

Patriotism & Faith

By Susan Vogt



Summer brings both hot weather and the 4th of July – a combination that usually adds up to a picnic. Although not all civic holidays have a religious dimension, consider how patriotism and our faith in God can reinforce each other.

For

Adult / Couple

Season

Summer

Needed

Fixin's for a picnic, some relatives, knowing where fireworks will happen (or a few personal fireworks)

Prepare in Advance

- This traditional holiday pretty much requires that your family has agreed to celebrate together.
- Whatever you need for a picnic meal. It would be nice if you could arrange for it not to rain.

Activity Plan

1. Early in the day, invite the family to come together for 5 or 10 minutes to focus on what is common to both patriotism and faith. Bring this to the family's consciousness before the actual picnic begins and then let the family gathering take its natural course.
2. Start with a simple prayer.

*God, we thank you for this day off work and time to play together. We believe that you watch over **all** people on earth, not just those who live in our country. Today, however, we ask you to help **us** to contribute to making our country reflect your goodness and care for all."*

3. Brainstorm some classic ingredients of patriotism and what is good about our country. For example:
 - Democracy: the people have a voice in how laws are made
 - Service: people are willing to spend their time and risk death to protect the people
 - Common good: people are willing to pay taxes to support public services and those in need
 - Loyalty: citizens could move to another country, but stay because of bonds and history
 - Songs and symbols: We have special songs (Star Spangled Banner) and symbols (flags)
4. Now brainstorm classic ingredients of your faith. For example:
 - Service: from the Good Samaritan to washing the disciples' feet, Jesus calls us to serve
 - Common good: Christians are called to share with the poor and vulnerable
 - Self-sacrifice and love for all people on earth

- Songs and symbols: What are your favorite religious songs? Symbols like the cross, candles (think fireworks ☺), water.

Suggest that we carry our faith values into our civic celebration today.

5. Continue with the way your family generally celebrates the holiday. As you go about your own family holiday traditions you may bring a new awareness with you. You can voice the connections you see or just ponder them in your heart. For example:
 - If you go to a parade, remember the people who have sacrificed their lives for you—as Christ sacrificed his life for us on the cross.
 - At your picnic, remember how many people contribute to making the meal—surely you’re not the only one cooking! Remember how Jesus fed the 5,000.
 - As you watch fireworks call to mind the mystery of how God created the universe – we presume with some kind of “Big Bang.”
 - As you play with your children, remember how Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not stop them.” (Matthew 19:14)
 - If you feel moved to do so, have a songfest. Perhaps you’d like to alternate your favorite patriotic songs with favorite religious ones. (This probably will work best with young children.)

