

the  Venues  
Go Deep  
In One Year & Out The Other  
“Fireworks”  
January 22, 2017

*What memories do you have the 4th of July?  
What do you celebrate about the United States?*

**1. We celebrate a separation.**

*What did “freedom of religion” really mean to the Pilgrims?*

At the signing of the Declaration of Independence there was no separation between church and state. There were state-supported churches; religious tests for office-holders, unequal religious rights. By 1833 all states had disestablished religions from government.

*Why do you think the “wall” between the church and state was built?*

Patrick Henry introduced a bill for state support of “teachers of the Christian faith.” James Madison opposed it saying, it was a “departure from that generous policy, which offering an Asylum to the persecuted and oppressed of every Nation and Religion, promised a lustre to our country.” Thomas Jefferson countered Henry’s bill with his own, a law that was “meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew, the Gentile, the Christian and the Mahometan, the Hindoo and Infidel of every denomination.”

*How would you have voted?*

Article VI of the Constitution states that “...no religious test shall ever be required as qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”

*Why did the framers put that in the Constitution?  
Why do some people ignore it?*

Read Matthew 22:15-22

*What would the political or social consequences have been if Jesus simply said, “Pay Caesar.” or “Don’t pay.”  
What was Jesus trying to communicate?  
Based on his response, where does Jesus stand on the “wall of separation”?*

**2. We celebrate a freedom.**

*What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “religious liberty”?*

In the 1970s and 1980s, Bob Jones University used “religious liberty” to defend their racially discriminatory policies. The Supreme Court ruled against the University in an 8-1 decision.

*What do you think of Bob Jones’ use of the principle of “religious liberty”?  
How do we see that same use today?*

Bob Jones University apologized in 2008 for its “racially hurtful” practices of its past.  
*What lessons can be learned from the Bob Jones University experience?*

**3. We celebrate a progression.**

The “all men are created equal” line in the Declaration didn’t apply to women, blacks, Native Americans, or non-property owners.

*What changed? Why did we expand the “equal” clause to include more people?*

*What does that expansion say about our understanding of ethics (systems of determining right and wrong)?*

*What ethical progression do you see in Christianity?*

*Are women better off today than they were in Bible times? Why?*

*What do these verses teach about the status of women (Leviticus 12:2,5; Exodus 20:17; Numbers 31:17-18)?*

*How did Jesus challenge and change this view of women?*

*Why did it take 144 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence for women get the right to vote?*

*What is the Bible’s instruction concerning slavery (Exodus 21:1-11; 21:20; Colossians 3:23; Titus 2:9)?*

*Why then do we not have slaves today?*

*How then, are we to determine right from wrong? How are we to create an ethical system?*

*How does abolitionist, Gerritt Smith’s view help us, “The religion taught by Jesus is not a letter but a life.”?*