

# **Free Men and Free Markets: The Bible on Economics, Business, Entrepreneurship**

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## Table of Contents

Foundations of Economics.....	2
Foundational Principles.....	4
Expanding the Principles/ Market Principles.....	10
Christian Character- Essential for a Just Economic System.....	16
Economics and Civil Government.....	18
Labor- No Goods and Services without It.....	22
Private Property- No Freedom without It.....	28
Stewardship and Money.....	31
WWJD in Business?.....	33
The Economics of Loving Our Neighbor.....	37
A Summary- Contrasting Views.....	43
Resources for Teaching and Learning Economics Biblically.....	45

# Foundations of Economics

## Introduction

Tens of thousands of Cubans have risked 90 miles of the open sea on makeshift rafts for a better life in America. Many have died trying to escape. Why have so many said in essence, “give me liberty or give me death,” fleeing a communist country to come to America? America is the land of liberty including an astounding degree of economic liberty, resulting in one of the highest standards of living in the world. An average Cuban salary is \$20/month. Americans pay our kids that much for doing a couple hours of unskilled labor. Cuba has changed a little recently but is still far from a free-market society. You can sell something you’ve made, or receive payment for a service. You cannot buy something and then sell it for a profit, however. The government still does not formally recognize small business owners, either. A business or company that is not government-owned still cannot import or export, resulting in the severe limitation of their markets. There is a great deal of income inequality between Cuba and America and there is one reason for it- freedom.

In America, our philosophy of liberty affects everything, even how we do business with each other. Some call this the free market or free enterprise, while others refer to it as capitalism. **Its main feature is liberty.** In America you have the freedom to pursue whatever career you want. You can work wherever you want and change jobs and even your career as you desire. You can own property, buy and sell freely and trade with others, or not trade, as you prefer. These blessed freedoms are not “givens” under communism/socialism. And sadly America is moving away from a free market economy. Our economy has receded from its founding principles to become “mixed,” some freedom and some socialism. Even more sadly, at a time that communist nations (China for example) are moving toward more economic freedom, we are moving toward more government control.

This book is a primer in Biblical economics. It is intended to be a basic introduction to the **principles of economics found in Scripture.** It is an excellent source for the economics teacher or professor to use to ensure that their course is taught with a Biblical worldview. At the end of this book is a list of recommended sources. The high school teacher or college professor could use some of these resources in addition to this book, to teach a semester or year long course in economics.

When you hear the term “economics” what do you think of? For most people this term brings to mind such concepts as The Federal Reserve System, Wall Street, stocks and bonds, profit and loss, supply and demand, business, inflation rate, interest rate, banking, money supply, taxation, etc. For many of us these concepts are boring or confusing. It is no wonder that in academia, economics is known as “the dismal science.” But economics can actually be an inspiring subject as it is a study of God’s design for man as he works to solve the problem of scarcity. As is true of many concepts, man has made difficult what God has made very clear in His Word. In fact, **God is an economist;** He created economics! This book was written to help you to understand the principles of economics as God has expressed in the Bible, and their vital applications.

## Why Study Economics?

Due primarily to the lack of proper instruction, many Christians have little understanding of what the Bible teaches concerning economics. However, this is problematic since economics is an extremely important topic on which God has revealed much truth. For example it is estimated that one-sixth of the Bible relates to economics. Dennis Peacocke observes, "There are more parables concerning the stewardship of material goods and personal talents in the New Testament than concern heaven or any other single topic." <sup>i</sup>

As Christians we have a responsibility to know what God's Word has to say on every topic, and we must apply this truth to every area of life. God calls us to lead, and we have not always done so; we have been followers in the area of economics, and this must change. We must obey God by first learning His ways, and then providing the leadership desperately needed. We must learn what the Bible teaches concerning the all-important topic of economics as well as how it relates to government; then we will be equipped to obey God in this area of life, and lead others into His truth.

## Economics Defined

The rudiments (first principles) of economics are in the Bible. Obviously not every aspect of economics is in the Bible; there is much for man to discover about economics in addition to what He has given us in His Word. Our Creator has plainly revealed to us the all-important, unchanging *principles* of economics.

Let us begin by defining our terms. The word economy comes from two Greek words: *oikos* meaning *house* and *nomos* meaning *law* or *rule*. Economics, therefore, is the "rules of your house." Webster defines economy as:

*Primarily, the management, regulation and government of a family or the concerns of a household.*

*A frugal and judicious use of money; that management which expends money to advantage, and incurs no waste; frugality in the necessary expenditure of money. It differs from parsimony, which implies an improper saving of expense. Economy includes also a prudent management of all the means by which property is saved or accumulated; a judicious application of time, labor, and of the instruments of labor.*

Economics is a very "down to earth," practical subject. In fact, **our home is an economy**. Consider that at the level of individuals and families, within our house we engage in these economic activities (1) we make purchases, (2) we sell, (3) we work, (4) we save and invest, (5) we use tools, (6) we produce tools, and (7) we have a system of government. The reality is that most of us engage in economic activity throughout each day. It's imperative that we do economics God's way!

Dennis Peacocke connects the dots between the home and economics:

Family government at home produces wealth, and that wealth of skills, talent, and

stewardship flows from the front doors of the homes like small trickles of little streams and eventually becomes collective rivers for the nations to bath in. Put another way, if wealth is not coming from the family units, then neither Washington D.C., Tokyo, or Bonn can produce it.

Our children are a stewardship, a heritage, and an inheritance from the Lord. God requires us to pass on our wealth to them and to raise them in the faith as we teach them the truths and moral wealth creating principles of Scripture (Deut. 6:6-9) <sup>ii</sup>

Webster also points out that economics has to do with property. "A judicious application of time, labor, and the instruments of labor," means that we must exercise proper Biblical stewardship of (1) our time, (2) the use of our mind and body in our work, and (3) in the proper use of tools.

Dr.Gerald Chester, President of Strategies at Work, has stated a Christian view of economics:

Economics is the social science that describes the factors that determine the stewardship of time, talent, treasure, and technology (T4) through production, distribution, and utilization of goods and services to facilitate mankind's role of ruling the physical universe (individually and organizationally) in accordance with the Creation Mandate.

Notice from this definition that the end of economics is to fulfill God's Dominion Mandate, using His methods.

