

# Freedom Is Not Free

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I am unworthy to speak of such heroes yet I feel compelled. So many Americans have paid the ultimate price to allow the rest of us the opportunity to prosper and live in peace. Young men and women in the prime of their lives plucked from this earth in the blink of an eye. I am in awe of their sacrifice and if there is a particular word or phrase to adequately describe my personal appreciation it escapes me. I will just say my gratitude exceeds my vocabulary and my respect for these intrepid Americans and their families is total and complete.

It has been said many times “Nothing in life is free.” It seems to always come down to “how much does it cost and who is going to pay?” Our freedom and lifestyle have been bought and paid for time and again but the toll has been tremendous. The fallen have written a blank check and we cashed it. They tilled the bloody ground of the battlefields to sow the seeds of freedom and the rest of us reaped the harvest and revel in the bounty. We have no way to repay this debt and I doubt such noble Americans or their families expect payment. What we can do is give thanks for their incredible gift, honor their memory and live our lives in a way that justifies their ultimate sacrifice.

We have erected monuments, made movies, told stories, taught history and written songs about those who gave everything. Each year we bring out our flags to celebrate their sacrifice just as we should. All of these endeavors are praiseworthy and commendable but are they enough? Is there more we could do? Do we celebrate a holiday or the reason for the holiday? What is my role in our country’s future? I ask these questions of myself and I think they are important. I will continue to ask myself these questions until I feel I have answers that would satisfy the surviving family of an American who gave all. It just seems proper.

The Good Lord knows I am a flawed man not qualified to give advice but I will make a suggestion. Talk to your children and grandchildren about the price of freedom. Instill in them an understanding and a sense of gratitude for those who gave all. Tell them Memorial Day is much more than balloons, flags and BBQ. Tell them every day is Memorial Day even though we only celebrate and honor these heroes once each year. Tell them there is a line of Americans as far as the eye can see who have made the ultimate sacrifice for us and our way of life. Tell them of the families whose lives will never be the same.

Children should be taught there is nothing glamorous about war, it is not a video game or G.I. Joe movie. Tell them we all pray we have seen the last war but we probably haven’t and Americans will always do what must be done. Tell them how much you love them and tell them those who have died for us were loved by their families in the same way. Tell them the way they choose to live their lives ultimately determines the true value of the sacrifice made by these splendid Americans.

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