First Grade

DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Foundations of Religious Liberty: Understanding Faith, Freedom, and the Constitution

LITTLEPATRIOTS

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Key Themes

- The Legacy of Religious Freedom
- Religious Freedom vs. Religious Uniformity
- What is “Separation of Church and State”?
- Thomas Jefferson’s Role in Religious Liberty



Core Values

- Community
- Life
- Faith
- Liberty

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Explain what "One Nation Under God" means.
- Define religious freedom as the right to follow and practice one's faith without fear or punishment.
- Understand that faith and religious freedom are important parts of America's history and values, helping make the country unique.
- Discuss why it's important that people in the United States can practice their faith freely and how this freedom makes America special.

Key Terms

01 **faith:** belief in someone or something even when it can't be seen.

02 **Founding Fathers:** the leaders who helped create the United States of America.

03 **government:** a system of rules and leaders that help keep people safe and make sure everyone is treated fairly.

04 **honor:** to show great respect for something.

05 **individual freedom:** every person has the right to make their own decisions, choose what to believe, and decide how to worship.

06 **opportunity:** having the chance to do something or achieve something.

07 **religious freedom:** the right, given by God, to practice your faith however you choose.

08 **unity:** coming together as one, despite our differences.

09 **worship:** showing respect and honor to God, often by praying, singing, and attending church or a religious service at a temple or synagogue.

Introduction

TELL Students 📷🔑

Hello, little patriots! Today, we're going to talk about something very important that we say every day: the Pledge of Allegiance. When we recite the Pledge, we stand tall, place our right hand over our hearts, look at the United States Flag, and speak the words together to honor our country. **Honor** means to show deep respect for something or someone. We honor our country because it is a place where we have freedom, safety, and the opportunity to learn and grow. **[Reference Salute Image] Opportunity** means having the chance to do something or achieve something, like learning new things, trying out different activities, and becoming the best version of ourselves. By honoring our country, we show gratitude for all the blessings we have and the people who have worked to make it a special place. Let's recite the Pledge of Allegiance now. [Recite the Pledge of Allegiance with the class.]

ASK Students

Let's talk about some of the words in the Pledge of Allegiance. Have you ever thought about what it means when we say we are "One Nation Under God"?

TELL Students 📷🔑

"One Nation Under God" means that our country is united. **Unity** means coming together as one, despite our differences. People in our country work together, help each other, and care for one another, even though we may look different, speak differently, or believe in different things. When we are united, we are stronger and can achieve more, just like a family or a group of friends who stick together and share the same goal. When we unite as a class to clean up, it is faster and more fun than if one person does it alone. **[Reference Unity Image]**

ASK Students

Why is unity important?

TELL Students

Unity is important because it allows us to work together and support each other in building a better world. When we say "One Nation Under God," it means we believe in and are united by something greater than ourselves—God.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

By standing and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance with our hand on our heart, we are united as Americans, no matter where we come from or what we believe. When we say the Pledge of Allegiance, we also acknowledge that we are united under something bigger than ourselves, under a higher power, or God.

ASK Students

What does it mean to be "One Nation Under God"?

TELL Students 📷🔑

Religious freedom is tied to being "One Nation Under God." **Religious freedom** means that you have the right, given by God, to practice your faith in any way you choose. This could mean praying, going to church, or reading a holy book like the Bible. **[Reference Bible Image] Faith** means a belief in someone or something even when it can't be seen. Religious freedom is important because it allows people to fully express and practice what they believe, without fear. Imagine believing in something and not being able to talk about it. It would be hard not to talk about something that is important to you! Sadly, in some countries today, people are not allowed to talk about their faith. But here in the United States, we have the special freedom to express our beliefs.

ASK Students

What is religious freedom?

