

## Beacons of freedom abound

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

We are celebrating independence from tyrannical rule this weekend. Two hundred thirty-four years ago, it was England that virtually enslaved us, these days; the battle lines are a bit more complicated. It is fascinating how quickly comfort produces lethargy. Most people are unaware of a need for another fight against the threat of tyranny. I am not referring here to the global threats that are very real, including our current efforts in Afghanistan that are now back on the headlines. More succinctly, I am referring to the warring over our very souls.

Many people grew up watching movies with relatively simple story lines — the good guys fight the bad, and just before the ultimate dastardly fatal blow that threatens to end the efforts of good forever, somehow a turn of events causes our hero to extol these triumphant virtues once again. But most know that real life isn't so simple. Sometimes a story will come out where the plot is ultimately depressing because the central character endures pain and sorrow and then ultimately death with no seeming victory or redemption at all. It is truer to real life and it is sad.

The Bible records lots and lots of amazing promises for those who love God and answer the call to be in the vast family of God. For these, even life's most difficult tragedies will produce good in the end. But for those who reject the beckoning of God in pursuit of other ideas, there is no such comfort or power or promise. It is a sad story that leaves everyone in tears.

Shelley and I went to see a movie the other day called "My Sister's Keeper." I can't remember going to a movie where you can hear people sobbing all over the theater like that. Bring a tissue. It was deeply emotional and not for all ages. I personally appreciated the approach to family in the midst of deep conflict in pain. Storylines that grapple with real struggle seem to resonate with the soul. They even politely handled some of the meaningless metaphysical stuff that is prevalent both here and in Hollywood. But in the end, they still dealt with death in confusion, without God's truth and apparently void of prayer, and genuine hope. The only sense of any Christian experience was an allusion to the man that spoke at the funeral of the teenage main character. How do you deal with death without contact with God? People do every day.

We live in the greatest country in the world and if anyone should understand freedom, and the blood sacrifice it takes to

get it, it should be Americans. Our ideas of equality and autonomy among races and gender come from Scripture. Concepts of freedoms of thought, speech and individual inherent rights and value also originate in the mind of God. (Principles of Darwinian evolution teach the opposite.) As a people, we should be a beacon of inner freedom, but we aren't. Genuine spiritual liberty as described in the New Testament is rare. Individuals are enslaved by their relentless pursuits of selfish gain and pleasure and hearts are breaking on every level. Sometimes it seems that lives are falling apart faster than we can keep up, and it is very tragic.

Parades, barbecues, fireworks, and a lot of red, white and blue (not just sunburns and bruises) will mark the occasion. Most of us will be out there together. There is an opportunity for all of us to reflect. Look at Romans 6-8. It is all about freedom of the most important kind. Let's celebrate these amazing blessings and answer the call. May God continue to bless America and the people of our own community, in Jesus' name.

To read other articles by Pastor Dan visit [Ojai Valley News Articles](http://www.ojavalleynews.com/articles)

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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### Sunday Worship:

**9:00 & 10:30am**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

### Mid-Week Study:

**7:00pm Thursday**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View