

Our Creator in the Capital
A Walking Tour of God in Washington, D. C.

from "Winning the Future" by Newt Gingrich,
Former Speaker of the House

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These words are to reconfirm that Our Creator was and is a large part of the creation of this United States and our Forefathers were believers who believed in and relied upon our Heavenly Father as they drew up our Constitution and later developed each monument and landmark in our Capital.

This guide should be helpful to any visiting our Capital as they visit each landmark and a reminder to those who do not have the same pilgrimage opportunity that Our Father was, is and should always be a foundation for our faith, our government and our country.

The following is taken from "Winning The Future" written by Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House

Our Creator in the Capital A Walking Tour of God in Washington, D.C.

Every American who visits the national capital should take some time to witness the power and centrality of God in American history.

One or two days spent visiting the key historic and monumental exhibits will end any questions you might have about America's indebtedness to and reliance on the Creator from whom all our rights come.

The next time your friends contend that we are not guaranteed religious liberties in public and do not need to be taught about God in history and government classes, simply ask them to take this guided tour. Advise your friends to spend one or two days visiting the great men, the great events, the great documents, and the great institutions that are at the heart of our freedom as Americans and identity as a people.

The tour begins with the National Archives where you will find The original Declaration of Independence. It is in this document that you will find the immortal phrase declaring that we "are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." That was the beginning of our independence as a people.

I

The National Archives

What to look for:

Image of the Ten Commandments

The Declaration of the Independence

In the National Archives – The repository for our nation’s most important documents –displayed across the floor you will find an image of the Ten Commandments. The Judeo-Christian beliefs brought by the Pilgrims and others to the New World formed the foundation for our laws.

The Declaration of Independence was heavily influenced by the Magna Carta, a contract of rights between the English king and his barons and generally regarded as the first great step toward guaranteed liberties in Britain. The Declaration of Independence, however, had a clear difference from the English concept of rights –The Founding Fathers believed our rights comes from God, not the king (or the state). Here you can see the original Declaration with its assertions:

- **When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary to...assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and**
- **equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them....**

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

This is both the beginning and the heart of American independence. Our rights come from our Creator.

II

The Washington Monument

What to Look for

Monument cornerstone

Free Press Methodist Episcopal Church Memorial plaque

Prayer and psalm inscriptions

Laus Deo

It is no accident that George Washington's monument has so many references to God. Washington was a profoundly religious man. When Washington took the oath of office on April 30, 1789, he asked that the Bible be opened to Deuteronomy, chapter 28. Immediately following the oath, he delivered the first inaugural address.

No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.

Eight months later, Washington proclaimed the first national day of Thanksgiving in the United States (there were earlier thanksgivings but that was before we became a single country.

..that we then may all unite unto him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country...for the signal and manifold mercies and the favorable interpositions of His providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government...for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed....

II - Washington Monument (Con't)

Washington's personal journal provides more evidence of his deep faith:

It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible. It is impossible to account for the creation of the universe, without the agency of a Supreme Being. It is impossible to govern the universe without the aid of a Supreme Being.

From bottom to top, the Washington Monument is filled with references to God: some visible, some not.

The monument's cornerstone contains within it a Holy Bible.

There is a memorial plaque from the Free Press Methodist Episcopal Church.

Climb the stairs and you will see on the twelfth landing a prayer offered by the City of Baltimore; on the twentieth a memorial presented by Chinese Christians; and on the twenty-fourth, a presentation made by Sunday school children from New York and Philadelphia quoting Proverbs 10:7, Luke 18:16, and Proverbs 22:6.

Finally, there are two words on the aluminum cap atop The east side of the Washington Monument: *Laus Deo*—Latin for "Praise be to God."

The following comments about the Washington Monument are not from Newt Gingrich's "Creator in the Capital" but from a very popular email that circulated in 2005 when religious symbols i.e., the Ten Commandments. in public places came under attack.

LAUS DEO: A History Lesson

The Washington Monument.