TELL Students 📷🔑

This belief that religious freedom is important was shared by the Founding Fathers—the leaders who helped create the United States of America. Some of the most well-known Founding Fathers include George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. **[Reference Washington, Jefferson, Franklin Images]** These men worked together to build a country where people could be free to make their own choices and live the way they wanted. One of the most important things the Founding Fathers believed in was **individual freedom**, which means that every person has the right to make their own decisions, choose what to believe, and decide how to worship.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

Worship means showing respect and honor to God, often by praying, singing, and attending church or a religious service at a temple or synagogue.

ASK Students

Why did the Founding Fathers think it was important for people to make their own decisions and live the way they wanted?

TELL Students

The Founding Fathers wanted everyone to have the right to choose what they believe and practice their faith without anyone telling them what to do. The Founding Fathers wanted to make sure that everyone could choose what they believed and live how they wanted. These freedoms were the first step in creating all the other rights we have today. And, we have a lot of rights as Americans! That's why religious freedom is often called "America's first freedom." It was one of the most important rights the Founding Fathers wanted to protect. It means people have the right to follow their faith and practice it openly, without anyone telling them what to believe. One of the things that makes America so special is how important faith and religious freedom have been from the very beginning. These ideas were so important that even before America became its own country, people were already thinking about the freedom to practice their faith. Let's watch a Star Spangled Adventures cartoon to learn more!

WATCH

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon
Ep. 40: Thomas Jefferson/Religious Liberty

Lesson

TELL Students

Now let's talk about what we saw in the cartoon today. Liberty the Eagle begins by introducing an idea called "Separation between Church and State." This idea is connected to religious liberty, but it is often misunderstood. Let's take a closer look so we can understand it clearly!

ASK Students

What does it mean to separate two things?

TELL Students 📷

That is right! When you separate things, you take them apart. Have you ever argued with your brother or sister? Maybe you were arguing because they were being bossy or unfair, causing so much disagreement that it was hard to get along. If you can't get along, your parents probably separated you from your sibling so that you would stop arguing! Now let's talk about what the word "State" means. When we say "State" in this lesson, we are not talking about Texas or another state on a map. Here, the word "State" means the **government**, the people and leaders who make rules and laws for our country. So, the State includes leaders like the president, governors, judges, and others who help run our country and keep things in order. **[Reference President, Governors, Judges Images]**

ASK Students

What is the phrase we are learning about?

TELL Students

Great job! The phrase we are learning about is "Separation between Church and State." Now that we understand what State means, let's talk about what Church means. When we say Church in this phrase, we are not just talking about a building. Church with a capital "C" includes the people who believe in something and worship together. It includes places where people go to pray, read a holy book like the Bible, sing worship songs, and learn, whether or not they do so in a church building. It includes people of all religions who gather to worship.

ASK Students

What does "Church" mean in this phrase?

Lesson

TELL Students

That is right! In this phrase, "Church" means the people who are worshiping, and it includes all religions. Now let's put our learning together. When we say "Separation between Church and State," we mean that the government (the State) and religion (the Church) each have their own important roles. **[Reference Separation Between Church and State Image]** In our country, the government does not tell people what to believe, and the church does not control the government. They can't tell each other what to do! This is important because it protects our freedom! It means you and your family can worship and live out your faith without the government telling you what you must believe.

ASK Students

Why do you think it is important that people are free to worship in their own way?

TELL Students

That's right! Religious freedom means you are free to worship in a way that is right for your family. Religious freedom is also called freedom of religion. We heard this term in the cartoon quite a bit! When the cartoon starts, we see some men, called "elders," in a church. These men are leaders of the Danbury Baptist Church. One of the men in the cartoon says, "They act like America does not have freedom of religion." Remember, religious freedom, or freedom of religion, means the freedom to have different types of churches that can worship in many ways.

ASK Students

What are the men in the cartoon complaining about?

TELL Students

That is right! They are complaining about a lack of religious freedom. In the cartoon, one of the Danbury Baptist elders says, "It still irks me that every person in the state is required to pay money each year to the Congregationalist Church." The Congregationalist Church is a type of church that worships differently from the Danbury Baptist Church. The people who attended the Danbury Baptist Church wanted to support their church, not a different church.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)
The problem that the Danbury Baptist elders were discussing is that the state of Connecticut was making people give money to one type of church, even if they did not attend or worship there. And, they had to ask permission from the government if they didn't want to pay those taxes.