Finally, consider the role of capital in an economic system. Capital is often described as the use of wealth to create more wealth. Rodney Stark provides a more comprehensive definition of Capitalism:

Capitalism is an economic system wherein privately owned, relatively well organized, and stable firms pursue complex commercial activities within a relatively free (unregulated) market, taking a systematic , long-term approach to investing and reinvesting wealth (directly or indirectly) in productive activities involving a hired workforce, and guided by anticipated and actual returns. Concurrently, everyone agrees that capitalism rests on free markets, secure property rights, and un-coerced labor.<sup>iii</sup>

## Foundational Principles

In this chapter I introduce the principles of economics from four different sources. Webster defines principle as:

In a general sense, the cause, source or origin of any thing; that from which a thing proceeds; as the *principle* of motion; the principles of action...Ground; foundation; that which supports an assertion, an action, or a series of actions or of reasoning. iv

So we see that it is vital to begin the study of every subject with understanding its principles as the principles are similar to the foundation of a building. The foundation must be in place before the structure can be built. Therefore we must understand the principles of a subject in order to properly grasp the subject's facts, details and applications.

Webster continues:

A general truth; a law comprehending many subordinate truths; as the principles of morality, of law, of government, etc.v

A principle is a general, broad truth. It is expansive, as often principles have sub-principles and many applications. It is vital to master the principles of a subject before you delve into the nitty-gritty, as the principle will guide you in correctly understanding the details of the subject.

## Ten Pillars of Christian Economic Wisdom

A good place to begin in understanding the principles of economics is with the *Ten Pillars of Christian Economic Wisdom* by Dr. Charles Wolfe. These are based upon an outstanding booklet entitled *How We Live*, by Fred G. Clark and Richard S. Rimanoczy.<sup>vi</sup> Study Dr. Wolfe's 25 page *The Principle Approach to American Christian Economics* (in *A Guide To American Christian Education*) in order to understand this subject more fully. As stated by Dr. Wolfe, these Ten Pillars are

1. *Everything has a cost that must be paid.*
2. *God is the source of man's ability to produce.*
3. *Only earned money is honest; inflation is dishonest.*
4. *Wages should be determined by voluntary exchange in a free market.*
5. *Job security depends upon customer security.*
6. *Wages must be related to productivity.*
7. *Increasing output per worker benefits everybody.*
8. *God created the three basic factors of production – natural resources, human energy, and tools.*
9. *Tools are created when individuals deny themselves, save, and invest.*
10. *High productivity is the effect of a free people in competition with each other.* <sup>vii</sup>

Each of these could be elaborated upon. Let's do so for the first one.

TNSTAFL- There is no such thing as a free lunch, right? Lunch is free, and lots of other free stuff, say the socialist democrats. Two Democrat Presidential hopefuls tout the latest free goodies, "free

college tuition” and “free health care.” You can add to that the myth (lie?) of free public schools, free lunches, free food stamps, free housing, etc. Why don’t we just make everything free? Because... there is the painful reality that NOTHING is free (except the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ). In order for me to get something “free” it must be taken from you, the rightful owner. No truth is more apparent to every man than this. So, why do we continue to place the word “free” before “college tuition,” “health care,” “lunch,” “public education,” and “housing?”

It’s simple- because “free” is a lot nicer sounding word than “stolen.” After all, none of us considers government plunder as stolen goods. It’s simply, “our fair share.” “If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need” (Ephesians 4:28).

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously said, "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other peoples’ money." I could not disagree more! The problem with socialism is that you are stealing from others. Period.

Dr. Wolfe’s remaining principles (2-10) are explained in *A Guide to American Christian Education*.

## **Economic Principles of FEE**

Many individual organizations have expressed principles of economics in differing yet consistent ways. One of the best economic think-tanks is The Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). They have recently distilled “economic thinking” into twelve key concepts. The following list has guided them internally for years.

1. **Gains from trade:** In any economic exchange, freely chosen, both parties benefit—at least in their own minds.
2. **Subjective value:** The value of any good or service is determined by the individual human mind.
3. **Opportunity cost:** Nothing is free, and the cost of anything is what you give up to get it.
4. **Spontaneous order:** Society emerges not from top-down intention or planning but from individuals’ actions that result in unplanned outcomes for the whole.
5. **Incentives:** Individuals act to maximize their own reward.

6. **Comparative advantage:** Cooperation between individuals creates value when a seller can produce a given item or service at a lower cost than the buyer would spend to produce it himself.

7. **Knowledge problem:** No one person or group knows enough to plan (and force) social outcomes, because information necessary for social order is distributed among its members and revealed only in human choice.

8. **Seen and Unseen:** In addition to the tangible and quantifiable effects, there are quite often invisible costs and unmet opportunities to any action or policy.

9. **Rules matter:** Institutions influence the decisions individuals make. For example, property rights extend from the reality of scarcity which demands that ownership must be vested in individuals and not a collective.

10. **Action is purposeful:** Each person makes choices with the intention of improving his or her condition.

11. **Civil society:** Voluntary association permits people of all backgrounds to interact peaceably, create value, cultivate personal character, and build mutual trust.

12. **Entrepreneurship:** Acting on an opportunity to gather underused, misused, or undiscovered resources and ideas to create value for others.

## **Economic Principles in Proverbs**

One very interesting study is to read the book of Proverbs paying attention to **principles of government and economics**. The number of such principles in just this one book of the Bible is astounding! I will give you a representative sample, and hope that you will be inspired to do further study:

Work or labor-

Labor performed without the necessity of excessive oversight by management- 6:9-10

Diligent labor- 10:4

Labor leads to a productive life- 10:16

Labor fulfills your desires, or your needs for goods and services- 13:4



Labor produces lasting wealth- 13:11

The way of labor is an easier way-15:19

Pleasure seeking deters us from labor- 21:17

Slothfulness produces poverty- 24:30

God desires a willing worker. 31:13

Labor often involves difficulties to be overcome- 20:4

#### Private property

Private ownership of property- 19:14

We must honor the borders of others- 15:25

#### Christian Character Needed in the Market

Treat your neighbor honestly; have just weights and measures- 20:10, 20:23

Greed and desire to get rich quick are sinful desires- 15:27, 23:4, 28:20, 28:22, and 30:8

#### Debt

Do not go into debt, lest you become a slave- 22:7

Do not be responsible for another man's debts- 22:26-27

#### Collectivism/Communism

Collectivism is evil (one purse) - 1:14

Private, free, individual enterprise- 16:26, 12:11, 5:15-17

Fathers should leave an inheritance to children- 19:14

The free market and voluntary exchange- 20:14, 23:23

Labor is multiplied by the use of tools- 14:4

#### **The Christian Worldview of Economics**

Another excellent source is a work entitled *The Christian Worldview of Economics*. This is part of a series of World View Documents developed by Dr. Jay Grimstead with the Coalition on Revival. In this short document, 42 principles of economics are stated with (1) a statement of affirmation and (2) a statement of negation. Categories include: First Principles, Wealth and Poverty, Work, Property, Value Price and Money, Orders of Responsibility, and Helping the Poor. This work assists you in learning what the Bible teaches about economics and what is commonly taught or believed that is not Biblical. Here is one principle, with hopes to whet your appetite to study the other 41!

