

July 2002

The Meyer Minute for July 1, 2002

What's the greatest freedom in your life?

We look to God for many things, for health, for family blessings, for personal peace. That's fine, but God is more than Wal-Mart where you pick and choose the goodies you want. Our basic problem with God is that He's holy and made us to be that way but we're not. Unless you get together with God on His terms, other things are going to become ultimately unimportant. Without the forgiveness of sins, all the other goodies are here today and gone tomorrow.

We're back where we're supposed to be, at one with God, reconciled, when we believe that Christ paid the price for our sins. The wrongs you have done have been forgiven. You might still feel guilty about some things, people might still throw your wrongs in your face, but God says, "The price has been paid. You're forgiven it."

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). As we move into a week of celebrating our freedoms, I hope you'll rank this freedom as the greatest of all.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1).

The Meyer Minute for July 8, 2002

The date in 1776 the Declaration of Independence was first read to the public.

The Declaration of Independence was first read to the public on this date, July 8, in 1776. That reading was accompanied by the ringing of the Liberty Bell, which carries this biblical inscription, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitant thereof." (Leviticus 25:10).

Leviticus 25 tells that every fiftieth year was to be set aside as a Year of Jubilee. In that year slaves were to be freed, debts forgiven, and no one was to work...for the entire year. Proclaim liberty!

We Americans live under a different form of government and have widely divergent views, even conflicting views, of the deity. Still, all surveys show we are a religious people, a people who acknowledge the blessings of heaven upon us, whatever our view of heaven might be. It's worth remembering that the birth certificate of our nation, the Declaration, rang out with the words of Judaeo-Christian Scripture.

And it was on this date in 1835 that the Liberty Bell cracked when it was rung for the funeral of Chief Justice John Marshall. Perhaps the worst crack in our first amendment freedoms would be to forget how integral religious faith, of whatever kind, is to the life of most Americans today.

The Meyer Minute for July 9, 2002

The blame game, our national pastime!

Back when God gave the Ten Commandments, He said, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:5-6).

People twisted those words and perfected the blame game. "Hey, it's not my fault; my parents are to blame." They even came up with a little saying blaming it all on the parents. "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2).

Yes, others influence us, often hurt us and sometimes must be called to account. That said, each of us is still accountable. "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezekiel 18:4). The best place to play the blame game is in front of your mirror but also remember to look at yourself as a forgiven sinner.

These days the game is on TV, corporations blaming others, politicians blaming the other party. Let it be a spectator sport. When the blame game breaks out in your family, call a time out.

The Meyer Minute for July 10, 2002

"Sophistry." That word popped into my mind while I was watching executives of WorldCom and Arthur Andersen testify before a committee of the House of Representatives. Oh, lots of squirming going on.

"Answer me with a yes or no," demanded the irritated congressman.

The executive moves uneasily and begins a theoretical field trip that answers nothing.

Sophistry is a line of thinking that seems plausible but is really misleading, even false. But we do it too. You fudge the numbers on a loan application. You don't tell your spouse how much you really spent. Sophistry.

"Thou shalt not steal."

"I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children" (Matthew 11:25).

Does the old commandment seem too simple for your sophisticated life?

"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known" (Luke 12:2).

Sophistry is your ticket to the hot seat. I don't know how you are, but the older I get the more I see the benefits of following the simple things I learned as a child. Honesty is still the best policy.

The Meyer Minute for July 11, 2002

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

“Come,” Jesus says. He's always inviting us; His Spirit always wooing us. For some reason unknown to me, God has given us the terrible ability to resist His call, to say, “No.” Still, He keeps inviting us to come.

“Come to Me.” I'm afraid this is where many churches go wrong. Churches can't save you. Only Jesus can. Now that's not to say you shouldn't bother with the church. It's just to say that the church should be about Jesus, not about itself.

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened.” That's me; isn't it you? Why are we this way, burdened and weary? Do we get so busy, do we carry so much because we want to prove that we are worthy of love and respect? That's a crushing load.

“Come to Me...and I will give you rest.” Lay your load down at His feet. Rest in His love for you. Rest in His strength...and, by the way, you'll be renewed to carry your burdens.

Don't just do something; sit there. “Oh, Lamb of God, I come, I come.”

The Meyer Minute for July 12, 2002

The stock market down. Business scandals up. Baseball couldn't finish the All-Star game. My church denomination is arguing about whom you can and can't pray with. TGIF!

