

“In God We Trust”

Introduction

- I. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Pro. 14:34).
 - A. On November 19, 1863 President Abraham Lincoln stood before 15,000 people to dedicate the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
 - B. In his “Gettysburg Address” Lincoln said: “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.”
 - C. Today we are still “testing whether this nation can long endure.”
- II. When our Founding Fathers talked about religion and politics they borrowed their language from the Jewish Old Testament.
 - A. People today often claim our Founding Fathers were simply Deists.
 - B. But they talked about God in terms that are radically Jewish: Creator, Judge, and Providence.
 - C. For the most part, these are not names that could have come from the Greeks or Romans, but only from the Old Testament.
 - D. All of the Founding Fathers—Thomas Jefferson included—shared in common a belief that a people cannot maintain liberty without religion.
 - E. They understood the power of religion to their cause and worried that in the eyes of God they would be found wanting.
 - F. “I sometimes tremble to think that although we are engaged in the best cause that ever employed the human heart, yet the prospect of success is doubtful, not for want of power or of wisdom but of virtue.” (John Adams, 1776).
 - G. The founding generation of our country had no munitions factory on this side of the Atlantic, and yet they were facing the most powerful army and the largest navy in the entire world.
 - H. Because our young nation couldn’t compete in armed power, the colonists depended on high moral qualities in their leaders and on devotion in the people.
 - I. In order to win, George Washington had to avoid frontal combat and rely on the moral endurance of his countrymen year after year.
 - J. General Washington issued an order that any soldier who used profane language would be drummed out of the army—he impressed upon his men that they were fighting for a cause that demanded a special moral appeal.
- III. In September 1774, members of the First Continental Congress were riding hastily toward Philadelphia, where they hoped to remind King George III of the rights due to them as Englishmen.
 - A. As these delegates were gathering, news arrived that the king’s troops were shelling Charlestown and Boston.
 - B. As they gathered, the delegates were confronted with impending war.
 - C. No wonder the first act of the Continental Congress on September 7, 1774 was an official prayer by an Episcopalian minister.

- D. He read a Jewish prayer, Psalm 35 in *The Book of Common Prayer*: “Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me. Fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of buckler and shield, and rise up for my help. Say to my soul, ‘I am your salvation.’ Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life. Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me.”
- IV. Later, when Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence he mentioned God twice.
- A. But, before Congress would sign it, members insisted on two more references to God.
- B. Thus, these four names appear in that great document:
1. The *Author* “of nature and nature’s laws.”
 2. The *Creator* who endowed in us our rights.
 3. The *Judge* to whom we appeal in witness that our motives spring not out of seditiousness, but from a dear love of liberty.
 4. And *Providence*, a trust in Divine Providence.
- C. The members of Congress on July 2, 1776 were about to make themselves liable to the charge of treason against the Crown.
1. They appealed to an objective world, and beyond the eyes of men they appealed to the Supreme *Judge* for the goodness of their intentions.
 2. They needed that reference to their *Judge* in the Declaration.
 3. And they wanted that reference to *Providence*, to declare that God is on the side of Liberty, and that those who trust in liberty will therefore prevail.
- V. Less than a century after our nation was founded we were engaged in a “great civil war.”
- A. In 1861 Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase received a letter from a minister by the name of M. R. Watkinson.
- “Dear Sir: You are about to submit your annual report to the Congress respecting the affairs of the national finances.
- “One fact touching our currency has hitherto been seriously overlooked. I mean the recognition of the Almighty God in some form on our coins.
- “You are probably a Christian. What if our Republic were not shattered beyond reconstruction? Would not the antiquaries of succeeding centuries rightly reason from our past that we were a heathen nation? What I propose is that instead of the goddess of liberty we shall have next inside the 13 stars a ring inscribed with the words *perpetual union*; within the ring the all-seeing eye, crowned with a halo; beneath this eye the American flag, bearing in its field stars equal to the number of the States united; in the folds of the bars the words *God, Liberty, Law*.
- “This would make a beautiful coin, to which no possible citizen could object. This would relieve us from the ignominy of heathenism. This would place us openly under the Divine protection we have personally claimed. From my hearth I have felt our national shame in disowning God as not the least of our present national disasters.”

