

A. Well, you know, I think that whether you are
looking at it from a theological perspective or a
scientific perspective, answering that question with
specificity, you know, is above my pay grade. But let

me just speak more generally about the issue of abortion because this is something obviously the country wrestles with.

One thing that I'm absolutely convinced of is that there is a moral and ethical element to this issue. And so I think anybody who tries to deny the moral difficulties and gravity of the abortion issue I think is not paying attention. So that would be point number one.

But point number two, I am -- I am pro-choice. I believe in Roe v. Wade, and I come to that conclusion not because I'm pro-abortion, but because ultimately I don't think women make these decisions casually. I think they -- they wrestle with these things in profound ways, in consultation with their pastors or their spouses or their doctors and their family members.

And so for me, the goal right now should be -- and this is where I think we can find common ground, and, by the way, I have now inserted this into

the Democrat Party platform -- is how do we reduce the number of abortions because the fact is that, although we've had a president who is opposed to abortion over the last eight years, abortions have not gone down.

And that I think is something that we have to --

Q. Have you ever voted to limit or reduce abortions?

A. Well, I am in favor, for example, of limits on late-term abortions if there is an exception for the mother's health. Now, from the perspective of those who, you know, are pro-life, I think they would consider that inadequate. And I respect their views. I mean, one of the things that I've always said is that, on this particular issue, if you believe that life begins at conception, then -- and you are consistent in that belief, then I can't argue with you on that because that is a core issue of faith for you.

What I can do is say are there ways that we can work together to reduce the number of unwanted

pregnancies so that we actually are reducing the sense that women are seeking out abortions. And as an example of that, one of the things that I've talked about is how do we provide the resources that allow women to make the choice to keep a child. You know, have we given them the healthcare that they need. Have we given them the support services that they need. Have we given them the options of adoption that are necessary. That, I think, can make a genuine difference.

Q. Okay. There's a lot more I'd like to ask on that, but we've got 15 other questions here.

Define marriage.

A. I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman. Now, for me as a Christian -- for me -- for me as a Christian, it's also a sacred union. God's in the mix, but --

Q. Would you support a Constitutional Amendment with that definition?

A. No, I would not.

Q. Why not?

A. Because historically -- because historically we have not defined marriage in our Constitution. It's been a matter of state law that has been our tradition.

I mean, let's break it down. The reason that people think there needs to be a Constitutional Amendment, some people believe, is because of the concern that -- about same sex marriage.

I am not somebody who promotes same sex marriage, but I do believe in civil unions. I do believe that we should not -- that for gay partners to want to visit each other in a hospital for the state to say, you know what, that's all right, I don't think in any way inhibits my core beliefs about what marriage are. I think my faith is strong enough and my marriage is strong enough that I can afford those civil rights to others even if I have a different perspective or a different view.

Q. Okay. How about this, what about stem cells?

Now, we've had this scientific breakthrough of creating these plury potent stem cells in adult cells. Do we still need federal funding for research? Would you still support that for embryo stem cells?

A. Well, keep in mind the way the stem cell legislation that was vetoed by the president was structured. What it said was you could only use embryos that were about to be discarded that had been created as a consequence of attempts at in vitro fertilization. So there were very tightly circumscribed mechanisms that were permitted. I think that that is a legitimate moral approach to take.

If we are going to discard those embryos and we know that there's potential research that could lead to curing debilitating diseases, Alzheimer's, Lou Gehrig's disease, if that possibility presents itself, then I think that we should in a careful way go ahead and pursue that research.

Now, if in fact, adult stem cell lines are working just as well, then of course we should try to

avoid any kind of moral arguments that may be in place.

But I want to make a broader point, Pastor Rick, on an issue like stem cell research. It's not like people who are in favor of stem cell research are going around thinking to themselves, "Boy, let's go destroy some embryos." Right? I mean, that's not the perspective that I think people come to that issue on.

I think what they say is we would not tolerate a situation in which, you know, we're encouraging human cloning or in some ways diminishing the sacredness of human life and what it means to be human, but that in narrow circumstances, you know, there is nothing inappropriate with us pursuing scientific research that could lead to cures so long as we're not designing embryos for that purpose.

Q. Okay. We've got one last time -- I've got a bunch more, but let me just ask you one about evil.

Does evil exist, and if it does, do we ignore it, do we negotiate with it, do we contain it, do we

defeat it?

A. Evil does exist. I mean, I think we see evil all the time. We see evil in Darfur. We see evil, sadly, on the streets of our cities. We see evil in parents who viciously abuse their children, and I think it has to be confronted. It has to be confronted squarely, and one of the things that I strongly believe is that, you know, we are not going to, as individuals, be able to erase evil from the world. That is God's task, but we can be soldiers in that process, and we can confront it when we see it.

Now, the one thing that I think is very important is for us to have some humility in how we approach the issue of confronting evil, because you know, a lot of evil has been perpetrated based on the claim that we were trying to confront evil.

Q. In the name of good?

A. In the name of good. And I think one thing that's very important is having some humility and recognizing that, you know, just because we think our

intentions are good doesn't always mean that we're going to be doing good.

Q. Okay. All right. Let's move on to some domestic issues. Don't give me your stump speech on these. Try to -- let's go through it.

A. All right. This is hard. I've been on the stump for a long time.

Q. I know it is.

A. All right.

Q. The courts. Let me ask it this way. Which existing Supreme Court Justice would you not have nominated?

A. That's a good one. That's a good one.

I would not have nominated Clarence Thomas. I don't think that he -- I don't think that he was a strong enough jurist or legal thinker at the time for that elevation. Setting aside the fact that I profoundly disagree with his interpretations of a lot of the Constitution.

I would not nominate Justice Scalia, although I don't think there's any doubt about his intellectual brilliance, because he and I just disagree. You know, he taught at University of Chicago, as did I, in the law school.