ASK Students
Did the Danbury Baptist elders think this was fair?

TELL Students 📷
That is right! One of the elders explains that the United States Constitution makes it clear that people should not be forced to follow a religion or pay money to a church. **[Reference United States Constitution Image]** Remember, the Declaration of Independence told the world that we were free from Great Britain, and the United States Constitution is the roadmap that shows us how to stay a free nation. If we want to stay free, we must follow the Constitution. The Constitution explains that freedom of religion is a right that all Americans have. Freedom of religion is a natural right that comes from God, which means no government can take it away. The elders were explaining that the Church should be in charge of the Church and the State should be in charge of the State.

ASK Students
What did the Danbury Baptist elders do to voice their concern?

TELL Students 📷
That is right! They decided to write a letter to the President of the United States at the time, Thomas Jefferson. **[Reference Thomas Jefferson Image]** Remember from our earlier lessons that Thomas Jefferson was a Founding Father and the main author of the Declaration of Independence. In their letter, the Danbury Baptist elders explained that Connecticut needed to follow the Constitution and stop forcing people to support the Congregationalist Church.

ASK Students
Who does President Jefferson discuss the letter with?

Lesson

TELL Students 📷

We see President Jefferson and James Madison, another important Founding Father, talking about the letter from the Danbury Baptist elders. James Madison explains the Constitution's Bill of Rights. **[Reference Bill of Rights Image]** The Bill of Rights is a special part of the Constitution that lists important rules to protect our freedom. One of these freedoms is the freedom we have been learning about today, freedom of (pause for students to say, "religion"). The Bill of Rights makes sure everyone can worship in their own way.

ASK Students

Why is the Bill of Rights important?

TELL Students 📷

We also saw in the cartoon that President Jefferson explained that faith is something between a person and God, not between a person and government. Jefferson responded to the Danbury Baptist elders in a letter. He talked about the "wall" that separates church and state. Remember, this means that the Church is in charge of the Church and the State is in charge of the State. **[Reference Wall of Separation Image]** Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers knew that faith was very important. They also wanted to make sure that America did not create one church that everyone had to attend or support. State-sponsored churches had caused a lot of problems in Europe, and they did not want to repeat those mistakes!

ASK Students

What did President Jefferson mean by a wall separating church and state?

TELL Students

That is right! He meant that the government cannot make people attend or support one church. Remember, the Church is in charge of the Church and the State is in charge of the State. Today, some people get confused by this and believe that it means that faith has no place in public life. But we know that is not what President Jefferson meant. Even our Pledge of Allegiance says that we are "one nation under God," which shows that faith has always been important to Americans and to our Founding Fathers. They wanted people to be free to live out their beliefs, not to hide them.



Money Motto Mystery

Objective

First-grade students will learn about religious freedom and our country's motto, "In God We Trust," by exploring its meaning and significance. Through a fun tracing activity, students will discover how the motto is an important part of our country's history and values.

Materials Needed

- Penny (or a printed image of a penny)
- Paper (preferably white or light-colored)
- Pencils
- Markers or crayons (optional for decorating)
- Printed "In God We Trust" phrase for reference (optional)

Introduction to the Activity

Start by asking the students:

- "Have you ever noticed the words 'In God We Trust' on money?"
- "What do you think those words mean?"

Explain that "In God We Trust" is our country's motto. A motto is a short phrase or saying that represents the values or beliefs of a group or country. In this case, our motto shows that we trust in God and that faith is an important part of who we are as Americans. Discuss how this phrase connects to religious freedom, reminding us that in America, we have the right to practice our faith freely without fear.

