

*Free Indeed!*

Six weeks to America's 250

AMERICA

250™

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## INTRODUCTION

America's Founding was not just a moment in history marked by a certain date. It was a convergence of powerful events that tested humanity related to the abuses of power, oppression, and the disdain for rights awarded by God to His creation.

As the United States of America moves toward the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our nation's founding, we must find, appreciate, and apply the timeless spiritual values that gave men and women great courage in faith that set the course of this world's only democratic republic and beacon of freedom for the world.

It is wrong and foolish thinking to believe that the levers of politics steered by one ideology over another, or opposing another, was, is, and will be the sole power behind the greatness of America. Oh, no! The men and women who established America and framed its constitutional republic viewed liberty and freedom through the lens of Holy Scripture that had only been available to the masses and average people beyond priests and academic scholars for just over three centuries.

Words often used in speeches, correspondence, pamphlets, and documents of the First and Second Continental Congresses, along with the Founding Documents of the Declaration of Independence and later the US Constitution stand as evidence. Providence, Creator, conscience, covenant, sacrifice, virtue, and moral accountability before God were terms and topics embraced by the colonists of America as she united in her independence formed against oppression and hostility.

How do we speak of Liberty today? What about freedom? Do we dare speak of these in the original context as used when America's Founding documents were composed and penned?

Spend the next six weeks in devotion to study God's word, take in a little history, and apply the timeless wisdom that only the Holy Spirit may provide.

Each week will unite our family of faith in prayer, seeking and worship, and receiving the revelation that the Holy Spirit has for each of us to live "Free...Indeed!"

## DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN CHRIST JESUS

When in the course of human events people find themselves burdened by fear, sin, corruption, bitterness, deception, hopelessness, and spiritual bondage, it becomes necessary to declare the freedom found only through Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.

We hold these truths to be eternal:

That all people are created in the image of God and called not into slavery to darkness, but into liberty governed by truth, righteousness, mercy, holiness, and love.

That Jesus Christ came not merely to comfort humanity, but to redeem it, restore it, and reconcile it unto God.

That wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Therefore, we declare our independence:

- from fear into faith
- from hatred into love
- from deception into truth
- from bitterness into forgiveness
- from bondage into freedom
- from pride into humility
- from despair into hope
- from selfish ambition into service
- from spiritual death into eternal life through Christ Jesus

We reject counterfeit freedoms:

- liberty without truth
- power without righteousness
- influence without character
- pleasure without holiness
- prosperity without stewardship

We affirm that true freedom is found through joyful surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

## DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN CHRIST JESUS

We commit ourselves:

- to truth over deception
- to courage over compromise
- to prayer over panic
- to holiness over corruption
- to discipleship over apathy
- to service over selfishness

May every home become a place of discipleship, every church a house of prayer, and every believer a faithful witness of Jesus Christ.

To the glory of God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son, in the power and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

WEEK 1 - MAY 25-31

# Liberty- Rooted in Truth

Liberty from the Biblical perspective must be viewed through the lens of both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Scripture presents freedom, not as unlimited self-expression, but as deliverance from bondage of forces of this life. Liberty is rooted in Truth – God’s Truth. The purpose of Biblical Liberty is to permit humanity to live in our highest good, responsibly, and faithfully in God’s fellowship and care. Then, we are to serve as Jesus did.

## Principles of Liberty

Throughout Scripture, Liberty is inseparably connected to:

- Truth
- Covenant
- Responsibility
- Worship
- Justice
- Self-governance
- Generational discipleship

Exodus 1-14 records these seven principles in the history of the called out people of God, the Hebrews, being delivered from the bondage of this world’s powers to fellowship with Jehovah and follow Him in His abiding presence through miracles, wilderness, and battles. As His Church, His called out people today, we may experience this same abiding in His word, His Spirit, while applying His principles.

***Have you chosen to live in Liberty as God defines or as this world defines it?***

## LIBERTY - ROOTED IN TRUTH

Inscribed on the Liberty Bell on display in Philadelphia's Independence Hall courtyard is part of the Bible verse Leviticus 25:10, "*...and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants.*"

The meaning the Hebrews heard in these original words and read them in generations to follow of establishing the governance of the nation formed by twelve sons, the sons of Jacob, or Israel, as God named Him were not the same as our modern definition of Liberty or freedom.

Let's consider those contrasting definitions. In contrast to a Biblically based and principled definition, culture frames Liberty as license. License to do whatever, whenever, however we want as long as it feels good and we are happy. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our Independence revolves around the "I" of self and not the "I" of His Image, His Identity.

God made us in His Image, gave us His Identity, and has created us for independence from this world, not as defined by this world.

### Position in Liberty

As we should, quoting John 8:32 during this amazing time in America's history fits the occasion. "*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,*" said Jesus to the Jews who were following Him, rather than man's definition of salvation.

See the context of His remarks to be that this truth of His redeeming and rescuing salvation that breaks the bondage of enslavement comes from abiding in His word and serving as His disciples. The blessing of Liberty in Christ from verse 32 is tethered to John 8:31 which explains that those who abide, remain, or continue in God's word are His disciples.

Just a few verses away, in verse 36, Jesus declares Himself to be the Liberator Who defines and sets the terms of our state of freedom versus bondage. Those terms are found in His word.