**We affirm** that wealth is material and non-material; that Christian economics must address both kinds of wealth; that non-material wealth includes (but is not limited to) life, liberty, intellect, ideas (especially of understanding God's moral law), emotions, will, time, personal relations, and goodwill; that material wealth includes, (but is not limited to) raw materials, labor, and manufactured materials; that the various kinds of wealth are valued differently in the Bible and ought to be valued differently by men according to their unique personalities and needs; that the highest kind of wealth is a right relationship with God; and that material and non-material wealth are blessings of God related to His purposes and the degree of our obedience to Him (Deuteronomy chapters 8 and 28; Hebrews 11 indicates that there are exceptions).

**We deny** that wealth is only material; that material or non-material wealth ought to be pursued at the expense of a right relationship with God; that all human valuations of wealth are equally consistent with God's valuations; and that godliness should be pursued for the purpose of material gain (1 Timothy 6:3-6). <sup>viii</sup>

This document also provides very solid action steps to assist you with ways to bring about God's order in the market sphere of life. Besides economics there are 16 additional worldview documents. To obtain this resource either purchase *Rebuilding Civilization on the Bible*, or go to Reformation.net and you can download all 17 worldview documents.

## Expanding the Principles

The four sets of principles just referenced (Charles Wolfe, FEE, Proverbs, and The Christian Worldview of Economics) are not the only principles of economics. As we have seen with other “subjects,” principles are not limiting, they are expansive. That is, the more you study from a principled perspective, the more you will be led into God’s truth, and will see connections from principles to all of knowledge. As I have studied and taught economics, I have gained insight into additional economic principles.

In this book I will discuss approximately 70 Biblical principles of economics. This book is not a comprehensive textbook on economics, but an introductory/supplementary work designed to impart the Biblical principles. Accordingly, I have not gone into great depth on each principle, with a few exceptions! Please consult the Resource list at the end of this book for recommended comprehensive economics texts.

Most principles are followed by several Bible references. A few of the principles are consistent with Biblical principles but cannot be derived from a specific chapter and verse. They can be deduced from a careful study of the whole of Scripture; therefore I have included them, without listing a Biblical reference. As is true of every subject, God has left much of the discovery of knowledge to man. He has not specified all of truth in His Word, but challenges us to discover it ourselves. Proverbs 25:2 affirms, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.” Let’s enjoy searching out economic truth from the Scriptures.

Let’s begin our understanding of economic principles with two fundamental ones:

- The earth and all that can be produced from it was given to man for his benefit and for the supply of his material needs, “The heavens are the heavens of the LORD, but the earth He has given to the sons of men” (Psalms 115:16). See also 1 Timothy 6:17.
- Christians are commanded, by the Dominion Mandate, to participate actively in the economic system, “let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Genesis 1:26-28). See also Psalms 8:6-8. We should note that God gave mankind dominion over the physical creation and the animals, but **He did not give him dominion over his fellow man**. Therefore civil governments that men establish must honor this principle and prevent man from have dominion over his neighbor.

Webster defines dominion as the, “power to direct, control, use and dispose of at pleasure.” God did not give the ability to have dominion over the earth to animals, angels, Satan or any other entity. He gave it to every man and women. Why? Among other reasons, so we could meet our basic material needs for goods and services. Amazingly, with man’s God-given diligence and ingenuity, man has exercised dominion and gone way beyond basic needs to create an unbelievable array of goods for our pleasure and comfort. Even as you read these words, there

are hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of individuals searching out ways to produce things for your pleasure and comfort, many of which you have no idea that you want or need!

## Market Principles

Trade produces...exact justice, opposite to robbery... [it] renders every man willing to live on his own property...When a democracy is founded on commerce, private people may acquire vast riches without corruption of morals...It is much better to leave trade open than...to restrain the liberty of commerce...[it] flies from the places where it is oppressed, and stays where it has liberty to breathe. Montesquieu

What is a market? The word comes from the Latin *mercatus*, meaning “to buy.” Webster defines market as, “Sale; the exchange of provisions or goods for money; purchase or rate of purchase and sale. The seller says he comes to a bad *market* when the buyer says he comes to a good *market*.” A market, in the broadest sense, is where we exchange, or buy and sell, goods and services.

We tend to think that only business people or entrepreneurs are the producers in the marketplace. Interestingly every human being participates in the market on a regular basis, as both producer/seller and buyer/consumer. It is vitally important that we structure and operate markets Biblically, and that we behave Biblically within markets. The Biblical market is under tremendous attack today primarily by the worldview of socialism/Marxism.

Consider these 21 basic market principles:

1. **Resources, time, and labor are scarce**, yet man’s wants are insatiable; therefore man must use resources judiciously in order to gain the maximum benefit from them. “Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your face you will eat bread” (Genesis 3:16-17). See also Deuteronomy 8:9; Ecclesiastes 5:10, 6:7; Isaiah 56:11-12.

Scarcity is the result of the fall. There was no scarcity before the fall and there is no scarcity in heaven. Because scarcity exists, man must be a good steward of resources, his time, labor and tools. Men operating in a free market conserve scarce resources more efficiently than the civil government. The reason for this is that they, or those close to them, will be affected personally by their decisions, for good or for bad.

2. There is no such thing as a free lunch. **Everything has a cost.** When God said, “If a man will not work, he should not eat” (1 Thessalonians 3:10), this is in recognition that man’s sustenance is not free and must be paid for. Civil government has no source of revenue other than by taxing its citizens. Everything that it spends it must first acquire by taxing citizens. To be accurate substitute the words “taxpayer funded” for the word “free” when referring to items paid for by government.
3. Profit is an indispensable element of a free market. In a general sense profit is:

Any advantage; any accession of good from labor or exertion; an extensive signification, comprehending the acquisition of any thing valuable, corporeal or intellectual, temporal or spiritual. A person may derive *profit* from exercise, amusements, reading, study, meditation, social intercourse, religious instruction, etc. Every improvement or advance in knowledge is *profit* to a wise man. <sup>ix</sup>

Human beings expect to profit in some way from their efforts. Without this expectation why would you act? In the business sense profit is

The profit of the farmer and the manufacturer is the gain made by the sale of produce or manufactures, after deducting the value of the labor, materials, rents and all expenses, together with the interest of the capital employed, whether land, machinery, buildings, instruments or money. <sup>x</sup>

Every person in business expects a profit, "In all labor there is profit, But mere talk *leads* only to poverty" (Proverbs 14:23). No profit- no expenditure of effort. Expectation of profit is critical to the market system. When you receive a profit, it is proof that you made someone happy!

