

True Independence

July 3, 2019

Independence Day is commonly associated with fireworks, parades, barbecues, carnivals, fairs, picnics, concerts, family reunions and political speeches.

What are your Fourth of July traditions?

When I served as Athletic Director and Head Football Coach at Vernon High School in Vernon, Florida, our principal, Mr. Riviere, would set off fireworks on the top of this mini mountain where we practiced football. Although the town is small with no Wal-Mart or McDonald's, it is as busy as Times Square on Independence Day. What a great tradition.

For the past eight years my family and I have spent the first week of July in St. Simons Island, Georgia at the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Coaches Camp. This is the best week of our year, every year.

One summer we planned to go on a Disney Cruise for our summer vacation. We thought our young children would be so excited about seeing Mickey Mouse and all the Disney Princesses. A couple of months before our scheduled cruise Taylor and Kenneth called a family meeting to let us know they wanted to go to FCA camp instead of going on the Disney Cruise. When we informed them of our plan to do both they were elated.

This tradition has offered our family true independence from the morally bankrupt society in which we find ourselves. This independence has come through the dependence of our faith. When Tanika and I have had marriage problems, coaches camp mended broken pieces. When we felt hurt by people, we trusted in this crazy life of a coach, we found refuge in coaches camp. When we sought examples of mature, Godly adolescents, we realized we were surrounded by them at camp.

Although my wife and I went to our first FCA camp together in 2004, our first year at Coach's Camp was 2012. In that first year we placed our children in the kid's program which is Vacation Bible School on steroids. While they were making tie-dye shirts and singing praise songs my wife and I were enjoying date night, competition, Bible studies, worship services and amazing fellowship.

The food is provided by the great staff at Epworth by the Sea and the scenery is special. Our children are now a part of the leadership camp that takes place at the same time on another part of the campus.

Imagine five hundred young people being taught how to lead by following the principles of the greatest leader to ever live. They sing songs, do chants, have breakout sessions and enjoy a dynamic speaker. Tayelor and Kenneth are looking forward to the day when they can lead their own group. Those leaders are called Huddle Leaders and they are usually made up of college students who are diligent in their faith.

The greatest thing about this tradition is catching up with friends who we only see at this camp. My son and his friends take a photo every year in the same spot striking the same pose. It is cool to see how they have grown and how much they have changed.

I have worked at eleven schools, covering four states and at least eleven moves. People often ask how my wife endures the life of a coach's wife.

I can't imagine all she has endured; however, I know that other coaches' wives at coaches camp have helped her tremendously. As we enter year 18 of our coaching lives it is awesome for me to witness Tanika's maturation as she mentors young coaches' wives.

Last summer we received a call from Southwest Florida Coaches Ministry in Naples, Florida. I was certain they wanted me to come speak at their big conference for coaches and their families called "Coaches Time Out." I was wrong. They wanted my wife. She did an amazing job as part of a panel featuring high school, college and professional coaches' wives.

True Independence is blocking out technology and spending quality time with family...independent of distractions.