



circumstances. He was angry at his Creator. He argued with God and he didn't lose his faith. It's okay to argue. It's okay to be angry. Those emotions are natural as well.

And finally, the emotions of the family members most affected go beyond grief, losing a son, losing a daughter, a brother, a sister, losing a close friend. You can go beyond grief to isolation and feeling despair. Those haunting words that were uttered on a hill on Calvary: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Despair is a natural emotion at a time like this. They're all natural, they're all appropriate, but let me ask one thing of you, this community, as you wrestle with your sadness, as you wrestle with your own feelings of anger, of confusion, as you wrestle with the despair, even you family members who have lost people close, you do not let hold of that spirit of community that makes Virginia Tech such a special place. Do not lose hold of that.

You need it as a university because you've always had it. You need to maintain it. We do not need that spirit of community to be a victim of yesterday.

You, as a community unified—together there is so much you can do for these family members to help bear them up, to help them deal with their grief. If you are unified, there is an incalculable amount you can do to help the family members and friends deal with the loss.

We need, in Virginia, that spirit of community that you have here. We are bold enough to call ourselves not a state but a commonwealth. A state is a dotted line, a state is a political subdivision; commonwealth has a meaning. The meaning is what

we have, the God-given and man-made resources that we have we hold in common for a community. And you at Virginia Tech can be that community and demonstrate that community for us in a way that will benefit the entire Commonwealth of Virginia.

And finally I would say to you, from having that vantage point of hearing about this on the other side of the world, it is not just for you that you need to maintain that spirit: the world needs you to, as well. Because the world was watching you yesterday, and in the darkest moment in the history of this university, the world saw you and it saw you respond in a way that built community.

I was reminded in the airport as we got ready to board to come back that I've seen this story before. I've turned on television and seen the bad news of a shooting or a weather emergency or a famine. I've seen these stories and there will be more stories, but there was something in the story yesterday that was different—and it was you. Your spirit, even in a dark day, of optimism and community and hope and of wanting to be together. You taught something good yesterday, even on a dark day, to people all around the world, and the world needs that example put forward.

And so I pledge to do all I can, President Steger and members of the community, and my team as well, to be with you in the coming days. To be alongside you in difficult times as we sort through and try to work with families and friends. You have a remarkable community here; just look around and see this. And see the thousands of students next door. This is a remarkable place. Do not let hold of that sense of community that is so powerful in this room. □