**In God We Trust – Week 1 – The Attitude of Trust**

**Message Big Idea**: God will transform our attitude about money when we choose to trust his wisdom about finances and generosity.

**Scripture:** Various Scriptures

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**Introduction– The Farmer & His Wife**

*(Series Graphic)* Morris and his wife Esther went to the state fair every year, and every year Morris would say, *“Esther, I’d like to ride that there airplane!”* But Esther would always reply, *“I know dear, but that there airplane ride costs fifty dollars; and fifty dollars is fifty dollars.”* But one year Morris said, *“Esther, I’m 85 years old. If I don’t ride that there airplane this year, I may never get another chance!”* But once again Esther replied, *“I know dear, but that there airplane ride costs fifty dollars; and fifty dollars is fifty dollars!”*

The pilot overheard their argument and said, “*Folks, I’ll make you a deal. I’ll take you both for a ride and if you can stay quiet for the entire ride and not say one word, I won’t charge you. But if you say one word – then you owe me fifty dollars!”*

Morris and Esther agreed and up they went. The pilot did all kinds of twists and turns trying to get them to cry out, but not a word was heard. He did rolls and dives over and over again, but still not a word.

After they landed, the pilot turned to congratulate the couple, but to his surprise, only Morris was there. He yelled, *“Where’s your wife! What happened! Why didn’t you say something?!?”* And Morris said, *“By golly, I was going to say something when she came loose, but goodness gracious, fifty dollars is fifty dollars!”*

Some of you love that joke, and the rest hate it. But I wanted to start with something light because money is a big deal, and sometimes we get real tense whenever we talk about it. But it doesn’t have to be that way! And I don’t know about you… but fifty dollars is fifty dollars!

**Series Intro**

Today we’re starting a 3-week series called **“In God we Trust.”** Now, this is a very recognizable phrase, as it’s our national motto. *(Hold up dollar bill)* “In God We Trust” appears on every piece of currency we have. But did you know it hasn’t always been our national motto? Here’s a little history:

When our country was established, the founders chose “E Pluribus Unum” as our national motto. It means, “From many, one.” It wasn’t until 1956 that the saying became our national motto and including it on our money became a requirement. Why? It was done in response to the feared secularizing ideology of communism. Simply put, we wanted to set ourselves apart from the communists by printing “God” on our money.

And here’s the irony: we print “In God We Trust” on the very thing many of us place our trust in. Sure, it’s not the *only* thing we put our trust in, but many of us *do* place our trust in the good old greenback, placing our security and confidence in money to come through time and time again. We spend a ton of time and energy trying to make sure we have enough money, and if not then we’re worrying about not having enough. We put all our eggs in the proverbial basket of money, but where has that gotten us? If we’re honest, not really anywhere. Listen to this:

* **The** **average credit card debt for an American households is $5,247.**
* In fact, *(add)* **The amount of interest an average American pays each year is more than 14% of their income.**
* By comparison, *(add)* **The average American Christian gives about 1.4% of their income to the church ($817).**

Last year, Northwestern Mutual released a study that said money is the #1 cause of stress for Americans, more than relationships or work! Money is driving us up a *wall* and in a *hole*!

But here’s some good news: God wants to free us from the anxiety that plagues so many of us. There is a path to financial freedom where we can not only be free from worry and anxiety, but experience the joy of generosity. That’s why we’re doing this 3-week series.

Now, I want to let you know at the outset of this series that there’s no commitment card coming at the end of service. Our hope is simply this: that when it comes to our finances, we’ll learn to truly put our trust in God.

And this path to financial freedom starts with our attitude…

Philosopher William James said:

**“The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes.” –William James**

If that’s true, what is our attitude when it comes to money? This is an important question because our attitude determines how we behave.

**Attitude Test**

The writer of Proverbs says:

***“There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.” -Proverbs 14:12***

When it comes to finances and generosity, there is a way that appears to be right, but in reality leads to death. Maybe not a literal death, but a death nonetheless. The writer of Proverbs here is saying that, often we grasp at things that we think and hope will bring life, but ultimately they don’t. They can’t.

Here are a few attitudes that I think a lot of us have.

