

JULY 4, 2023  
INDEPENDENCE DAY



*Free to love your neighbor.*

## INDEPENDENCE DAY BIBLE READINGS

Take time to read and reflect on these Bible passages as part of your Independence Day observances.

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Deuteronomy 26:5-9</b>	<b>First fruits and tithes</b>
	<b>Psalms 118:1-9</b>	<b>A song for victory</b>
	<b>Galatians 5:1-2, 13-14</b>	<b>Christ gives freedom</b>
	<b>Luke 4:18-19</b>	<b>Jesus begins his work</b>

## SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

*For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become enslaved to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

**Galatians 5:13-14 (NRSV)**

## PRAYERS AND BLESSING

### A Prayer for Independence Day:

God of the nations, we thank you for the freedoms we enjoy in this land. Give us courage and strength to use our freedoms not for selfish ends but for the good of all, motivated by the love of all through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

### Mealtime Prayer:

Loving God, thank you for the fruited plains, for amber waves of grain, for abundant seas, and for all the ways you bless this land and all creation with ample food. Amen.

### A Blessing to Give:

May the God of freedom set you free to love and care for others.



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## HYMN FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

*Mine Eyes Have  
Seen the Glory*



## INDEPENDENCE DAY MILESTONES



Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

## CARING CONVERSATIONS



Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What do the words, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" mean to you?
- How does life in the United States help you pursue freedom and happiness? What gets in the way?

## DEVOTIONS



*Read:* Luke 4:18-19.

The Fourth of July provides an opportunity to focus on "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," something that has been denied various groups of people and individuals throughout history. The pursuit of freedom and opportunity for a better life is not something new. It is the story of the exodus from Egypt for the Hebrew people (Deuteronomy 26:5-9). It is the focus of Jesus' first recorded sermon (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus promises good news for the impoverished, freedom for captives and the oppressed, and even regaining sight for those who cannot see. The good news of Jesus Christ speaks to basic human desires described in the Declaration of Independence. All of this is part of the human freedom we long for—freedom from bondage to others, freedom from want, freedom from physical limitations and illness. It is good for Christians to recall that Jesus' message is not just for a future salvation after death, but relief from life's burdens now.

*Discuss:* How does your Christian faith help you pursue life, liberty and happiness for others and yourself?

*Pray:* **Liberating God, from the exodus to the cross, you have entered our lives and world to free us from bondage to sin and death; for this we thank you through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## SERVICE



Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings for this day, how might you use your freedom as a Christian to love your neighbor as yourself?

## RITUALS AND TRADITIONS



The *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, also known as *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, was first written as a poem by Julia Ward Howe in 1861. It has been a tradition over the years for schools and churches to sing this song during patriotic programs. In the United States, July 4th is known for the many parades and fireworks. Think or talk about July 4th traditions and memories you have from past years. Then finish by singing or saying the chorus of *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*: "**Glory, Glory Hallelujah, Glory, Glory Hallelujah, Glory, Glory Hallelujah, His truth is marching on.**"



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