On the aluminum cap, atop the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C. are displayed two words: *Laus Deo*. No one can see these words. In fact, most visitors to the monument are totally unaware they are even there and for that matter, probably couldn't care less.

Once you know *Laus Deo*'s history, you will want to share this with everyone you know. But these words have been there for many years;

They are 555 feet, 5,125 inches high, perched atop the monument. (One detail that is not mentioned, in DC, is that there can never be a building of greater height than the Washington Monument.)

Those words face skyward to the Father of our nation, overlooking the 69 square miles which comprise the District of Columbia, capital of the United States of America.

***Laus Deo!* Two seemingly insignificant, un-noticed words. Out of sight and one might think, out of mind, but very meaningfully placed at the highest point over what is the most powerful city in the most successful nation in the world. So, what do those two words, in Latin, composed of just four syllables and only seven letters, possibly mean? Very simply, they say
"Praise be to God!"**

**Though construction of this giant obelisk began in 1848, when James Polk was President of the United States, it was not until 1888 that the monument was inaugurated and opened to the public. It took twenty five years to finally cap the memorial with a tribute to the Father of our nation, *Laus Deo*
Praise be to God!**

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From atop this magnificent granite and marble structure, visitors may take in the beautiful panoramic view of the city with its division into four major segments. From that vantage point, one can also easily see the original plan of the designer, Pierre Charles l'Enfant...a perfect cross imposed upon the landscape with the White House to the north. The Jefferson memorial is to the south, the Capitol to the east and the Lincoln Memorial to the west.

A cross you ask? Why a cross? What about separation of church and state?

Yes, a cross; separation of church and state was not, is not, in the Constitution. So, read on. How interesting and, no doubt, intended to carry a profound meaning for those who bother to notice.

Praise be to God! Within the monument itself are 898 steps and 50 landings. As one climbs the steps and pauses at the landings the memorial stones share a message. On the 12th landing is a prayer offered by the City of Baltimore; on the 20th is a memorial presented by some Chinese Christians; on the 24th a presentation made by Sunday school children from New York and Philadelphia quoting Proverbs 10:7, Luke 18:16 and Proverbs 22:6. Praise be to God!

When the cornerstone of the Washington Monument was laid on July 4th, 1848 deposited within it were many items including the Holy Bible presented by the Bible Society. Praise be to God! Such was the discipline, the moral direction and the spiritual mood given by the founder and first President of our unique democracy.. "One Nation, Under God."

I am awed by Washington's prayer for America. Have you never read it? Well, now is your unique opportunity, so read on!

"Almighty God; We make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection; that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government; and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large. And finally that Thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without a humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation. Grant our supplication, we beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

Laus Deo!

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When one stops to observe the inscriptions found in public places all over our Nation's capitol, he or she will easily find the signature of God, as it is unmistakably inscribed everywhere you look. You may forget the width and height of "Laus Deo", its location, or the architects but no one who reads this will be able to forget its meaning, or these words:

**"Unless the Lord builds the house its builders labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand
guard in vain." Psalm 127:1**

III

The Jefferson Memorial

What to Look for:

Quotes and references to God

While Jefferson often stressed the importance of questioning all things, including the existence of God, his writings and governing history make clear that he himself believed:

My views....are the result of a life of inquiry and reflection, and very different from the anti-Christian system imputed to me by those who know nothing of my opinions.

April 21, 1802, letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush

Upon entering the Jefferson Memorial, you'll find above the chamber, around the interior dome:

I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.

Of the four panels inside the dome, three contain references to God. The first to the right is an excerpt from a 1777 bill for establishing religious freedom (passed by the Virginia Assembly in 1786) and a 1789 letter to James Madison:

Almighty God hath created the mind free...All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments, or burthens...are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion...

The second to the right is a famous excerpt from the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...

III - Jefferson Memorial (con't)

And the first on the left is taken from his 1785 Notes on the State of Virginia:

God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever. Commerce between master and slave is despotism. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free.