Q. How about John Roberts?

A. John Roberts, I have to say, was a tougher question only because I find him to be a very compelling person, you know, in conversation individually. He's clearly smart, very thoughtful.

I will tell you that how I've seen him operate since he went to the bench confirms the suspicions that I had, and the reason that I voted against him, and I'll give you one very specific instance, and this is not a stump speech.

Q. All right.

A. I think one of the --

Q. When I pick this up it means --

A. Exactly. I'm getting the cues. I'm getting the cues.

One of the most important jobs of, I believe, the Supreme Court is to guard against the encroachment of the Executive Branch on the power of the other branches.

Q. Okay.

A. And I think that he has been a little bit too willing and eager to give an administration, whether it's mine or George Bush's, more power than I think the Constitution originally intended.

Q. Okay. The role of faith-based organizations. Recent poll says 80 percent of Americans think faith-based organizations do a better job at community services than the government helping addictions, you know, prisoner reentry, you know, all the different, homelessness, poverty, things like that.

The Civil Rights Act of '64 says that faith-based organizations have a right to hire people who believe like they do.

Would you insist that faith-based

organizations forfeit that right to access federal funds?

A. Well, first of all, I think you are aware, Pastor Rick, that I gave a speech earlier this summer promoting faith-based initiatives. I think that we should have an all-hands-on-deck approach when it comes to issues like poverty and substance abuse. And as somebody who got my start out of college working with churches who were trying to deal with the devastation of steel plants closing in the south side of Chicago, I know the power of faith-based institutions to get stuff done.

What I have said is that when it comes, first of all, to funding faith-based organizations, they are always free to hire whoever they want when it comes to their own mission, who their pastor is, the various ministries that they want to set up, but -- and this has been a longstanding rule.

Q. Like at a Christian college, Christian university?

A. Absolutely. When it comes to the programs that are federally funded, then we do have to be careful to make sure that we are not creating a situation where people are being discriminated against using federal money.

That's not new. That's a concept that was true under the Clinton administration, that was true under the Bush administration. There are -- in 95 percent of the circumstances, it's not an issue because people are careful about how they use the funds.

There are some tough issues, 5 percent of the situations, where people might say, you know, I want to hire somebody of my faith for a program that is fully funded by the federal government and we're offering services to the public.

Q. For instance like in relief. Like in Katrina. If I took people to Katrina and I wanted to hire some people to do relief, I would still -- if I took federal

money to help in that relief, I wouldn't be able to say, I only want people to believe like we do?

A. Well, you know, it's one of those situations where the devil is in the details. I think, generally speaking, faith-based organizations should not be advantaged or disadvantaged when it comes to getting federal funds by virtue of the fact that they are faith-based organizations. They just want a level playing field.

But what we do want to make sure of is that as a general principle we're not using federal funding to discriminate, but that is only when it comes to the narrow program that is being funded by the federal government. That does not affect any of the other ministries that are taking place.

Q. Okay. Let's go to education. America right now ranks 19th in high school graduations. We're first in incarcerations.

A. Not good.

Q. Not good. 80 percent of Americans, a recent

poll said, they believe in merit pay for teachers. Do you -- I'm not asking do you think all teachers should get a raise. Do you think better teachers should be paid better? They should be paid more than poor teachers?

A. I think that we should -- and I've said this publicly -- that we should set up a system of performance pay for teachers negotiated with teachers, work with the teachers to figure out the assessment so that they feel like they are being judged fairly. That it's not at the whim of the principal. That it is not simply based on a single high-stakes standardized test, but the basic notion that teaching is a profession, that teachers are underpaid. So we need to pay them all more and create a higher baseline, but then we should also reward excellence.

Q. Reward excellence.

A. I think that is a concept that all of us should embrace.

Q. Okay. Taxes. This is a real simple question.

Define "rich." I mean, give me a number. Is it 50,000, 100,000, 200,000? Everybody keeps talking about, well, who we're going to tax. How do you define that?

A. You know, if you've got book sales of 25 million then you qualify -- I just want to --

Q. Okay. All right. I'm not asking about me.

A. Look, here is how I think about it. Here is how I think about it, and this is reflected in my tax plan. If you are making \$150,000 a year or less as a family, then you are middle class --

Q. Middle class?

A. -- or you may be poor. But \$150,000 down, you are basically middle class. Obviously, it depends on region where you are living.

Q. In this region, you're poor.

A. Yeah. Well, depends. I don't know what housing prices have been doing lately.

I would argue that if you are making more

than \$250,000 then you are in the top 3, 4 percent of this country. You are doing well.

Now, these things are all relative, and I'm not suggesting that everybody that is making over \$250,000 is living on easy street, but the question that I think we have to ask ourselves is if we believe in good schools, if we believe in good roads, if we want to make sure that kids can go to college, if we don't want to leave a mountain of debt for the next generation, then we've got to pay for these things. They don't come for free.

And it is irresponsible -- I believe it is irresponsible intergenerationally for us to invest or for us to spend \$10 billion a month on a war and not have a way of paying for it. That, I think, is unacceptable.

So nobody likes to pay taxes. I haven't sold 25 million books, but I've been selling some books lately. And so I write a pretty big check to

Uncle Sam. Nobody likes it.

What I can say is that under the approach that I'm taking, if you make \$150,000 or less, you will see a tax cut. If you are making \$250,000 a year or more, you are going to see a modest increase. What I'm trying to do is create a sense of balance and fairness in our tax code.

One thing I think we can all agree on is that it should be simpler so that you don't have all these loopholes and big stacks of stuff that you've got to comb through, which wastes a huge amount of money and allows special interests to take advantage of things that ordinary people cannot take advantage of.

Q. We'll be right back.

(Commercial Break.)

BY PASTOR RICK:

Q Welcome back to the Saddleback Civil Forum on the Presidency. In this last session, I want us to talk about America's responsibility to the rest of the world. We are the most blessed nation in the world and we're blessed to be a blessing. So let's just go down some of those issues, international issues.

