

What If We Lived by the National Motto?

Proverbs 3:5-6

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In March, the Tennessee Legislature passed a bill that the U.S. Motto, “In God We Trust,” must be in a prominent location, either as a plaque, artwork or in some other form in all Tennessee public schools.

Governor Haslam said that at the end of the day he’s never thought that having a motto somewhere changes a lot of people’s thoughts, but in April he signed the bill into law. If he wanted to earn the trust of voters, he didn’t have much choice.

Perhaps the motto gives God-believing people some feeling of hope that we still have not strayed completely away from acknowledging God as our Lord. However, mottos are not worth much if they are lived out.

If no one pays attention to a motto, or if no one is being held accountable to live by a motto, then it becomes like a piece of trash that people walk by, ignore, step on, and even discard.

It becomes like a church people ride by every day but never see. It becomes like a Bible people put on a shelf but never read. It becomes like wedding ring people wear but forget the vows it represents.

When is the last time you’ve heard that someone’s behavior about how they use their money was influenced or changed because they were convicted by the motto, “In God We Trust.” That motto is printed on every coin and every piece of currency.

Every day, money passes through our hands without us giving any thought to whether we should save, it, invest it, spend or give it away.

Every time the offering plate is passed, it’s an opportunity for us to decide whether we believe the motto, or whether we have more trust in keeping our tithe in our pockets.

As the years go by, a motto in a school will likely become as forgotten as the motto on our money because no one will mention it.

No one will be allowed to teach about it; no one will be able to expound on its meaning or its purpose. It will just be a motto that students walk by.

But at least they will have to walk by it. At least the students will have a daily reminder that God should be present in their lives.

We can only hope that it will have redeeming value if to remind the students and the teachers that God is supposed to be the one in whom we place our abiding trust.

What if we lived out this motto. What if Americans lived by the motto, "In God we trust?" How would our lives be different?

Better yet, what if we lived out the proverb,

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Since the motto is stamped on our coins and printed on our money, let's start there.

1.) It would change how we view our relationship with money.

Most people like making money, otherwise we'd work for free. We need money to pay our bills and provide for our families. After that, we like to have some left over.

If we trust God with our money, it keeps our money in perspective. We remember that the money we have is what God has given us to manage. So is our time, our possessions, and talents.

If we trust God with all our heart, we must settle the ownership question. We would realize that the money or the possessions we have are not ours. It all belongs to God. We are just God's managers.

We are here for a short time to manage just a small portion of God's rich bounty.

Should we become possessive and greedy, and start believing that it belongs to us for the short term or for eternity, we've allowed our money or possessions to become an idol.

Anything we trust more than God is an idol.

So, are you trust God or your money?

All you have to do is look at your checkbook. Look at your bank statement. If you are not building God into your budget, then I assure you, God gets leftovers, and you've not learned to trust God with your money. You are not obedient with what God has given you to manage.

It is impossible to trust God and at the same time hold on to all of our money, possessions, time, gifts, and talents the way a hungry monkey clutches a piece of fruit.

Instead, God has instructed us to be generous with what we have. Generosity begins with a tenth. Until we become being tithers, we have not gotten to the point of trusting God with our money.

Trusting God with our money begins with a tithe. Until we reach giving a tithe, we may be giving some of our money away, but we are not trusting God. We've not yet become the stewards God has asked us to be.

The prophet Malachi said:

“Begin by being honest. Do honest people rob God? But you rob me day after day.

“You ask, ‘How have we robbed you?’

“The tithe and the offering—that’s how! And now you’re under a curse—the whole lot of you—because you’re robbing me. Bring your full tithe to the Temple treasury so there will be ample provisions in my Temple. Test me in this and see if I don’t open up heaven itself to you and pour out blessings beyond your wildest dreams.” Malachi 3:8-10

It's impossible to tithe if you carry large debt or if you do not learn to budget. If you pay 23% for credit card debt or if you don't budget and build God into your budget, you will never learn to tithe. God gets the leftovers. You look into your wallet, and you say, "Well, I've got \$10 left," and it's difficult to let go of that.

Look at your money. It says, "In God We Trust." If you believe the motto, trust God with your God with your money.

2) If we lived by the motto, “In God We Trust,” it would change how much we worry.

How many of you burn needless energy worrying about things that you cannot control? When you start thinking about life, just how many things can you control? Outside of your thoughts and actions, there are not many things in our control.

Many of us like to think we can control our children – nope.

We like to think we can control our spouse – nope.

We want to believe we can control things at work – nope.

Oh sure, what we do affects all these things, but we are mistaken if we think we can control them.

When we start trying to control all of these people, what we do is create for ourselves a big mess and a big mess of worry. Then with our prayers, we try to control God. We say prayers that instruct God what He ought to do to fix the mess we are in.

God doesn't play that game. Instead, God wants us to learn to trust Him and lean not on our understanding.

Jesus said, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can anyone of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” (Matthew 6:25-27)

You need to trust God when you feel out of control.

