

A Place Called *Liberty*



Several years ago I was driving through Ohio with a friend when we came upon a town called Liberty. I was so fascinated by the discovery I pulled over and sat by the sign wondering what it would be like to live in a town called Liberty. Of course I knew it was just a name but what if there really was a place called Liberty—a place that didn't carry the name but lived up to it? My mind raced with all the marvelous possibilities, and as I drove out of town that day I knew the idea was planted deep in my heart. If there ever was a place called Liberty, I wanted to live there.

A friend once asked me how my children came to be so patriotic. I hadn't really thought about it until then. It was kind of like asking how your children got so tall. It happens so gradually you don't really recognize the dramatic changes. But looking at them, I could see my friend was right. It is more than apparent that our children have a deep love and respect for America and all she stands for. They automatically stand when the National Anthem is sung, take their hat off when the flag goes by, proudly pledge allegiance to the flag, and graciously thank and honor all those who serve and protect our freedoms. So how did they come to be this way? Is it in their genes? Maybe, but I assure you it isn't hereditary. Patriotism isn't something you are born with. It is something you develop with time and through experience. So when my friend asked me how our children developed this deep love and devotion for their country I told her the simple truth, "I share the story of America with them."



A few years ago our family took a trip to Washington D.C. One of the things we wanted to make sure and do while there was visit Arlington Cemetery and the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Our youngest boys, Ethan and Noah, were only four and seven years-old at the time. And yet, when we neared the cemetery they quieted to a whisper. As we reached the tomb of the Unknown Soldier our teenage sons instinctively removed their hats and our two daughters bowed their heads with tear-filled eyes. Where did that instinct and emotion come from? It came from stories!

For months before we took our trip I began reading stories to our children of people who gave their lives for their country. We read books about Arlington Cemetery and specifically the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We talked about what it was and what it represents. My husband shared his feelings about that sacred place and we told our children about all the people in our family who served in battle, some giving their lives, so that we could remain free.

By the time we arrived at the Cemetery our children already knew it was a sacred place that held great honor and deserved the utmost respect. They knew because we took the time to tell them, we told them with love, and reinforced it with stories. This is why our children have such a love for their country and cherish freedom—because their father and I have been faithfully devoted to tending and nurturing a love of liberty in their hearts. We instill this love and devotion in them, through the stories we read, the experiences we provide, and the example we set. We love America because our parents shared the story of America with *us*. And our children love America because we share the story with them. It is a beautiful story well worth telling over and over again, and it is my deepest hope that you will share it with your children.

As my husband and I have shared these stories and experiences with our children we have made an important discovery. There *is* a place called liberty and that place is our heart!