

A One-Day Wonder?

July 4th was yesterday. I loved hearing the patriotic songs played everywhere -- yesterday. I listened to march music on my daily walk -- yesterday. Parades highlighted the morning in communities all across the nation -- yesterday. Families got together for cookouts -- yesterday. Once nightfall came I looked up in the sky and observed colorful fireworks -- yesterday. For me, the highlight of the day was the music. Music captured my emotions and brought to mind a patriotic feeling. Yesterday. Then I saw a late-night Facebook post that reminded us that July 5 is just another day at work. By midnight I had settled into bed and the day was done, the celebration over for another year. Tomorrow is just another day. Or, is it?



Do we shift gears that quickly? Is the celebration of our independence a one-day party? The real question is: Do we celebrate for the sake of celebration or do we really mean it? The Lee Greenwood song, God Bless the USA, has one of the most memorable patriotic lines: “I’m proud to be an American for at least I know I am free.” We get a special feeling in our hearts when we hear those words. For that particular moment in time we appreciate the country where we live. We may even think about the sacrifice of lives that made the USA a free country. Veterans who rode in the parade yesterday put their lives on the line. They didn’t do it to get a seat in a convertible in the 4th of July parade. They risked their lives so that we would have a special way of life on July 5th, July 6th and every day.

Jesus Christ did even more than that. He gave His life so that we would be free for our entire lives. Don’t let religious holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, be only about the celebration. Don’t toss out the Christmas tree the evening of December 25th and gobble up the chocolate quickly after completing the Easter family dinner, thinking it is time to “get on with life”. Special days, like July 4, Memorial Day, Easter and Christmas, call attention to life-changing events and the people who made them possible. Resist the temptation to make it all about the festivities and not about what we are celebrating.

A life-changing event lasts forever. Let the celebration be a way to increase our appreciation for our way of life. Let us always remember the sacrifice and what it means to us every day of the year. Go back to work “the day after” and live your life with renewed enthusiasm for what others have done for you. It didn’t come without the cost of human lives. Because of their sacrifices your life will never be the same again. If your revelry is the focus of your day the celebration has little or no substance for you. But if the celebration increases your commitment to your faith, your country or your family, it is definitely worth celebrating.

If you are proud to be an American, act like it. Embrace our country, rather than joining in on the general mood we are experiencing currently, as people seek to tear down our country every chance they get. Defend the greatness of our country as you honor those who made it possible. It took heroic acts to gain our independence, and more heroic acts to maintain those freedoms. Show that you are “proud to be an American.” Don’t take it for granted. Even more importantly, if you are proud to be a follower of Jesus Christ, act like it. Defend the faith and let it guide all that you do. Honor Jesus Christ every day of your life. Celebrate being a follower of Jesus every day, starting December 26 and Easter Monday, and continuing all year. “At least you know you are free.”

Scripture: *So I have reason to be enthusiastic about all Christ Jesus has done through me in my service to God (Romans 15:17).*

Question: What do you do to maintain your enthusiasm and commitment to the Lord year-round?

Prayer: Most gracious Heavenly Father. We pray we won’t take for granted the sacrifice of your son, Jesus Christ. We also pray we won’t take for granted that we live in a free country whose greatness was won for us by those who have sacrificed much for us. We celebrate those who have sacrificed much for us. Amen.