***Are you abiding in the word of God to be His disciple, or His apprentice, living life in Christ?***

## LIBERTY - ROOTED IN TRUTH

### Promises and Power in Liberty

As described in the Bible, being set free, declares those who have died to self, confessed Christ as Savior, and follow Him as Lord, are “free from sin,” or released from bondage and restraint of sins control. Romans 6 sets the Biblical terms of bondage in flesh and sin until we are freed by the love of God through Jesus Christ.

While we honor America’s great founding, we must know that neither God, Jesus, nor the Holy Spirit are Americans. A nation is only as Godly as the people who reside and populate that nation. “One nation under God” is written on our currency. Is it true in reality because of the influence of God’s people living in love, giving love and forgiveness?

### Posture of Liberty

Galatians 5:1 issues an imperative that offers no equivocation or moderation: *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”* We are to stand firm, keep our standing “in the liberty by which Christ made us free.” Our focus in standing should be fixed on Christ, not politics, not coalitions, and not institutions of man which seek to divide. We are to stand fast in Christ, guard the Liberty He has given, and model and replicate that posture in the next generations.

### Purpose of Liberty

Did you see it the first paragraph? The purpose of Biblical Liberty is to permit humanity to live in our highest good, responsibly, and faithfully in God’s fellowship and care. Then, we are to serve as Jesus did...in love.

### Call to Act!

We Christ followers must repent for accepting cultural definitions of freedom over biblical truth, seeking comfort over abiding and serving in Christ, neglecting Scripture, and failing to disciple younger generations.

Hebrew words for study (Old Testament): dʿrôr – liberty, flowing, run free.

Greek word for study ( New Testament): eleutheria –Freeborn, without restraint.

## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

**JOHN WITHERSPOON: PREACHER, EDUCATOR, FOUNDER, PATRIOT.**

America's founding occurred when 56 men signed their names to a document that served as their death warrant before the King of England. They would all face death for treason, for dissent of the Crown, and inciting violence. Yet, these Founding Fathers from the Thirteen Colonies that would form the United States of America stood fast. They rejected the oppression of King George and his terms to send the wealth of the states back to England.

One of the signers of the Declaration of Independence was a man of God, not just a believer, but a Presbyterian minister and president of the College of New Jersey, now called Princeton. As the only clergyman and college president who signed the famed parchment and also help draft the Articles of Confederation which served as the predecessor to America's Constitution, Witherspoon was educated, respected, and eloquent.

Obviously, as college president, he helped shape students who would become civic leaders. But it was his faith in Jesus Christ that formed his civic reasoning.



## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

**JOHN WITHERSPOON: PREACHER, EDUCATOR, FOUNDER, PATRIOT.**

The Princeton Papers cite that John Witherspoon believed liberty required virtue, conscience, and resistance to tyranny. His 1776 sermon, *The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men*, linked the American struggle to God's providential ordering of history. He is remembered for the conviction that civil liberty and religious liberty were inseparable.

If civil liberty could not exist without religious liberty, then the reasoning was clear that both must be guarded and passed forward.

John Witherspoon was a pastor first. His faith influenced his patriotism and not vice versa.

Be inspired.

WEEK 2 - JUNE 1-7

# Modern Foundations of Liberty and Freedom

Acknowledging that there are competing definitions of Liberty, Truth, and Freedom as framed by God in His word versus the span of millennia of humanity, where are we in today's America?

Believers and followers of Jesus Christ know and experience this tension and conflict. God's word predicts this shift over time and reveals it to be part of ushering in the Last Days before the return of Jesus Christ the King and Messiah.

So, what are Christ followers to do? This shift from liberty rooted in God, truth, covenant, and responsibility to one that is self-defined or "identified," loosely comprised of fluid "truth," and has individual in meaning – which proves it has no meaning, only subjective feelings – should inform Christians in this moment of honoring 250 years of America's history.

## ***Romans sure looked a lot like Americans.***

Paul wrote to the people who followed Jesus in Rome during the reign of Nero, one of the most perverted and sick national leaders whose tenure spanned from AD 54 through AD 68. This secular leader during the time of Greco-Roman culture had Christians dipped in wax and burned for illumination in his sick garden parties that were nothing more than gatherings honoring the demons of hell.

Read Romans 1:18–32. Do you recognize any similarities between America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the state of Rome?

## MODERN FOUNDATIONS OF LIBERTY AND FREEDOM

- Like Rome, America is now a culture of spectacle, performance, and entertainment.
- Like Rome, America has a moral pluralism or “diversity” that permits an individual definition of right and wrong with no universal standards.
- Like Rome, America is steered by the power of the courthouse, statehouse, the legislative house, and White House full of politics rather than the church house and home.
- Like Rome, America is home to sexual deviancy and confusion with biological norms and healthy familial roles destroyed.
- Like Rome, America focuses on self through individual rights, individual preferences, and individual deification.

There are likely many more parallels. But looking at Romans 18:21–26, these words are fitting today that should sober our minds and quicken Christians to repentance, then transformation in Christ.

### **...So goes the culture...**

We’ve heard people say a variation of the idiom, “Politics is downstream of culture.” That is true. Our politics reflect our cultural shifts. That’s obvious in the ever-changing policies that govern our economy, our schools, our entertainment norms, our national security policies, etc.

But realize the upstream from culture is the Church, or her absence; and upstream from the Church is the family.

