

What does Memorial Day mean to you? A day off from work or school or the beginning of summer? You tune into the news you will hear stories that touts Memorial Day as the kickoff of summer. You will see families at the beach, having picnics and enjoying fireworks. In this fast paced world we live in, it is easy to live in the moment and forget what happened in the past and how we got to where we are today. I believe that the news should focus more on the real meaning of Memorial Day. Gen Z (post millennials born mid-1990s to early 2000s) may not fully understand the significance of Memorial Day or the true meaning and purpose of the day. The younger generation may not fully know how many people died so we can enjoy our freedoms. Freedoms that people young and old take for granted. Freedoms such as free speech, and freedom of religion, press.

Memorial Day is a day to take a step back, slow down and remember all those who sacrificed their lives while fighting in wars. Decoration Day was started after the Civil War in the late 1860's as a tribute to fallen soldiers. Both Union and Confederate soldiers were honored for their sacrifice. To date, the total number of Americans killed in all US wars is more than 1.1 million people. The Civil War alone had 498,322 casualties. With such significant loss, it is not surprising that the United States did not want anyone to forget all the soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice to protect our country. During the years of World War I, the name of this particular day gradually changed and became known as Memorial Day and included all American soldiers killed, not just those who fought in the Civil War.

Some Americans commemorate Memorial Day by going to cemeteries and placing American flags and flowers on graves of the soldiers who gave their lives for us.

Memorial Day is a day to be thankful for what the United States Military has done for you and I. Without our soldiers fighting for us and dying for us, the United States would not have the freedoms it has today.

Each soldier takes an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic for us, we the people. We need to remember that the soldiers that gave their life for us are not just a number; they are a brother, uncle, father, mother, sister, a friend. They are a family member, a loved one. Because of their sacrifice and bravery we are privileged to live in the land of the free.

While it is important for us as a country to show our appreciation on Memorial Day, it is more important to remember all year that soldiers gave up their lives so that we may have the freedoms that sadly many of us take for granted. So when you read your favorite newspaper or book and you enjoy Sunday services with your family, remember why you have these freedoms. It is our duty to honor the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for all generations, past, present and future.

As Lee Greenwood sang in his now famous song God Bless the USA,

“And I’m proud to be an American, where at least I know I’m free. And I won’t forget the men who died who gave that right to me.”

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