- B. Seven days after the receiving Watkinson’s letter, Secretary Chase wrote to James Pollock, Director of the Mint at Philadelphia and instructed him to prepare a motto, declaring, “No nation can be strong except in the strength of God, or safe except in His defense. The trust of our people in God should be declared on our national coins...”
 - C. “In God We Trust” first appeared on the 1864 two-cent coin.
 - D. Nearly a century later, on June 14, 1954, Congress unanimously ordered the inclusion of the words “Under God” into the nation’s Pledge of Allegiance.
 - E. A law passed by the 84th Congress and approved by the President of the United States on July 30, 1956, President Eisenhower approved a Joint Resolution of the 84th Congress, declaring “In God We Trust” to be the national motto of the United States.
- VI. We have come a long way in our nation!
- A. Omar Bradley (1893–1981) was one of the most popular generals of WWII.
 1. He commanded the Second Army Corps in North Africa and was given command of the US ground forces for the invasion of France.
 2. In an address he made on Armistice Day in 1948, General Bradley said: “We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount... The world has achieved brilliance without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants.”
 - B. The ACLU and atheistic groups are trying their best to remove “God” from every vestige of our national life.
 1. They want His name taken off of our coins and currency.
 2. They want His name taken out of the Pledge of Allegiance.
 3. They want to rewrite the history books to remove any reference to the Almighty in the writings of our Founding Fathers.
 - C. Lawsuits have been filed to prevent local schools from displaying copies of the Declaration of Independence, the Mayflower Compact and the Pledge of Allegiance—claiming that those documents are “unconstitutional” because they mention the name of God!
 - D. In 1992 the Kentucky Legislature had to pass a bill to allow schools to post these documents in their classrooms—including the Preamble to the Kentucky Constitution!
- VII. It seems as though everywhere you look people are trying to remove God from the daily life of American citizens.
- A. This lesson will contain numerous quotations from our Founding Fathers.
 - B. I am not quoting these men out of mere reverence for them—I want you to listen to how these men spoke of God, His Word and His Son.

Discussion

I. We Have Removed God From Marriage

- A. We have seen numerous attempts to legalize “gay marriage.”
 1. Voters in state after state have voted to ban gay marriage, but liberal judges often overturn the will of the people.
 2. Recently the U.S. Senate was presented with over 2,000,000 petitions of support for the Marriage Protection Amendment—but despite overwhelming public support for the Constitutional amendment, liberals in the Senate filibustered and would not allow a vote on the amendment.

- B. The majority of Americans realize that marriage is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman.
 1. Many oppose “gay marriage” because they realize that God condemns homosexual activity (Rom. 1:26–27).
 2. If you were to ask most of these same people why “gay marriage” is wrong, they would probably be able to quote our Lord (Matt. 19:4–5).
 3. Sadly, these same people are willing to ignore the rest of what Jesus said about the marriage covenant (Matt. 19:7–9).
- C. We need to reaffirm that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16).
 1. The marriage covenant is so binding that God has only allowed one reason for an individual to put away their spouse and marry another, i.e., sexual immorality.
 2. I often get calls from someone who is about to get married and they are looking for someone to perform the ceremony.
 3. I make it clear that I do not perform “civil ceremonies”—I preach!

II. We Have Removed God From Public Schools

- A. Many of you saw the news a few weeks ago when a young woman, Brittney McComb, had her microphone turned off as she was giving the valedictorian speech at Foothill High School in Las Vegas.
 1. Her problem was that she attributed her success to God.
 2. Her “crime” was that she used a phrase that the Board of Education just could not stand—she said; “God’s love is so great.”
- B. Do you realize that when this nation was founded the Bible was the primary textbook used in all public schools?
 1. Most people today would argue that teaching the Bible in school would be a violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution.
 2. Fisher Ames was one of our Founding Fathers and he offered the final wording for the House version of the First Amendment.
 3. Interestingly, Fisher Ames wrote an article where he expressed concern that the Bible might become under-emphasized as the primary textbook in public schools.
 4. He deduced that as more and more books were introduced into classrooms, there would be less time to study the Bible.
 5. He warned that the Bible must never be pushed to the back of American classrooms, urging: “Why then, if these [new] books for children must be retained—as they will be—should not the Bible regain the place it once held as a school book?”
 6. He concluded his article by stressing that the fact that the Bible was the source of sound morals in America was a further reason that it must never be separated from the classroom.
- C. William Holmes McGuffey (1800–1873) was considered to be the “schoolmaster of the Nation.”
 1. In 1836 he published the first edition of *McGuffey’s Reader*.
 2. This book was the mainstay in public education in America till 1920.
 3. Over 150 million copies have been sold—it is one of the most widely used and influential textbooks of all time.
 4. Millions of American children learned to read and write from the reader.