Friends, our homes and our morals, our standards, and our practiced ways influence the Church. And then, the Church, the Bride of Christ, is supposed to be preparing herself for Christ. Yet, we fixate more on being affirmed and accepted by worldly institutions that reflect the cultural shift, and some might say, “rot.”

## MODERN FOUNDATIONS OF LIBERTY AND FREEDOM

Does your home reflect Biblical Truth? Or do you do as the Romans were doing who read Paul's words? *"People knew God perfectly well, but when they didn't treat Him like God, refusing to worship Him, they trivialized themselves into silliness and confusion so that there was neither sense nor direction left in their lives. They pretended to know it all, but were illiterate regarding lie. They traded the glory of God who holds the whole world in His hands for cheap figurines you can buy at a roadside stand."* (The Message).

- Why are many of our churches in disarray?
- Why are our schools in turmoil with behavior issues and instruction time limited?
- Why is our culture without rights or wrongs, standards, morals, or decency?
- Why are our politics so brutal and even dangerous in persecution and personal destruction?

**What in the world does this have to do with America's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary?  
Everything!**

### Biblical Foundations Are Not Shaken

The First and Second Continental Congresses which convened in Philadelphia, America's capital at the time of the Declaration of Independence's signing, often held prayer meetings with times of fasting called for solemnity and the seeking of Godly wisdom. The very document of the Declaration of Independence references God as: God of Nature, Creator, Supreme Judge of the world, and Divine Providence.

These powerful salutations of God indicate the hearts of the men who penned the words. When Jesus spoke of the wise and foolish builders, or founders in Matthew 7:24-27, His words no doubt inspired the Founders and Framers of America's Republic. America was founded upon principles of God's word, just as Jesus said.

But look at our homes. Look at our schools, entertainment; listen to our mouths; look where we spend our money. And yes, look at our politics of hatred, even from the hearts and mouths of "Christians."

## MODERN FOUNDATIONS OF LIBERTY AND FREEDOM

Jesus instructed us to be wise and build our lives upon God's will and word. Paul warned and spoke of those who had "*exchanged the truth of God for the lie.*"

### Call to Act!

Be resolved to build your home on the proven word of God. Begin today. With our devotion to Biblical Truth, every relationship, every encounter, and all we do will reflect God's will and ways. Institutions of man will begin to reflect our Creator, not just the hearts devoted to power.

## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

**ABIGAIL ADAMS: WIFE, MOTHER, AUTHOR, FIRST LADY, PATRIOT.**

The letters of Abigail Adams exchanged with her husband, John Adams, are a treasure trove of history. John Adams served as a delegate in the Continental Congress, or the legislative body that governed America during its founding, and throughout the Revolutionary War – in the fight to break free of the tyranny and oppression of the British Crown at that time.

John and Abigail Adams were writing of events in real time, but they were making history.

John Adams was educated at Harvard and encouraged to become a minister (since Harvard was once a School of Divinity). He, instead, chose to pursue and practice law, he defended America's cause in her infancy and worked to legally protect those active in protests and speech of the day.

His wife, Abigail, was self-educated in reading from her father's personal library, a minister himself. She married, gave birth to and raised six children, one of whom would be the sixth President of the United States – John Quincy Adams. While raising their children, running the family properties and farm, Abigail Adams put her mark on history in her correspondence with her husband.

As she wrote letters, since the only forms of communication were in written form in the mid-to-late 1770s,



## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

**ABIGAIL ADAMS: WIFE, MOTHER, AUTHOR, FIRST LADY, PATRIOT.**

she revealed herself to have strong opinions and quite the activist bending of her husband's ear...and heart, and mind.

Abigail advocated for the education of females, not common at the time. Abigail opposed slavery. Her writings were infused with Scripture reflecting her Biblical teachings and applications.

Following the costly defeat at Bunker Hill which preceded the Revolutionary War when Britain invaded to seize weapons and leaders, Abigail wrote reflecting on God's source and power. Mrs. Adams had just learned of the loss of life, including a family friend: *The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong [Ecclesiastes 9:11], but the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people [Psalm 68:35]. Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your hearts before him; God is a refuge for us [Psalm 62:8]. . . . Almighty God cover the heads of our countrymen, and be a shield to our dear friends. How many have fallen, we know not. The constant roar of the cannon is so distressing that we cannot eat, drink, or sleep. May we be supported and sustained in the dreadful conflict.*

Abigail Adams stood fast in her faith on which she founded her views of Liberty and served as America's first Second Lady and America's second First Lady and the first to occupy the White House in Washington, DC.

WEEK 3 - JUNE 8-14 (FLAG DAY)

# Liberty Demands Sacrifice

As Americans enjoy weeks of commemorative reflection, education, and activities honoring the 250 years of the nation's Republic, we are reminded of key events involving the cherished and powerful document drafted by our Founders entitled the Declaration of Independence.

While these powerful words carefully drafted over a period of weeks by "The Committee of Five" – Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman – all delegates of the Second Continental Congress, declared "Independence" from oppression, over taxation, and no voice in government, they also declared war.

The Revolutionary War followed battles on American soil that preceded the signing of the Declaration of Independence that involved Britain's seizure of wealth, weapons, and the leaders of the 13 colonies. The loss of life, significant bloodshed, and steeled devotion were all part of the timeline of 1765 through the final end of the war in 1783.

