

# “In God We Trust”

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*January 31, 2010*

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Matthew 7:7-12*

I'm sure you've heard this phrase: "In God we trust, all others pay cash." Well maybe just the first part.

"In God we Trust." As Americans this phrase, I venture, is first thought of, as our national motto. And with this, flows a plethora of pre-understandings – about the God of the Western tradition, and our religious national heritage. "In God we Trust" is on our currency, placed there in the mid 1950's as a Cold War measure. "In these days when imperialist and materialistic Communism seeks to attack and destroy freedom, it is proper to remind all of us of this self-evident truth that as long as this country trusts in God, it will prevail," declared Rep. Bennett.

But did you know "In God we Trust" first appeared on a coin in 1864 during the Civil War. (Parenthetically our nation's political, social and cultural heritage is replete with religious – Christian allusions, verbiage and pronouncements especially up to the 1970's. A fact to know and appreciate, not to ignore, denigrate, or deny.)

"In God we Trust" – let's step beyond the national currency identity, and consider the magnitude of your actual believing in such a tremendous and powerful phrase.

"In God we Trust"!

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But really, trust – is it possible? Should I try it? I don't know – it's a bit dicey – this trust business.

Linda and Tom had been best friends for several years. They worked together at the same Wall Street accounting firm, since graduate school. Linda recalled, "He was like a brother to me. We shared everything. Whenever he had a problem in the office, I'd put aside my workload to help him figure it out."

Linda was being wooed by one of the city's top firms. She, as usual, went to Tom to discuss this with him; the pros and cons, of making such a big move.

Linda share, "Tom listened to me for hours. He didn't discourage me outright from accepting the offer, but he didn't hesitate to point out all the reasons why I'd be happier personally, and better off professionally, if I stayed where I was."

A month later, when Linda returned from a long weekend away with her husband, her boss announced to the department that Tom has resigned. He had been offered another job, the very position Tom had discouraged Linda from accepting.

Linda was outraged and hurt! She felt betrayed. She had trusted Tom. They were such good friends, or so she had thought. She asked herself, “Why does this always happen to me? Why didn’t I see what kind of person he was?”

Wives, husbands, lovers, children, brothers, sisters, relatives, co-workers, professionals, politicians, and the list goes on and on and on; have betrayed and been betrayed. Trust has been dashed to pieces!

Yet each and every one of us relies on and thrives on trust. It is so woven into our public and private lives, often we just take it for granted, unless our trust has been betrayed.

My guess is, every one of you has experienced a time, or times when trust has been shaken or destroyed.

Someone you trusted proved untrustworthy. This is often devastating. We are thrown into a quagmire of hurt, anger and confusion. We desperately wonder and fear that we will never be able to trust again.

For some, it will take a lone time before any trust can once again be offered. Trust is extremely fragile! Trust is a major building block for all relationships, public and private.

How sad, if someone has given up on trust. Tragic is perhaps a more appropriate description. For not to trust, eclipses the possibilities of entering into shared human and divine relationships. Scars and all, we must not give up on trust. It is akin to the air we breathe. Without trust, social life is basically impossible. All of our daily activities reflect multiple levels of trust. Walking down the street. Driving your car (trusting the steering will work, the brakes will engage, the exhaust will stay outside, etc.). Depositing your payroll check in the Bank. Buying a starbuck’s coffee at Barnes and Noble, trusting hygienic standards.

Trust. Trust. Trust. It is difficult to imagine the anarchy that would ensue if all or a significant amount of trust was depleted.

The terrorism of 9/11, and continued threats, impact on our individual and shared sense of trust. In fact, is it safe to walk down the street? Can I (we) trust our government, society to protect us? What level of trust is acceptable before something breaks?

Since the 1960’s – “those turbulent times” Americans have expressed declining confidence in government, business, civic institutions, religious establishments and one another. Certainly, blind trust is not a positive option either. Whereas trust is fundamental for our lives, so is a healthy sense of skepticism; both public and private. But, we need high levels of trust for our health as a society and as individuals.

We must not take the subject of trust lightly! Not only does your personal well being depend on a certain level of trust, but our very society is dependent on trust.

You need a healthy dose of trust in your life. If you have been consistently betrayed, over and over and over again, do not throw out trust, but perhaps it would be beneficial to talk to someone – a therapist, psychologist, a councilor, your minister – to map out a way to trust again, but carefully, and not blindly. There are certain people in my life that I trust, my wife Shawn, my children, my mother, and others.

Jesus declares that we need to trust – to trust in God (foundational for all trust)! Jesus knows that we humans need to trust. He also knows that we need to be trustworthy. It is indeed a two way street.

Jesus looks out over the people gathered around him. He sees some friends, acquaintances, members of his community, and many strangers. He knows there are fathers among them. There’s Amos. He has nine

children, and a lovely wife Sara. Over there, near that large olive tree is Isaac and Mary. They have only one child. She is the sum of their lives. Jesus recalls how Mary and Joseph raised him. They didn't have much money. But Joe always provided. Food, meager as it was, was always on the table. I imagine Jesus thinking lovingly of his deceased earthly Father Joseph, as he continues (a tear on his cheek)... Jesus explains about trust – trust in God. He wants us to declare “In God we Trust”! He shares; “Dads, is there anyone of you who, when your son asks for some bread, you would give him a stone instead? If your son asks for a fish, would you give him a snake? There was a striking resemblance between the flat cakes of bread and the Palestinian stones, and between eel-like fish and snakes. Would you treat your son this way? Would you betray his trust? And of course, the implied answer is No! Never!

Certainly – human fathers and mothers can be trusted. Their sons and daughters learn (hopefully) to trust their parents. If you can trust your “not perfect” parents then by all means you can trust your Heavenly Parent.

Trust is primal! Jesus is trying to convince his listeners to trust in God! In God's ways. This way of life. What became known as the Christian life! He wants them/us to resolutely declare “In God we Trust!” It will make all the difference in your life and the life of your family and community!

Now if you are having trouble believing in a trustworthy God, perhaps you need to look back to your childhood, and begin to unpack the mistrust that has been accumulating all these years.

To trust in God, is to trust in life!

To trust in God is to see that trust is available through other human beings.

Tragically some fathers, and mothers, perversely feed their children's souls stones and snakes, and these children grow into adults filled with mistrust and fear. Their image of God is untrustworthy. All of life is permeated with this mistrust. But this is not God! Thank God that paradigm is not the norm! We imperfect fathers and mothers know what our children need, and we supply their needs, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

If you were given a stone or a snake, sometime in your life by someone you should have been able to trust, and have been barely surviving on such small doses of trust - begin a new journey – toward trust. Begin today the journey of discovery.

Consider there are those fathers, mothers, who have been trustworthy. They indeed exist. Consider - if they can be trusted, why not the God of the universe? Why not life!?

## **Trust.**

Trust in the God, who is **Trustworthy.**

A way of life!

Say it within your heart! “In God I trust!”

Life will begin to open up before your eyes as you take the chance, reach out your hands for sustenance, and find your arms not full of stones or snakes, but full of Love and Hope!

No more stones. No more snakes. Only trust!

“In God we Trust!” What a glorious way to live!!

Listen to those ancient enduring words from Proverbs (worthy of memorizing)

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
and lean not to your own understanding  
In all your ways acknowledge him  
And He will direct your paths.”

In God We Trust!

Amen.