If you get a chance, visit the Jefferson exhibit below the rotunda.. Notice the lack of quotes, notes, or references to God downstairs and contrast it with what you have just seen above. It is the same Thomas Jefferson, just a different time. The downstairs exhibit was finished four years ago and reflects the increasing secularization of public life at the expense of historic accuracy.

IV

The Lincoln Memorial

What to Look for

- The Gettysburg address
- Lincoln's second inaugural address
- "I have a dream" inscription

Abraham Lincoln was a devout Christian who believed in the power of divine providence to guide the nation through the Civil War. In October 16, 1862 he said to Eliza Gurney:

If I had my way, this war would never have been commenced. If I had been allowed my way, this war would have ended before this. But we find it still continues; and we must believe that He permits it for some wise purpose of His own, mysterious and unknown to us; and though with our limited understanding we may not be able to comprehend it, yet we cannot but believe, that He who made the world still governs it.

At a White House dinner during the war, the clergyman who gave the Benediction closed with a thought: "the Lord is on the Union's side." Lincoln responded with this sharp rebuke:

I am not at all concerned about that, for I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord's side.

Lincoln's faith is prominently on display in his memorial, The Gettysburg Address – inscribed into the wall to the left of the statue is only 267 words long, but still concludes with Lincoln's message of the importance of God's role in America.

We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom...

IV - The Lincoln Memorial (con't)

Lincoln's second inaugural address—inscribed into the wall to the right of the statue—is a mere 700 words, but it mentions God fourteen times, including in this passage:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

The Lincoln Memorial was also the site of the Reverend Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech. On August 22, 2003 the Martin Luther King, Jr. Inscription Dedication unveiled an inscription in the granite approach to the Memorial—to the center after the first set of steps—marking the location where Dr. King spoke:

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

V

The Capitol Building

What to Look for

Capitol Rotunda paintings

Replica of the Magna Carta in the Rotunda

House and Senate Chamber inscriptions

Opening Pledge of Allegiance in House and Senate sessions

As you walk up the steps of the Capitol building, recall that on September 12, 2001, two hundred members of Congress gathered on these steps to sing “God Bless America.” In a similar scene in June 2002, members of the House of Representatives gathered here to recite the Pledge of Allegiance after the Ninth Circuit Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to include in it the phrase “under God.”

Upon entering the Capitol Rotunda, you will be immediately struck by the religious imagery. In particular:

The Embarkation of the Pilgrims depicts the deck of the Ship *Speedwell* as it departs for the New World from Delft Haven, Holland, on July 22, 1620. William Brewster holds the Bible and pastor John Robinson leads the group in prayer. The rainbow at the left side of the painting symbolizes hope and divine protection.

V The Capitol Building(con't)

The Discovery of the Mississippi shows Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto's (the first European to set foot in what is now Mississippi) encounter with the Native Americans. On the right a monk prays as a crucifix is planted into the ground.

The Apotheosis of Washington shows our first president's ascent into heaven. The thirteen maidens symbolize the original states.

The painting *Religion* honors the role of God in the Nation's founding.

In addition, you will see a gold replica of the Magna Carta, a gift from the British government in 1976. Many of the first travelers to what would become the colonies came with a copy of this document in hand. It was later used to justify the colonialists' protests against the Stamp Act and other violations of their rights. In fact, the seal adopted by Massachusetts on the eve of the Revolution featured a militiaman with sword in one hand and Magna Carta in the other.

V – the Capitol Building (con't)

In the Cox Corridor in the House wing of the Capitol the following words are carved into the wall “America! God shed his grace on Thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!” Also in the House chamber is the inscription “In God we trust.”

At the East entrance of the Senate Chamber is “*Annuit coeptis*” (Latin for God has favored our undertakings); “In God We Trust” is written over the South entrance. Look also for the relief portrait of Moses.