America's founding happened in the midst of conflict and war. So the idea that America was formed from only an ideological debate about representation, taxation, and the voice of people and their rights to own property and defend themselves is wrong.

Just as the Declaration of Independence acknowledges, the colonists declared that Nature's God entitled them to a station of respect and self-governance. As Creator, He endowed each with unalienable rights, or those that man didn't give, therefore, man cannot take away without evidencing that their efforts oppose God's divine will and ways.

## LIBERTY DEMANDS SACRIFICE

The colonists' representatives who served as delegates in the Second Continental Congress had already appointed George Washington as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army (1775). There remained a hope of reconciliation despite the military battles as evidenced by the flying of a flag by General Washington that had 13 red and white stripes, representing the colonies, but also featured the British Union Jack in the canton.

### ***Independence declared demanded unified sacrifice***

The version of the flag known as the Grand Union Flag flown by George Washington in January 1775 and '76 was replaced by one commissioned by the Continental Congress once the Declaration of Independence was penned and signed. The newly sewn flag would be a significant departure from the individual flags flown in battles by various regiments and local militias and the Grand Union Flag.

Adopting the flag was an act of Congress, literally. On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress declared, "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation." One flag with meaningful design components that had no relation to the invading forces was proposed and created. This flag would unite thirteen separate colonies in the declared actions to defend their individual and collective Liberty. The unified colonies, became the United States by putting aside the unique divisions, embracing the call for sacrifice in battle, and standing in courage.

### ***Liberty Symbolized and Seized***

Historical records and historians debate who sewed the flag. But let's focus on the symbolism and apply it to God's word and instruction about His name, Jehovah Nissi – The Lord our Banner.

Liberty was not simply awarded by the proving of a point in the composing and signing of the Declaration of Independence. There were battles, war, and decades of great loss experienced for the cause of freedom.

## LIBERTY DEMANDS SACRIFICE

In the effort to unify those willing to fight, the commissioned flag took on great meaning with its canton of blue holding thirteen stars forming an uninterrupted circle and “new constellation.” The blue field spoke of one, collective body holding this new creation of separate entities coming together in unity. Blue has represented justice, perseverance, and determined vigilance.

The thirteen red and white stripes reflected the original 13 colonies with red symbolizing sacrifice, courage, and valor. White represented innocence, purity, and the integrity of the cause.

America’s flag was a significantly different standard flown compared to the monarchies of the day which often featured some coat of arms or territorial dynasty.

### ***Liberty Symbolized and Seized in the Bible***

America is the wonderful result of sacrifice, unified efforts, and courage over two and a half centuries. The Hebrews – twelve tribes born from the 12 sons of Jacob, renamed Israel – experienced the same process.

The book of Exodus records the release of the Hebrews from oppression and bondage. Within four to eight weeks after crossing the Red Sea, the wandering people of God had not yet formed their governance, established their individual tribes as a nation, or even gotten trained for war, but Exodus 17:8-16 records a battle of significance.

Just as the Hebrews were seeking their own land and liberty, the Amalekites confronted them. These wandering terrorists of their day stood between the Hebrews and Canaan. These verses show Moses appointing Joshua as the Hebrews’ first volunteer military commander. Moses stood above the battlefield with his rod held high as the Hebrews prevailed. Yet as Moses’ arms tired and lowered, the wave of Amalekites matched the weakness of the prophet’s solo efforts.

Aaron, Moses’ brother and priest of the Hebrews, and Hur, an assistant to Moses, stepped up to assist in lifting Moses’ arms holding the rod of God in his hand. As the rod returned high, the Hebrews surged in victory. The leadership of Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and Hur made them vessels of God in this victory.

## LIBERTY DEMANDS SACRIFICE

Moses, as Exodus 17:15 records, built an altar and called its name, "The LORD-Is-My-Banner." The presence of God was the covering that yielded victory in battle and set the Hebrews on their journey advancing to God's Promised Land and eventual formation of God's nation of people.

### Call to Act!

Examine the standard which flies over your life. Do you fall in behind Jehovah Himself and rally for liberty in Christ, or do you fight independently?

## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

### GEORGE WASHINGTON: FARMER, SURVEYOR, COMMANDER, FIRST PRESIDENT

George Washington was educated at the Lower Church School, located in a Methodist church in Virginia. Raised by his father, a justice of the peace and his mother, “a planter” and farmer, widowed by age 36 with six children and thousands of acres to manage, George was fashioned by the institution God created as the bedrock of society – his family.

In his role as Commander of the Continental Army, Washington issued correspondence to the troops stating, “The General hopes and trusts, that every officer and man, will endeavor so to live, and act, as becomes a Christian Soldier...”



Among his papers were found the humble petitions of the great leader, “Direct my thoughts, words and work... wash away my sins in the immaculate blood of the Lamb...”

George Washington filled roles as the first of many. He served as the first Commander in Chief of America’s volunteer army. He served as the first President of the United States of America. Washington could have become the first king but rejected the gesture after his victories and leadership, knowing the Republic form of government would guard against tyranny.

## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

### GEORGE WASHINGTON: FARMER, SURVEYOR, COMMANDER, FIRST PRESIDENT

Among the words spoken and written by this American hero, many pointed to the Providence of God, or His divine will, purpose, and plan. But the writings from the winter encampment at Valley Forge during the winter of 1777–78 about a decade prior to becoming president should stir us all during this time of reflection for America’s 250<sup>th</sup> and the week of Flag Day (June 14).

