

# Yearning for Peace: The Human Heart and Memorial Day

Chuck Colson | BreakPoint

2021 31 May



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*[Originally published in May 2009, Chuck Colson's essay on Memorial Day remains as timeless as it was when he first wrote it. Though the occasion is a U.S. holiday, Colson's application of biblical truth is universal.]*

This Memorial Day we remember those brave men and women who gave their lives in defense of our most precious freedoms.

And we would do well to pray for the members of our armed forces who are placing their lives on the line even as I speak. They long to accomplish their mission and return home to their loved ones. Above all, they yearn for [peace](#).

So do we all—especially since our nation has been at war for years now. So I think it's important to think about how our longing for permanent peace—unattainable though it is in this world—points us toward a world in which it is possible.

This longing was illustrated by two teenage boys I know. The older boy received a DVD player for his birthday. He was allowed to pick several movies to go with it, and chose nothing but war films: *The Patriot*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *The Sands of Iwo Jima*. Over the next few days, he and his brother were engrossed in the action, cheering whenever the good guys finally whipped the bad guys, relieved when peace broke out.

Most of us react exactly the same way to real-life wars. Those of us who are old enough certainly remember the elation that swept the country after Germany and Japan surrendered, ending World War II. And it doesn't seem that long ago when General

Schwarzkopf led the massive victory parade down Pennsylvania Avenue as the country celebrated the end of the first Gulf War. We rejoiced that the enemy was defeated, but we also hoped that peace would last.

Well, peace never has lasted. Within five years of the end of World War II, we were fighting in Korea. Then in Vietnam. And now, we face the sobering prospect of a long, protracted struggle against radical Islam in Iraq, Afghanistan, and maybe even Pakistan.

Which leads to an interesting question: Why is it that humans desire good and noble things we cannot possibly have?

Considering this question, C. S. Lewis came to a fascinating conclusion. If our deepest desires cannot be satisfied in this world, he wrote, then we must have been made for another world.

The Scriptures confirm that we are designed for a different world, and they urge us to focus on the world which is yet to come. As Paul told the Colossians, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" ([Colossians 3:2](#)).

Sadly, our inner longing for the good guys to win, for true peace and justice, has often led to tragic efforts to obtain them on earth, including dangerous utopian schemes that ultimately destroyed millions of lives. And that's why it's so vitally important that our children understand where these longings come from.

We need to teach our kids that while we should certainly fight for justice and freedom here on earth, we must do so in the knowledge that our true desire for peace and justice will only be satisfied in [heaven](#).

One day, as the prophet Isaiah wrote, men will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, [and] neither shall they learn war anymore."

Until then, however, we honor those who fought our wars and sacrificed for a peace—transitory though it is—that is also a precious reflection of the peace which is to come.