

W^{In Other} Words...

A RESEARCH SERVICE FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATORS

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REDUCED FONT SIZE FOR MORE JULY 4TH CONTENT

AMERICA: The Preamble to the United States Constitution contains a reminder we can't afford to forget: "in Order to form a more perfect Union..." Those words, ensconced in the 52-word sentence that introduces the U.S. Constitution, were written 11 years after the Declaration of Independence. That statement, officially signed on September 17, 1787, neither promises nor declares perfection. It simply states an endeavor to improve. We should all strive for "a more perfect union" and not lose hope when it comes up short. *National Archives Museum*

AMERICA: On May 10, 1869, a ceremonial golden spike was driven at Promontory Summit, Utah to mark the completion of America's first transcontinental railroad. It was a seemingly impossible task but enormous effort and sacrifice led to that monumental day. A simple one-word telegraph was sent to ignite national celebration..."DONE." Throughout American history many great accomplishments have been finished only to remind us that our work is far from done. The American spirit must always be, we are not done because there is still so much to be done. *NPS.org*

FAILURE: America's success came in part from failure. George Washington repeatedly failed to secure an appointment as an officer in the British military because he wasn't deemed good enough. One time he traveled 500 miles in hopes of gaining a position but was rejected. Although a line from the movie *Young Washington* attributed to his mother did not historically occur, it is a truthful reality: "Failure is the tutor sent by God. If you don't learn from it, you fail twice. If you do learn from it, you've earned wisdom." Thankfully, Washington's failure was turned into wisdom and we're the beneficiaries of it. *World, July 2026, p.58; TheBanner.org, 7/1/2026*

FAITH: Discussions on Abraham Lincoln's faith are varied yet his closest spiritual advisor observed a powerful lesson for us all. Dr. Phineas Gurley pastored New York Avenue Presbyterian Church near the White House where Lincoln attended. The president expressed appreciation for the minister by stating, "I like Gurley. He don't preach politics. I get enough of that through the week, and when I go to church I like to hear the Gospel." Dr. Gurley was a trusted friend through the Civil War, the death of Lincoln's son Willie, he was at the president's side when he died, and was the man who conducted Lincoln's funeral in the East Room of the White House. Gurley wrote of a conversation later in Lincoln's life after his visit to Gettysburg. The 16th president tearfully confided that "he had lost confidence in everything but God, and that he now believed his heart was changed and that he loved the Savior." At the funeral Gurley declared, "his abiding confidence in God...was his noblest virtue, his grandest principle...the secret of his success." He concluded by stating, "He will speak through the ages and to all rulers and peoples in every land...have confidence in God." We frequently place our trust in many things but sustaining faith comes when we lose our confidence in everything but God. *100 Bible Verses That Made America, Robert Morgan, 2020, p.220*

FREEDOM: On January 5, 1967, Ronald Reagan made this statement in his first Inaugural Address as Governor of California: "Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by way of inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people. And those in world history who have known freedom and then lost it have never known it again." *ReaganLibrary.gov*

GOD: On September 14, 1814, Francis Scott Key wrote the lyrics to what would ultimately become America's National Anthem on March 3, 1931, *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Key was a prominent attorney, a man of deep faith, and one of the early leaders of the American Sunday School movement. The fourth verse of Key's poem provided the inspiration for our national motto: "And this be our motto, 'In God is our trust.'" On July 30, 1956, "In God We Trust" was signed into law as the U.S. national motto. At the 11th Annual Presidential Prayer Breakfast on February 7, 1963, President John Kennedy declared, "The guiding principle and prayer of this Nation has been, is now, and ever shall be 'In God We Trust.'" Placing our trust in God has a long history in America and it's the only hope for a promising future. *Congressional Record, 9/14/2000; 5/5/2010*

GUIDANCE: Teddy Roosevelt was heavily influenced by Abraham Lincoln and hoped to emulate him when he was suddenly thrust into the Oval Office at the age of 42 after President McKinley's assassination in September 1901. Renowned artist Ernest Wells gifted Roosevelt with a portrait of Lincoln that he had completed in 1899. This rendering of Lincoln, before he grew a beard, was placed prominently above the fireplace in Roosevelt's office. America's youngest president said he frequently looked at that portrait when faced with difficult decisions and would often ask in an audible voice, "What would Lincoln do?" He wrote, "I have always felt that if I could do as he would have done were he in my place, I would not be far from right." Every one of us has an even greater opportunity because we can look up to Christ and literally beseech Him & His guidance. *USA Today, 5/29/2026, p.D2*