- To his military charges, “At this time of public distress, men may find enough to do in the service of God and their Country...” General Washington encouraged Godly conduct and times for worship.
- To the president of the Second Continental Congress, Henry Laurens of South Carolina, General Washington painted the dire picture: “We have this day no less than 2,873 men in camp unfit for duty because they are barefoot and otherwise naked...” Washington’s assessment was dire; his leadership focused on the Providential calling to press on.
- Still encamped at Valley Forge, Washington wrote, “...it is the indispensable duty of all men to adore the superintending Providence of Almighty God...” in May 1778.

Washington’s calls for days of prayer, fasting, and thanksgiving marked his many roles. He modeled the belief that America’s founding relied heavily on the compassion, provision, and guidance of Almighty God.

WEEK 4 - JUNE 15-21

# Generational Stewardship

HOW HAVE WE STEWARDED LIBERTY?

*"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."*

Ronald Reagan spoke these words most famously in 1964 in a speech called, "A Time for Choosing." His powerful words pressed Americans during a time that Communism worked to invade the democratic republic's governance and unrest within the United States was escalating in the shadow of President John Kennedy's assassination, Cold War escalations with Russia, and civil conflict involving the sin of racism and segregation.

Solomon was right – there is nothing new under the sun.

One thing has certainly changed since Reagan spoke those words more than six decades ago: Americans are so much more distracted and focused on so many things that crowd out the essential truth of life.

The truth remains, however, that essential foundations of life exist from the stewardship of one generation passing forward principles, practices, and modeled and teach the firm position of Liberty.

***Liberated...but will Liberty continue?***

Compared to monarchies and other sovereign governments, the United States of America as a constitutional republic has endured under the same written governing charter longer than any other major modern nation.

## GENERATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

America's Founders, in prayer, fasting, and unified commitment, crafted a form of government that was to limit government and empower people. The assumption was that American people would be freedom-loving as God deemed Liberty, not as man defined license and unrestraint.

Two-hundred fifty years includes a span of only about 10 generations. Just ten generations ago, men and women pledged their lives in faith to God and His Providence, His will.

### ***What have our children learned from us?***

Sources such as Pew Research, the Centers for Disease Control, the Federal Reserve, Gallup polling, and the US Census Bureau show us what generations have learned by chronicling our ways over the last 65 years.

Where have we gotten the idea that Liberty occurs from policies rather than deeply held principles practiced in our homes and communities that are modeled for our children? Where did we exchange the notion that it was someone else's job to raise our families, teach our children, pay our debts, save for our futures, and defend that which is true and Truth?

Jesus taught about stewardship as a principle for which we will be judged when we stand before Him. Read Jesus' teaching on stewardship in Matthew 25:14-30. But be advised with His direct warning: *"When someone is given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even much more is required"* (Luke 13:48, NLT).

### **Call to Act!**

This day, fall on your face in prayer and repentance. Decide and act today in being the model of Jesus for your family in word and deed. Then we are sure to be good stewards!

GENERATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

Indicator	1960s baseline	Latest available / current trend	Direction
<b>Church attendance / membership</b>	Gallup church membership was around <b>70%+</b> for much of the mid-20th century; 1999 was still <b>70%</b>	Membership fell to <b>47% in 2020</b> ; regular weekly/nearly weekly attendance fell from <b>42% in 2000–03 to 30% in 2021–23</b> . ( <a href="https://www.gallup.com">Gallup.com</a> )	Down sharply
<b>Professed Christian identity</b>	Roughly dominant national identity through the 20th century; Pew's comparable modern series began later	Pew: Christian identification fell from <b>78% in 2007 to 62% in 2023–24</b> ; unaffiliated rose to about <b>29%</b> . ( <a href="https://www.pewresearch.org">Pew Research Center</a> )	Down
<b>Active Christian faith lived</b>	Harder to measure historically; church membership/attendance and “religion very important” were higher	Gallup reports less than half now say religion is “very important”; Bible engagement in 2026 returned near 2024 levels after a 2025 uptick. ( <a href="https://www.gallup.com">Gallup.com</a> )	Down / weakened
<b>Children in intact mother-father homes</b>	About <b>88%</b> of children lived with two parents in 1960	About <b>69%</b> lived with two parents by mid-2010s; Census 2023 shows two-parent living remains higher for young children, <b>75% under age 6</b> , but lower among older children, <b>68% ages 12–17</b> . ( <a href="https://www.time.com">Time</a> )	Down
<b>Children born within marriage</b>	Births outside marriage were about <b>5% in 1960</b> historically; marital births about <b>95%</b>	Around <b>40% of births</b> are now to unmarried women, meaning roughly <b>60% within marriage</b> , with state variation. ( <a href="https://www.cdc.gov">CDC</a> )	Marital births down
<b>Crime rates</b>	Violent crime rose steeply from the 1960s into the early 1990s	Violent crime is far below 1990s peaks; FBI reported violent crime down again in 2024, including murder down <b>14.9%</b> . ( <a href="https://www.cpsr.org">CPSR</a> )	Rose sharply, then fell

GENERATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

Indicator	1960s baseline	Latest available / current trend	Direction
Poverty rates	Official poverty rate was about <b>22% in 1959</b> , falling during the 1960s	Official poverty rate was <b>10.6% in 2024</b> , with 35.9 million people in poverty. ( <a href="#">Census.gov</a> )	Down overall, persistent
Indebtedness	Household debt burden was much lower before the credit expansion era	Household debt reached about <b>\$20.9 trillion</b> by Q4 2025; household debt-to-GDP was about <b>68.5% in Q2 2025</b> , down from Great Recession-era highs but far above mid-century norms. ( <a href="#">Federal Reserve</a> )	Up long-term
Civic/cultural knowledge	No perfect 1960s national series	NAEP 8th-grade civics score in 2022 was <b>lower than 2018</b> and not meaningfully better than 1998; only <b>22%</b> reached proficient in civics, and U.S. history proficiency was <b>13%</b> . ( <a href="#">Nation's Report Card</a> )	Weak / declining recently
Biblical knowledge / engagement	High biblical literacy was culturally assumed but not measured uniformly	American Bible Society reports historically low Scripture engagement in 2024, a modest 2025 uptick, then 2026 returning near 2024 levels; “Scripture-engaged” adults were reported around <b>17–18%</b> in 2024–26. ( <a href="#">Scripture Engagement</a> )	Down / low

## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

### **AUGUSTINE WASHINGTON AND MARY BALL WASHINGTON: PARENTS OF GEORGE WASHINGTON**

Augustine Washington and Mary Ball Washington were the parents of George Washington, the general who liberated America and led the Republic in its founding and to set its course.

Most cannot relate to eloquent writers, politicians, war heroes, or public figures. But all of us have had a homelife – good or bad, normal or complicated, healthy or traumatic, etc. George Washington was a product of his raising.

Augustine Washington owned a large farm and was a planter, but he served as the local justice of the peace in his community in rural Virginia. He was widowed after his first wife died at only 30 years of age, leaving two children. Augustine married Mary Ball a year later in 1731 to have five more children who survived to adulthood.

Mary Washington worked alongside her husband in rearing their family, managing their land, and instilling values as the first teachers of their children.

Augustine taught George the basics of surveying, which led to his competencies that benefitted him as a leader, in land battles, and in managing human and material resources.

Mary was widowed after only 13 years of marriage when their son George was only 11 years old. She was elevated to a female head of household managing more than a thousand acres of farmland and crops with a house full of children.

What evidence is there to support the Christian faith of Augustine and Mary Washington as they raised one of the most consequential leaders in history? Their family Bible.

## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

### AUGUSTINE WASHINGTON AND MARY BALL WASHINGTON: PARENTS OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

This brown leather book contains notes in pencil from Mary's hand and lines of carefully inscribed genealogy and significant events in ink by the hand of George on a blank sheet. That blank sheet was held within the pages of the Book of Jeremiah.



Without question, the Biblical citations that George Washington wrote within his papers and correspondences came from a homelife that included Biblical teachings and practices. George Washington's parents took their responsibility to teach faithfully and their faithful stewardship was evident in their son.

Consider just one verse (Micah 6:8) used often by Augustine and Mary's son, George:

***"O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"***

WEEK 5 - JUNE 22-28

# The Pursuit of Authentic Liberty in Christ

IT BEGINS WITH REFLECTION AND RENEWED COVENANT

Successful businesses and organizations have strategic plans that lay out vision, mission, and plans that are reviewed regularly to meet standards and mission goals. In the cases of performances that are lagging or even fail, effective teams in the corporate, nonprofit, and any competitive field, even sports, a look back is conducted to find the problem areas, ensure that those are eliminated or at least isolated while under repair, and corrections are made.

These reviews empower leaders to navigate rather than drift in response to trends and external factors.

Unfortunately, too many today reject looking back, claiming that the “Good Ole Days” are not progressive, advanced, or permit some believed secret to success based on making things happen as you go.

None of us should be threatened by looking back. But we can't live there. We can't even permit our past to preoccupy our plans and thoughts. But this capacity separates leaders from trendy front folks.

How does this relate to America's Liberty and the believer's Liberty in Christ?

Personal reflection

Do you fix God's word – the Old and New Covenant or Testaments – as your plum line of truth and measure of freedom? How many times each week do you read the Bible – not social media memes with an inspirational quote or a singular Bible verse superimposed over a sunrise or mountain vista?

## GENERATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

There is no Liberty when it's not rooted in and tethered to truth. Judges 21:25 is one of many references to the habits of God's own people to do *"what is right in his own eyes."*

If we are not individually committed to read, study, and know God's word, we unfortunately fall into the crowd Paul wrote of in 2 Timothy 4:2-5 as he admonished the young pastor to *"Preach the word!"* Why would Paul be so imperative? Because *"the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears...and they will turn away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."*

One of these many fables is that politics will save us. Another is that God is an American. Another is that God prefers one partisan group over another. Another is that yesteryear was so oppressive, even within the church, that we can't possibly look back. Another is that God is love...as we define it, not God's own word.

### Renewed Covenant

If looking back bothers you, then renewing your covenant with God in a personal commitment acknowledging Him as Savior, Lord, Source of Wisdom, and Almighty God may equally bother you.

But do you want to ensure Liberty and reverse course in America's cultural slide? If so, we must individually return to God's word and ways. His covenant is entering into a binding commitment with Him on His terms, not yours.

