

MEMORIAL DAY TALK May 31, 2026

Introduction:

Good morning everyone. Thank you for coming. Today we gather not merely for a long weekend, but for something far greater. We gather for remembrance. We gather for gratitude. We gather as Americans to honor the brave men and women who gave their lives in service to the United States of America.

We stand here today in the final resting place of so many of our loved ones. This is a tender place a hallowed place and an honored place.

Every grave represents someone's loved one. The surrounding green lawn has been watered by buckets of tears. Many graves have a white cross representing a departed fellow American who valiantly served this country so that you and I can stand here today enjoying the freedoms granted by the sacred Constitution of the United States of America.

BUT...Freedom has never been free.

This is a day to remember:

1. It's a day to remember the 24,000 American colonists who gave their lives in the Revolutionary War. 8600 battle deaths. 8,500 died in the rat infested squaller, filth, torture, abuse and starvation in British prison ships. 10,000 more died from disease: small pox, cholera, malaria and starvation.
2. It's a day to remember the 116,000 Americans who gave their lives in World War 1. (53,402 combat, 63,000 from disease)
3. It's a day to remember the 418,000 Americans who lost their lives in the second World War. But don't forget why the United States got involved: A madman went unchecked, killing 8 million genocide victims by Hitler's Nazi Germany who wanted the world to speak German.
4. It's a day to remember the 36,584 Americans who lost their lives in the Korean War. Today 51 million people of South Korea are enjoying the basic freedoms of Democracy.

5. It's a day to remember the 58,200 Americans who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. Although we militarily lost that war, Southeast Asia was put on notice that ruthless communist aggression would not go unpunished.
6. It's a day to remember the 4,800 Americans who died in the Iraq war. A war based on erroneous intelligence that America was at risk of a nuclear disaster from the tyrant, Saddam Husein who threatened chemical and biological war on the U.S..
7. It's a day to remember the 6,300 Americans who lost their lives in the Afghanistan war plus the few thousand Afghans who aided the USA
8. It's a day to remember the 620 Americans who have been killed by Iranian backed terrorists.
9. It's a day to remember the recent 13 American military souls who lost their lives in Operation Epic Fury as well as the estimated 43,000 Iranian protesters of the Iranian regime. That operation will protect America and the middle east from inter ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons of mass destruction from a regime who daily shouts "death to America"!
10. It's a day to remember the more than 1.1 million Americans who lost their lives in all wars defending our freedoms..

If your loved one were serving in the military, can you imagine your answering the door bell to see a uniformed military officer with an envelope in hand with a letter that reads : " It is with deepest regret that I must inform you ..." The anguish, the grief, the loneliness of those receiving those notices would be overwhelming . Thousands became single parent families, thousands of wives became widows, children became orphans, many never finished their

college degrees, many never knew the children they never had, many never met their future spouse. many never became grandparents.

THE BOTTOM LINE: FREEDOM HAS NEVER BEEN FREE!!!!

I am a combat veteran of the Vietnam War, having served during the infamous TET offensive of 1968. Being an oral/maxillofacial surgeon with disciplines of dentistry and medicine, I was assigned to a Marine combat hospital. My assignment: Surgically treat oral and facial injuries of the U.S. Marines near the DMZ.

My eyes have seen the devastation of war: extremities blown off, faces disfigured for life, body parts missing, Some never to eat another steak, nor kiss with supple lips, or never able to intelligibly speak with tongues scarred beyond function, faces never to smile again.

My eyes saw the Chinook helicopters landing on our helipad emptying their cargo of body bags containing bodies, beyond recognition, identifiable only by their dental records. Our psych unit was full of young boys/men whose minds had been permanently scarred having just seen their buddy's legs blown off by stepping on a land mine. PTSD!

My hands had to surgically reconstruct mangled faces , often unable to restore the function or esthetic looks due to the missing lips, tongues, nose or jaws.

My hands had to restore the face of a 14 year old Vietnamese boy who had committed his life to becoming a pacifist Cao Di Priest. He had refused to join the Viet Cong but suffered a Viet Cong's bullet to his face in retribution. A single bullet turns into a mushroom wound as when bone is shattered , each fragment becomes a secondary missile.