PRAYER: Near the U.S. Capitol's Rotunda is the official Congressional Prayer Room. It was established in 1954 by House Concurrent Resolution 60 from the House and Senate, and opened for use in 1955. This room is not open to the public but reserved for leaders to seek God and His guidance. Its design is intended to reflect "the basic unity of belief in God and His Providence that

has characterized our history.” The focal point is an altar dominated by a stained-glass depiction of George Washington kneeling in prayer. The words of Psalm 16:1 surround him: “Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust.” The statement from Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, “This Nation Under God,” resides above Washington. The altar beneath Washington’s frame contains an open Bible that’s usually set at Psalm 23. The stained-glass was donated by a craftsman from California and is dedicated “to those who have in the past sought God’s guidance and to those who presently determine the destiny of the Nation by the inspiration of their decisions.” This Congressional Prayer Room reflects the reality of America’s past and gives clear direction for our future hope...seek God. *ChaplainHouse.gov*

PROVIDENCE: In a desperate attempt to escape when the Revolutionary War was all but lost, George Washington called for an overnight evacuation from Brooklyn to Manhattan. 9,000 troops would have to secretly cross the East River in darkness without making a sound. If it failed, the war was over. Against all odds, the Continental Army moved everyone and everything throughout the night without tipping off the British. Such care was taken that even the oars on their boats were muffled with cloth. The miraculous maneuver worked, until they ran out of nighttime. Daybreak was upon them with many still waiting to cross. It was at that time on August 30, 1776, a heavy fog settled in that completely concealed the army. Even as the sun rose, it did not diminish the dense fog until every man was safely on the shores of Manhattan. George Washington was the last to cross and once he arrived the fog dispersed and they could see the enemy on the opposite shore. Only 3 of the 9,000 men were captured because they stayed back to plunder. Without a single shot being fired, the army was saved to later win the war because of God’s Providence to create a protective curtain of fog. Without that miracle, July 4th would be just another day on the calendar. A humorous social media meme pictures a musician exhorting the congregation to lay aside all distractions to focus on worshipping God while laser lights are darting in all directions and a fog machine is creating floating clouds throughout the room. If there was ever a time to utilize those fog makers...July 4th weekend is it. *1776, David McCullough, 2005, Chapter 5*

SACRIFICE: In a letter to his wife Abigail on April 26, 1777, John Adams shared his concerns about future generations understanding freedom’s price: “You will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom! I hope you will make a good use of it.” Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch, summarized the efforts of our nation’s birth this way: “At the heart of it all were ordinary people willing to do extraordinary things and risk all they had to secure a better life for themselves, their children, and generations to come.” Such sacrifice is befitting for us all. *Heroes of 1776, Neil Gorsuch & Janie Nitze, 2026, Front page & last page*

TRUST: Amidst the uncertainty on September 4, 1774 when the First Continental Congress convened, Thomas Cushing made a motion to begin their business with prayer. Some opposed the measure but Samuel Adams voiced powerful support for the idea and nominated a local Anglican pastor, Jacob Duche, to lead in the prayer. The next day Duche led what has been described as “the most famous prayer of the American Revolution.” John Adams told his wife in a letter that, “It had an excellent effect upon everybody here.” At the core of his 10-minute prayer was a petition to the “Kings of kings and Lord of lords...desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee.” So moved by this experience, Congress continued the practice each day, and they still do. The hope of America, and each of her individual citizens, is singular dependence on God alone. *100 Bible Verses That Made America, Robert Morgan, 2020, p.63*

VISION: As the last few men signed the Constitution, James Madison heard Benjamin Franklin remark about the half-sun painted on George Washington’s famous chair. He noted how it had been difficult throughout their challenging sessions to discern whether that sun was rising or setting. With the ink of those signatures drying, Frankling declared, “But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting Sun.” All Americans must vigilantly practice that which contributes to a rising sun rather than one that is setting. *USHistory.org*

EVERYDAY HUMOR

DISPOSITION: A waitress said one of her customers is so negative that he might as well order his eggs “cloudy-side up.” *Beaumont Enterprise, 6/3/2026, p.B8*

EFFORT: A guy explained what he does when his wife asks him to clean up the garage. He said, “I usually just move piles around so it looks like I tried.” *Mature Living, May 2026, p.47*

FAITH: A frustrated pastor confided to a colleague that he felt like his church members never read anything but the Gospel of Luke-warm. *Preaching, Fall 2022, p.45*

GUDIANCE: Dan was discouraged that his teenage son seldom followed his guidance. Dan’s wife tried to cheer him up by saying, “Just think of yourself as his South Star.” *Editor’s Files*

HELP: The *Family Circus* kids thought they were somehow helping their mom: “We tried to rinse off the ice cubes in hot water and now we can’t find them.” *Houston Chronicle, 5/26/2026, p.A12*

MARRIAGE: Early in his career, comedian Nate Bargatze would say, “I’ve been married 4 years now, and it’s getting pretty serious.” It tends to do that. *Reader’s Digest, January 2013, p.123*

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