Today, the House and Senate both open their daily sessions with the Pledge of Allegiance. Representative Sonny Montgomery (Democrat from Mississippi) recited the first Pledge of Allegiance on the House floor on September 13, 1988. Former Speaker of the House Jim Wright decided to make the Pledge a daily ritual, and in 1995 the House rules were amended to make it permanent.. The Senate has never officially made the Pledge a permanent feature but has recited it before each session since June 24, 1999.

VI

The Supreme Court

What to Look for

Multiple images of the Ten Commandments

Statue of Mohammed

Opening session traditions

The most striking religious imagery at the Supreme Court building is that of Moses with the Ten Commandments, affirming the Judeo-Christian roots of our legal system:

At the center of the sculpture over the East portion of the Supreme Court Building;

Inside the actual courtroom there is another picture of Moses holding the Ten Commandments;

The Ten Commandments are also engraved over the chair of the chief justice and on the bronze doors of the Supreme Court.

There is also a statue of Mohammed on the walls along with a statue of Charlemagne holding a cross. If you have the chance to sit in on a hearing, notice that all sessions begin with a marshal saying, "God save the United States and this honorable court."

Throughout most of our history, the Supreme Court has ruled that we are a religious nation. For example, in *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952), the Court upheld a statute that allowed pupils to be released from school to attend religious classes:

VI - The Supreme Court (con't)

“We are a religious people and our institutions presuppose a Supreme Being...When the state encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it follows the best of our traditions. We cannot read into the Bill of Rights a philosophy of hostility to religion.”

Justice William O. Douglas

VII

The Library of Congress

What to Look for

Statue of Moses holding the Ten Commandments

Lord Tennyson phrase

Gutenberg Bible

In 1998, the Library of Congress held an exhibit called "Religion and the Founding of the American Republic." While no longer on display, the Library web site has an overview: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/>

Along the top floor of the Great Hall there are a series of unattributed phrases running along the ceiling. On the right side (from the staircase) is the phrase: "Nature is the art of God." In back of the stairs: "Ignorance is the curse of God, Knowledge the wing where with we fly to heaven."

In the viewing area there is a statue of Moses holding the Ten Commandments. Across the room, northeast of the statue, is a plaque with the phrase from Alfred, Lord Tennyson: "One God, one law, one element, and one far off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

In the Great Hall of the Thomas Jefferson Building is a mint condition copy of the Gutenberg Bible, the first ever mass-produced printed document. Gutenberg is widely credited with inventing a system of moveable type that eventually allowed books to be produced quickly and inexpensively, increasing literacy across the world.

VIII

The Ronald Reagan Building

What to Look for

“Liberty of Worship” statue

Ronald Reagan spoke eloquently and often about his faith in God and how He inspired him and the nation. In 1984, he wrote *In God I Trust*, a memoir of his life and faith. On March 8, 1983, he said in an address to an evangelical convention:

I tell you there are a great many God-fearing, dedicated, noble men and women in public life, present company included. And yes, we need your help to keep us ever mindful of the ideas and the principles that brought us into the public arena in the first place. The basis of those ideals and principles is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty that, itself, is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted.

The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight.

Outside the main entrance to the building (14th Street between E Street and Constitution Avenue) is a statue called “Liberty of Worship.” The figure is leaning against the Ten Commandments, another allusion to the close tie between religion and liberty. It says, “Our liberty of worship is not a concession nor a privilege but an inherent right.”

IX

The White House

What to Look for

Seasonal decorations

President Adam's prayer mantle

Since 1878, American presidents and their families have celebrated Easter Monday by hosting an "egg roll" party on the White House lawn, one of the oldest events in White House history.

The tradition of placing a decorated Christmas tree in the White House began in 1889. While it started as a gathering for President Benjamin Harrison's family and friends, the lighting of the White House Christmas tree has become a national tradition. In 1929, First Lady Lou Henry Hoover started the as yet unbroken custom of first ladies trimming the White House Christmas tree.

If you get the chance to go on the White House tour, be sure to visit the State Dining Room. The fireplace mantle contains a prayer by President John Adams.