Consider this statement of the Communist Party USA:

A better and peaceful world is possible- a world where people and nature come before profits. That's socialism. That's our vision. We are the Communist Party USA.<sup>xi</sup>

What do they get so fundamentally wrong? Their view of profits. With capitalism profits do come before people. Profits are what make people lovingly and peacefully produce goods and services for each other. Consider the five groups of people who profit from business: (1) consumers who enjoy goods and services, (2) employees and their dependents (3) the business's suppliers (4) the business owner (5) investors.

4. **"Pure profit" in business is not guaranteed** "Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest." (Matthew 25:17). From the revenues of a business, owners must first pay all expenses of production. The owner must be paid for his labor. Interest, of typically 4-5% must be paid for all investment in capital, whether this is by the owner or other investors. This is called ordinary interest. If there is anything left after these expenses are paid, this is what we refer to as "pure profit." The average pure profit for a business is 5-7% per year. One should rejoice when a business makes a profit for this is a great incentive to keep doing the very hard work of business.
5. Because we live in a fallen world, in business and in life **there is a risk of loss**. Job (chapter one) suddenly lost all of his oxen, asses, sheep, camels, servants and children. Additionally there is the possibility of our efforts **producing no gain**. Investors will earn a higher rate of return as the risk increases.
6. Production is increased when there is **division of labor**. "His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-Cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron" (Gen. 4:21-22). See also Romans 12:6-7; I Cor. 4:7; 12. Some view economics as the study of the creation of wealth through the division of labor. Throughout the Bible, we see those people who specialized in a task such as sales, carpentry, tent making, farming, teaching, writing,

construction, music making, raising livestock, working in brass and iron, cloth making, shipping, military work, etc. Adam Smith began his famous work, *Wealth of Nations*, with this assertion, “The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labor, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is anywhere directed, or applied, seem to have been **the effects of the division of labor.**”<sup>xii</sup>

7. Division of labor works because of the concept of **competitive (or comparative) advantage**. One has a competitive advantage when you can produce a good or service better, faster, with a higher quality, or with better customer service than a competitor. For example, countries that have moderate temperatures year round and good soil have a competitive advantage in agriculture as they can grow crops year round, not worrying about extremes of heat or cool that are detrimental to their products.
8. **Competition** is necessary and desired, as a great blessing in an economic system, reducing waste and resulting in better products at lower prices. “Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules” (II Timothy 2:5).

Conversely, monopolies are an evil in an economic system, resulting in inferior products and/or higher prices. In a free market, a pure monopoly will not last long and therefore is not to be feared. The reason a monopoly is short lived is that when entrepreneurs realize that there are good opportunities to make money in a given product or industry, they will enter that market to earn some of those profits.

Monopolies to be feared the most are government monopolies. The American government educational monopoly is one of the costliest in the world, and returns a very poor return on investment with little hope of reform.

9. Men benefit greatly from **trade with each other**, “Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents” (Matthew 25:16). Trade allows us to have the things that we want and need while supplying the same for those with whom we trade. Interestingly trade is so important that lawless nations are punished via “sanctions” which prohibit them from trading to gain the goods that they want and need. Voluntary cooperation (free market) works much better than coerced cooperation (civil government’s involvement in the market). So discover **your competitive advantage** and specialize in it; trade with others and prosper! In a free market it is nothing short of miraculous that we get so much in exchange for our labor!
10. God created man free, and gave Him the liberty to make his own choices. We love this freedom. We chose to eat certain foods, to decorate our house or office different ways, we chose our representatives, we decide which church to join, we chose to attend a certain college or none at all, and we choose our career. Think of all of the differing economic choices that we make because of our particular likes and dislikes!

Economics has been called **the science of choice**. “So **Lot chose** for himself all the valley of the Jordan...” (Genesis 13:11) An application of the principle of individuality to economics indicates that what matters the most is individual decisions made by people every day. Von Mises claimed that the greatest power we have is that of choice: “Economics is not about goods and services; it is about human choice and action.”<sup>xiii</sup> A good economic system seeks to maximize the choices left to individuals. This necessarily means that we must minimize choices that civil rulers make for us through laws and

regulations. One of the great evils of our day is the ever expanding civil government that greatly reduces the choices that we can make as they are made by laws, and regulations.

11. **Opportunity cost** is defined as, the cost of an alternative that must be forgone in order to pursue a certain action. Put another way, opportunity cost is the benefits you could have received by taking an alternate action. “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36). Examples include

- When the prodigal son demanded and received his share of the inheritance while his father was still alive, the father could not use and grow this money for the benefit of the entire family.
- I can get an extra hour of sleep but I give up my morning devotions and exercise routine.
- I give up the opportunity to have a career and more money, but I gain the value of spending additional time with my children during their most formative years.
- I can purchase the new electric bike but can’t send as much to my favorite charity as I would like.
- I can spend time with video games, movies or TV, but I give up those hours that could have been used for study, helping my family, working on my hobby or doing ministry.
- Whatever money is taken in taxes and spent by civil governments is not able to be spent by private citizens and businesses.

Given the reality of scarcity, time is a most precious commodity. Ben Franklin stated, “Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that’s the stuff life is made of.” <sup>xiv</sup>We should always choose wisely where to invest our time and money, asking God to help us be the best possible steward.

12. In sports, and sometimes in life, there is a winner and a loser. Not so in economics! The free market is a “**win-win**” **situation**. It is an application of the Golden Rule to the marketplace, “I will do something good for you, and you will do something nice for me.” (Luke 6:31 paraphrased). It is erroneous to believe that in an economic transaction, one person wins while the other loses. In fact both gain, because they both end up with something that they valued more than what they exchanged. That is why after a purchase a “Thank-you” from one party will evoke a “Thank-you” from the other, rather than “You’re welcome.”

