

**Phrases & Vocabulary:** \*\*sth = something; sb = somebody.

motto = a short phrase that expresses the aims or beliefs of a person, school, or institution

anthem = a song that a particular group of people (e.g., a government or school) considers to "officially represent them" or is very important

to pit (pitting) against = to set in direct opposition ***An election pits political candidates against each other.***

Treasury Department = The department of a government in charge of collecting, managing, and spending tax money

mint = official place where a country's money is made ***The US has four mints, in Philadelphia, Denver, San Francisco, and West Point.***

e pluribus unum: meaning "one out of many"; one of three Latin phrases on the official United States Seal (printed on money and official documents)

to stamp = to put a lasting image on sth, such as a pattern, words, or the face of a political leader

reminder = a thing that help you remember (e.g., remember an important idea, a date, an event, or a place)

(things that) last = (things that) continue or remain available ***Hard candy lasts a long time in your mouth. Ideas come and go but truth lasts.***

founder = sb who establishes (or first develops basic policies for) a government, business, school, etc

norm = what is normal/common or widely accepted

denomination = one group of sth among others (e.g., \$5 bills among all paper money); a religious group that has different beliefs from other groups within the same religion ***Common Christian denominations in America include Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and the Assemblies of God. Think of them like brothers who fight each other but also defend each other against bullies! Many denominations got started in different parts of Europe, and came to the US with immigrants.***

poll: a survey that asks many people the same question to find out general opinions about sth

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"In God We Trust." Have you seen this motto in some official places like money and documents? Today we'll look into the history and meaning of this phrase.

The phrase comes from the US National Anthem, written in 1814. The second verse (rarely sung now) includes: "And this be our motto: In God is our trust. And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave, O're the land of the free and the home of the brave."

About 50 years later, from 1861 to 1865, America was in a deadly Civil War, pitting the North against the South. As many people looked to God during the terrible war, the (Northern) Treasury Department received many requests to recognize God on coins. In 1861, US Treasury Secretary Chase sent the following to the US Mint, asking them to create a new motto:

"Dear Sir: 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."

Chase also instructed the Mint to prepare a motto in the fewest possible words to express this idea. They suggested "In God We Trust," which was approved by Congress in 1864.

Ninety-two years later, in 1956, Congress declared "In God We Trust" to be the official motto of the United States, and it started to also appear on paper money in 1957. Then-President Dwight Eisenhower had been the top General in another terrible conflict: World War 2 (ended 1945). Before 1956, the unofficial motto was "E pluribus unum" (Latin for "One out of many"), which has been on the Great Seal of the United States since 1782.

Why is "In God We Trust" on America's money? Secretary Chases' explanation is still very clear; most Americans recognize that the nation needs God's strength, because many things are beyond our control. Another writer says: "those that pushed for the motto to be on our money knew that whether we were in peaceful times or in a war, God's protection and love was always going to be needed by people." He continued by noting that since many people "put their trust" in money, stamping the motto on coins is an important reminder: money comes and goes, but we can always trust God to provide and protect the precious things that last.

America's founders rejected the norm in Europe that required all people to hold one official religion (or even one denomination). Instead, since 1789 the US Constitution has guaranteed that Americans can practice any religion (or no religion) and can be free to change one's religion at any time. Thus, judges say the motto is acceptable as long as it does not say "which God." A small but growing number of non-religious Americans object to this motto, but as of 2003 a joint poll by USA Today, CNN, and Gallup showed that 90% of Americans support having "In God We Trust" on US coins. (493 words)

Sources include

<https://ingodwetrust.com/about/history-of-in-god-we-trust/>; <https://www.treasury.gov/about/education/Pages/in-god-we-trust.aspx>;

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/in-god-we-trust-on-the-us-currency.html>;

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**Questions:** (As always, please do not answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.)

1. Is there a motto or something similar on money in your country? Tell us about it.
2. "IN GOD WE TRUST" has been on American coins since 1864. According to the article, what are some of the reasons the government decided to put this motto on money? Can you think of additional reasons?
3. Why do wars and disasters (like the COVID pandemic) push many people closer to God? If you wish, tell us how the pandemic has influenced your faith.
4. Do you think God or fate, or any other invisible power has an influence on people's destiny? What does it mean to "trust" that power? Explain.
5. The motto "In God we trust" has long been important to many Americans. But as America's core values change, do you think a different motto would be more popular with your American friends? (*Hint, see below for a list of popular sayings.*)
6. In your opinion, what motto might most people in your country think is important now? Explain.
7. Is there a short motto that you try to live by? Explain.