"I pray to heaven to bestow the best of blessings on this house and all that hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof."

In 1953, President Dwight David Eisenhower hosted the National Prayer Breakfast out of a desire to meet with the House and Senate prayer groups and unite the nation's leaders under the common bond of faith. Over the years, the annual tradition has grown to include guests from all the fifty states and more than one hundred countries.

IX - The White House (con't)

Backed by congressional resolution, President Ronald Reagan declared 1983 the Year of the Bible “in recognition of both the formative influence the Bible has been for our Nation, and our national need to study and apply the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.”

The Bible and its teachings helped form the basis for the Founding Fathers’ abiding belief in the inalienable Rights of the individual, rights which they found implicit in the Bible’s teachings of the inherent worth and dignity of each individual. This same sense of man patterned the convictions of those who framed the English system of law inherited by our Nation, as well as the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

World War II Memorial

Opening officially on the sixty-year anniversary of D-Day, the World War II Memorial is the newest monument in Washington, D.C. and, not surprisingly, is the most secular. However, a passage containing religious imagery from General Dwight D. Eisenhower's D-Day address to the soldiers who were about to storm the beaches of Normandy can be found on the Atlantic side of the monument.

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you.....

Eisenhower and other American leaders talked often of this war as a crusade against evil. The government issued seventeen million Bibles to the soldiers with a message in them from Generals Eisenhower and George Marshall. In addition, many of the government-printed World War II posters contained religious imagery. "This is the Enemy" won a graphics award in 1943 and shows an arm with a Nazi insignia plunging a dagger through the Holy Bible. Another shows a German plane and Nazi soldiers attaching a crucifix. Eisenhower's address to the troops concluded...

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble Undertaking.

XI

The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial

After the allies successfully took Normandy beach, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave a nationwide address and led the American people in prayer:

Almighty God: Our sons, pride of our Nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity.

Notice that Roosevelt linked our nation and civilization with our religion. He also used the occasion to commit the American people to a rededication of their faith:

Many people have urged that I call the Nation into a single day of special prayer. But because the road is long and the desire is great, I ask that our people devote themselves in a continuance of prayer. As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let words of prayer be on our lips, invoking Thy help to our efforts.

XI - Roosevelt Memorial (Con't)

In the radio address, we see that Roosevelt also knew how our faith bound us together as a country:

And, O Lord, give us Faith. Give us Faith in Thee; Faith in our sons; Faith in each other; Faith in our united crusade. Let not the keenness of our spirit ever be dulled. Let not the impacts of temporary events, of temporal matters of but fleeting moment let not these deter us in our unconquerable purpose.

Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen.

This recently constructed memorial is noticeably devoid of references to our Creator, despite Roosevelt's obvious belief in the importance of the nation's belief in God during the War. *Faith* is mentioned in two areas, however:

To the right of the first waterfall, you can see this inscription.

In these days of difficulty, we Americans everywhere must and shall choose the path of social justice.... the path of faith, the path of hope, and the path of love toward our fellow men.

As you leave the memorial, the last quotation on the wall reads "Freedom of speech; Freedom of worship; Freedom from want; Freedom from fear." It's from his 1941 State of the Union address and shows the value he places on our nation's religious liberty.

XII

Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington National Cemetery offers a breathtaking view of nature, architecture, and our country's strong Judeo-Christian belief system. There are hundreds upon hundreds of memorials and graves decorated with religious imagery.

One of the most famous is the eternal flame of President John F. Kennedy's memorial and tomb. Inscribed upon it is his famous 1961 inaugural address, during which he declared we should "ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

The address concludes:

With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His Blessing and his help but knowing that here on earth, God's work must truly be our own.

As you absorb the breathtaking and awe-inspiring scenery, reflect on the bravery of those who sacrificed their lives to defend the proud traditions and deeply held beliefs of this country. In the future, what will they be fighting for?

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me: As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men holy, let us die to make men free, While God is marching on.