First thing, let's just talk about war. As American -- as an American, what's worth dying for? What's worth having the sacrifice of American lives for?

A Well, obviously, American freedom, American lives, America's national int- -- national interests.

You know, I was just with my family on vacation in Hawaii, visited the place where my grandfather is laid to rest, the Punchbowl National Cemetery and then went out to Arizona, out in Pearl Harbor. And you know, you're reminded of -- of those sacrifices that have been made on behalf of our freedom and I think that is a solemn obligation that we all have.

I think we also have forged alliances with

countries, NATO being a prime example, where we have pledged to act militarily for common defense. That is in our national interest and that is something I think we have to abide by.

Q What would be the criteria that you would commit troops to end the genocide? For instance, like, what's going on in Darfur or could happen in Georgia or anywhere else, a mass killing.

A I don't think that there is a hard and fast line at which you say, Okay, we are going in. I think it is always a judgment call. I think that the basic principle has to be that if we have it within our power to prevent mass killing and genocide and we can work in concert with the international community to prevent it then we should act.

Now, we have to do so -- we have to do so -- I think that international component is very critical. We're not -- we may not get 100 percent agreement, but --

Q -- go to the war without approval?

A Oh, yes, absolutely. Yeah. But I -- but I -- you know, I think -- you take an example like Bosnia, when we went in and undoubtedly saved lives. We did not have UN approval, but there was a strong international case that had been made that ethnic cleansing was taking place. And under those circumstances when we have within our power, we should -- you know, we should take action.

Q Okay. This one is dear to my heart. Most people don't know that there are 148 million orphans in the world, 148 million kids growing up without mommies and dads. They don't need to be in an orphanage, they need to be in families, but a lot of families can't afford to take these kids in.

A Right.

Q Would you be willing to consider and even commit to doing some kind of emergency plan for orphans like President Bush did with AIDS, almost a president's emergency plan for orphans to deal with this issue?

A I cheated a little bit. I actually looked at this idea ahead of time and I think it is a -- I think

it's a great idea. I think it's something that we should -- we should sit down and figure out, working between nongovernmental organizations, international institutions, the US government, try to figure out what can we do.

I think that part of our plan, though, has to be how do we prevent more orphans in the first place and that means that we're helping to build the public health infrastructure around the world; that we are, you know, building on the great work that you and, by the way, this president has done when it comes to AIDS funding around the world.

I think you know I'm often a critic of President Bush, but I think the PEPFAR program has saved lives and has done very good work and he deserves enormous credit for that.

Q Religious persecution, what do you think the US should do to end religious persecution, for instance, in China, in Iraq and in many of our supposed allies? I'm

not just talking about persecution of Christianity, particularly religious persecution around the world that persecutes millions of people.

A Well, I think the first thing we have to do is to bear witness and speak out and not pretend that it's not taking place. You know, our relationship with China, for example, is a very complicated one. We're trading partners. Unfortunately, they are now lenders to us because we haven't been taking care of our economy the way we need to be.

I don't think any of us want to see military conflict with China so we want to manage this relationship and move them into the world community as a full partner, but we can't purchase that by ignoring the very real prosecutions -- persecutions that are taking place. And so having an administration that's speaking out, joining in international forums where we can point out human rights abuses and the absence of religious freedom, that, I think, is absolutely critical.

Over time, what we are doing is setting up new

norms and creating a universal principle that people's faith and people's beliefs have to be protected. And as you said, it's not just Christians. And we've got to make sure -- you know, one thing that I think is very important for us to do on all these issues is to lead by example.

That's why I think it's so important for us to have religious tolerance here in the United States.

That's why it's so important for us when we are criticizing other countries about rule of law to make sure that we're abiding by rule of law and habeas corpus and we're not engaging in torture because that gives us a moral standard to talk about these other issues.

Q Okay. Another issue, the third largest and the fastest growing criminal industry in the world is human trafficking. \$32 billion a year. A lot of people don't know that there are about 27 million people living in slavery right now, many them in sex trafficking, but in the others. How do you speak out and how do you plan to do something about that?

A This has to be a top priority. And I -- this is an area where we've already seen bipartisan agreement on this issue. What we have to do is to create better, more effective tools for prosecuting those who are engaging in human trafficking and we have to do that -- within our country, sadly, there are thousands who are trapped in various forms of enslavement here in our country, oftentimes, young women who are caught up in prostitution. So we've got to give prosecutors the tools to crack down on these human trafficking networks.

Internationally, we've got to speak out and we've got to forge alliances with other countries to share intelligence, to roll up the financing networks that are involved in them. It is a debasement of our common humanity whenever we see something like that taking place.

Q Okay. In a minute, in one minute -- because I know you could take the entire hour on this -- tell me in a minute why you want to be president.

A You know, I remember what my mother used to tell me. I was talking to somebody a while back and I said,

The one time that she'd get really angry with me is if she ever thought that I was being mean to somebody or unfair to somebody. She said, Imagine standing in their shoes, imagine looking through their eyes, that basic idea of empathy. And that I think is what made -- what's made America special is that notion that everybody's got a shot. If we see somebody down and out, if we see a kid who's -- who can't afford college that we care for them too.

And I want to be president because that's the America I believe in and I feel like that American dream is slipping away. I think we are at a critical juncture economically. I think we are at a critical juncture internationally. We've got to make some big decisions not just for us, but for the next generation and we keep on putting it off.

And unfortunately, our politics is so broken and Washington is so broken that we can't seem to bring together people of goodwill to solve these common

problems.

I think I have the ability to build bridges across partisan lines, racial, regional lines to get people to work on some common sense solutions to critical issues and I hope that I have the opportunity to do that.

Q All right. I'm going to skip over a couple of these other important ones and I'll just ask you, what do you say to people who oppose me asking you these questions? That will be the last one.

