

# Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

## To the Town of Sanford and the Village of Springvale

Some 235 years ago men of honor and valor put their life and fortunes on the line when they signed a document that would change the course of human history on this planet. The birth of our nation with the signing of the Declaration of Independence I believe is second only in world impact to the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

We know Jesus has an eternal time line as explained in the book of Revelation but the time line of this great nation is not so clear, not so eternally guaranteed. It is in the hands of the people of God. How long it may endure; in great measure, depends on the church of Jesus Christ.

To establish the beginning of this time line of history I will begin with the document itself. The first three sentences of the Declaration of Independence:

*“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitles them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”*

What was meant by our founding fathers when they put their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor on the line in a publicly binding agreement that stated Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness were our **unalienable** rights? More importantly what have they come to mean to Americans today?

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When Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence it was during an era when many of the American colonies were creating their own Declarations of Rights. They included phrases very similar to the one Mr. Jefferson chose to be in, “The Unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.”

The basic concept is that human beings have the right to live, have personal freedom and pursue their personal happiness, which included owning property and amassing personal wealth. These rights were inherent in just being born into the world but at the time of the American Revolution there were many areas that the king of England, George III, was denying; most significantly the right of representation. He was also imposing tyrannical control over those he considered his subjects. One key issue was there was taxation of the colonies by England without representation from the colonies to England. The colonies were governed by foreign British Law but had no representatives in British Parliament to speak on their behalf.

The Revolutionary War started in April 1775. The first Continental Congress was in September of that same year and the following year, in 1776, the second Continental Congress voted on and signed The Declaration of Independence, declaring freedom England’s tyranny listing their grievances. The vast majority in that second Congress were Christian men seeking God’s will.

Today that majority has dwindled; the grievances have been forgotten and in our seemingly endless pursuit of this illusive “happiness” we have lost site of what is true happiness and have become preoccupied with personal, self indulgent happiness.

### [Ecclesiastes 2:26](#) (NIV)

To the person who pleases Him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and **happiness**, but to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. (So writes Solomon.)

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What we have lost sight of and need to refocus on is that our foundation must be in Jesus Christ.

The Bible hasn't changed from what our forefathers read. The same principles rule our lives that ruled theirs. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Heb. 13:8) What the Apostle Paul wrote to the first century church is still true today!

### **1 Corinthians 3:10-11 (NIV)**

<sup>10</sup> By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay **any** foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

We all know that the United States of America was not founded as a religious nation for Christians only but the fact that the principles of scripture shaped the values of our founding fathers is proven over and over in historical documents from the Mayflower Compact to the letters and diaries of our first president George Washington. We need to return to those values.

These “self-evident” truths, according to the frames of our nation, that our Creator endowed us with included; life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Let's take a look at these truths.

**First – “Life”:** We could equate life with simply having breath! Animals have breath, but we are talking about human life in a society of other human beings with living souls.

### **Genesis 2:7**

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of **life**; and man became a living soul. (He doesn't say that about animals!)

So, when these 55 men in Philadelphia signed this pronouncement they were acknowledging that this life came from our Creator [God] and we have a right to live it; from conception to the

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grave, the full expense of it, barring any criminal act that would by law remove that right. Our right to life comes from God alone, according to the Bible and our Declaration of Independence. We need to stand for what God says, not courts or special interest groups or politically correct trends. God is the originator of life and He alone is the terminator of it. We must take a stand for life! For a Christian there is no other stand to take.

2<sup>nd</sup>, “**Liberty**”: The idea that you could be free of debt and bondage to anyone. **Total freedom!**

[Leviticus 25:10](#) (The passage engraved on the Liberty Bell)

And ye shall hallow the 50th year, and proclaim **liberty** throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

Again, a Biblical concept that was freedom for every man throughout the land. This original declaration from God to the children of Israel was that every fifty years all debts would be cancelled and people that were in slavery because of debt would be returned to their families.

Though the debt dismissal element was never part of the American concept of liberty the freedom aspect was and still is, but what is biblical liberty?

**2 Corinthians 3:17** (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

This directive that was sent from God is now personified in Jesus Christ. We are His body and His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is in His body, Amen? This place, in the midst of the body of Christ, His church, is where true liberty should be demonstrated and lived out day-to-day. Real liberty is only found in Christ. When we enter into a life changing relationship with Jesus Christ as our Savior He sets us free from the debt of our sin and the bondage of our past into the liberty He

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has for us to walk in; the fulfillment of our purpose in Him. To please God, there is real, lifelong liberty and that is what brings true Happiness.

This “pursuit of happiness” has been the biggest point of confusion that we have as a culture. What had been originally set as a goal for the first settlers as indicated in the 1620 Mayflower Compact, the first document of the original colonists, was: “Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country,” Where’s this pursuit of happiness?

From 1620 to 1776 to whole purpose of this great American experiment had been sidetracked. The purpose of coming here in the first place was, “...for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith...” those things being the will of God would by their fulfillment bring the happiness that is otherwise searched for and never found. The world has it backwards! We are not to seek happiness as an end in itself. We are to please God in all that we do and in return He rewards us and gives us wisdom, knowledge and **happiness**. Our heavenly Father is the source of true happiness; so, to find this elusive “Right” we must please Him!

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As Solomon said, all the striving for worldly pleasures and personal happiness in the end are meaningless.

So, let all of us that are Christian seek to please God who gives us life, who brings liberty to the captives; and as we please Him, He promises us the reward of happiness from on high.

If you’re not a Christian, now is the time to become one. Declare your dependence on Christ.