One could never know when a student who was hurting inside might be comforted or helped, even if in a small way, by some prayer or some Bible verse.

I know that some people say that prayer and Bible reading are the responsibilities of the family and the home, and I agree with that. But I also think it is a responsibility of the schools and society to teach and encourage good morals and values and ethics. As a popular phrase today says, character counts, and this should be taught in the schools.

George Washington once said, ''You cannot have good government without morality. You cannot have morality without religion; and you cannot have religion without God.''

We open up every session of this House and the Senate with prayer, and this has never been a problem. We have Catholic Priests, Protestant Ministers, Jewish Rabbis, and others lead us in prayer, and I do not think there has ever been a complaint. But we do not allow our schools to have the same privilege.

Some people say or think we cannot have prayer in public schools because one cannot mix church and State. Well, these words and even this idea are not mentioned in the Constitution. Our Founding Fathers came here to get freedom of religion, not freedom from religion; and there is a big, big difference.

In 1952, our U.S. Supreme Court said there is ''no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence.'' Let me repeat that. The U.S. Supreme Court, in 1952, in Zorach v. Clauson said there is ''no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence.'' Yet, this is exactly what government has done over the last 35 or 40 years.

William Raspberry, the great columnist of the Washington Post, wrote a few years ago, ''Is it not just possible that anti-religious bias, masquerading as religious neutrality, has cost us far more than we have been willing to acknowledge?''

That is such a good question. Let me repeat it. William Raspberry said, ''Is it not just possible that anti-religious bias, masquerading as religious neutrality, has cost us far more than we have been willing to acknowledge?''

He then told of something that Dennis Prager, a Jewish talk show host, once said on one of his shows. He said, ''if you were walking down the street of one of our Nation's largest cities late one night, in a high crime area, and you heard footsteps approaching rapidly from behind, and you turned and saw four well-built young men coming toward you, would you not feel relieved to learn that these young men were coming home from a Bible study.''

Today, most public high schools believe they cannot even allow nondenominational prayers at high school graduations.

We have come too far down the wrong road, and we need to do better, much better for the sake of our children. Prayer and Bible reading helped many children and never hurt anyone. It sent a message, even to young people who may not have been helped at the time, that there was a higher power to turn to when times got tough, as they do for all of us.

To those who say we should not try to impose morality on others, listen to the words of Judge Robert Bork in his book ''Slouching Towards Gomorrah'': ''Modern liberals try to frighten Americans by saying that religious conservatives 'want to impose their morality on others.' That is palpable foolishness. All participants in politics want to 'impose' on others as much of their morality as possible, and no group is more insistent than liberals.''

If we do not instill good morals and values and ethics of the Bible, then we will, by default, be teaching the bad morals found in our modern day obscene and violent movies, video games, the Internet, and in Godless classrooms.

We need to restore prayer and Bible reading to the schools of this Nation. It certainly would not solve all of our problems, but it would help.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, I rise today to talk about the subject that is I think most on the minds of my constituents and most of the constituents throughout our country, and that is the subject of education. It is definitely the building block for the future; and as we head towards a more and more complicated future with more and more rapid change, that education basically life-long education is going to be critical to the prosperity of our country and certainly of our people.

We seem to have an unfortunate choice that is laid out before us if we are watching public policy makers on education; and that choice is, either bash public education or blindly support it. I am here to say that I do not think that is the choice that is put before us, and I would urge public policy makers to find a middle ground.

Basically, support for public education makes a great deal of sense. It has educated somewhere around 90 percent of the population. I personally benefited from it, as have millions of others. It has done a wonderful job of educating our children. It is one of the better things we did in the 20th century. But just because we support it does not mean that we should do so blindly or that we should never ask for reforms or never ask for it to be held accountable or to improve or for standards to be set.

I worry that, given that false choice between supporting and bashing public education, that we will miss out on that opportunity to reform it and set the standards that we should set. That is why I as a member of the New Democratic Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats. We are searching for that middle ground to try to find an area where, yes, we can support public education, but we can also set the standards and make the changes we need to improve it.

It makes a great deal of sense to say that we should spend money on school construction and to reduce class sizes, and I think we should. I think it is wrong to run away from a Federal obligation to help public education.

But it is equally wrong to continue the current Federal role in public education in the manner that we have set it up. That manner is totally bureaucratic and process oriented and not results oriented and not oriented towards encouraging local control, which could make an incredible difference in our education system.

So, yes, the Federal Government should support public education, but we should stop driving dollars out the way we are driving them out now, which is basically in a blizzard of programs, some 300 or 400. I have actually tried to count them over the course of the last 6 months and still have not quite tracked them all down.

They are designed totally along the lines of process. If one meets certain standards, one gets a certain amount of money. Basically, we have turned our school district personnel in this country into people who are more interested and spend more of their time, I am sorry, they are not more interested, they are forced to spend more of their time justifying their existence to the federal bureaucracy than they are spending time educating our children.

Why do they do that? Because they have to get the money. They have to fill out a variety of grants and a variety of programs to prove that they deserve the money in the first place, and then prove that they are spending it exactly how we told them to in the second place.

All of this takes away time from the classroom. I believe that it would make a good deal more sense to drive those dollars out far more narrowly and to drive them out based on standards and based on actual accountability and accomplishments. Instead of just driving money out based on whether or not they filled out a grant form properly,