

# Welcome to a Year of Celebration!

**Week 27: July 3-10, 2022**

## **Celebrate Independence Day**

This year, we are focusing on who God is and how we can celebrate him and the life that he offers to us. We will draw deeper into a relationship with the Lord through examining his nature and desire for personal intimacy with us as his people, and we are going to do so in such a fun way! We are going to journey in 2022 through practical ways to celebrate various holidays! We will look at many of your favorite celebrations: Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day and much more. We will explore the historic, liturgical holidays of the year, learn about the Jewish festivals of the Bible days, and even consider some of the celebrations of other religious faiths. I'm so glad you will be on this journey with us.

In this packet, you will find some ideas for you to grow closer to God, your family, and others. Nothing is required. It is all for fun and your personal enjoyment and growth. There are enough activities that you could do one or two per day during the week if you want. If you don't want to do something, skip it. If another idea comes to mind, do it. Watch for God's abundant goodness and celebrate it.

Come Join Us as We  
**CELEBRATE GOD!**



**"They celebrate your abundant goodness  
and joyfully sing of your righteousness."**

*Dr. Patrick Wilson*

**(Psalm 145:7)**

**2022**

# Video Devotional

Go to Patrick Wilson's YouTube page and watch the video devotional for this week: Celebrate Independence Day. Then, consider and discuss with your family/friends the following questions:

"The church exists primarily for two closely correlated purposes: to worship God and to work for his kingdom in the world." —NT Wright

- What are America's greatest strengths?
- What are America's biggest challenges?
- Why is life more complex than two opposing sides? Give examples.
- How did Jesus address the issue of taxation?
- What should we "give" to God? Why?
- How did Jesus explain his kingdom to Pilate? What does this say about how we should live, today?
- Why is our allegiance to God's kingdom more important than our pledge to our nation?

## Patriotic Marshmallow Shooter

1. Cut the scrapbook paper to fit around the toilet paper roll and glue into place.
2. Tie a knot in the bottom of the uninflated balloon.
3. Cut the top (round part) off the balloon.
4. Wrap the open end of the balloon around the bottom of the toilet paper roll and secure with a rubber band.
5. To use, place a marshmallow in the shooter and pull the knotted end back. Let go of the balloon to shoot the marshmallow out.
6. Save some marshmallows for a treat and enjoy!

### Needed Supplies:

- Toilet Paper Roll
- Red and White Striped Scrapbook Paper
- Blue Balloon
- Rubber Band
- Marshmallows (Minis)

Provided by Big Family Blessings.



# Foods to Prepare

Americans love their food, and it is common to gather together around the table or in the backyard for a good meal on the Fourth of July.

According to Eater.com, here are some favorites for the 4th:

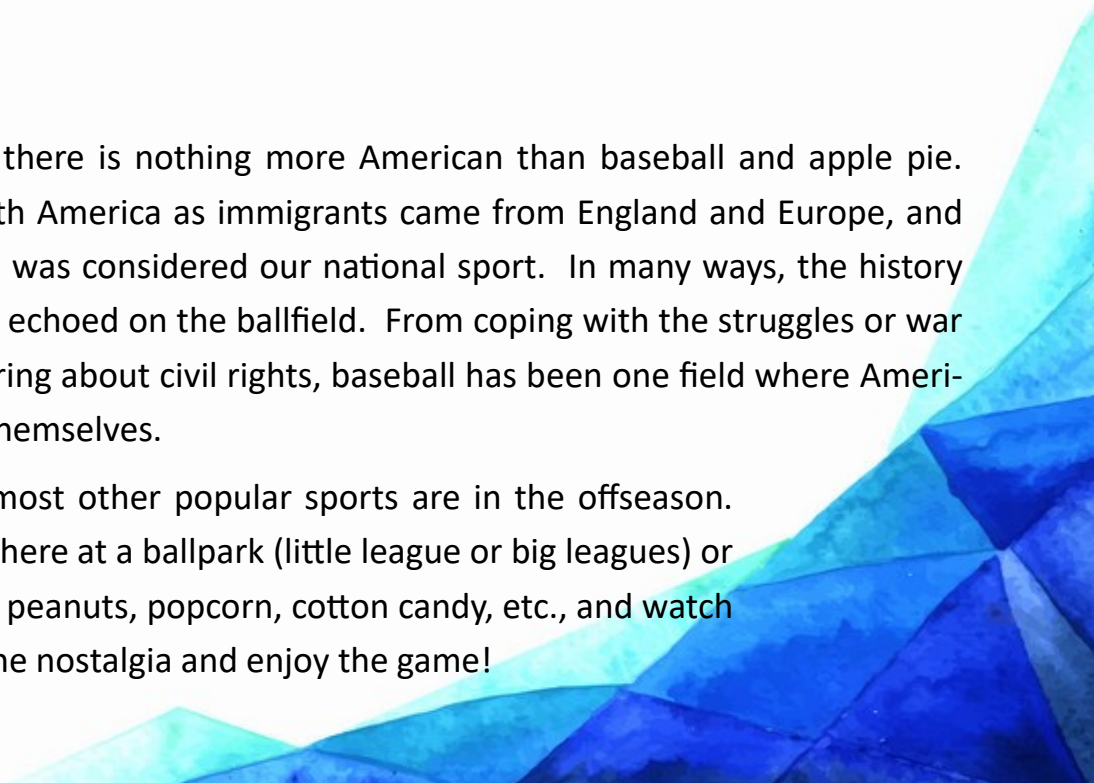
- Anything Red, White, and Blue: Fruit boards or meat trays (charcuterie)
- Fruit Pies: Especially strawberry, apple, cherry, and blueberry
- Fried Chicken or Fish (or anything else fried)
- Hot Dogs: In all of its various forms and flavors
- Hamburgers: The juicer the better
- S'mores: Yes, please!
- Corn on the Cob: Throw it on the grill
- Baked Beans
- Deviled Eggs
- Salads: Coleslaw, Potato or Macaroni Salad

