

In (no) God We Trust?

Joe Slater

Last month the Metroplex Atheists organization put up banners in several downtown Ft. Worth locations saying, "IN NO GOD WE TRUST." Of course it was an "in-your-face" to believers and, predictably, a public outcry ensued (which is exactly what the atheists wanted). Apoplectic citizens inundated city officials with calls asking why the banners were permitted. At least one less-than-intelligent individual defaced several banners and then posted his vandalism on Facebook – again, exactly what the atheists wanted.

The Mayor and other city officials correctly explained that, although they did not agree with what the banners said, the atheists' right to freedom of speech is constitutionally protected. I would put it this way: from a legal perspective, Metroplex Atheists' freedom to make fools of themselves (Psalm 14:1) is my freedom to proclaim God's wisdom. Civil government should restrict neither. Yes, the banners were "offensive," but we are not guaranteed the right not to be offended! This point ought to be made to secular progressives who incessantly whine about being offended by whatever triggers their allergies this week; but it applies equally to believers who want Big Brother to shield them from challenges to their faith.

Of far greater concern to me is the sad fact that the motto "In God We Trust" simply isn't true for most Americans, including far too many church folk. Our conduct betrays our lack of trust; in most cases, God is merely an emergency first-aid kit we use when we crash. If we really and truly trust in God, we had better busy ourselves demonstrating that trust in far more significant ways than having it stamped onto our coins or lining the streets with banners.

Me First!

"Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also love you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:1, 2 ASV).

"Me, me, me!" my one-year-old grandson protested as he tried to push his three-year-old sister off my lap. He is still a baby, and already two of his four words are "me" and "mine."

We learn very early to stand up for and protect what is ours and what we want. People seem to have a built-in selfish streak. They put themselves before all others. They want to be the best, to have the best, and to be first in line to have anything good. They believe they deserve to have the best.

The disciples of Jesus were no exception. James and John asked Jesus, *"Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory"* (Mark 10:37). Over and over Jesus tried to show them that they should love their neighbor as they loved themselves. The Master and Teacher even washed their feet.

Jesus is God. He gave up His glory in heaven to come to this poor world and save us. When we think of who Jesus is and how He left it all to die for our sins, we cannot help but be humbled. He didn't just wash our feet, but His blood washes and cleanses our souls. Because of Jesus, we have the best, but not because we deserve it.

Christians must give up their pride and arrogance and wanting to elevate themselves. May we imitate our Lord and walk in love, putting others before ourselves and serving them. Let us become His humble ambassadors.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)

THE "VENTING" MYTH

It is common knowledge that "venting" is good for us. "Go ahead," people say, "get it off your chest."

That "common knowledge" is a myth, an urban legend, an old-wives tale. Research on the subject tends to indicate the opposite. The more we talk about our frustrations, the more we reinforce them.

I knew that. I had read some of the research. But I made the mistake none-the-less. I have kept a diary for several years. Without realizing it, I began to use my diary as a form of venting. I recorded the negative, the insults, the failures, the times when I did not feel well. In fact, it seems that if I had a good day, I did not record it. Only the disasters were counted worthy of being recorded.

The result, according to the venting myth, should have been that I would have gotten these things off my mind. The reality was that I was reinforcing the negative emotions. I felt worse and worse. Finally, I realized that the diary was part of the problem, so I gave up keeping one.

Then someone suggested to me that I restart the diary, but this time I should record only success. I was urged to write down two or three things that went well, even at the end of a day when many things went wrong.

It was not easy to do this. At first it seemed dishonest; but I kept trying. I realized that it is no more dishonest to record the good and overlook the bad than it had been to record the bad while overlooking the good. Slowly it began to make a difference. Just as venting the negative had reinforced the negative, recording the positive began to reinforce the positive.

The research indicates the value of thinking on the good rather than the bad. My own experience has now confirmed it. But I should have known it all along, for it is the teaching of scripture.

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8, ESV).

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)