Tracing the Penny

- **Step 1:** Give each student a penny (or a printed image of a penny) and a piece of paper.
- **Step 2:** Instruct students to place the penny under their paper. They will use their pencils to carefully trace over the "In God We Trust" phrase on the penny. As they trace, they should focus on the words and think about what they mean.
- **Step 3:** Allow students time to trace over the words with their pencils. Encourage them to take their time and discuss the significance of the motto as they trace.



Discussing the Motto's Meaning

- **Step 1:** After students have finished tracing, ask them:
  - "What do you think it means when we say, 'In God We Trust'?"
  - "Why do you think this is our country's motto?"
- **Step 2:** Discuss how the motto means that as a country, we trust in God and believe that our freedom, including religious freedom, comes from Him. Explain that religious freedom means the right to practice any religion or faith without being told what to believe.

Reflecting and Decorating

- **Step 1:** Let students decorate their traced papers with designs or drawings that represent religious freedom, such as churches, hearts, or symbols of peace and unity.
- **Step 2:** Ask the students to share their artwork and explain how it connects to religious freedom and the motto "In God We Trust."

Wrap-Up

Conclude by reminding students that religious freedom is very important in America, and the motto "In God We Trust" is a reminder that we have the freedom to practice our faith in any way we choose. Explain that this motto reflects our country's values and the importance of trusting in God for strength and guidance.

Optional Extension

"Trust and Freedom" Wall: Create a classroom display where students can add their decorated papers or drawings, celebrating religious freedom and the motto "In God We Trust."



Belief and Blessings: The Freedom Song

Objective

First-grade students will learn about religious freedom through a fun and interactive song. The activity includes hand motions, lyrics, and discussion questions to help students understand the importance of religious freedom in America.

Song: "This Land is for Believing"
(Sung to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

Lyrics:

(Verse 1)
This land is for believing,
In the faith that we hold dear.
We can pray, we can worship,
Freely without any fear.
This land is for believing,
In the faith that we hold dear.

(Verse 2)
People here have the right to choose,
What they believe and never lose.
Everyone should have the chance,
To follow faith in peace and dance.
This land is for believing,
In the faith that we hold dear.

Hand Motions

- **Verse 1:**
  - "This land is for believing" – Hold hands over heart and gently move hands outward, symbolizing freedom.
  - "In the faith that we hold dear" – Point to the sky as if referring to something important or sacred.
  - "We can pray, we can worship" – Place hands together as if praying, then raise arms like you're praising or worshiping.



Belief and Blessings: The Freedom Song

- "Freely without any fear" – Shake head slowly, then open arms wide to show freedom.
- "This land is for believing" – Point to the ground beneath you, symbolizing the land.
- "In the faith that we hold dear" – Place hand over heart.

- **Verse 2:**
  - "People here have the right to choose" – Point to self, then out to the class, indicating choice.
  - "What they believe and never lose" – Cross arms over chest, then open wide, showing nothing is taken away.
  - "Everyone should have the chance" – Point to different students, inviting them to share.
  - "To follow faith in peace and dance" – Pretend to dance with both hands up and moving joyfully.
  - "This land is for believing" – Hold hands together like in prayer again.
  - "In the faith that we hold dear" – Point upward to the sky.

Questions to Ask Students After the Song:

1. **What does "freedom to believe" mean?**
   - (Guide students to understand that it means we can believe in whatever we want and practice our religion freely.)
2. **Why is it important to have the freedom to follow our faith?**
   - (Help them realize that it helps people feel safe, happy, and connected with what they believe.)
3. **How do you feel when you know you can believe in what you choose?**
   - (Allow students to reflect on their own experiences and feelings.)
4. **Can you think of ways people show their faith or beliefs?**
   - (Encourage them to think of examples, like praying, going to church, or helping others.)
5. **Why do you think it's important for everyone to have the freedom to worship?**
   - (Talk about the importance of respecting others' beliefs and creating a peaceful, fair world.)

Wrap-Up

After singing and discussing, let students know that religious freedom is something very special in our country, and it means everyone has the right to follow their faith without being told what they can and cannot believe. Use the song as a reminder of the blessing we have to live in a country where we are free to believe and practice what we choose.