Whip up some delicious food and invite family/friends to join in the festivities!

## Play Ball

It has been said that there is nothing more American than baseball and apple pie. Baseball came to North America as immigrants came from England and Europe, and by the 19th century it was considered our national sport. In many ways, the history of the United States is echoed on the ballfield. From coping with the struggles or war to the challenges to bring about civil rights, baseball has been one field where Americans have expressed themselves.

At this time of year, most other popular sports are in the offseason. So, take in the atmosphere at a ballpark (little league or big leagues) or create your own (grab peanuts, popcorn, cotton candy, etc., and watch a game on TV). Feel the nostalgia and enjoy the game!





# Movies to Watch

If you are movie fan, pick out a favorite movie to watch alone or with family/friends. These movies focus on American history, independence, and freedom. If you'd rather, just pick another great movie to watch together. Pop some popcorn, curl up on the couch, and enjoy the show!

## American Themed Movies:

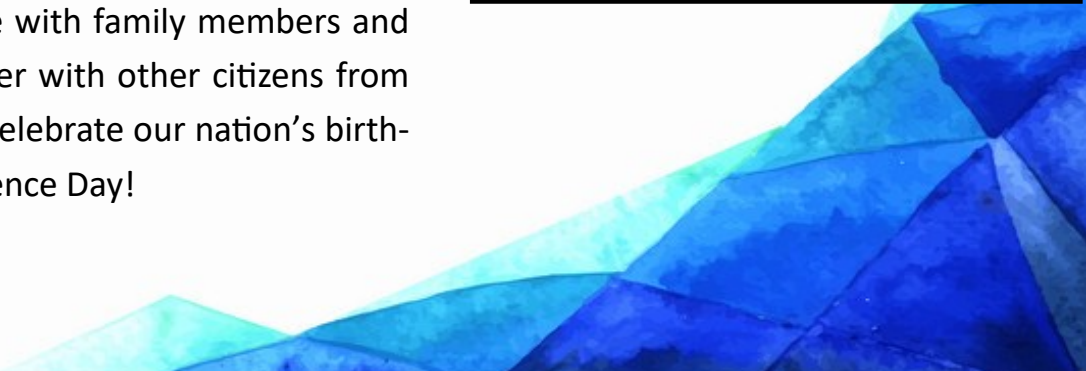
- Yankee Doodle Dandy
- The Patriot
- Born on the Fourth of July
- 1776
- Hamilton
- Glory
- Harriet
- The America President
- National Treasure
- Girls Trip
- Air Force One
- Jaws
- Top Gun
- Independence Day
- Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
- A League of Their Own
- Forrest Gump
- I Know What you Did Last Summer

# Fireworks

The use of fireworks dates back to the Song dynasty in China (960-1279). They have been used to accompany various festivals around the world.

Many communities across the country put on spectacular firework shows on or around Independence Day. If there is one in your area, drive out to see the show. If you can, take lawn chairs to sit in or lower the tailgate and watch the explosive decor without obstruction.

