

Impressionable Children

Each year, on the Saturday before July 4, the Kiwanis Club of Kernersville hosts the Miss Mary's Children's Parade. It is a fun event designed to encourage patriotism in young children. The kids dress up in red, white, and blue to march around the courtyard, following the American flag and the town's Miss 4th of July. They decorate their bicycles and wagons, and carry small American flags that are given to them. The event's ceremony includes a salute to the American flag, the Pledge of Allegiance and the national anthem. A bounce house, a firetruck and mascot on display, lawn games, and lots of kids' music made it a fun event. The event has grown in popularity, attracting over 200 kids (plus parents and grandparents), even on a hot, steamy summer day.



In the last decade, patriotism has gradually waned. We live in a free country, but people often take for granted our freedom and the sacrifice that made it possible. Others protest our country's politics by pushing back from expressions of patriotism. As a result, it is more important than ever to instill the importance of patriotism at a young age. Preschool and young elementary-age children are impressionable. Fun community events pique their interest.

My grandsons recently attended a summer VBS that used decorations, music, and fun activities to captivate their interest. The theme was "Breaker Rock Beach," which emphasized God's solid truth in a world of shifting values. The children are encouraged to follow the Bible verse (Romans 12:2) that reads: "*do not be confirmed by the pattern of this world.*" The VBS was at a different church than their home church, so they didn't know anyone when they first walked in the door. Yet, the festive atmosphere sparked their attention. After a fun week, they can't wait to go back. We can make learning about Jesus fun while still having spiritual content.



We also take *spiritual* freedom for granted. We are free because of Jesus' victory over death. Our world today teaches people to be independent and care only about themselves. Instead, teach children to depend on God and feel the peace that comes through trusting God for direction. God wants the best for them. They need to know that He is with them when they go through difficult times. We can show children how to make conscious choices to follow Jesus and resist the world's way. It is instinctive for children to want to please. What could be better than seeking to please God?

Summer is the season for patriotic parades, events, and summer VBS programs. Jesus wants to speak to the little children. Utilize opportunities to teach patriotism and faith so our children will appreciate the sacrifices that made their freedom possible.

The Bible Says: *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:20).*

Train up a child in the way he should go, And even when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6)

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. (Matthew 19:14)."

Question: What opportunities are there in your community to teach young children patriotism and God's truth?

Closing Prayer: The world wants us to be independent and make that suit us. Let us follow your path. Lead us in the way we should go, appreciating the sacrifice of people who fought for our freedoms, and to Jesus, who gave us freedom because of your sacrifice on the cross. You are the way to spiritual freedom and eternal life. Amen.