13. **Markets should be free**, with un-hampered interaction between potential buyers and sellers, “It is naught, it is naught, says the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasts (Proverbs 20:14). See also Acts 5:1-4. Historically, the greatest hindrance to the free market is civil government. Lawmakers and bureaucrats, contrary to God’s order, make laws, regulations, or guidelines that restrict or interfere in some way in the interaction between buyers and sellers. This, of course, is always for “our safety and benefit,” they maintain. For example, “for our benefit” some states have passed laws requiring private companies to spend a certain percentage of its payroll on health insurance benefits. Adam Smith stated, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759):

*The man of system (one who believes in centralized planning as opposed to self-government and liberty)...is apt to be very wise in his own conceit; and is often so enamored with the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government, that he cannot suffer the smallest deviation from any part of it. He goes on to establish it completely and in all its parts, without any regard either to the great interests or to the strong prejudices which may oppose it. He seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board...<sup>xv</sup>*

One of the most significant differences between capitalism and socialism in this: Capitalism desires **free men and free markets** while socialism desires **controlled markets which means men are unnecessarily controlled as well.**

14. The market works on the basis of **enlightened self-interest**, “for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church” (Ephesians 5:29). Self-interest is according to God’s design and not sinful. Philippians 2:4 states, “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” So it’s not an either-or but a both-and. We are to look out for our interests and the interests of others. Selfishness is a sin as the selfish only care for themselves and perhaps close family members, while the self-interested “love their neighbors as themselves.” Adam Smith famously said,

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages...neither intends to promote the public interest...led by an invisible hand to promote an end that was not part of his intention.” <sup>xvi</sup>

My desire to provide for myself causes me to create goods or services that I trade with you. We both benefit. The free market actually tends to diminish the effects of greed and selfishness, because I can’t profit unless you do as well. **In order to profit, I must serve you.** Bastiat explains

Cooperation is greatly enhanced by markets, which allow cooperation even among those who are not personally known to each other, who don’t share the same religion or language, and who may never meet. The existence of potential gains from trade and the facilitation of trade by well-defined and legally secure property rights make possible charity among strangers, and love and friendship across borders.” <sup>xvii</sup>

Isn’t God’s design amazing! Through the market system, He causes even strangers to be a great blessing to each other.

Speaking of greed, politicians and government officials are not less greedy than businessmen, entrepreneurs, or the average person; in fact due to their access to public funds we should be much more concerned about the potential greed of politicians than businessmen.



15. **Economic value is subjective.** “Bad, bad,” says the buyer, but when he goes his way, then he boasts (Proverbs 20:14). See also Genesis 23:3-16. The Marginal Utility Theory of Value says that the value of something is not objectively related to the cost of production (Marx’s grave error) but subjectively by what someone is willing to give in exchange. **What something is worth is what someone is willing to pay for it.** Thank God for the CEO who makes \$5 million per year because he brings much more than \$5 million in value to the company.

16. **Consumers set prices and wages.** Consumers determine what is produced; this is called **consumer sovereignty**. The goal of production is consumption, therefore consumers tell producers what they are willing to buy and how much of it. Consumers in an indirect way set wages since one of the major expenses of any business is wages. The consumers demand for or lack of demand for certain good or services determine how much income companies will have to pay employees. If sales are good at my son’s jewelry store he benefits, but so does each of his employees.

17. **Income is distributed to land owners, laborers, capitalists, etc. in varying amounts.** One major reason for this is that people own different proportions of the available productive resources (land/building, tools, and training). Other considerations include talents and abilities, motivations and work ethic.

There is a great deal of concern today about income inequality, and some advocate the very unjust policy that civil government should force a more equitable distribution of wealth. There is evidence that approximately 75% of “wealth distribution” is due to age. When you are young, you start out with a small or no net worth. You may even have student debt and a big mortgage. When you are nearing retirement age, you usually have a fair or substantial net worth, debts that are paid, retirement accounts and you are at the height of your earning potential.

18. **Prices are extremely important** pieces of information in a free market. They tell producers how much to produce and whether to use their energies in the production of some other good or service. One reason government price setting, inherent in socialism, is so bad is that it removes the information of what consumers really value. Therefore producers have no idea how much to produce. This results in either surpluses or shortages.

19. When supplies of a given commodity are low, prices rise and demand decreases. When the supplies increase, prices drop and demand increases. This is referred to as **the law of supply and demand**. “When good things increase, those who consume them increase” (Ecclesiastes 5:11). See also II Kings 6:25, 7:1, 16. This economic law serves to bring production and consumption into equilibrium, ensuring that there are not shortages or wasteful surplus.

20. **Incentives and disincentives matter.** In policy-making we need to be careful to give incentives to godly behaviors and disincentives to ungodly behavior. Examples include:

- A tax code that favors marriage will encourage marriage rather than cohabitation.
- A welfare system that pays many benefits to mothers without a husband will encourage women to have babies and not get married. No wonder the

prevalence of children born out of wedlock has exploded over the past half century! Our government actually subsidizes immorality.

- A welfare system that discourages work by removing benefits too quickly when a recipient enters the workplace will get more people that stay on welfare rather than work.

21. **Sunk costs** are payments or investments which can never be recovered “Amaziah said to the man of God, “But what *shall* we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?” And the man of God answered, “The LORD has much more to give you than this” (2 Chronicles 25:9).

You should not factor a previous payment or purchase into a future economic decision. For example, if your car engine fails, and you are trying to decide whether to repair or replace your car, you should not factor in the fact that you just spent \$2000 on a new paint job. These are sunk costs and will not be covered whatever you decide.

22. If we honor the preceding market principles, and **honor God and His Word, we will enjoy economic prosperity**. “The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow” (Deuteronomy 28:12). See also Joshua 1:8.

We often hear the phrase, “The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.” Usually you hear it in the context of we need to pass some tax or law to take more from the “rich” to benefit the poor. By definition, there is a “gap” between poor and rich, but this is not something that we should be concerned about. If it is true that the poor over time are really getting poorer, that is a problem that we should be concerned about. Also, if the rich are becoming richer at the expense of the poor, that is a moral outrage.

The reality is neither is true in America at this time in history: the poor are not getting poorer, and they are not poor because the rich are rich. In America, with our partially free market economy, the total amount of wealth is growing over time. This is why the rich are getting richer and **the poor are also getting richer**. Jay W. Richards, author of *Money, Greed, and God*, observes:

From 1947 to 2005, the average income of the richest 20 percent of the US population went up almost every year, from \$8,072 in 1947 to \$184,500 in 2005 (adjusted for inflation). But this didn’t come at the expense of the poor. On the contrary, the real incomes of the poorest 20 percent also went up almost every year, from \$1,584 in 1947 to \$25,616 in 2005. And all this happened over a period in which the number of American families doubled, from about 37 million in 1947 to over 77 million in 2005.<sup>xviii</sup>

So, the amount of wealth increased in the last six decades, allowing rich, middle class and poor to enjoy a higher standard of living. Help your less economically blessed brothers and sisters by working for: limited government, regulations only for health and safety, a free market, low taxes, and no barriers to becoming an entrepreneur.