**Additional Short American Mottos & Proverbs:**

*E pluribus unum* (Latin for "One out of many")  
Bloom where you're planted.  
Follow your dream.  
Live and let live.  
Time is money.  
Money can't buy happiness.  
There's no place like home.  
Give Love & Give Thanks.  
Work hard, play hard.  
Work smarter, not harder.  
You only live once. YOLO  
Carpe Diem (*Seize the Day*)

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(things that) last = (things that) continue or remain available ***Hard candy lasts a long time in your mouth. Ideas come and go but truth lasts.***

poll: a survey that asks many people the same question to find out general opinions about sth

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Today we'll look into the history of a phrase found on American money: "In God We Trust."

The phrase comes from the 1814 *Star-Spangled Banner* (US National Anthem). The second verse (rarely sung now) includes: "And this be our motto: In God is our trust."

About 50 years later, America's Civil War pitted the North against the South. As people looked to God during the terrible war, the Treasury Department received many requests to recognize God on coins. In 1861, US Treasury Secretary Chase sent the following to the US Mint: "Dear Sir: 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." Wanting a motto with few words, they suggested "In God We Trust," which Congress approved in 1864.

The phrase appeared on paper money in 1957, after Congress made "In God We Trust" the official motto of the USA. Then-President Dwight Eisenhower had been the top General in another terrible conflict: World War 2 (ended 1945).

Why is "In God We Trust" on America's money? As Secretary Chase said, most Americans recognize that we need God's strength because many things are beyond our control. Another writer said the motto is a reminder not to "put our trust" in money, which comes and goes; instead, we should trust God to provide the precious things that last. In the 1700s, most European countries required everyone to follow the same religion. In contrast, since 1789 the US Constitution has guaranteed that Americans can practice any (or no) religion, and can change one's religion at any time. Perhaps that's why (according to a 2003 poll), 90% of Americans still support having "In God We Trust" on US coins. (296 words)

Sources include

<https://ingodwetrust.com/about/history-of-in-god-we-trust/>; <https://www.treasury.gov/about/education/Pages/in-god-we-trust.aspx>;

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/in-god-we-trust-on-the-us-currency.html>;

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In\\_God\\_We\\_Trust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_God_We_Trust); [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E\\_pluribus\\_unum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E_pluribus_unum);

<https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/polls/tables/live/2003-09-29-religion-poll.htm>

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**Questions:** (As always, please do not answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.)

1. Content questions:

- Where did the motto appear in 1814?
- Which government department did Secretary Chase work for?
- When did Congress first approve putting "In God We Trust" on coins?
- Who was the top general in World War 2?
- What percent of Americans support having this motto on US coins?

2. Is there a motto or something similar on money in your country? Tell us about it.

3. "IN GOD WE TRUST" has been on American coins since 1864. According to the article, what are some of the reasons the government decided to put this motto on money? Can you think of additional reasons?

4. Why do wars and disasters (like the COVID pandemic) push many people closer to God? If you wish, tell us how the pandemic has influenced your faith.

5. Is there a short motto that you try to live by? Explain. (See examples below)

6. In your opinion, what **motto** might most people in **your country** think is important now? Explain.

**Additional Short American Mottos & Proverbs:**

*E pluribus unum* (Latin for "One out of many")

Bloom where you're planted.

Follow your dream.  
Live and let live.  
Money can't buy happiness.  
Give Love & Give Thanks.  
Work hard, play hard.  
Work smarter, not harder.  
You only live once. YOLO

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These lessons were created or adapted by the staff of International Friendship Ministries, P.O. Box 12504, Columbia SC 29211; ifmusa.org; info@ifmusa.org. IFM is grateful to Kathy Williams for most of the original work. Some lessons were adapted from EFLsuccess.com (with permission). IFM makes these lessons available to our participants, but this does not imply our consent for others to publish these lessons online or in print without permission.

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