5. In the forward of the book, McGuffey wrote: "The Christian religion is the religion of our country. From it we are derived our prevalent notions of the character of God, the great moral governor of the universe. On its doctrines are founded the peculiarities of our free institutions."
 6. In his 1837 *Eclectic Third Reader*, he wrote: "The design of the Bible is evidently to give us correct information concerning the creation of all things, by the omnipotent Word of God; to make known to us the state of holiness and happiness of our first parents in paradise, and their dreadful fall from that condition by transgression against God, which is the original cause of all our sin and misery ... The Scriptures are especially designed to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus; to reveal to us the mercy of the Lord in him; to form our minds after the likeness of God our Saviour; to build up our souls in wisdom and faith, in love and holiness; to make us thoroughly furnished unto good works..."
- D. I am not recommending that schoolteachers today conduct Bible classes.
1. However, neither am I suggesting that God be removed from discussions on moral and ethical questions.
 2. The Bible does answer the great questions of life:
 - a) Why am I here on earth? (Eccl. 12:13–14; Micah 6:8).
 - b) Where did I come from? (Gen. 1:1).
 - c) Where am I going? (Heb. 9:27).
- E. In the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, school days customarily opened with an oral prayer.
1. Citing "separation of church and state" in the First Amendment and applied to the states via the Fourteenth Amendment, opponents of the practice were successful in getting school prayer abolished.
 2. Staff-sanctioned prayer in public schools was effectively outlawed by two landmark Supreme Court decisions: *Engel v. Vitale* [1962] and *Abington Township v. Schempp* [1963].
- F. On June 27, 1962 Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia delivered a powerful and moving message in Congress just two days after the Supreme Court declared prayer in schools to be unconstitutional.
- "Inasmuch as our greatest leaders have shown no doubt about God's proper place in the American birthright, can we, in our day, dare do less?...
- "In no other place in the United States are there so many, and such varied official evidences of deep and abiding faith in God on the part of Government as there are in Washington...
- Every session of the House and the Senate begins with prayer. Each house has its own chaplain.
- The Eighty-third Congress set aside a small room in the Capitol, just off the rotunda, for the private prayer and meditation of members of Congress. The room is always open when Congress is in session, but it is not open to the public. The room's focal point is a stained glass window showing George Washington kneeling in prayer. Behind him is etched these words from Psalm 16:1: "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust."

Inside the rotunda is a picture of the Pilgrims about to embark from Holland on the sister ship of the *Mayflower*, the *Speedwell*. The ship's revered chaplain, Brewster, who later joined the *Mayflower*, has open on his lap the Bible. Very clear are the words, "the New Testament according to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." On the sail is the motto of the Pilgrims, "In God We Trust, God With Us."

The phrase, "In God We Trust," appears opposite the President of the Senate, who is the Vice-President of the United States. The same phrase, in large words inscribed in the marble, backdrops the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Above the head of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court are the Ten Commandments, with the great American eagle protecting them. Moses is included among the great lawgivers in Herman A McNeil's marble sculpture group on the east front. The crier who opens each session closes with the words, "God save the United States and this Honorable Court."

Engraved on the metal on the top of the Washington Monument are the words: "Praise be to God." Lining the walls of the stairwell are such Biblical phrases as "Search the Scriptures," "Holiness to the Lord," "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Numerous quotations from Scripture can be found within its [the Library of Congress] walls. One reminds each American of his responsibility to his Maker: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

Another in the lawmaker's library preserves the Psalmist's acknowledgment that all nature reflects the order and beauty of the Creator, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). And still another reference: "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" (John 1:5).

Millions have stood in the Lincoln Memorial and gazed up at the statue of the great Abraham Lincoln. The sculptor who chiseled the features of Lincoln in granite all but seems to make Lincoln speak his own words inscribed into the walls.

"...That this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

At the opposite end, on the north wall, his Second Inaugural Address alludes to "God," the "Bible," "providence," "the Almighty," and "divine attributes."

He then continues:

As was said 3000 years ago, so it still must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

On the south banks of Washington's Tidal Basin, Thomas Jefferson still speaks:

"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."

[These words of Jefferson are] a forceful and explicit warning that to remove God from this country will destroy it."

III. We Have Removed God From Our Worship

- A. This might seem like a strange statement to some, but please give me a moment to explain.
- B. From the time of Cain and Abel we find examples of men and women bowing before their Creator in worship.
 - 1. Abraham when he was ready to offer his son (Gen. 22:5).
 - 2. The children of Israel (Exo. 4:31).
 - 3. David worshiped after the death of his son (2 Sam. 12:20).
 - 4. In the days of Ezra after release from captivity (Neh. 8:6).
- C. We also read of those who worshiped false Gods.
 - 1. Aaron made a golden calf (Psa. 106:19).
 - 2. Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1–3).
 - 3. Amon (2 Kings 21:20–22).
 - 4. The Lord's decree against the cities of Judah (Jer. 1:16).
- D. It seems strange to some today, but God is not obligated to accept your worship (Matt. 15:7–9).
- E. God alone can prescribe *how* He is to be worshiped (John 4:24).
- F. Most people today no longer have the concept that God is to be the object of our worship—people today are more prone to worship themselves.
 - 1. When people today are "looking for a church," what do they look for?
 - 2. They are looking for a church that makes *them* happy—not God.
 - 3. Evidenced by their singing, choices of men for gospel meetings, how the building is designed.

Conclusion

- I. "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:13–14).
- II. Let us all pray and then put our prayers into action by seeking to restore a sense of righteousness in this nation.

For Further Study...

The source material for this lesson was derived from many sources, including:

America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations, by William J. Federer

The Ten Commandments & Their Influence on American Law, by William Federer

The Foundations of American Government, by David Barton

US Treasury Fact Sheet on the History of "In God We Trust"

<<http://www.ustreas.gov/education/fact-sheets/currency/in-god-we-trust.shtml>>

"In God We Trust", an article by Michael Novak

<<http://www.hooverdigest.org/002/novak.html>>