

7 Ways to Teach Your Kids About the Meaning of Fourth of July

Children love celebrating birthdays. Each year American families are invited to join in commemorating the important event leading to the official birth of our nation.

On July 4, 1776, our Founding Fathers chose to take a stand against the control of an English king who desired to add the colonists' hard-earned pennies to his pocket through taxation, though he cared little about their families' needs. Our brave pioneers of liberty, determined to live and worship as they knew God was leading and knowing that their tax dollars were needed on their own side of the ocean, officially declared good riddance to oppressive foreign rule in resolving to be "free and independent States ... absolved from all allegiance to the British crown."

In penning these words, the Continental Congress essentially shouted to the world, "Happy Birthday, America!" At 241 years later, it's still party time.

Attending a picnic or fireworks display is great fun, but to make this year's Independence Day festivities particularly memorable for your little patriot, consider these seven ways to expand your child's knowledge about the freedoms we, as United States citizens, enjoy:

1. Ask your child to place a hand over his or her heart and then recite the Pledge of Allegiance aloud together. Afterwards, explain the significance of America, your homeland, being "one nation, under God ... [offering] liberty and justice for all." Point out that feeling one's heart beating while reciting our nation's pledge is meant to remind us of those soldiers whose hearts no

longer beat because they gave their lives in fighting tyranny and division so that we may enjoy the freedom to live in peace and to attend the churches and schools of our choosing.

2. Search your family tree to find those men and women who served in the United States' armed forces. Work alongside your child to write thank-you letters expressing appreciation for the service and sacrifices made by each. Encourage your child to decorate the letters. And remember, there are likely many veterans among your church family who would also love to hear from you.
3. Download the national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner," and print out American flag coloring pages. Then gather art supplies and play the anthem while you and your child color the flags together. Discuss the significance of the 13 red-and-white stripes and the 50 white stars on a blue background.
4. Contact a local assisted living facility. Ask the director when you and your child can visit a veteran and enlist help in connecting with one. Before the meeting, help your child formulate a question about the veteran's wartime experiences to ask during your visit. Take a small gift—a homemade treat, balloons or a soft blanket in red, white or blue—to express your gratitude to this hero. Invite him to share his story.
5. Stop by your local library and check out a book about one of our founding parents. Read the book with your child and then work with him or her to create a costume befitting that person. After that, play "living wax museum": encourage your child to dress in character and then to tell his or her story based on information gained from the book.
6. Enlist your child's help in planning this year's family

vacation. Research three or four historic spots in America, briefly talk about what took place in each one and then select which site sounds like the best place to visit.

7. Go for a walk at a local park and marvel aloud over God's wonderful creation. While there, sit closely with your child and open your Bible. Then read pertinent Scriptures aloud, pointing out how Christ Jesus bought us liberty from the tyranny of sin when He took our place on Calvary's cross. As you share the gift of opening God's Word in a public place—unafraid of being arrested or harassed for doing so—pause to pray, thanking God for the men and women who've fought for your right to worship freely. {eoa}

*Children's author **Tara McClary Reeves** is daughter of beloved evangelist Marine Corps Lieutenant Clebe McClary. In her book, "Is Your Dad a Pirate?" she shares the true story of her injured father's return from battle, encouraging children and spouses facing similar trials to cherish the gift of family.*