A These are the kinds of forums we need, where we have a conversation. And I think based on -- based on these conversations, the American people can make a good judgment. I mean, one of the things, if you are a person of faith like me, I believe that things will work out and we will get the president that we need.

What we want though is just to make sure that people have good information; that they're not just consuming negative ads or the kind of nasty tit for tat that has become so common in politics. I want people to know me well and I want people -- I'm sure John McCain

feels the same way that if we are both known and people know where we stand on issues, I trust in the American people. They're going to make a good decision and we're going to be able to solve the big problems that we face.

Q We have 30 seconds.

What would you tell the American public if you knew there wouldn't be any repercussions?

A Well, you know what I would tell them is that solving big problems like, for example, energy is not going to be easy and everybody's going to have to get involved and we are going to have to all think about how we're using energy more efficiently. And there is going to be a price to pay in transitioning to a more energy efficient economy and dealing with issues like climate change.

And if we pretend like everything is free and there is no sacrifice involved then we are betraying the tradition of America. I think about my grandparent's generation, coming out of a depression, fighting

World War II. You know, they've confronted some challenges we can't even imagine. If they were willing to make sacrifices on our behalf, we should be able to make some sacrifices on behalf of the next generation.

Q Senator, thank you.

Now, would you stand -- would you stand and thank Senator Barack Obama. Thank you. Thank you. And while you are still standing, would you welcome at the same time Senator John McCain. Would you welcome him as he comes out here. Thank you, guys. Thank you, guys. Thank you so much.

(Commercial break.)

BY PASTOR RICK WARREN:

Q. Welcome back to the Saddleback Civil Forum on the Presidency, and welcome Senator John McCain.

A. Thank you, Rick.

Q. Thank you for being here.

A. Thank you.

Q. Thank you for coming. Now, my first question.

Was the cone of silence comfortable that you were in just now?

A. I was trying to hear through the wall.

Q. Okay. This first set of questions deals with leadership and the personal life of leadership. First question is who were the three wisest people that you know that you would rely on heavily in an administration?

A. First one I think would be General David Petraeus, one of the great military leaders in American history who took us from defeat to victory in Iraq. One of the great leaders and I'm so proud to know him.

Fourth of July a year ago, Senator Lindsey Graham and I were in Baghdad. 688 brave young Americans whose enlistment had expired swore an oath of reenlistment to stay and fight for freedom. Only someone like General David Petraeus could motivate someone like that.

I think John Lewis. John Lewis was at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Had his skull fractured. Continued to serve. Continues to have the most optimistic outlook about America. He can teach us all a lot about the meaning of courage and commitment to causes greater than our self-interest.

Meg Whitman. Meg Whitman, the CEO of eBay. Meg Whitman. 12 years ago there were five employees. Today, there are one and a half million people that make a living off eBay in America in the world. It is one of these great American success stories. And in these economic challenging times, we need to call on the wisdom and knowledge, background of people like Meg Whitman who have been able to make such a great

American success story part of the world's folklore.

Q. Okay. Let me ask you this. This is a character question.

A. I hope they get easier.

Q. This one isn't any easier. We've had a lot of leaders because of their weaknesses, character flaws, stumble, become ineffective, or not even serving anymore. Serving our country.

What's been your greatest moral failure and what has been the -- what do you think is the greatest moral failure of America?

A. They don't get any easier.

Q. No, they don't get any easier.

A. My greatest moral failing, and I have been a very imperfect person, is the failure of my first marriage. It's my greatest moral failure.

I think America's greatest moral failure has been throughout our existence, perhaps we have not devoted ourselves to causes greater than our

self-interest, although we've been the best at it of anybody in the world.

I think after 9/11, my friends, instead of telling people to go shopping or take a trip, we should have told Americans to join the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, the military, expand our volunteers, expand what you are doing. Expand the -- create missions that you are doing, that you are carrying out not only here in America but throughout the world especially in Rwanda, and I hope we have a chance to talk a little bit about that later on.

You know, a little pandering here. The first words of your very successful book is this is not about you. And you know what that really also means? Serve a cause greater than your self-interest.

Q. John, you know that a lot of good legislation dies because of partisan politics, and party loyalty keeps people from really putting America's best first.

Could you give me an example of where you led against your party's interest -- oh, this is hard --

and really maybe against your own best interest for the good of America?

A. You know, by a strange coincidence, I was not elected Miss Congeniality again in the United States Senate this year. I don't know why. I don't know why. I don't know why.

Climate change, out of control spending, torture. The list goes on on a large number of issues that I've put my country first and I've reached across the aisle.

But I probably have to say that one of the times that probably was one of the most trying was when I was first a member of Congress, and I am a new freshman in the House of Representatives, and very loyal and dedicated to President Reagan, who I still think is one of the great, great presidents in American history, who won the Cold War without firing a shot, in the words of Margaret Thatcher.

He wanted to send troops to Beirut for a

peacekeeping mission. My knowledge and my background told me that a few hundred marines in a situation like that could not successfully carry out any kind of peacekeeping mission, and I thought they were going into harm's way.

Tragically, as many of you recall, there was a bombing of the marine barracks and well over a hundred brave marines gave their lives. But it was tough that vote because I went against the president I believed in and the party that believed that maybe I was disloyal very early in my political career.

Q. There's a verse in the Bible that says intelligent people look for ideas, in fact, they search for them.

What's the most significant position that you've held ten years ago that you no longer hold today? I think the point I'm trying to make is that leaders are not stubborn. They do change their mind with additional information. So give me a good example of something that was ten years ago you said that's the

way I feel about it and now ten years later that's different. That's not flip-flopping. It is just sometimes growing in wisdom.

A. Offshore drilling. We've got to drill now, and we've got to drill here, and we've got to become independent on foreign oil. I know that there's some here in California that disagree, that disagree with that position.

