

*Remarks for the
Mayor's Annual Prayer Breakfast
January 17, 2003*

(recognize Mayor Johnson / other dignitaries)

I want to extend a special welcome to Dr. Buster Soaries (SORE-eez). I know he has a special awareness of the challenges facing communities and states, and we will all benefit from his words this morning. Dr. Soaries, it's a pleasure to welcome you to Mississippi.

It's good to be with you all this morning, and I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts about my own faith and the faith I have in this great state of ours.

I believe Mississippi is going through a revival – in its commitment to making the most of the promise of *all* its people, in all areas of the state.

That revival begins with how we care for one another. It begins with how we focus our efforts on education and on jobs that put food on the table and roofs over our heads.

If we are going to be successful in that revival, we have to set priorities for how we want to reach our goals and achieve our dreams.

I've always believed that God makes our dreams a size too big so we can grow into them.

Mississippi is growing; we're growing fast and we're growing together.

I believe we are far beyond the Mississippi that most people think of; we are a Mississippi that shares a common belief and a common commitment to the worth of all people.

The worth of all people is at the foundation of our work to achieve our true promise and potential, and that work begins with education. The investment we make today in education for all Mississippians will pay off tomorrow.

If we shortchange that investment, we shortchange education. That's not good for our people, and it's not an acceptable alternative.

Each of us in this room – not just the elected officials – has a stake in this work. Each of us benefits from good schools, good jobs and good communities.

I pray every day for the strength and the wisdom to do this job, a job that I love. I would ask for your prayers as well – not just for myself, but for all in public service – that we might do work that serves our people and serves God.

That work includes doing everything we can to come together not just as Mississippians but as creations of God – made in His image, and blessed by His grace.

We can do this. It's happening right now. It's helping make a better, stronger, healthier Mississippi – and I'm thankful for it.

God bless you, and may God bless Mississippi and America.