

JULY 4, 2018
INDEPENDENCE
DAY



We are set free to love our neighbor.

INDEPENDENCE DAY BIBLE READING

Take time to read and reflect on this Bible passage as part of your Independence Day celebrations.

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. **Romans 13:9b-10 (NRSV)**

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you.

Jeremiah 29:11-12 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for Independence Day:

Lord, we thank you for the independence and freedom we have of speech and of religion. Above all, we thank you for the freedom borne of the cross of Christ, a freedom to love you and love our neighbor as ourselves. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Lord God, thank you for abundant seas, for fruited plains, for amber waves of grain, and for all the ways you have blessed us with this meal. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God bless you with the freedom, the faith, and the courage to love your neighbor as yourself and to give you peace.



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HYMN FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

My Country 'Tis of Thee



CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home or small group:

- If you could do anything you want, what would you want to do?
- Is there a difference between independence and freedom?
- The Declaration of Independence identifies “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” as “self-evident” and “unalienable Rights.” How do Christians understand human freedom as something more than a declaration for a civil society?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Jeremiah 29:4-14

We are reminded that God has a plan. We may not understand God’s plan or know what it may be but the message in this scripture gives us a future with hope. In Romans 13:9-10, the commandments are summed up to love your neighbor as yourself. We are reminded that love does no wrong to our neighbor. Out of this love, we have the freedom to speak up and act to defend the rights and needs of others. What are the needs of others that require support in today’s world? How does God’s message of a future with hope help us to reach out to people in the world whose freedom is limited ?

Pray: O Lord, we pray for those in our world who cannot see a future with hope. Help us to love them as we love ourselves through prayer and support for those who serve communities and nations to keep others free. We are grateful to freely practice our Christian faith. Amen.

SERVICE

Freedom has a price. Many in our midst have dedicated their lives to protect others. Think of someone or group of people who serve society in the armed services, law enforcement, emergency services, or as a politician, medical staff, social worker, church worker, and others. Send a card or do an act of kindness for that person or group and express your thanks for their public service.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Independence Day is a national holiday in the United States of America. It always falls on July 4th. Celebrations take place outdoors at picnics and fairs. Fireworks light the sky across the country and are often accompanied by patriotic songs such as *God Bless America*, *My Country 'Tis of Thee*, *Stars and Stripes Forever*, and *The Star Spangled Banner*. There was a custom in the New England States during the 19th and 20th centuries to build towering pyramids with barrels and light them on fire to usher in the celebration. It is still practiced in some towns. What traditions have you experienced during July 4th celebrations? Are there any that have been passed down through the years to your family that you still do today? As you honor this day, thank God for the freedom and independence given to us as we celebrate.



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