

# Memorial Day marks attitude of gratitude

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

We are only a week away from another exciting weekend full of parades and picnics, boating and barbecues. You are about to be bombarded with Memorial Day sales ads on television, radio, in your newspaper and filling up your mailbox. For many, Memorial Day is one of the busiest weekends of the year. But what is it really all about anyway?

There are times when we, as a culture, stop everything to celebrate landmarks in our lives. When Shelley and I got married, almost everything else that would normally have been priorities in daily living took a backseat to the life event that was taking place. When each one of our four children was born, the same thing occurred. No matter what was on my schedule or what bills needed to be paid, it was all canceled so I could focus on the day. Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and the Fourth of July have always been that way to me also. Even during tense times of exams or deadlines, school or work was suspended and the daily routine was altered in order to get together with family to feast and celebrate. And when someone I love dies, I stop everything to remember and commemorate their life — a memorial.

I personally feel grateful for many blessings in my life and it is perfectly appropriate that I would stop all of the busyness in my life once in a while and reflect on that.

We are called to have an attitude of gratitude every day; however, there are times when we halt all of our superfluous activities to consider specific gifts in our lives that may otherwise go unnoticed or unappreciated. Memorial Day is one of those times. It is at this time when we count our blessings for the many sacrifices that were made to hand to us the freedoms that we enjoy every day here in the United States of America. I am among those who believe this is the greatest country on the planet in which to live. While imperfect, there is no place else on Earth where there exists such a wonderful combination of natural beauty and opportunity. I count both as blessings from God.

In this country people have the opportunity to pursue education, career, commerce, home and land ownership while exercising freedoms of speech, press, travel and worship. These are just a few of the many blessings we enjoy. Further, most of us are not mere residents, but citizens, which brings added privileges as well as responsibilities. From many parts of the globe, it is the lifelong dream of millions to come to the United States and become citizens.

And yet, wouldn't you agree that it is foolish to blindly believe that these wonderful freedoms have come by accident? Many men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice to bring them to us. God has been gracious to us and people have been willing to battle for their conviction to live free. I thank every person, past, present and future, who makes these critical sacrifices for the benefit of us all. We are in their

debt.

If you will allow me, I want to make an important point. Many of these principles of individual freedom, personal sovereignty, freedom to pursue peace and happiness, freedom to own land and to worship, are principles that were acquired from the Bible. The Scriptures tell of mankind as being enslaved to sin and not truly free. The passages continue to instruct regarding God's heart to liberate his people whom he made in his image. They speak of men and women doing the very things that lead to their own demise and the need for a radical sacrifice to set them free from their bondage. Jesus made that sacrifice. As our American freedoms did not come by accident nor were they simply handed to us by our enemies, so spiritual freedom does not come by accident, nor is it just given over to us by our enemy. A sacrifice was made to set you free from sin and its ultimate consequences; that sacrifice was Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free — and if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:32, 26).

As you get out the barbecue and begin charbroiling the burgers, stop to consider what you have been given. Remember the sacrifices, remember the people, appreciate the freedoms, be grateful for the blessings and enjoy them, in this way we honor those who brought them to us. To me, this is what Memorial Day is all about. And consider Jesus, the sacrifice he made and the freedoms he brings to you; receive them, and live them. Stand fast in the freedom where Christ has made us free and not to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage (Galatians 5:1).

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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

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