To put it in perspective, let me tell you about Speaker and Amos. Speaker is our dog and Amos is our rabbit. People have dogs but a rabbit? Amos, the rabbit, actually belongs to our daughter, but Diane and I are raising our fluffy little grandson. Amos is a house rabbit, spends most of his time in a cage but runs free for an hour or so every day. Amos and Speaker should be enemies but they've learned to get along with each other. In the evening Speaker will sit by our side to be petted while Amos snuggles on Diane's lap.

“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat...and a little child will lead them” (Isaiah 11:6)

For all the crumbly news this week, there is far more love, if only we'll take time to follow it. For us warring sinners and even for us battling Christians, the love of Jesus leads to peace. Thank You, God, for Friday. Thank You for Your love's peace.

The Meyer Minute for July 15, 2002

Terry Hillig of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch wrote that Mr. James Pruitt's elderly parents had died and so Mr. Pruitt was going through their personal records. He came across a receipt for a \$5.00 deposit his father had given to the power company back in 1933. The receipt said that the \$5 "must be returned when refund is requested."

So Mr. Pruitt wrote to the utility company asking for the \$5 refund, along with the 6% interest that the company had promised. Here's a pleasant surprise. Mr. Pruitt recently got a check for the \$5 plus \$150.39 of interest.

Like that \$5 deposit, the Creator has given you gifts to be used for the good of others and to His glory. On top of that, God's been patient with us, forgiving our sins, giving us so many second chances. Are you returning God's deposit to Him with interest, living a life that shares the love of Christ with others?

"Vindicate me, O Lord." Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me" (Psalm 26). Live today so that one day you'll hear, "Well done."

The Meyer Minute for July 16, 2002

Good things take time, good things take work.

On this date, July 16th, in 1861, 33,000 Union soldiers began marching toward Manassas, about 30 miles west of Washington. There they would engage 22,000 Confederate soldiers in the first major battle of the Civil War. Thomas DiLorenzo writes, "Many Washingtonians rode out to Manassas Junction in their carriages with their packed lunches in hopes of watching the rebels surrender soon after the first shots were fired." ([The Real Lincoln](#), p. 38).

But when the smoke settled on July 21, the Union forces had been defeated. Secretary of War Stanton wrote: "The rout, overthrow, and demoralization of the whole army were complete." Four years later, 620,000 had been killed, the equivalent of 5 million Americans in today's population.

The war on terror won't be ASAP.

Close to home, remember that good things take time, good things take work. A successful marriage: time and work. Raising children to live respectable lives: time and

work. Developing your spiritual resources to withstand trial and temptation. That too takes time and work.

You're in for the long haul. Time, work...and, to gain the victory, lots of prayer to the Giver of all good gifts.

The Meyer Minute for July 19, 2002

Ever wish you were Tiger Woods...or some other celebrity? I mention Tiger because all eyes are on him this weekend as he plays in the British Open.

But even Tiger has the challenges we commoners have. "I'm allergic to grass, trees, dust, pollen, it's something I've always had." That's not good if you make your living on a golf course, another reason why Tiger's accomplishments are...nothing to sneeze at. Still, you're not a nameless face in the gallery.

When God's eyes look at you, when His ears hear your prayers, you are as dear to Him as any celebrity. "God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right. This is the message God sent...through Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:34-35).

The other day Tiger had trouble getting on the course at Muirfield, where the British Open is being played. A marshal stopped Tiger and asked for his identification. He had forgotten to bring it...and she didn't recognize him.

You'll never have that problem with God. "Whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away" (John 6:37). Be glad that you are you!

The Meyer Minute for July 22, 2002

Yesterday was the 30th anniversary of the worst day of violence in the long history of strife in northern Ireland. In 75 minutes, 22 bombs exploded in or near Belfast, killing nine people and injuring 130. Last Tuesday the Irish Republican Army apologized for that day in 1972 that has come to be called "Bloody Friday." "We offer our sincere apologies and condolences to their families."

Dr. Charles Wilson of St. Olaf College has observed a subtle shift in our understanding of confession. It used to be that a confession was primarily made to God for having violated one of His commandments. Nowadays, Dr. Wilson observes, confessions are often made to society for violating society's standards. We may use the same words, "I confess, I apologize," but they no longer mean what they used to.

I don't know what the IRA's apology really means. I can only ask that you and I reflect on our own motives when we admit to something. Are we confessing a sin against our Creator and Judge...or just trying to get back in the good graces of our peers?

