

4 Truths and Tips for an Unforgettable 4th of July

By Stacie and Carrie Stoelting

As we wave the flag, eat watermelon, and “oooh” and “aaaah” at fireworks, it’s important to remember four truths to deepen this exciting day of freedom. The four truths of the 4th of July will enrich your holiday beyond description:

1. **Realize that freedom is not free.** Here’s a recent example of what I mean:

Navy SEAL Mike Monsoor and his two teammates climbed to rooftop positions during a firefight in Ramadi, a Sunni insurgent stronghold west of Baghdad. Suddenly, an insurgent grenade bounced off Monsoor’s chest. It landed on the roof.

Monsoor looked at it. He had two choices: escape and live yet watch his two comrades die or die in their place. I’ll let President Bush’s speech reveal what happened as he quoted one of the survivors:

“Mikey looked death in the face that day and said, ‘You cannot take my brothers. I will go in there instead.’ In that terrible moment, he had two options—to save himself, or to save his friends. For Mike, this was no choice at all. He threw himself onto the grenade and absorbed the blast with his body.”

He chose to stay. They lived. He died. He died for his comrades, but –ultimately- he died for his country.

Countless men and women like Mike Monsoor have willingly given their very lives for us. How might we give back to them? The 4th of July is the perfect way to celebrate our heroes because it possesses both extreme patriotism and historical importance.

2. **Light up Independence Day with more than fireworks: Brighten the lives of heroes and thank them on the 4th!** Soldiers always give so much. It’s time for us to give back to them. One such veteran is Glenn “Mac” McDole:

In 1940, McDole enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. On August 12, 1942, he bravely entered the Palawan prison camp in the Philippines.

Two long years later on December 14, 1944, Japanese soldiers slaughtered about 93% of American POWs. The Japanese lied. They announced false air raids to move prisoners into underground shelters. Then, they mercilessly poured gasoline on top of them and used dynamite and machineguns to murder the POWs. Our brave soldiers were slain by evil, blood-thirsty hands. They died a hellish death for our freedom.

Yet McDole escaped.

Amazingly, Glenn McDole was one of eleven young men who escaped. **He was the last man out** of the Palawan Prison Camp 10A. McDole and the ten other survivors dug into refuse piles, hid in coral caves, and slogged through jungle and swamps to safety. The horrifying conditions suffered by McDole and his comrades were endured for America’s freedom – our freedom.

During World War II, Japan captured thousands of American soldiers like McDole as prisoners of war (POWs). They were held captive in camps from Burma to the Philippines. The Japanese treated all captives with the same disdain: starvation, disease, beatings, torture, and even execution.

McDole was one of eleven survivors of Palawan Prison Camp 10A (located on a remote Pacific island) and he currently lives in my home state: Iowa.

Clearly, POWs such as Glenn McDole, Senator John McCain, and Colonel Bud Day strongly value freedom. They know from experience what it was like to live in bondage. They know firsthand what it is like not to be free.

Yes, July 4, 1776 was a great day in American History. But let’s make the modern holiday another great day in American History by taking time to thank God for our freedom in the USA and, most of all, our spiritual freedom.

3. **Thank God for His Son, Jesus Christ, Who set us free from sin and death.**



Stacie Stoelting, Lee Booton, Glenn McDole, and Carrie Stoelting

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” —Jesus, in John 8:36 (NIV)

“You have been set free from sin...” - Romans 6:18, NIV

4. **Be soldiers of Jesus Christ and deliver the life-saving message to prisoners of sin. Let's give out the Gospel!** Let's share with others how to be independent from the tyranny of the devil and sin. ([Click here](#) to learn how to be set free.)

“Endure hardship with us **like a good soldier of Christ Jesus**. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.” —II Timothy 2:3-4, NIV

In May, my sister and I visited with a few heroic veterans: Glenn McDole, John McCain, Lee Booton, and others. We thanked them once again for their brave service. (Their courage, service, and Christian faith inspired us so much that we wrote this article.)

This 4th of July, remember the four tips to make it an inspirational Independence Day. Think of it: You could be a soldier who will deliver a life-saving message (the Gospel) to set someone free eternally. Now, **Happy 4th of July!**