- Covenant to show love and follow His two commands (Matthew 22:37-40)
- Covenant to both profess Jesus as Savior and Lord and evidence that with your life of obedience (Luke 6:46-49)
- Covenant to live in the Liberty provided by your death to self to permit the Holy Spirit to govern your spirit, your mind, and your flesh (Galatians 5:1-26)

But, but I just want to be patriotic and do my part to leave America a better place than when I was born!

## GENERATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

EXACTLY! This is doing your part. Christians pray the model prayer of Matthew 6:5-15, acknowledging God's Kingdom coming to this earth as it is in heaven with little consideration to the words they utter. For this to happen, the Kingdom of God must be materialized through the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, as Paul described Christians (2 Corinthians 5:20).

### America Rededicated and Revived

"Yes! Amen! We declare this and pray for this. Please, Lord Jesus, let America be rededicated to You and let her be revived!"

Whose job is it to sacrifice for this to happen?, Do we understand that to experience Christian Liberty we must yield in denial and death to self to allow the Holy Spirit (or the Spirit Jesus promised after His resurrection) to remove our ways for His (Galatians 5:22-24)?

Liberty in Christ and His Liberty living through you and each Christ follower will revolutionize America. Read Romans 8:5-17. Reflect on your own life. Do you permit culture to define how you worship Jesus, give time to fellowship, worship, and serve Him? Do you reject the "Good Ole Days" because you've been "church hurt" just as the enemy of Christ wants you to do? Do you pursue the truth of 2 Corinthians 3:17 – *"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."*

### Call to Act!

Declare today that you will have daily reflection using His word; you will renew your covenant to God's word, His ways, and His will. The spiritual revolution will be underway!

## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

### PHILLIS WHEATLEY: BORN A SLAVE, FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN AUTHOR OF PUBLISHED POETRY

After being sold by a local chief in her home village in Senegal, Africa and sent to America aboard a slave transport ship named Phillis, the 11 year old girl became property of the Wheatley family of Boston, Massachusetts.

Her intellect and energy soon endeared her to the family that provided an unparalleled education by the tutoring by their own children, Mary and Nathaniel, who apprenticed her in reading and writing.



Phillis Wheatley wrote prose and poetry that was often read and discussed in the family parlor. At the age of twenty, she even accompanied Nathaniel Wheatley to London for audiences who heard and read her writings in hopes for publication.

An excerpt from one of Phillis' poems reads:

*Tw'as mercy brought me from my Pagan land,  
Taught my benighted soul to understand  
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:  
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew...*

Phillis Wheatley's most renowned poem, To His Excellence, George Washington, was delivered to the Commander of the Continental Army in 1775. The following year, at the invitation of the writing's honoree, Washington met with the former slave, who had been freed years earlier.

Phillis Wheatley's writings often included references to redemption, salvation, grace, and liberty from the perspective that few could appreciate.

Consider the oppression this woman suffered, yet she stood firm in her faith in Christ Jesus, not permitting culture or circumstance to keep her enslaved in her spirit. Phillis Wheatley serves to inspire as a tremendous ambassador of Jesus being in this world, but not of it.

WEEK 6 - JUNE 29-JULY 5

# American Patriots Shaped America

WHO SHAPES AMERICA NOW AND OUR FUTURE?

Two hundred, fifty years – or about ten generations have passed in chronological time since America’s Independence declared became her Liberty for generations. Yet the DNA of America’s original Patriots, or fellow countrymen and women devoted to their sovereign country, is still among us.

The fruit of Liberty’s Tree has been cultivated, faithfully reproduced, and harvested for sustenance for two and a half centuries. As Thomas Jefferson first wrote, too, that “The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.” Liberty must be defended; tyranny must be defeated; and peace – not the absence of conflict, but the state of being at its highest good – comes when the fruit of Liberty’s Tree is understood in its value, guarded, and kept pure without defilement or modification for the sake of power.

Who were the American Patriots who sowed the seeds in the 1700–1800s that yielded America’s beautiful and bountiful Tree of Liberty? What are the characteristics of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Patriot who is still sowing seeds of Liberty’s Fruit?

## Patriots Then

Farmers, fathers, mothers, merchants, printers, preachers, teachers, tradesmen. The average person in America influenced their families, their communities, and their forming country to reflect a common set of values and virtues. It was under the collective pressure of oppressive power that these values and virtues were put to the test.

## AMERICAN PATRIOTS SHAPED AMERICA

Then the threat to those values and virtues was the strongarm of tyranny that sought to rob individuals of their own earned wealth and goods. This tyrannical power of the government which attempted to control the new colonies lost sight of the fact that people determine the worth of any country through their own beliefs, labor, and contributions. Simply, the British Crown in the 1700s-1800s sought to confiscate the best of America for its consumption and discard that which it didn't find useful, just as one might leave the bones of a hearty meal.

Patriots of this era of time prioritized family and honored it as the bedrock of civil society. Parents were the first teachers...and often the only teachers. The behaviors of children reflected the values and virtues taught in the home and the local church that used the Holy Bible as the only Source needed for literacy, learning, and life's instruction book.