The Meyer Minute for July 23, 2002

The other day I was telling my mother about a problem. My mom, whose glass is usually half-full, quoted her favorite Bible verse. "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24).

That day, however, my glass was half-empty. So I said, "Ya, Mom, and Jesus said, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'" (Matthew 6:34).

In her new book, "Powerful Inspirations," Kathy Ireland writes, "My Mom is the most positive person I know. She used to say that 'an optimist is someone who wakes up and says, 'Good morning, Lord' and a pessimist is someone who wakes up and says, 'Good Lord, it's morning'" (p. 102).

When Jesus said that each day has enough trouble of its own, He was talking about the worrying that comes upon us when we forget that our heavenly Father will provide for us His children. The glass is half-full. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

The Meyer Minute for July 24, 2002

"Something familiar and sinister is stirring again," Yossi Klein Halevi wrote in the "Los Angeles Times" (July 17, 2002; B13). And he adds, "We'd be fools to ignore it."

He's referring to an increase in anti-Semitism. In the June issue of "Commentary," Gabriel Schoenfeld takes several pages to list anti-Semitic acts throughout Europe. To that can be added some North American incidents, like the shooting at LAX. Halevi suggests we're in denial about this new anti-Semitism. Just before killing Daniel Pearl, his murderers forced him to say, "I am a Jew. My mother is a Jew." Yet media coverage treated that as incidental.

This isn't just about skinheads or extreme Islamists. Schoenfeld writes, "The anti-Semitism in swiftest motion is the left-wing strain, the strain that loathes Jews not on explicitly racist or religious grounds but on 'universalist' ones." He lists "environmentalists, pacifists, anarchists, anti-globalists, and socialists."

"We'd be fools to ignore it," Halevi wrote. Because Christians have been complicit in anti-Semitism through the centuries, today's Christians had better be concerned too.

The Meyer Minute for July 26, 2002

This is against the popular wisdom, I know, but here goes: Don't get overly zealous about your children.

Sportswriter Kathleen Nelson reports that Brunswick, New Jersey, “is building a \$2.5 million sports complex that will include two elevated fields for Little League baseball and softball. Parents have three seating choices. They can stand in what amounts to a 5-foot-10-inch deep moat, looking at the ankles of players, coaches and umpires. They can sit in bleachers down the first- and third-base lines. Or they can sit in the distant shade.” (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 19; D1)

Over-zealous parents are a problem. The recreation superintendent says, “I’ve got them in a moat for baseball, I’ve got them 50 yards removed from the soccer field. All I have to figure out now is how to keep them away from the basketball court.”

My father-in-law says, “They don’t learn it from strangers.” Use this weekend to cheer your kids on in whatever they do, but please, don’t become a problem. You may find yourself in a moat!

The Meyer Minute for July 29, 2002

Erich Honcker, communist party boss of old East Germany, was arrested ten years ago today. After Honecker was deposed but before he was arrested, the East German government asked the church if they’d take him in. The church then turned to Pastor Uwe Holmer. Even though the Holmer family had suffered because of the communist regime, they took Honecker and his wife in. “It is the Christian thing to do,” they said.

One time an angry man came up to Pastor Holmer and berated him. “You wouldn’t have done such a thing if you’d been in a communist prison, as I was,” he said. Holmer said, “I haven’t been in your shoes but I venture to say that if you don’t forgive Honecker, your life will be filled with bitterness.” That made the man pause and think. “You’re right,” he admitted.

I had many wonderful conversations with Pastor Holmer, a dear man who taught me that unforgiveness is a poison but forgiveness frees. That is a very practical lesson for all of us today.

The Meyer Minute for July 30, 2002

The religious right wants its favorite issues to become the law of the land. The left objects. “Don’t impose your morality on us,” which means the left wants to legislate its favorite issues. What both left and right have in common is a desire to use the government to further their own agendas.

On this date in 1619 America’s first representative assembly met in Jamestown, Virginia, and passed laws against drunkenness, gambling, and idleness. Still doing it, though, aren’t we?

Legislation doesn’t change hearts. All the “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not” in the Bible, as good as they are, holy and given by God... Those laws can only force

obedience, often unwilling obedience. The Law doesn't change hearts; only the Gospel can. Only the goodness of God our Savior changes hearts and produces willing obedience.

That's why the Jamestown laws couldn't stop drinking, gambling, and idleness. And that's why legislating the religious views of the right or the left will not bring this country together in a much-needed consensus on moral issues.