## Christian Character- Essential for a Just Economic System

William Ames defines government as, “the power by which God directs and leads all his creatures to their proper end.”<sup>xix</sup> We cannot reach our proper end without Christian character.

Some attack capitalism, also referred to as free markets or free enterprise, with the accusation that it is not moral. Supposedly capitalism allows some to get hurt, the poor to be taken advantage of, for income inequality (poor getting poorer and rich getting richer), etc. We will have to deal with these one at a time later, but we must start with the recognition that human beings, who make up markets as both producers and consumers, are sinful and therefore Christian character is absolutely essential in our economic life.

Markets in themselves are not moral entities. You and I are. Each of us will apply our own standards of right and wrong in the marketplace. If you believe that it is ok to steal, cheat or lie under some circumstances, you will steal, cheat or lie when exchanging goods and services with others under some circumstances. A society, such as ours, that has embraced an entitlement mentality, leading to government redistribution of wealth (legalized theft), will pay the price in its economy. If it's ok for government to steal from my neighbor, then why shouldn't I?

What are the greatest marketplace commandments of all time? They are “Thou shalt not covet and thou shalt not steal” (#10 and #8). It is interesting to note that nine of the ten commandments **deal with actions**, (1-2) worshiping God only, (3) no idol worship, (4) not breaking the Sabbath, (5) honoring parents, (6) not murdering, (7) not committing adultery, (8) not stealing, (9) not lying. Although they all deal with heart issues, **only the last one focuses explicitly on the heart** “thou shalt not covet!” Could it be that God knows that one of man's greatest temptations is to want what others have that we don't?

What is the greatest marketplace principle of all time? “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matthew 7:12). We should all endeavor to practice this command of Jesus each time we participate in the market.

Ponder these additional principles regarding Christian character in the marketplace:

1. A good economic system is dependent upon character or virtue in the citizens and in its leaders, “Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to *any* people” (Proverbs 14:34).
2. God condemns **greed and the desire to “get rich quickly.”** “A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth, and does not know that want will come upon him” (Proverbs 28:22). See also Proverbs 23:4; 28:20; Luke 12:15. Greed, selfishness, and the desire to get rich quickly are not to be confused with having the character trait of diligence in business and being blessed accordingly.

3. **Nations fall first from within.** “When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting. By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down” (Proverbs 11:10-11). To remain prosperous and strong a nation’s citizens must be virtuous.
4. We should not destroy products or suppress their production in order to raise their price. “He who withholds grain, the people will curse him, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it” (Proverbs 11:26).
5. We should not conspire to “fix prices” in order to realize greater profits. “Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15). Fixing prices is typically done by civil governments as they attempt to protect an industry or product from market forces. They fix the price of a certain product at a certain level and make it illegal to sell it at a lower price. Private businesses can attempt to do this as well. To work, it would require all or most all, of those who produce a certain product to agree to sell it at a certain price. This usually fails quickly with private business, because if one producer sells the product at a lower price, he will gain the business that could have gone to his competitors. At that point, the plan to fix prices has failed.
6. **God says don’t debase currency.** “When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open the wheat *market*, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to cheat with dishonest scales” (Amos 8:5). Debasing currency was done by adding cheap metal to the precious metal and advertising it as “the real thing,” “*Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water*” (Is. 1:22). This is, in essence, stealing. The printing of additional paper money without gold or silver backing is a form of debasing the currency.
7. All forms of oppression of others are evil. This includes but not limited to the most vulnerable among us the poor, ill, widow, and orphan. “The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and have **oppressed** the sojourner without justice” (Ezekiel 22:29).

## Economics and Civil Government

“Government has no other end, but the preservation of property.” John Locke

“The modern State exists not to protect our rights but to do us good or make us good — anyway, to do something to us or to make us something. Hence the new name ‘leaders’ for those who were once ‘rulers’. We are less their subjects than their wards, pupils, or domestic animals. There is nothing left of which we can say to them, ‘Mind your own business.’ Our whole lives are their business.” <sup>xx</sup> C. S. Lewis

“God has given to men all that is necessary for them to accomplish their destinies. He has provided a social form as well as a human form. And these social organs of persons are so constituted that they will develop themselves harmoniously in the clean air of liberty. Away, then, with quacks and organizers! Away with their rings, chains, hooks, and pincers! Away with their artificial systems! Away with the whims of governmental administrators, their socialized projects, their centralization, their tariffs, their government schools, their state religions, their free credit, their bank monopolies, their regulations, their restrictions, their equalization by taxation, and their pious moralizations! And now that the legislators and do-gooders have so futilely inflicted so many systems upon society, may they finally end where they should have begun: May they reject all systems, and try liberty; for liberty is an acknowledgment of faith in God and His works.”<sup>xxi</sup> Frederic Bastiat (1801-1850)

Verna Hall aptly observed, “Government is the house in which the economy lives.” There is a **close relationship between a nation’s economy and its civil government**. Free men will create free markets.

**God created man to be free, including having economic liberty.**

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians. 5:1). Civil government is ordained by God to perform the limited functions of praising those who do good, protection of life and property, and the administration of justice (Romans 13). Therefore, it is not the civil government’s role to direct, control, or regulate any aspect of the economy, but rather to *protect economic freedom* (Acts 5:3,4). So we often re-visit questions like, “What should the minimum wage be?” This is absolutely the wrong question! Instead we should ask, “Does the Bible or the US Constitution allow civil governments to coerce business owners beyond regulations for safety and health? Would Jesus, Paul, Madison, Jefferson, Washington and Henry approve of laws dictating the salaries and benefits of employees?”

Corporate welfare (crony capitalism) and much of corporate lobbying is justifiably criticized. But consider the situation. When government unjustly controls businesses and the economy, then businesses push back by lobbying for laws that benefit them. Can you blame them? The better tactic is to reduce the unnecessary government control over business and the economy. Then the need for corporate lobbying almost disappears!

Sadly today nearly unlimited civil government acts like this: subsidize, tax, regulate, penalize, spend, over legislate, borrow and manipulate.

