

Use The Scene to introduce “Which Church Has the True Gospel? (The Challenge of Jehovah’s Witnesses),” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for October 5, 2014. The lesson is found on page 31 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

The Board of Aldermen of Ballwin, Missouri, has rejected a proposal to place the U.S. national motto on a sign in their boardroom. The board decided that they could not support that statement of confidence in someone who is not trusted by all citizens of Ballwin—God.

This summer, members of Holy Infant Parish and Knights of Columbus pledged funds to create and post a sign with the motto “In God We Trust” over the platform in the seat of government of the St. Louis suburb. “I was very, very surprised how few towns and no one in St. Louis County, that I know of, have our national motto put up on city municipal buildings and courtrooms,” explained Joe Strange of the Knights of Columbus.

The wording of the motto can probably be traced back to the “Star-Spangled Banner,” written by Francis Scott Key during the War of 1812. The fourth stanza of our national anthem includes the phrase, “And this be our motto: ‘In God is our Trust.’” The words “In God We Trust” first appeared on U.S. coins in 1864. It was not until 1956 that Congress officially adopted the words as the U.S. national motto.

The board seemed ready to accept the proposal to create and display the sign. But then Nikki Moungo, a Ballwin resident and self-proclaimed atheist, spoke out at an aldermen’s meeting, asking the board not to alienate non-religious residents.

Moungo argued that the slogan is a slap in the face to those who are not Christians. “What you are saying to your residents is that you don’t matter, the nonbelievers or a different religion you don’t matter,” she insisted. “There’s people from all walks of life here, you have Buddhists and Muslims, that’s what makes Ballwin and St. Louis a great place to live.”

When all was said and done, the board rejected the sign with a vote of 6-2. The aldermen who voted against the proposal said they were religious sorts, but like many residents who spoke against the sign, they did not want a sign that would create division. Alderman James Terbrock said he had never seen so much debate over four words in his 10 years on the board. “I’m not in favor of these hotly contested words on a wall,” he said.

So if not in God, where does Moungo place her trust? “We are all equal in the eyes of the government,” she said.

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above news story to read. After all teens have had the opportunity to read the article, discuss it in this way:

If you were a citizen of Ballwin, Missouri, what stand would you have taken on this issue? What relevance does a trust or lack of trust in God have to do with local government, if anything?

Some people today voice a trust in God, but a lack of trust in what they see as organized religion. What do you think of that idea? How would a love for Jesus but distrust for His church affect one’s behavior?

Over the centuries, some religious groups have arisen that profess a trust in God and even in the Bible, but have taught that the church through the centuries has been wrong about some very important ideas. Today we will look at what the Bible teaches about the nature of Jesus and the end of this age.