

## The Declaration of Independence

If you had to think of one document other than the Bible that people can most easily quote almost without thinking about it, that one document would be the Declaration of Independence. The comparison to the Bible is apt. Not that the Declaration of Independence is holy in a religious sense of the word. But it has a place of reverence in the hearts of the American people and in the history of the founding of this great nation.

While not the first words of the Declaration of Independence, these stirring words have that kind of prophetic power that anyone who hears them is immediately inspired by the beauty, the poetry and the deep truths that were so beautifully expressed in that historic document.

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.

This one statement from that famous declaration so beautifully demonstrates some core principles that show why this document has such a deep impact on the American mind and heart. The statement that the truths in this document were indeed truths is a profound statement in its own right. The Declaration of Independence does that suggest that what is being declared in those pages are theories, possibilities, even political ideology. These are truths which puts them on the same value as statements of values as often taught in a religious setting. Truths are eternal values and values that are not changed by circumstances, by whomever or whatever is handling the government of the land or by the whim of lawmakers. These truths exist above those temporal earthly ideas and live on that plain of the eternal.

"Self evident" is a powerful phrase and it reflects on the founder's belief in what was called natural law. Natural law is the belief system that there are laws that are part of our natural state of existence and that they cannot be taken away (inalienable). These laws are our rights as creations of the almighty and any government system must recognize these laws because they are above government. It is a basic belief system of the American system that ALL people are entitled to these rights and that they cannot be taken away.

The mention of a creator in the declaration of independence is very important because there are those who would maintain that the separation of church and state tells us that the government is at heart a secular institution. Clearly the founders did not lay the foundation of our country on that groundwork. They saw the inheritance we as Americans have in our rights and freedoms to be part of our legacy from God and as such, above the government and something the government must back off and leave alone as well as protect and defend.

The Declaration of Independence is truly an amazing document especially when you consider the "primitive" state of the nation when it was written by Thomas Jefferson and signed on July 2, 1776 to become the backbone of our American

system of government. It became an often referenced and quoted document, even becoming a part of President Lincoln's famous inaugural speech when he said with such deep conviction...

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Because these words are such a deep part of our American heritage, American history and the American spirit, they are often a crucial center part of any study of history in the schools in this country. That is why school children in every state are so familiar with these words.

But it would do us all well to take some time once a year or so and take our copy of the Declaration of Independence and read it either as a private moment of reflection nor with our families. What a wonderful fourth of July tradition that would make. Then as you watch the fireworks celebrating the birth of the country and its independence, you will have those words fresh in your heart to remind you that it was our creator that gave us our freedoms and independence and nobody has the right to ever take them away.