You need to trust God when you don't have the answers to your problems.

You need to trust God when you have doubts.

You need to trust God when you are tempted, and God shows you a way out of your temptation.

You need to trust God when you lack faith.

Trusting God is about finding peace in the storm.

3) If we learned to trust God, it would matter less what others thought about us and more about what God thinks about us.

How many of you used to get smiley faces on a chart when you were a child? If you got enough smiley faces, then your parent or your teacher would give you a prize.

Ever since we were children, we've been trying to please someone. Children want to please their parents. Employees want to please their employers. Students want to please their teachers. Politicians want to please the voters and the special interest groups. Businesses want to please their consumers. Players want to please their coaches and their fans.

We all know how we feel when we haven't measured up in someone's eyes. We feel like a failure. We lose self-esteem.

We all want to hear someone say, “You did good work. I'm pleased with what you've done. Good work.”

We all want to receive a blessing from someone.

One of the things that we learn about this world is that it is cruel. This is a place where bullies live, and violence occurs. It is a place where reputations are ruined and where people are violated and become afraid to tell about it.

Times haven't changed much since the Old Testament days when twins, Jacob and Esau had such a difficult time getting along.

Esau learned that his brother was so sneaky that he was willing to steal both his blessing and his birthright and he even had his mother's help in doing it.

Jacob received his father's blessing, but Esau never did, and it destroyed their family.

Receiving affirmation and a blessing from others will always be important to us, but if we learn to trust in God, the affirmation and blessing that makes our life change is the one that comes from God through his son Jesus, not from another person.

The day we realize that God loves us and that the grace of God covers all of our shortcomings, that is a wonderful day that is the most blessed day of all.

We could be blessed by parents, coaches, teachers, professors, employers, and even strangers but unless we are blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, all the other blessings combined will not be enough to rescue us from the pit of destruction that will come to us.

When we come to God, like the prodigal son who returned to his Father, realizing that he needed his Father's love and blessing but did not deserve it, we discover full acceptance and love.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he said, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for the Kingdom of God belongs to you" (Luke 6:20).

If you want to be blessed, if you want to be affirmed by God, you must come to God this way, acknowledging that you don't know the way, that you don't have the answers to life's problems, that you are not self-sufficient, and that you don't measure up to God's standards.

We are poor in Spirit. We have a spiritual deficiency that can only be filled by the Spirit of God.

When we begin there, Jesus says there is hope for us because this becomes the foundation for trusting God and not ourselves. Otherwise, we are going to rely on our own understanding.

It's a good day when we realize that we don't have the answers. It's a better day when we learn to rely on and trust in the One who does have the answers, in the One who does know the way, in the One who is sufficient, and in the One who gives us grace in spite of our deficiencies.

4) If we trust in God, we learn to pray, "Thy will be done." In addition to the cross, the yield sign becomes one of the most important signs in our lives.

When Jesus prayed these words in the Garden of Gethsemane, he showed us the real meaning of trust.

Jesus fell back into the arms of God and allowed himself to walk through the valley of death. He trusted God to bring him through death and because of that trust, death was conquered.

Had Jesus not trusted God in this part of his life, and had God not delivered Jesus from the finality of death, we would have no reason to trust God with our lives now or for eternity.

The resurrection of Jesus gives us a reason to trust God. We can trust God with all our hearts because we trust God with our eternity.

If you cannot trust God with your eternity, then you have no reason to trust God with your day, your marriage, your work, your finances, or your future.

If you can trust God with your day, your marriage, your work, your finances, your future, then you can trust God with your eternity.

This morning are you submitting to the Lord in all your ways?

If you've got some crooked paths in your life, then you might need to think about your answer because God promised that if you'd submit to Him in all your ways, He'd make all your paths straight.

When we yield to God, we are doing more than saying, "I trust God." When we yield to God, we are showing that we trust God.

If I have on a parachute and I'm in a plane, I have to jump to show that I trust my parachute and those that packed it. Otherwise, I'm just taking up space in the plane. I'm just pretended to be a skydiver.

As a Christian, when I say, "Thy will be done," I must be willing to be like Jesus who placed himself in a position of servitude.

Do you want Jesus' will to be done in your life? If so, "In God We Trust," must be more than a motto. It must be more than a phrase that's written on our money. It must be a commitment that's written on our hearts.

If you don't remember anything about this message today, remember this. To trust you have to learn to let go, to turn loose, just like that skydiver has to let go and jump out of that plane.

That's why we must let go of some of our money and give it to God. It's a matter of trust.

That's why we must let go of our worry and give it to God. It's a matter of trust.

That's why we let go of what others think of us and claim what God thinks instead.

That's why we let go of our own understanding and instead pray, "Thy will be done." It's a matter of trust.

So, to fulfill the National Motto, "In God We Trust," God is asking us all this morning,

"What do you need to let go of today to trust God fully with your life?"

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