

This Memorial Day, Do Something for Someone Who Can't Pay You Back

John Bunyan, the author of the classic book *Pilgrim's Progress*, said, "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you."

That is such a powerful truth, and few people in America understand its meaning as well as those who serve in the U.S. military.

For many in America, Memorial Day marks the start of summer—three months of sun-drenched days, warm evenings, barbecues in the backyard and vacations at the beach.

But the true meaning of Memorial Day tends to get lost—the willingness of men and women to answer our nation's call, knowing the risks they face, willing to give their lives to protect and defend the country they love.

What an extraordinarily selfless thing to do! Jesus spoke of such a sacrifice in John 15:12-13 (ESV): "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

Following the Civil War, in remembrance of those they had lost, people from the North and South decorated graves with flags and flowers on what was known as Decoration Day.

Now we call it Memorial Day to remember all of the men and women lost in all the wars this country has fought—nearly 1.2 million people. Their sacrifices have guaranteed the religious and civil freedoms that we enjoy, which many in today's culture take for granted.

I recently had an opportunity to visit the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, commonly called the Iwo Jima Memorial, in Washington, D.C. This experience served as a necessary reminder of the sacrifices made by “a few good men.” The fight for that small island in the Pacific resulted in 26,000 American casualties, including 6,800 deaths.

It’s hard to fathom what those brave Marines would have held on to in the darkest moments of battle had they not had their brothers at their side. We are no different. The battles are different, for sure, but still they are battles. We battle illnesses, the loss of loved ones and addictions. We are battling an enemy who has come to kill, steal and destroy.

But we are not fighting alone. We must fight in the Lord because the battle is the Lord’s. We must never forget that Jesus has defeated the darkness. We dare not fight without the armor needed to defeat the enemy if we’re going to win this battle. And we can never leave our fellow believers behind in the struggle. We are to support and encourage them consistently.

Likewise, as Christians, let us not forget these brave men and women who fought and even died for us. We must have a heart for them, a burden for them. The Bible says we must give honor to whom honor is due, and these American heroes deserve our honor and thanks.

And as believers, let us never take for granted the greatest sacrifice ever made—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’s death on the cross.

From America’s struggle for independence from Britain to the Afghanistan evacuation last year, countless men and women have answered duty’s call. They have performed a tremendous service that we cannot repay. And untold numbers have made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lifeblood for the cause of freedom.

Maybe you are the loved one or friend of someone who died for our country. If so, you too have made a sacrifice that many cannot even imagine. But Jesus recognized just such sacrifice in John 15:13 when He said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

This Memorial Day, let's remember the courageous men and women who have given their lives to ensure our freedom.

May their patriotism and love for God and country inspire us to do something selfless for our fellow man. {eo}

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