## **Wealth Redistribution=Legalized Plunder**

Thomas Jefferson writing to Joseph Milligan in 1816 stated, "To take from one because it is thought that his own industry and that of his father's has acquired too much, in order to spare to others, who, or whose fathers have not exercised equal industry and skill, is to violate arbitrarily the first principle of association--the guarantee to every one of a free exercise of his industry and the fruits acquired by it."

It is a great evil for civil governments to forcibly redistribute wealth. "You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly" (Leviticus 19:15). See also Ex. 20:15, I Samuel 8, Matthew 25:1-9).

One of the most egregious stories of wealth redistribution is the murder of Naboth orchestrated by Jezebel, so she could give Naboth's vineyard to Ahab (I Kings 21:1-16). The apostle Paul, on the other hand was a stellar example of working for his necessities. He declared, "...nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it" (II Thessalonians 3:8). Samuel, one of Israel's most righteous rulers gave an accounting at the end of his reign and asked, "bear witness against me before the LORD and His anointed. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? I will restore it to you." (I Samuel 12: 3). The response? "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand."

**Wealth redistribution will ultimately destroy a society.** James Madison stated in 1792, "That is not a just government, nor is property secure under it, where the property which a man has in his personal safety and personal liberty is violated by arbitrary seizures of one class of citizens for the service of the rest." <sup>xxii</sup> The phrase "promote the general welfare" in our Constitution is not a broad grant of power to the Federal government to spend money on anything they deem proper.

Evidence that many Americans have bought into the wealth redistribution lie is the often repeated statement, "I need to get my share fair" of this or that, referring to some government funded program. What are we to conclude? Have we become a nation of thieves?

Frederick Bastiat makes a profound point in *The Law*. Bastiat called government wealth transfer programs "legal plunder." He observes that we only have three choices regarding legal plunder: (1) The few plunder the many (2) Everyone plunders everyone (3) Nobody plunders anybody.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Now, let's explain each.

**The few plunder the many-** An example of this is any form of dictatorship, monarchy or aristocracy where a ruling few are able to enjoy the wealth of the country while the majority suffers and lacks. There are only a few "winners" of the loot and mostly "losers." Although loved by the winners, this is a great injustice for the losers. In communist countries typically the 1-2% members of the communist party will be materially blessed while the rest suffer.

**Everyone plunders everyone** - You may recognize this as, "I need my fair share." Those that have money taken from them without a corresponding benefit obviously feel a great sense of injustice has been done to them. They feel as if they have been robbed, not at gunpoint, but through withholding taxes and 1040 forms. Rather than working to pass laws such that "nobody should plunder anybody" they work to get what they feel is rightfully theirs. Two wrongs don't

make a right. The fact that I have been wronged by having my earnings removed and given to someone else, does not make it right for me to do the same to others through the power of lawmaking.

The American modern welfare state is predicated upon the assumption that everyone should plunder everyone. We are told that we have a “right” to health care, housing, food, education and even a cell phone. Rights, understood Biblically do not involve stealing from my neighbor through taxation. Inalienable rights to life, liberty the pursuit of happiness, and freedom of religion, speech, the press, assembly etc. do not involve someone taking my hard earned money away. We are all losing when everyone plunders everyone.

Jesus refused to redistribute wealth. “Someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the *family* inheritance with me.” But He said to him, “Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” (Luke 12:13-14). Be generous with your own time and resources as commanded by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46. There is no virtue in being generous with OPM (Other people’s money)!

**Nobody plunders anybody-** Is there any doubt that this is the Biblical option? Is this not the system that our American founders bequeathed to us? Is this not what brings liberty and justice to all?

I believe that “My fair share” is what I have personally produced minus taxes for the legitimate functions of civil government. I love the vision of Isaiah 65: 21-22: **“They will build houses and dwell in them: they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.** No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat.”

### **Minimum or Maximum Wage Laws**

Americans love liberty, but let’s be sure we have “liberty and justice **for all**” including business owners. Should business owners be forced to pay a minimum wage? Should business owners of a certain number of employees, say 50, be mandated to provide health insurance? Should societies force business owners to provide employee benefits in the name of “equality?” Frankly, no, according to Jesus. In a truly free market, business owners should **be free to do what they feel best with their own money**, just as individuals do.

Jesus tells an important parable in Matthew 20. As you recall in this parable a householder hired men to help in his vineyard. He told the laborers that he hired first that he would pay them a penny for the day. The others hired throughout the day were told they would be paid “what is right.” All the laborers were paid a penny, regardless of how long they worked. The principle stated by the householder was, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?” The parable of the laborers in the vineyard is a nightmare for socialists because **Jesus in this instance advocates for the freedom of a business owner to pay as he alone determines.** We need to rethink the assumption that we should force business owners to pay employees as we subjectively see fit. We find clues for why Jesus taught as He did in these three additional principles:

(1)**The sanctity of contract:** If you agree to do something, then follow through with it. The householder pledged to pay at a uniform rate. This is a moral and legal imperative, “He who swears to his own hurt and does not change” (Psalm 15:4).

(2) **The importance of full employment for able-bodied men and women.** One of the problems that the householder (business owner) seemed very anxious to correct was workers who were idle. This is a possible explanation for why he would pay workers who labored for fewer hours the same as those who worked all day.

(3) **Thankfulness to business owners for providing employment** for us. Some workers grumbled because they thought that they were not paid enough. The householder rebuked them saying, “Friend, I did you no wrong” (v. 13). The householder paid the men who worked the most what they were promised. He was generous with the men who worked less. It is his prerogative to be generous!

All attempts, by individual men or civil government, to interfere in the freedom of businessmen and employees to agree upon whatever wages they please (salary and benefits), are immoral and unproductive.

There should be no “minimum wage laws,” or maximum wage laws, for that matter. Henry Hazlitt elaborated in *Economics in One Lesson*:

“We **cannot distribute more wealth than is created.** We cannot in the long run pay labor as a whole more than it produces. The best way to raise wages, therefore, is to raise marginal labor productivity. This can be done by many methods: by an increase in capital accumulation - i.e., by an increase in the machines with which the workers are aided; by new inventions and improvements; by more efficient management on the part of employers; by more industriousness and efficiency on the part of workers; by better education and training. The more the individual worker produces, the more he increases the wealth of the whole community. The more he produces, the more his services are worth to consumers, and hence to employers. And the more he is worth to employers, the more he will be paid. **Real wages come out of production, not out of government decrees.**” xxiv

## **Economics and the Seven Principles**

Dr. Charles Wolfe has masterfully made the connection between economics and the seven governmental principles of liberty. xxv The following is a summary of his teaching. When we are aware of the close connection between government and economics, we realize that these seven governmental principles can also be expressed as economic principles:

**The Principle of Individuality** — Biblical economics is at its root, individual, not collective. An economic system is made up of innumerable daily individual decisions. Dr. Wolfe contrasts this principle with collectivism, “under which government is more concerned with groups than with individuals, and forces people to join together in producing goods and in providing for their economic security.” xxvi

**The Principle of Christian Self-government** — It takes self-government to save and invest, and to purchase tools, so you might be able to be more productive and have a better financial future. Self government among a people will result in a maximized peace, harmony, and prosperity.