Together, these average Bible-believing people bonded and bound together to become a force that stood against one of the most powerful political monarchies of the day. No, there was no excessive wealth of Americans, superior material goods or other resources, or any other factor beyond the reality that these hard-working, God-fearing people were inspired to defend the freedom that had experienced owning their own property, working to sustain their own family, and having the rights of a unique land that were reliant on their personal responsibility. Every single American in Liberty's covenant had skin in the game. If they lost, they lost it all.

### Patriots Now

Patriots still exist. Many fight, however, within institutions that have become more committed to its own existence and benefit – politics and government – than to serve the people for whom they were created.

Patriots of the Revolutionary times understood that the greatest threat to a republic was internal – there had to be the internal and unified will to live in Liberty that served the highest good for all and as established by Truth, not opinion or those who held power at the moment.

## AMERICAN PATRIOTS SHAPED AMERICA

We're now experiencing this internal threat. Liberty's Tree is being neglected, if not intentionally modified, for the benefit of select populations despite the fact: Liberty cannot and will not exist apart from truth.

Today, Patriots are those who remain steadfast in Biblical truth, not the fickle opinion that gets echoed long and loud enough to indoctrinate our thinking and ways. Patriots are still the average person who decides to seek truth not popularity; to live each aspect of life – family, education, economic, entertainment, etc. – rooted in Biblical values and virtues; and to see that conflict happens, and is needed to cultivate, root out, and to water Liberty's Tree, but that individual rights are endowed by our Creator, not because of a political party, one's partisan affiliation, any politician, any policy, or any person in power.

Modern American Patriots take responsibility for their families, serve their local church, help in schools, sports, and charities, and give to improve others' lives rather than to gain praise.

The Patriots' fight is first spiritual. **Read and study 2 Corinthians 10:1-6.** Do we first fight to govern our own selves to love God, to treat others exactly as we would want to be treated, to give the forgiveness and mercy we want? Or do we fight each other more to win a point than to create disciples of Jesus Christ, which God's word promises will completely transform a person into a new creation – a creation with the capacity to live like Jesus?

Do we speak biblical truth today, or simply repeat political talking points?

Do we teach our children to read, learn, and flourish by grounding them in the Bible and their Creator, or merely shield them from opposing political and cultural views?

We mock God if we attempt to defile His truth, His word, to fit out politics and our culture. Let's bring His kingdom come, His will be done on this earth as it is right now in heaven.

Let's cultivate and tend Liberty's Tree through the love of His Holy Spirit Whose power will guarantee life in abundance and to the fullest...our Liberty in Christ!

## AMERICAN PATRIOTS SHAPED AMERICA

American Liberty sprang from the hearts of those who enjoyed first the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24).

A small group of men walked with Jesus Christ, God in His fullness in flesh, to establish the faith of Christianity today.

Similarly, a united group of people seeking freedom to worship, own property, and live as independent and responsible individuals began America's story.

### Call to Act!

Reflect on your own personal role in America's story. What will your family say of your story – your time on this earth either as a giver or a taker to make your family better? Are you a giver who contributes and adds value to your family, your community, your church, your workplace, etc.?

God gives seed to the sower. We are to be sowers of the Word of God and the authentic Liberty in Christ that is borne from truth, not any institution of man. Let's sow seeds and let the Holy Spirit do His good and miraculous work.

***"Now the Lord is Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."***  
2 Corinthians 3:17

## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

### JOSEPH WARREN: PHYSICIAN, MAJOR GENERAL, PATRIOT

Likely a name most have never heard of, Joseph Warren was educated and highly motivated with the Bible-based belief that Liberty was not granted by kings or governments, but came from God Who gave these rights as natural possessions to free people.

History texts speak of the “Midnight Ride of Paul Revere,” along with William Dawes and others dispatched and mobilized to spread the word, based on intelligence that, “the British are coming!” But that British intelligence was placed in the hands first of Dr. Joseph Warren who called for the horseback riders to make their ways through the region in the dark of night to stir Patriots from their beds on April 17, 1775, and specifically to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

While the Declaration of Independence signed on July 4, 1776, declared America’s Independence, it came after property confiscation, invasion, and battles mounted up by the united colonists inspired by the taste of Liberty and the threat of its destruction. Dr. Joseph Warren was one of many stirred to action as he witnessed that which was good and from God.

Dr. Warren served as an appointed officer in the Continental Army. Yet his rank was not a factor when battle came.



He fearlessly fought alongside the men he led on the battlefield, rather than pulling back to oversee the field of conflict.

Why do we know so very little about a man who wrote speeches and essays, networked with the Sons of Liberty, and debated that God created Liberty for His people, not for the power of man?

## FOUNDING INSPIRATION

### **JOSEPH WARREN: PHYSICIAN, MAJOR GENERAL, PATRIOT**

He died on the battlefield at Bunker Hill fighting with his troops on June 17, 1775. Major General Joseph Warren, MD, served his countrymen and women because He served His Creator. His contemporaries were George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin – all men we know and honor.

Yet before the eyes of God, Joseph Warren served the cause of authentic Liberty as defined by God and defended in America's Founding.

Be inspired and encouraged. What you do that may be unseen by man and remembered by few, if any, still contributes and adds value when done for the cause of Christ.

# Free Indeed!

Six weeks to America's 250

Join us on July 5 for  
Freedom Sunday

Pastor Ronnie Phillips  
will preach on "Hope for America"  
at 10:30am as we join with  
Abba's House Español for a moving  
service honoring our nation's  
birthday.