Prior to my leaving for Vietnam I had received a letter from a friend of mine, Paul Rose. Paul was a returned missionary, BYU student who had been drafted. He told me that he was now seeing the horrors of war but I will never forget what he said: "war is terrible, making men do awful things, but the ravage of war is not nearly as bad as living under the tyranny of an oppressive

government!” Two months later, his parents received one of those dreaded letters : “ It is with deepest regret that I must inform you...death of you son.” Paul sealed those thoughts with his life.

Today is not only a day of remembrance but a day of gratitude and honoring those who have given so much. In 1868 General John A. Logan of the Union Army designated May 30th as “Decoration Day” to honor the Civil War dead. That designation lasted nearly a century until Congress passed the 1968 Uniform Holiday Act designating the last Monday in May as a day to honor the fallen heroes who have served this country so honorably.

So...here we are today having the opportunity to honor those brave fallen.
So... How do we do that?

1. We can honor and fly the stars and stripes for which so many gave their lives. It is much, much more than stars and strips on a piece of material. The symbolism should be revered
 - a. Stars neatly unified representing each state .
 - b. Red: represents the blood of those who gave their life,, their valor, their bravery.
 - c. White: represents the purity and innocence of those lives lost
 - d. Blue: represents loyalty, perseverance, vigilance, justice.
2. Last week I attended the graduation ceremony honoring the 2026 Timpview graduates. Although, a wonderful rendition of the Star Spangled Banner was sung by their choir...the flag was nowhere to be seen! Where was the Pledge of Allegiance.
 - a. Our fallen heroes fought for those laws as guaranteed by the divinely inspired Constitution and Bill of Rights.
3. We can honor our fallen by becoming a united , United States.
 - a. The first paragraph of the Constitution states “We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union....”

- b. Granted, we are not yet a perfect union and we are far from being united.
 - c. We can turn down our rhetoric, we can agree to disagree...but we should never forget that we are Americans, blessed with “certain unalienable rights among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”
 - d. We can get our news from sources other than Instagram, Facebook or late night comedy tv. Search/compare multiple sources, NBC, CBS, Fox News, CNN. It’s amazing having listened to many of the State of the Union messages and then listen to the post broadcasts editorialists telling us what we just heard. The editorial twists make you wonder if they heard the same thing you did. Listen to both left and right media and the truth is often somewhere in the middle.
4. We can honor them by our educators teaching patriotism, teaching the sacrifices of life, limb and treasure that has been spent securing the liberties that we enjoy today. Teach the evils of Totalitarianism, Communism and the horrors of their histories. The hundreds of thousands of executions and forced labor camps including Russia, Cultural Revolution of China, and North Korea and elsewhere. Teach as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain once said: “ Socialism works only until you run out of other people’s money!”

It is most essential that our youth internalize, incorporate and genuinely take to heart the value of American liberties.

President Ronald Reagan said “Freedom is never more than one generation from extinction”. Educators!... Don’t ever let that happen!

5. We can honor them by getting involved in the political process. We are a Republic, governed by elected officials. We can communicate with our

elected officials. We can support our candidates with donations, volunteering time, placing your candidate's sign on your lawn, attend town hall meetings. Be an informed voter! Support fair elections, eliminate fraud, gerrymandering . Let your voices be heard!

6. We can honor them by donating to the just causes of veterans: Even a single dollar by many, collectively, is meaningful!
 - a. American Legion
 - b. Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
 - c. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
 - d. Blinded Veterans Association
 - e. Marine Corps League
 - f. Among others \

7. President John F. Kennedy once said: "A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces but also by the men it honors".
 - a. **Today we honor the very best among us!**
 - b. To the fallen heroes of America:
 - i. We thank you
 - ii. We remember you
 - iii. We will never forget you
 - c. May God bless our veterans and active duty service members
 - d. May God bless the families who carry the weight of sacrifice
 - e. And may God continue to bless the United States of America

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