Enjoy this special time with family members and friends. Come together with other citizens from your community and celebrate our nation's birthday. Happy Independence Day!





# Bible Study

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (Jn. 8:32)

When we reflect on Independence Day, we are drawn back to the declaration that our forefathers made to fight for freedom from the oppression of England and to become our own, independent nation. We are so fortunate to live in America and to have the freedoms that are unavailable to others in various parts of the world.

Jesus spoke about freedom, but not in the same sense. Rather than speaking about being freed to do what we want (i.e., speech, bear arms, hold our own religious beliefs), he spoke of being freed from the tyranny of sin, evil, wickedness and our own delusional way of living. A selfish life does not provide lasting fulfillment.

Conversely, Jesus called us to a deeper and somewhat paradoxical truth: It is in living for others that we find fulfillment. Jesus modeled sacrificial love, which compelled him to go to Calvary and to give his life for us. As we follow the way of Jesus, we explore and discover greater truths and are prompted to pivot and apply them to how we live and interact with others.

This week, don't let your gratitude as an American citizen make our country or its ideologies and idol. Rather, worship and serve God alone, and give him thanks for the true freedom that is only found in relationship with Jesus.

## Prayer Time

We need to pray for our country everyday. Let the holiday remind you of the importance of praying for the following:

- Our Leaders: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial; Local, State, and National
- Our Military: Officers and Service Personnel, Families
- Our Educators: Administrators, Teachers, and Employees
- Our Hospitals: Doctors, Nurses, Staff, and Patients
- Our Businesses: Managers, Employees, and Customers
- Our Churches: Pastors, Leaders, and Ministries
- Our Families: Parents, Children, and Grandchildren



# Serve Others

NobleHour suggests these five great ways to volunteer on or around the Fourth of July:

1. **Help Keep Local Festivities Safe:** They may need help setting up vendors, roping off the celebration area, manning concessions stands, assisting with parking or shuttle services, cleanup, and making sure the fireworks display runs safely.
2. **Show Our Troops Your Appreciation:** Send a letter of appreciation to troops, first responders, or veterans through Operation Gratitude. Or you can send a care kit with necessities, entertainment, and non-perishable treats like cookies or brownies. The United States Postal Service offers a free Military Care Kit that includes everything you need to send a package overseas.
3. **Reach Out to a Local Military Family or Veteran:** Being around friendly faces and meeting new people can brighten someone's day. If you need a little guidance on reaching out, an organization like Blue Star Families brings military families and their civilian neighbors together.
4. **Organize a Neighborhood Cleanup:** Make a list of supplies you'll need, like trash bags, gloves, rakes, shovels, water, sunscreen, insect repellent, and so on. A neighborhood picnic or barbecue following the cleanup is an excellent opportunity to get to know one another and show appreciation for their work.
5. **Volunteer at a Local Homeless Shelter or Senior Center:** You might serve meals, help with laundry, or support the administrative staff at a homeless shelter. At a senior center, you may volunteer to read to residents, help them with daily tasks, or simply spend quality time with residents.

## Connect: Go to the Library

The local library is a great place to visit and find out more information. Go to the library and check out the services they offer. Consider finding a book about America to read and discuss together as a family. While you are there, see what other opportunities are available to you and your family this summer.



# Worship

Carve out some time to listen to worship music, hum or sing along. Here are some great songs to get you started. These songs focus on our American heritage and freedom in Christ. Look them up on YouTube if you don't have them in your music repertoire.

Pick your own songs and spend time worshipping and celebrating who God is to you and all the ways that he has blessed your life.

## Freedom Themed Worship Songs:

- Love Came Down
- God Bless America
- Freedom Reigns
- Set Me Free
- America
- Welcome to America
- Freedom
- A New Hallelujah
- Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)
- God of Our Fathers
- America the Beautiful
- God Bless the USA
- Battle Hymn of the Republic
- God's Not Dead
- I Am Free
- My Country Tis of Thee

## Challenge: Vote!

There are things about our country that you may agree with and other things that you may have big concerns about. One of the best ways for you to influence our country and its future is through voting. Sometimes, people believe that their votes don't matter, but they do. Your individual vote may not be on the winning side of every decision, but the fact that you participate and use your voice is important, regardless of the outcome.

Check with your local state and county regarding how to register and where to vote. Mark on your calendar the various times elections are to be held (local, state, and national). Study the issues and the politicians running for office. Pray for guidance as you prepare to vote. Then, go vote and continue praying!

To learn more about the issues, check out impartial cites such as "I Side With..."