Could I also mention very seriously about this issue, my friends, you know, that this is a national security issue. We're sending \$700 billion a year to countries that don't like us very much, that some of that money is ending up in the hands of terrorist organizations. We cannot allow this greatest transfer of wealth in history and our national security to continue to be threatened.

And Rick, I know we've got a lot of issues to cover, but let me just say it. At the town hall meetings that I have every day, that's the issue on

people's mind is energy. So I think if I could just get one -- 30 seconds.

One, we've got to do everything. We've got to do wind, tide, solar, natural gas, hydrogen cars, hybrid cars, electric cars, and we have to have nuclear power in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save on our energy costs.

By the way, in case you hadn't noticed it, the French. 80 percent -- we love to imitate the French. 80 percent of their electricity is generated by nuclear power. If they can do it and reprocess, we can too, my friends.

And by the way, if you hadn't noticed, we now have a pro-American president of France, which proves if you live long enough anything can happen in America.

Q. Well, you just took -- I had that question later on, but we don't have to ask it.

What's the most gut-wrenching decision you've ever had to make and what was the process that you used to make it?

A. It was long ago and far away in a prison camp in North Vietnam. My father was a high ranking admiral. The Vietnamese came and said that I could leave prison early, and we had a Code of Conduct that said you only leave by order of capture. I also had a dear and beloved friend who was from California by the name of Alvarez, who had been shot down and captured a couple years before me, but I wasn't in good physical shape. In fact, I was in rather bad physical shape. And so I said no.

Now, in interest of full disclosure, I'm very happy I didn't know the war was going to last for another three years or so. But I said no. And I'll never forget sitting and my last answer, and the high ranking officer offered to slam the door and the interrogator said, "Go back to your cell. It's going to be very tough on you now." And it was. But not only the toughest decision I ever made but I'm most happy about that decision than any decision I ever made

Civil Forum

in my life. I did finally say it took a lot of prayer,
it took a lot of prayer.

Q. We'll be right back with John McCain.

(Commercial break.)

BY PASTOR RICK WARREN:

Q Welcome back. Welcome back. And I'm here with Senator John McCain.

Now, John, in this next section, we're going to talk about worldview. And I actually invited 40,000 people of my personal friends to send me their questions and these are heartland questions that came in from all over America. And no matter how you answer them, somebody's not going to like it because we have many worldviews, obviously, in America. But let's talk through these -- these minefields together.

First, you've made no -- no doubt about the fact that you are a Christian. You publicly say you are a follower of Christ. What does that mean to you and how does faith work out in your life on a daily basis? What does it mean to you?

A It means I'm saved and forgiven. When we're talking about the world, our faith encompasses not just the United States of America, but the world.

Can I tell you another story real quick?

Q Sure.

A The Vietnamese kept us in prison in conditions of solitary confinement for two or three to a cell. They did that because they knew they could break down our resistance. One of the techniques that they used to get information was to take ropes and tie them around your biceps, pull your biceps behind you, loop the rope around your head, pull your head down between your knees and leave you in that position. You can manage, it's very uncomfortable.

One night I was being punished in that fashion. All of a sudden, the door of the cell opened and a guard came in, a guy who was just, what we called, a gun guard, just walked around the camp with a gun on his shoulder. He went like this and then he loosened the ropes. He came back about four hours later, he tightened them up again and left.

The following Christmas -- because it was Christmas day -- we were allowed to stand outside of our

cell for a few minutes. In those days we were not allowed to see or communicate with each other, although we certainly did. And I was standing outside for my few minutes outside of my cell.

He came walking up. He stood there for a minute and with his handle on the dirt in the courtyard, he drew a cross and he stood there. And a minute later, he rubbed it out and walked away. For a minute there, there was just two Christians worshipping together. I'll never forget that moment so every day --

Q All right. Let's go into the tough ones because that was just a gimme.

Let's deal with abortion. I, as a pastor, have to deal with this all the time, every different angle, every different pain, all the decisions and all of that. 40 million abortions since Roe v Wade. Some people who -- people who believe that life begins at conception would say that's a holocaust for many people.

At what point is a baby entitled to human rights?

A At the moment of conception. I have a 25-year pro-life record in the Congress, in the Senate. And as president of the United States, I will be a pro-life president and this presidency will have pro-life policies. That's my commitment. That's my commitment to you.

Q Okay. We don't have to go longer on that one.

Define marriage.

A Union -- a union between a man and woman, between one man and one woman, that's my definition of marriage.

Are we going to get back to the importance of Supreme Court Justices or should I --

Q We'll get to that.

A All right. Okay.

Q You got all my questions, good.

A When we speak of the issues of the rights of the unborn, we need to talk about judges, but anyway go ahead.

Q Let me just ask you a question related to that. We've got a bill right here in California, Proposition 8, that's going on because the court overturned this definition of marriage.

Was the Supreme Court of California wrong?

A I believe they were wrong and I strongly support preserving the unique status of marriage between man and woman. And I'm a federalist. I believe in that State should make those decisions. In my state, I hope we will make that decision, and other states they have, to recognize the unique status of marriage between man and woman.

And that means -- that doesn't mean that people can't enter into legal agreements. That doesn't mean that they don't have the rights of all citizens. I'm not saying that. I am saying that we should preserve the unique status of marriage between one man and one woman and if a federal court -- if a federal court decided that my state of Arizona had to observe what the state of Massachusetts decided, then I would favor a Constitutional amendment. Until then, I believe the State should make the decisions within their own states.

Q Okay. All right. Another issue is stem cells.

Now, we've had this scientific breakthrough of creating pluripotent stem cells through adult stem cells.

A Yes.

Q So would you favor or oppose the federal funding of embryonic stem cell research since we have this other breakthrough?

A For those of us in the pro-life community, this has been a great struggle and a terrible dilemma because we're also taught other obligations that we have as well.

