

The American Moms: Lessons I hope my children remember when they see the American flag

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"And this be our motto — 'In God is our trust!'"

The congregation of my church belted out those words in the third verse of the Star Spangled Banner over the weekend.

The verse permeated through me as tears streamed down my face.

It's not often we sing past the first verse of our national anthem. But the words in those forgotten verses, of a song dedicated entirely to our American flag, are so impactful.

My husband hung an American flag in our yard recently. As he was adjusting it, an elderly neighbor from down the street walked by.

"Thank you for flying that!" he said.

That flag meant something to him. And as Independence Day approaches, I can't help but think of the men and women who fought, and still fight, to give it meaning.

One of those valiant soldiers was my friend, Scottie Pace. This summer marks five years since he was killed in Afghanistan.

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Just a few months prior to his deployment, I had asked him what he would have wanted to do if he hadn't been in the military.

"I really just want to have a family and be a dad," he responded without skipping a beat.

Those dreams of his heart were never fulfilled before his helicopter was hit by Taliban fire. Scottie was a captain in the Army. He'd served several tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and was finishing up his last one.

He was just 33 years old. He could have been anything. But he just dreamed of being a dad.

As I'm now raising my own children, his tender words are not lost on me. I often think about how blessed my little family is

for living in America. That I get to be a wife and a mom and raise kids in a free land. Because people, like Scottie, helped make it so.

My children are young, but I hope they'll remember the lessons I'm trying to teach them about our freedoms. And when they see that American flag majestically waving through the air, I hope they'll always reflect on its meaning.

It stands for the freedom of religion. We can walk through the doors of our church every Sunday, knowing we can worship God and a Savior freely. That trust in God permeates every document our nation is founded on.

That beautiful star spangled banner stands for our right to vote. We can stand in a voting booth or mail in a ballot and know that our vote actually means something. It counts.

It stands for the right to make my voice heard. When I don't agree with something, I have the right to peacefully protest it. I have the right to stand up for what I believe in.

It stands for the freedom for me to be able to write freely and publish this very blog post and spread positive, uplifting messages if I so choose. I don't have to worry if what I say will be censored and I won't be thrown in jail for my opinions.

Do we sometimes question our politicians? Sure. But we live in a country where the government is absolutely run *by the people*. Our forefathers got rid of an oppressive government to establish these very freedoms we enjoy. Our flag stands for that very thing.

The American flag stands for our dreams; some dreams we've worked hard to make reality, some dreams are yet unrealized. But with determination, hard work and trust in God, they're all possible in America — a land that exists because of dreams and trust in God.

It's no wonder we watch our veterans in such awe and wonderment and are often moved to tears as we watch them patriotically salute our American flag and sing the national anthem. They fought for that flag. They fought for what it stands for. Our veterans and soldiers are men and women of valor. Their lives are forever changed when they enlist in the military, knowing what could be sacrificed. They are true heroes. Both the living and dead.

I am forever in awe and grateful to those, like Scottie, who sacrificed their dreams so I could live mine. So my children can live theirs.

I'm humbled to be reminded of that every day as I watch the stars and stripes wave just outside my window.

"And this be our motto — 'In God is our trust!'"

That's what I hope my children remember about the American flag.

Andrea Candrian Reeve is a former news reporter and served as press secretary in the United States Senate to Senator Bob Bennett and Sen. Pat Roberts.
