

REFLECTIONS ON PATRIOTISM AND FREEDOM

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Many commentators on television, radio and in the media keep asking the question, “Why should America care about what happens overseas?” Scoffers and sincere people alike question the reasons behind the war on terrorism. We all feel sickened when we see caskets draped in American flags carried from airplanes back to their mourning families. We watch in shock and horror as servicemen and citizens alike are butchered without mercy by terrorists, and we feel overwhelming concern for our own loved ones who serve and protect.

What do events half the world away have to do with *our* freedom? Freedom is a lot like love—it has to be shared in order for it to thrive. It has to be nurtured and protected, and when possible, we have to teach others how to live under its banner.

This Independence Day is one of great reflection and pondering. What is patriotism? Does it still exist today? Has freedom remained unthreatened for so long that our present generation doesn’t comprehend its value?

Just ask an old war veteran what this country and what freedom means to him. You’ll see misty eyes and hear a story from a quivering voice about sacrifice...duty, honor and country. You’ll see wrinkled hands carefully run over a folded flag with a sense of dignity as he carefully unfurls it and draws it up to the summer sky. Watch him as he stands at attention, perhaps on limbs shattered from yesterday’s conflicts, unfaltering as his eyes gaze intently on the colors he has guarded with his very life. You will never hear him say, “America isn’t worth the cost for freedom.” You’ll never hear him ask, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

In a modern “Me, Myself and I” society, the concept of giving oneself to a higher cause doesn’t always provoke the applause of the masses. The news of the football star-turned-soldier who lost his life in combat brought both praise and criticism. To some, he was a fallen hero. Others could only retort, “What a waste!” But this young man’s candle burned brighter in one fleeting moment, doing what he believed in, than all the stadium lights under which the crowds might have cheered him on to a superficial victory.

Patriotism is so much more than just the willingness to take up arms, though it is indeed that, too. We show our gratitude to God and to those who have bought our freedom every time we proudly endorse it through our actions and words, at home and in our community. We uphold godly laws and we vote for those who will create and preserve them. We stand for what is right, and yes, sometimes we have to defend the defenseless.

It’s why we’re here now. It’s why we’re *America*.

May we always be one nation UNDER GOD, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.