I've come down on the side of stem cell research, but I am wildly optimistic that skin cell research which is coming more and more into focus and practicability will make this debate an academic one.

Q All right. How about the issue of evil. I asked this of your -- your rival in the previous thing.

Does evil exist? And if so, should we ignore it, negotiate with it, contain it or defeat it?

A Defeat it. Couple points. One, if I'm president of the United States, my friends, if I have to follow him to the gates of hell, I will get Osama Bin Laden and bring

him to justice. I will do that and I know how to do it.

I will get that done. No one -- no one should be allowed to take thousands of American -- innocent American lives. Of course evil must be defeated.

My friends, we are facing the transcendent challenge of the 21st century, radical Islamic extremists. Not long ago in Baghdad, Al-Qaeda took two young women who were mentally disabled and put suicide vests on them, sent them into a marketplace and by remote control, detonated those suicide vests. If that isn't evil, you have to tell me what is, and we're going to defeat this evil.

And the central battleground, according to David Petraeus and Osama Bin Laden, is the battles -- is Baghdad, Mosul, Basra and Iraq and we are winning and we are succeeding and our troops will come home with honor and with victory and not in defeat and that's what's happening.

We have -- and we face this threat throughout the world. It's not just in Iraq. It's not just in

Afghanistan. Our intelligence people tell us Al-Qaeda continues to try to establish cells here in the United States of America. My friends, we must face this challenge. We can face this challenge and we must totally defeat it and we're in a long struggle, but when I'm around the young men and women who are serving this nation in uniform, I have no doubt, none.

Q All right. These next questions have to do with domestic issues. I believe that leadership is stewardship, not ownership. And for a few years, you are asking us to place our stewardship, our freedom and our security and economy, and environment, everything, into your hands so here I have about 500 questions in this category.

The first one is on the courts. Which existing Supreme Court Justices would you not have nominated?

A With all due respect, Justice Ginsburg, Justice Breyer, Justice Souter and Justice Stevens.

Q Why? Tell me why.

A Well, I think that the president of the

United States has incredible responsibility in nominating people to the United States Supreme Court. They are lifetime positions as well as the federal bench. There will be two, maybe three vacancies. This nomination should be based on the criteria of proven record of strictly adhering to the Constitution of the United States of America and not legislating from the bench. Some of the worst damage has been done by legislating from the bench.

And by the way, Justices Alito and Roberts are two of my most recent favorites, by the way. They really are. They are very fine and I'm proud of President Bush for nominating them.

Q All right. Let's talk about the role of faith-based organizations. There is a recent poll that came out, said over 70 percent of Americans believe that faith-based organizations do a better job at community services --

A Because Americans are right.

Q -- than the government. You know, addictions, homelessness, poverty, all of these -- prisoner rehab, things like that.

Now, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 allows religious organizations -- not just churches, but faith-based organizations -- to keep and hire the people that they believe share common beliefs with.

A Yes.

Q Would you insist that faith-based organizations forfeit that right to access federal funds?

A Absolutely not. And if you did, it would mean a severe crippling of faith-based organizations and their abilities to do the things that they have done so successfully.

Life is full of anecdotes. And I'm sorry to tell you so many anecdotes, but I went to New Orleans after Katrina. The Resurrection Baptist Church was doing tremendous work with thousands of volunteers, I'm sure probably from here at Saddleback, coordinating the efforts of thousands of volunteers, including my own church, the

North Phoenix Baptist Church, who came from all over America.

And various authorities off the record told me off the record that they were doing so much more good than the government organizations that it was incredible and New Orleans could not have been on the path -- and they've got a long way to go -- on the path to recovery if it hadn't been for the faith-based organizations who are still operating in New Orleans much to their credit.

Thank God.

Q First and last out.

A Yes.

Q All right. Let's talk about education. America ranks 19th in high school graduations, but we're first in incarcerations. Everybody says they want more accountability in schools.

A Uh-huh.

Q About 80 percent of America says they support merit pay for the best teachers. Now, I don't want to

hear your stump speech on education.

A Yes. Yes. And find bad -- and find bad teachers
another line of work.

Q You know --

A Can I --

Q We're going to end this. You are answering so
quickly.

A Can I --

Q You want to play a game of poker?

A Can I just say choice and competition -- choice
and competition, home schooling, charter schools,
vouchers, all the choice and competition. I want -- look,
I want every American family to have the same choice that
Cindy and I made and Senator Obama and Mrs. Obama made as
well and that was, we wanted to send our children to the
school of our choice.

And charter schools work, my friends. Home
schooling works. Vouchers in our nation's capital works.
We've got thousands of people in Washington DC that are
applying for a voucher system. New York City is

reforming. I go back to New Orleans. They were -- as we know, the tragedy devastated them. They now have over 30 charter schools in the city of New Orleans and guess what? It's all coming up. It's all coming up. It's a simple principle, but it's going to take dedicated men and women, particularly in the teaching profession, to make it happen.

And by the way, here in -- I won't go any further, but the point is, it's all based and it's being proven that choice and competition for every American family. And it is the civil rights issue of the 21st century because every citizens' child now has an opportunity to go to school, but what kind of opportunity is it if you send them to a failing school? That's why we've got to give everybody the same opportunity and choice.

Q Okay. All right. Let's move on.

A You're sorry you mentioned that my answers are short, aren't you?

Q No. No. Actually, this is great because I may actually get to ask you a couple of extra questions which is good. They are the lightning bonus round.

Okay. On taxes, define "rich." Everybody talks about, you know, taxing the rich and -- but not the poor, the middle class. At what point -- give me a number, give me a specific number. Where do you move from middle class to rich? Is it 100,000, is it 50,000, is it 200? How does anybody know if we don't know what the standards are?

A Some of the richest people I've ever known in my life are the most unhappy. I think that rich is -- should be defined by a home, a good job and education and the ability to hand to our children a more prosperous and safer world than the one that we inherited. I don't want to take any money from the rich. I want everybody to get rich. I don't believe in class warfare or redistribution of the wealth.

