

## “We Mutually Pledge . . .”

“. . . [W]e mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

*Declaration of Independence*

### Some Important Principles

- Even when sacrifice is required, we should faithfully keep our pledges, or our promises.
- Keeping our commitments helps motivate others to do the same.



### Getting Started

Show this picture and discuss:

- What is happening in this picture? Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the Declaration of Independence, is shown placing the document before John Hancock, president of the Congress. He stands with the other members of the committee who created the draft: John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and Benjamin Franklin.

- What promises are these men making?
- What important promises have you made?

- Why did you make those promises?
- What makes them easy or difficult to keep?

### Lesson

The fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence risked high treason against the King of England. The penalty of high treason was death—a death that not only ended the guilty individual's life, but also dishonored their family members (see 1708 Treason Act.) The guilty individual was first hung until unconscious. They were then cut down, beheaded, and cut into quarters. Their remains were scattered to frustrate family and friends in naming a final resting place. The surviving family members were not allowed to own property or businesses. Knowing all this, the signers of the Declaration of Independence moved forward with great sacrifice.

- Why do you think these men were willing to risk so much?
- How do you think that being part of a larger group helped them with their decision?

Our Founding Fathers were successful men from varied backgrounds. They were men of means, had grit and integrity, and understood that they were risking *everything* for a new beginning. It was understood that unity and compromise were absolute necessities in creating a new republic.

These men were willing to set aside their differences for the sake of freedom—a freedom that would extend to their families and to all people of the colonies.

- How has the Founding Fathers' sacrifice and commitment to freedom affected your life today?
- What can you learn from them that you could apply in your own life?



## What Can YOU Do?

As you continue to think about their sacrifices, what are *you* inspired to do? What is impressed upon your mind? A religious leader in America once said: "Freedom cannot outlive morality . . . freedom is not free—it must be earned" (Royden G. Derrick, "Moral Values and Rewards", 1981.) How might you stay morally strong and earn freedom? What could you do to inspire family, friends, and people in your community to protect and honor our freedom? Here are a few ideas:

- Write a simple "Family Declaration," that all family members agree with and will commit to. Ask every family member to sign it, and put it in a place where everyone can see it regularly. For example, "Our family will be honest in our relationships; we will serve one another daily; we will choose to spend dinner time together each day."
- Encourage each family member to memorize the last paragraph of the Declaration of Independence.
- Post a picture of the Founding Fathers in a prominent place in your home.

## Additional Resources

Article: [9 Things You May Not Know About the Declaration of Independence](#)

Video: [A Revolutionary Story – Freedom Factor](#)

Song: [Too Late to Apologize - A Declaration](#)

Song: [O, America](#)

Blog: [John Hancock and His Signature](#)

Article: [John Adams and Thomas Jefferson](#)

Video: [Good Morning America Piece on Adams and Jefferson](#)

## Do the Math

Today's year minus July 4, 1776 =  
Years since the Declaration Signing

- In your opinion, how well has the Declaration of Independence withstood that many years?
- How many more years until we celebrate the 250th anniversary of this event?
- What can you and your family do to prepare for that historic celebration?

## Learn More Details

To appreciate the significance of the unity demonstrated by the signers of the Declaration of Independence, it can be helpful to look at:

1. How many different colonies they represented.
2. Their difference in ages.
3. The unique professions they represented.
4. Where they were born.

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/signers-factsheet>

- What does this information teach us about the possibilities of unity, working together on a common cause, and getting along with those whose ideas are different from our own?
- How might the United States of America be different today if we worked harder to focus on our

unified goals and similarities rather than on our differences?

## References

Treason Act 1708 - 7 Ann c 21

Blackstone, Wm. Knight. Chase, ed. *Chase's Blackstone Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*. New York: Baker, Voorhis & Co., 1936

June 29, 2016. (2018, August 30). *Fun facts about our founding fathers - The County Press*. Retrieved June 30, 2022, from <https://thecountypress.mihomepaper.com/articles/fun-facts-about-our-founding-fathers/>

## Did You Know?

Only two people signed the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776: John Hancock and Charles Thomson. Most signed on, or after, August 2, 1776. The last signer, Thomas McKean, signed in 1781.