Resources

- https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0057
- https://minio.la.utexas.edu/webeditor-files/coretexts/pdf/163020model20of20christian20charity.pdf
- https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%205%3A13-15&version=KJ21
  https://www.history.com/news/pilgrims-puritans-differences
- https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/church-of-england-in-virginia/
- https://www.history.com/news/religion-13-colonies-america
- https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/gods-mosaic/
- Thomas Jefferson, "Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom," The Jefferson Monticello, https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/virginia-statute-religious-freedom/.
- United States Supreme Court, "Reynolds v. United States (1879)," Library of Congress, https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep098/usrep098145/usrep098145.pdf.
- James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 22 January 1786," National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-08-02-0249.
- Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Margaret Bayard Smith, 6 August 1816," National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-10-02-0186.

Images

Salute



Credit: Canva Pro

United



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Bible



Credit: Canva Pro

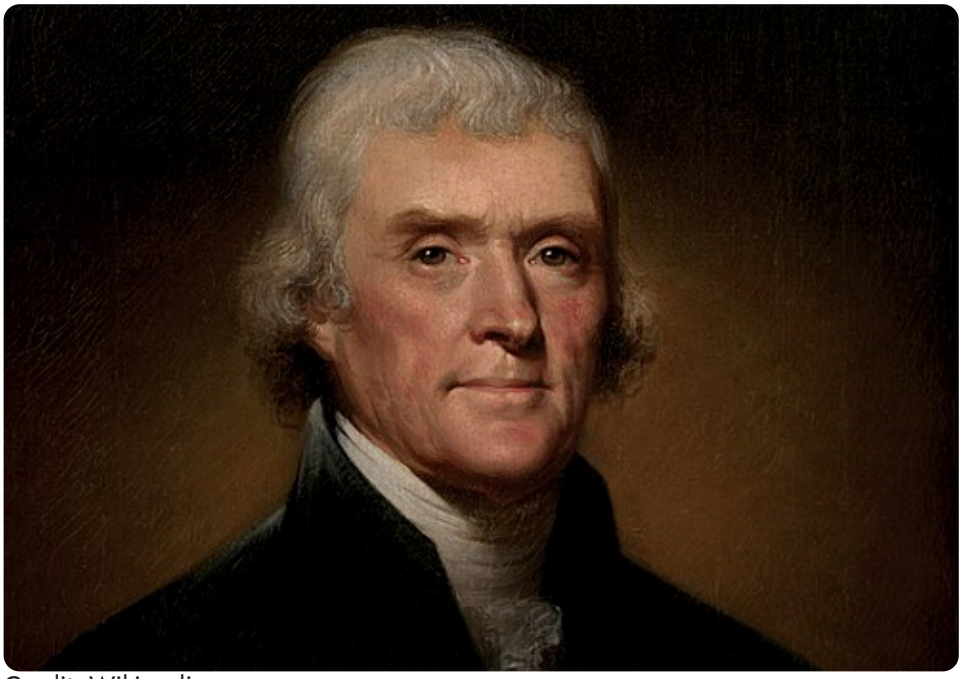
George Washington



Credit: Canva Pro

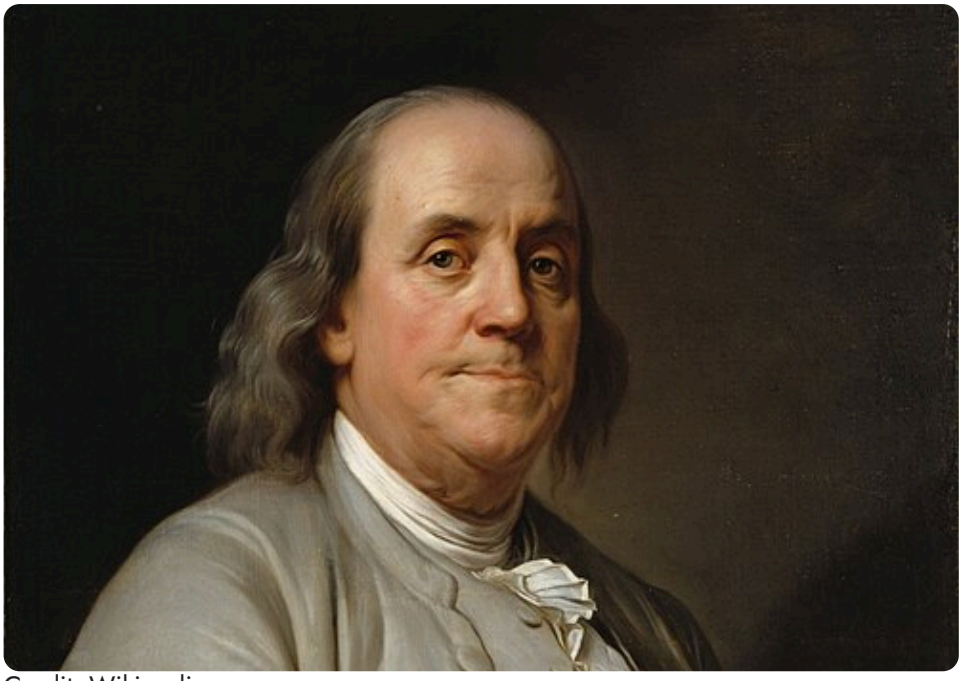
Images

Thomas Jefferson



Credit: Wikipedia

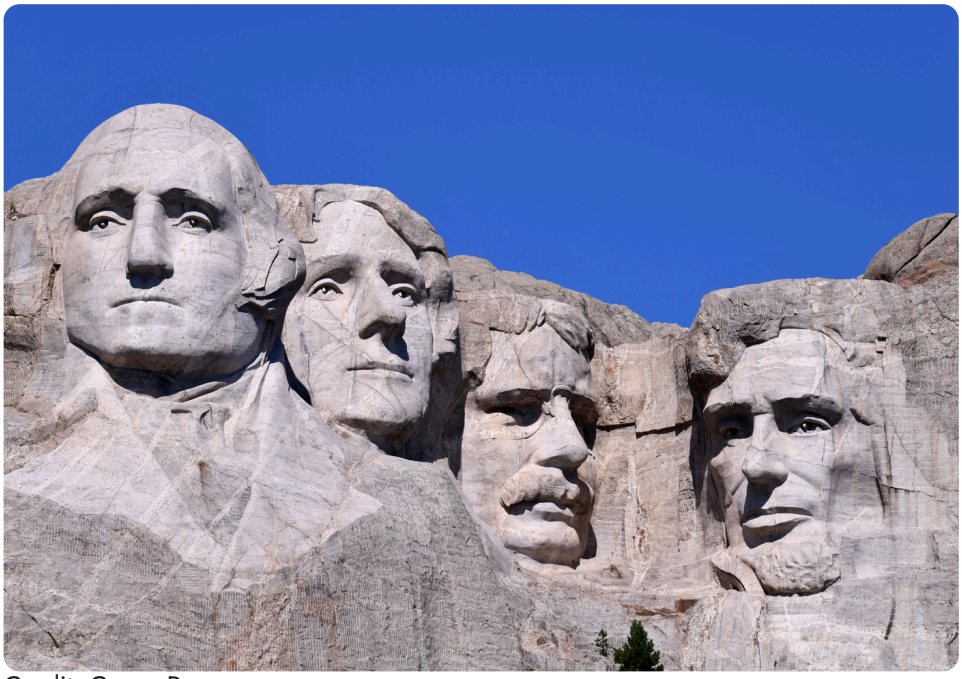
Benjamin Franklin



Credit: Wikipedia

Images

President



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Governor



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Images

Judge



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Separation Between Church and State



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

United States Constitution



Credit: Canva Pro

Bill of Rights



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Wall of Separation



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Notes