But I can tell you, for example, there are small businessmen and women who are working 20 -- 16 hours a day, seven days a week that some people would classify as,

quote, rich, my friends, who want to raise their taxes and want to raise their payroll taxes. Let's have -- keep taxes low. Let's give every family in America a \$7,000 \$5,000 refundable tax credit to go out and get the health insurance of their choice. Let's not have the government take over the healthcare system in America.

So -- so -- so I think if you're just talking about income, how about 5 million. So -- no, but seriously, I don't think you can -- I don't think seriously that -- the point is that I'm trying to make here seriously -- and I'm sure that comment will be distorted, but the point is -- the point is -- the point is that we want to keep people's taxes low and increase revenues.

And my friend, it was not taxes that mattered in America in the last several years. It was spending. Spending got completely out of control. We spent money in a way that mortgaged our kids' futures. My friends, we spent \$3 million of your money to study the DNA of bears

in Montana.

Now, I don't know if that was a paternity issue or a criminal issue, but the point is -- but the point is it was 3 million of your money. It was your money. And, you know, we laugh about it, but we cry and we should cry because the Congress is supposed to be careful stewards of your tax dollars.

So what did they just do in the middle of an energy crisis when in California we are paying \$4 a gallon for gas, went on vacation for five weeks. I guarantee you two things, they never miss a pay raise and a vacation. And we should stop that and call them back and not raise your taxes. We should not and cannot raise taxes in tough economic times.

So it doesn't matter really what my definition of "rich" is because I don't want to raise anybody's taxes. I really don't. In fact, I want to give working Americans a better shot at having a better life and we all know the challenges, my friends, if I could be serious. Americans tonight in California and all over America are sitting at

the kitchen table, recently and suddenly lost a job, can't afford to stay in their home, education for their kids, affordable healthcare, these are tough problems. These are tough problems. You talk to them every day.

Q All the time.

A Every day. My friends, we've got to give them hope and confidence in the future. That's what we need to give them and I can inspire them. I can lead and I know that our best days are ahead of us.

Q All right. Now, we got a couple minutes left in this section. Here is a security question I didn't get to with Senator Obama. We didn't have enough time.

When is our right to privacy -- when our right to privacy and our right to national security collide, how do you decide what takes precedent?

A It does collide and there are always competing priorities. We must preserve the privacy of all of our citizens as much as possible because that's one of the fundamental and basic rights we have. And by the way,

including a secret ballot for union organizers, a secret ballot, not a ballot that someone comes around and signs you up, that's a different subject.

But the point is that we have now had technological advances over the last 20 or 30 years in communications that are remarkable. It's a remarkable ability that our enemies have to communicate so we have to keep up with that capability. I mean, there is too many ways and -- through cyberspace and through other ways that people are able to communicate with one another. So we are going to have to step up our capabilities to monitor those.

Sometimes there are calls from outside the United States, inside the United States, there is all kinds of communications of every different kind. So you need Congress to work together. You need a judiciary that will review these laws that we pass.

And at the same time, it's just an example of our failure to sit down, Republican and Democrat, and work these things out together for the good of the nation's

security instead of this constant fighting which, according to our director of national intelligence until we finally reached an agreement not long ago, was compromising our ability to keep America from attack. And so there is a constant tension. It is changing with changes in technology and we have to stay up with it.

Q We'll be right back with Senator John McCain.

(Commercial break.)

BY PASTOR RICK WARREN:

Q. All right. Welcome back to Saddleback Civil Forum on the Presidency, and we're here with Senator John McCain.

John, these last questions are about America's responsibility to the world. We are without a doubt the most blessed nation in the world. We are blessed to be a blessing, and the Bible says, "To whom much is given, much has been required." So I want to talk about what is our stewardship to everybody else. And let's first talk about freedom and war.

As an American, what is worth dying for and what is worth committing American lives for?

A. Freedom. Our national security. Our security as a nation. Wars have started in obscure places that have enveloped us. We also must temper that with the ability to effectively and beneficially cause the outcome that we want. In other words, there's tyranny and there's tragedy throughout the world, and we can't

right every wrong, but we can do what America has done throughout our history, and that is be a beacon of hope and liberty and freedom for everyone in the world. As Ronald Reagan used to quote, "A shining city on a hill."

And so there are conflicts that we can't settle. The most precious asset we have is American blood. And throughout our history, Americans have gone to all four corners of the world and shed that blood in defense of someone else's freedom. No other nation on earth has ever done that.

But we've also succeeded in other ways. We won the Cold War, as I mentioned earlier, without firing a shot because of our etiology and that Communism was wrong and evil, and we can defeat it just as we can defeat radical Islamic extremism.

Can we talk just a second about the latest in Georgia?

Q. Let me ask you this. What would be the criterion for which you would commit troops?

A. American national security interests are threatened.

Q. Okay. I understand that. What about like genocide in Darfur or the mass killings that took place in Georgia?

A. Our obligation is to stop genocide wherever we can. We all know about Rwanda. No one knows that better than you and the Saddleback Church, who have been so active.

By the way, Cindy was just there with Mike Huckabee and Dr. Bill Frist and have seen what the women of Rwanda are doing. The women are taking charge of the future of Rwanda because they are saying never again, and they are doing an incredible job.

Darfur, our most respected former Secretary of State Colin Powell called genocide some years ago. The question is how can we effectively stop it and, obviously, we've got to do more, and we've got to try to marshal the forces all over the world to join us.

I think one of the things we ought to explore more carefully is us supplying the logistics and equipment and the aid, and the African countries step forward with the personnel to enforce a genuine cease-fire. It's a very complicated situation as you know, but we've got to be committed to never saying "never again" again.

