

## Memorial Day Mutualization

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Do you remember how you loved your parents when you were a little kid. They were big and powerful and smart and right about everything. I thought my dad could beat up everybody else's dad and my mom was the prettiest mom in the world. As I grew up a little bit I begin to see my parents were not perfect. They were vulnerable. Cracks in my illusion of their perfection began to appear. Cracks in my illusion of security began to appear in my worldview.

The process went so far that for a season I thought my parents were not so cool. They didn't get it. They didn't understand anything. They were easy to criticize and judge. I realized later that my hypercriticism of my parents said more about me than it said about them. More years go by and they began to get smart again.

Here's the thing about the process of growing up. I never stopped loving my parents. My love for them changed as I grew up. I loved them one way as a child, another way as an adolescent, and still a different way as an adult.

Paul said in one of his letters that when he became an adult he thought like an adult and acted like an adult and put childish ways behind him.

When I was a child I loved my parents like a child. I did not love them as I love them now. I love them now with my eyes wide open. And now, that my children are adults they see my faults, my vulnerabilities, my inconsistencies, my striving, as well as the things I do right every once in a while.

I think we go through the same process in every relationship. We begin by idealizing the other person. After a while we begin to realize that the other person may have a fault, or a wrinkle, or a wart, or maybe they have a quirky nervous habit. They begin to see some things in us as well. We start with idealization and then go to realization. We can get stuck in the realization stage of the relationship. It can be uncomfortable and painful to endure this stage of a relationship. Many people choose not to tough it out, thus they miss the opportunity of the third stage of a relationship; mutualization.

The three phases of relationships are idealization, realization, and mutualization. We can see the three phases of relationships in almost everything and everyone; our life partner, our jobs, our children and our parents. We can also see this process work itself out between citizens and their country.

I remember studying American history in school and for a time I believed that my country was the strongest country in the world. We had never lost a war and we could

beat up anyone. America was more beautiful than any other country in the world. As a nation we were the strongest, smartest, and most virtuous nation of all time. As a Boy Scout I was a patrol leader and I would give commands to the color guard to present the flags. The flag to me was a sacred object. I had not yet matured to the understanding that there was a difference between loving the object of the flag and loving the values and ideals that the flag represents.

My encouragement is that we understand that we become aware of how we love and how our love grows and changes in every relationship including our love for our country.

In an amazing and impassioned speech, Minnesota State Rep. and wounded Iraq veteran [John Kriesel](#) (R) stood up to fellow Republican legislators before a vote on a constitutional amendment that would prohibit future lawmakers from legalizing same sex marriage.

Kriesel served in the Minnesota Army National Guard from 1998–2008, rising to the level of staff sergeant. He was stationed in Kosovo in 2004 as part of a NATO peacekeeping force and, later, at Camp Fallujah in Iraq. **He lost both of his legs in military combat in 2006.** He was awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Purple Heart Medal, and the Bronze Star Medal for his service to his country.

“If this was five, six years ago, I probably would have voted yes,” he admitted — but “everything changed,” Kriesel said, after he was wounded in Iraq.

“It woke me up. It changed me,” he explained. “...Happiness is so hard to find for people. So they find it — they find someone that makes them happy — and we want to say you can be together, you can love that person, but you can’t marry them. That’s wrong. That’s wrong and I disagree with it.”

“This amendment doesn’t represent what I went to fight for,” Kriesel insisted, before holding up a photo of a gay soldier who was killed in Iraq.

“I don’t know about you guys, but I cannot look at this family, look at this picture, and say ‘You know what, corporal, you were good enough to fight for your country and give your life, but you were not good enough to marry the person you love.’ I can’t do that. I cannot do that and I won’t do that. If there was a ‘hell no’ button right here, I would press it. That would be the one I would press.”

The statehouse passed the marriage amendment [by a vote of 70-62](#), with Kriesel being one of only four Republicans to vote against his party.

I hesitate to do too much with our national holidays. We flirt with glorifying war, rewriting history, having a selective memory, and blindly idolizing our nation. Every one of Shadow Rock’s foundational theologians warns us about the demon of nationalism.

Our observance of Memorial Day is more than a sentimental act of remembering. We are called upon to honor the sacrifices of people who have given us such a blessed life and we are called upon to love our nation in a mature way. This means getting beyond the

idealization of our country. It means getting beyond an adolescent kind of love and the hypercriticism of realization. It means coming to such maturity that I can step up and act responsibly, get beyond the hurtful rhetoric that polarizes, and be the kind of citizen partner that honors the sacrifice. That is what I will try to remember.