1. **As long as I’m making monthly payments, I don’t have a problem with finances.**
2. *(Add)* **As long as I have money to go out to eat, I don’t have a problem with finances.**
3. *(Add)* **As long as I can take care of my family and have a little to put away for the future, I’m good.**

How many of you silently said “yes” to any of those 3 attitudes? In fact, you might have even said “Yeah, so what? All these attitudes sound good.” But that’s often the problem. Blindness to our own blindness is one of our greatest weaknesses. And how can we fix a problem we don’t even know exists?

We have a problem because many of us believe lies we don’t even know are lies – lies that sounds like truths. For example…

**3 Lies**

**Lie #1: Money and material things will satisfy me.**

Listen, I’m not immune to the reality that we need money. Things cost money. But we think we need it in order to be content. We think,

* (add) “If I could just get rid of this car for a newer one, one with Bluetooth then I’ll be satisfied.”
* (add) “I really need to update my wardrobe like my friend has, plus I deserve it!”
* (add) “If I could just build that outdoor patio like my neighbor has, THEN I’ll be satisfied!”

But King Solomon, one of the wisest and wealthiest guys who ever lived, said:

***“Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.” -Ecclesiastes 5:10 NIV***

And this is coming from a guy who probably would’ve been on “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.” So if Solomon says that wealth never satisfies, I think we should listen.

A second lie that sounds like truth is… **Lie #2: It’s my money and I can do whatever I want with it!**

This is something I’ve said myself. I’ve heard my friends say it. But it’s usually said when someone is trying to justify buying something for themselves or their kids at the expense of being generous towards others. Have you ever done that? Bought something simply because you could? The truth is I’m not the owner of what I have…God is. Listen to what the writer of Psalms says:

***“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.  The world, and all who live in it.” -Psalm 24:1.***

We are not owners of our money and possessions. God is. That’s the difference of attitude. Everything we have is on temporary loan from God, and he asks us to be stewards of all those resources. As a steward, that changes how I view what I have. I see what I have no longer in terms of what I want, but what God wants. I’m not saying you should never buy anything you want. But I am suggesting that maybe we need to shift our attitude. To ask ourselves: “How can I honor God with everything he has given me?”

The third lie… **Lie #3: All the church talks about is money.**

Let me just get this one out there for those of you who’ve been sitting here with this thought. I know, I know. It seems like every time you show up we’re talking about money. Or you invited a friend and this is their first time here, and you are worried they’ll never come back. But money actually shows up A LOT in the Bible.

* 16 of Jesus’ 38 parables deal with money.
* There is more in the New Testament about money than heaven and hell combined.
* Five times more verses deal with money and possessions than prayer (2000 to 500).

We talk about money because Jesus talked about it. We’re falling for a lie if we believe his followers shouldn’t talk about it.

So instead of believing lies that sound like truths, we have to start believing truths that may, at times, sound like lies.

**3 Truths**

**Truth #1: Everything good comes from God.**

As I said, everything I have belongs to God in the first place. James, the brother of Jesus, writes:

**“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows.” - James 1:17**

Let me ask you, do you believe this? If I could be vulnerable here, I often struggle with this. It’s easy for me to buy into the lie that I’m solely responsible for generating the good things in my life.

I can easily think:

* “I’m the one who sets my alarm to wake up at 5:30 every morning.”
* “I shower and dress myself with the clothes I bought with my heard earned money.”
* “I get in the car I paid for to drive to the job that I work hard at every day.”

If you are thinking those things too, you’re actually right. But not completely. There’s a deeper truth underneath them. Let me explain it this way. When you were born, you depended on the skilled hands of a doctor or a midwife to deliver you. Did anyone here deliver themselves at birth? When you were in grade school, someone taught you to read and write. When you were older and bought a car, someone used his or her skills to make that car. None of us have what we have on our own.

And when we trace it all back, we find that everything good we have is a gift from God. We are dependent on God, not just for salvation, but for our very breath.

When we embrace this truth our attitude changes. We’re free from worry and anxiety when it comes to money and possessions. We become more grateful for what we have, knowing that God has given us everything.