Q. What about, you're seeing Russia reassert itself in Georgia and maybe now Poland. What's happening?

A. I'm very saddened here to be with you and talk about a Russian reemergence in the centuries' old ambition of the Russian Empire to dominate that part of the world. Killings, murder. Villages are being burned. People are being wantonly ejected from their homes. The latest figure is from human rights organizations, 118,000 people in that small country.

It was one of the earliest Christian nations. The King of then Georgia in the 3rd Century converted to Christianity. You go to Georgia and you see these

old churches that go back to the 4th and 5th Century.

My friends, the President, the President Saakashvili is a man who is educated in the United States of America on a scholarship. He went back to Georgia, and with other young people who had also received an education, they achieved a revolution. They had democracy, prosperity, and a great little nation. And now the Russians are coming in there in an act of aggression. And we have to not only bring about cease-fire, but we have to have honored one of the most fundamental rights of any nation and that is territorial integrity.

We must respect the entire territory of Russia -- excuse me -- the Russians must respect the entire territorial integrity of Georgia.

And there's only 4 million people in Georgia, my friends. I've been there. It's a beautiful little country. They are wonderful people. They are suffering terribly now.

And there's two other aspects of this very quickly. One of them, don't think it was an accident that the presence of Lithuania -- the presidents, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Ukraine flew to Tbilisi to show their solidarity with the President of Georgia because they all have something in common with Georgia. They lived under Russian domination for a long period of time.

Second of all, of course, it's about energy. There's an oil pipeline that goes across Georgia that up to now had not been controlled by the Russians and, my friends, energy the Russians are using as a tremendous lever against the Europeans.

So keep them in your prayers. Let's get the humanitarian aid as quickly as possible to them and send the message to the Russians that this behavior is not acceptable in the 21st Century.

Q. Related to that, America's responsibility in the world. Religious persecution. What would you do in your administration to end, to put pressure on the

Chinese and Iraq and all the other places, so-called allies of ours that will allow -- will not allow religious freedom whether it is Christian or any other faith?

A. The President of the United States has -- greatest asset is the bully pulpit. The President of the United States -- and I go back again to Ronald Reagan. He went to the Berlin Wall and said, "Take down this wall." Called them an evil empire. Many said don't, don't antagonize the Russians or don't cause a confrontation with the Soviet Union.

He stood for what he believed, and he said what he believed, and he said that, to those people who were then captive nations, the day will come when you will know freedom and democracy and the fundamental rights of man.

Our Judeo-Christian principles dictate that we do what we can to help people who are oppressed throughout the world, and I would like to tell you that

I still think that even in the worst places in the world today, in the darkest corners, little countries like Belarus, they still harbor this hope and dream someday to be like us and have freedom and democracy.

And we have our flaws, and we have our failings, and we talk about them all the time, and we should, but we remain, my friends, the most unusual experiment in history, and I'm privileged to spend every day of my life in it. I know what it's like to be without it.

Q. John, most people don't know that there are 148 million orphans in the world growing up without parents. What should we do about this and would you be willing to consider or even commit to something similar to the president's emergency plan for AIDS, which he said AIDS is an emergency, PEPFAR. Could we do a PEPFAR for the emergency plan for 148 million orphans? Most of these, they don't need to grow up in orphanages. They need to be in families, and many of those families could take them in if they had some kind

of assistance.

A. Well, I think we have to make adoption a lot easier in this country. That's why so many people go to other countries to get -- to be able to adopt children.

My great hero and role model Teddy Roosevelt was the first modern American President to talk about adoption and how important it was, and I promise you this is my last story.

Seventeen years ago, Cindy was in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She went to Mother Teresa's orphanage. The nuns brought her two little babies that were not going to live. Cindy came home. I met her at the airplane. She showed me this five-week old baby and said, "Meet your new daughter." She is 17 and our life is blessed, and that's what adoption is all about.

Q. All right. You've got one minute to answer this one. And that is, why do you want to be president?

Civil Forum

A. I want to inspire a generation of Americans to serve a cause greater than their self-interest. I believe that America's best days are ahead of us, but I also believe that we face enormous challenges, both national security and domestic, as we have found out in the last few days in the case of Georgia.

And I want to be -- make sure that everybody understands that this is a time for us to come together.

Throughout my life from the time I was 17 and raised my hand and was sworn in as a midshipman at the United States Naval Academy, I've always put my country first. I put my country first when I had the honor of serving in the military, and I had the honor of putting my country first as a Member of the House of Representatives and in the United States Senate.

America wants hope. America wants optimism. America wants us to sit down together.

I have a record of reaching across the aisle and working with the other party, and I want to do

that, and I believe, as I said, that Americans feel it's time for us to put our country first, and we may disagree on a specific issue, and I won't review them now, but I want every American to know that when I go to Gee's Bend, Alabama and meet the African-American women there who are so wonderful and lovely and an experience I'll never forget, and when I go to places where I know they probably won't vote for me, I know that my job is to tell them that I'll be the President of every American, and I'll always put my country first.

Q. Thank you.

A. Thank you.

Q. All right. 20 seconds left.

What would you say to people who oppose me asking you these questions in a church?

A. I say to them that I'd like to be in every venue in America. This is an important -- this is a very important election. Our nation was founded on

Civil Forum

Judeo-Christian values and principles. I'm happy to be here in the church. I'm happy to be here in a place that with your program such as PEACE, such as your help throughout the world, such as your outreach to so many thousands of Americans, I'm honored to be here, and I thank you.

Q. Would you stand and thank Senator John McCain.

(Commercial break.)

Civil Forum

PASTOR RICK WARREN: Thank you. Thank you for being a part of this Saddleback Civil Forum on the Presidency.

I just want to remind you that one of the greatest freedoms we have here in America is the freedom of speech, even the freedom to protest this meeting. That's a good thing, but we have to learn how to have civility in our civilization. How to stop being rude. How to stop demonizing each other. How to have a discussion and debate because we all want America to be a greater place. God bless you.