This leads us to the 2nd truth that may sound like a lie: **God is the source of satisfaction.**

Money and possessions will come and go, but God is constant. James says that God…

**“…who does not change like shifting shadows.” James 1:17b**

* The bank account might not be where we want, but his presence is always satisfying.
* The vacation might not be there, but he always invites us to rest in His presence.
* You might not always be able to keep up with the Jones’, but he fully accepts you as you are.

When God is the source of your satisfaction, the never-ending desire for more stuff is replaced with the ever-increasing desire for more of Him.

Understand, my goal is not to make anyone feel guilty for what you have. My goal is to get you to see that God has given you what you have, and that He is your primary source of satisfaction.

Embracing these two truths, I believe, results in the action of the 3rd truth that may sound like a lie: **Giving back to God is the way to freedom.**

If it belongs to him, and he gives it to me, then a result of that is my giving back to Him.

There is an action that releases us from the fear, worry, and anxiety we carry over money. When I give back to God, I’m placing my trust in Him. I’m acknowledging that what I have comes from him, and trusting that he’s going to take care of me. I’m releasing the pressure I place on myself to provide everything. I’m giving up control. And honestly that can be scary sometimes! We like to have control, especially when it comes to money. And honestly, giving up control with our finances is often the last area of our life we turn over to God.

**Generosity Ladder**

Where are you when it comes to giving back to God? The reality is we’re all at different places. It’s a journey, not an overnight thing. It’s a little like what we call a *(Graphic)* Generosity Ladder. If you’ve been around Community for a while, you may have heard us talk about this before, but my guess is for a lot of us, it’s something new. We’re actually going to dive deeper into this in a few weeks, but for now I want to at least show it to you.

The Generosity Ladder can help us make a plan for our giving. It works like this…

* If you’ve not been giving anything, the first step in your plan is to start *(Add: Give Something)* giving something.
* If you’ve been giving something consistently, the next step is to start *(Add: Give Generously)* giving generously by tithing.
* If you’ve been giving generously, perhaps your next step is to start *(Add: Give Extravagantly)* giving extravagantly.

What we find when we begin to climb this ladder is freedom. What we find is we begin to trust.

**Challenge**

I know money is something that we all struggle with, myself included. My attitude about it hasn’t always been where it needs to be. It’s hard for me to not feel the worry of not having enough. My dad lost his job when I was 10 years old, and it was the first time I ever saw him break down and cry. It had a profound impact on me. We considered it a luxury to go for ice cream during that time he was without work. So I know what it’s like to experience the anxiety that comes with finances. I know there’s discomfort and anger when we talk about it. But I also know there’s freedom in this as well. We don’t have to always be weighed down by it.

Our desire in this series is to see the stronghold of money broken in our lives. This is an issue that has control over many of us, and we want to see God break through and free us from it.

So have two simple challenges as we start this journey…

First, be here for the next few weeks. Begin to ask God to reveal to you how you can trust him more in this area.

Second, spend time with Jesus for the next few weeks. *(Graphic)* We want to encourage everyone to sign up for our Bible Reading Plan for this series. For the next three weeks, we’re going to grow closer to Jesus by immersing ourselves in his stories and teachings about money, stewardship, and generosity. We invite you to open your heart to his words, and also to join us as we discuss them together. We’ve created a *(Graphic)* Facebook group where you’ll find additional insights and resources and be able to share your thoughts and questions!

**Conclusion**

Our vision for this series is this:

**Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. 1 Timothy 6:17-19**

I know that putting these words on the screen may not make it true for you yet, but this is the kind of life we want for you.

* Not a life stressed out about finances, but a life of freedom.
* Not a life living with the pressure of not having enough, but a life of gratitude because everything comes from God.
* Not a life focused on what we want, but a life of generosity.

This is the life. This is the best life. Let’s start living.

Will you pray with me?

**Communion Idea**

When it comes to trust in God, we know we can trust Him because He’s given us a reason to trust: His love for us. When it comes to generosity, God in the most generous act in human history gave up his Son so that we would enter into a relationship with Him.

*He who did not spare his own Son, but****gave****him****up****for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8:32*

He’s already been so generous to us in Jesus, so we’re free to trust that He’s going to give us all we need.

*(3 lies and 3 truths)*

So, as the elements are passed, lets reflect on the truths and lies. Which lie are you buying into? Which truth are you struggling to believe? Continue this conversation this week with your family and your small group.