**The Principle of Christian Character** — Character is needed in the market, on the part of both



producer and consumer. Character is needed on the part of civil authorities to exercise only their Biblically legitimate powers. When a people have a great degree of Christian character and self government, they will enjoy a greater economic blessing.

**Conscience is the Most Sacred Property** — We must realize that it is not material property that is the most important. The Kingdom of God is not meat nor drink... (Romans 14:17) but rather internal property “righteousness, peace and joy” and our conscience, our heart and our spirit. We must never violate our conscience by behaving immorally as a producer or consumer.

**The Biblical Form of Government** — A Biblically based government will most fully protect our economic liberty. As Dr. Wolfe observes, “Under our Constitution, the government was meant to be strictly limited in its functions and cost — to have just enough power to guard the citizen’s rights, but not the power to interfere with honest economic activities.” <sup>xxvii</sup>

**The Principle of Local Self Government** — Economics must be decentralized, with individual buyers and sellers meeting in the market and making voluntary exchanges.

**The Principle of Unity Producing Union** — When a buyer and a seller come to a “meeting of the minds” to make an exchange, because they believe it will benefit both of them, they contract together and make a trade.

Ponder these additional principles concerning the relationship between civil government and economics

1. **God created man to be free, including having economic liberty.** “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians. 5:1). Civil government is ordained by God to perform the limited functions of praising those who do good, protection of life and property, and the administration of justice (Romans 13). Therefore, it is not the civil government’s role to direct, control, or regulate any aspect of the economy, but rather to *protect economic freedom* (Acts 5:3,4). Corporate welfare (crony capitalism) and much of corporate lobbying is justifiably criticized. But consider the situation. When government unjustly controls businesses and the economy, then businesses push back by lobbying for laws that benefit them. Can you blame them? The better tactic is to reduce the unnecessary government control over business and the economy. Then the need for corporate lobbying almost disappears!

Sadly today nearly unlimited civil government acts like this: subsidize, tax, regulate, penalize, spend, over legislate, borrow and manipulate.

2. **Rulers, as well as the citizens, must submit to God’s government.** “By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all who judge rightly” (Proverbs 8:15-16). Rulers must submit to God’s principles of economics, and the nation will be blessed economically. In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 we see that the civil ruler was not to (1) build himself a powerful army, (2) not to practice polygamy, (3) not make himself rich. He must (4) keep a copy of God’s law to read that he would fear God, keep the law, and stay humble before God.
3. **Civil government should enforce God’s command to have honest weights.** “You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measurement of weight, or capacity. You shall have just

balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin” (Leviticus 19:35-36). See also Deuteronomy 25:13-15 and Micah 6:10-12. Practically, this means that government must have laws against stealing, cheating or deceiving others in the market.

4. **We err when judging only by the short term and looking at how policies effect only some people.** Henry Hazlitt, in the masterful *Economics in One Lesson* explains,

“The art of economics consists in looking not merely at the immediate but at the longer effects of any act or policy; it consists in tracing the consequences of that policy not merely for one group but for all groups.” xxviii

Frederick Bastiat said the same earlier, observing that we must look at the internal and external, what is seen and what is not seen “...in all public spending, behind the apparent good there is an evil more difficult to discern. To the best of my ability, I should like to get my reader into the habit of seeing the one and the other and of taking account of both.” xxix

**There are often unintended consequences of decisions or policies.** Unintended consequences are typically bad or evil results that are the result of laws with good intentions. They are the result of the fact that lawmakers cannot accurately predict how individuals will respond to a particular law.

For example, when marijuana (pot) smoking was legalized in Colorado in 2014, there were several unintended consequences: (1) pot is getting into the hands of minors, (2) people bake pot in cookies making it available for minors and for people to ingest accidentally, (3) crime has increased with burglars breaking into homes to get pot, (4) there is an increase in those driving while high on pot, and (5) those from other states are purchasing pot in Colorado and taking it to their state where it is illegal to possess/use.

5. **Taxes to support the legitimate functions of government should be raised through a means that does not interfere with production.** Scripturally this would be a “head tax” or poll tax. “This is what everyone who is numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as a contribution to the LORD. Everyone who is numbered, from twenty years old and over, shall give the contribution to the LORD” (Exodus 30:13-14). The American founders choose an indirect tax, import taxes, to fund the federal government. When you are taxed unjustly it does not just affect your bank account, there is something that happens to you internally, as you realize that part of your life and labor is going to someone else who does not have a right to it.
6. **Government subsidies, often referred to as corporate welfare, interfere with the free market and are immoral.** Government should be a “referee” in the economic system, making sure that everyone plays by the rules and nothing more. When civil government grants subsidies, it is involving itself in “special interest” wealth redistribution.
7. **It is Biblical to pass an inheritance to your children.** “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous”

(Proverbs 13:22). See also Proverbs 19:14. Civil government should not interfere with this duty and obligation by demanding a portion of the inheritance. All estate taxes should be eliminated.

## **Labor-Obtaining Goods and Services God's Way**

All wealth is the product of labor. John Locke

Work is the form in which we make ourselves useful to others.<sup>xxx</sup> Lester Dekoster

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you. I Thessalonians 4:11

### **Property is Acquired by Labor**

A fundamental question regarding property is “How do we determine what is mine, and what is yours?” There are several different theories as to what it is that makes something your property, in exclusion of others. English philosopher John Locke answered that question with this observation:

*Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a Property in his own Person: This no Body has any right to but himself. The Labour of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his Labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his Property. It being by him removed from the common State Nature hath placed it in; it hath by this Labour something annexed to it, that excludes the common Right of other Men. For this Labour being the unquestionable Property of the Labourer, no Man but he can have a Right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others. <sup>xxxi</sup>*

Locke reasons that the labor of a man belongs to him exclusively. When he applies this labor to

what God has given to man in common, the product becomes his property. The water in the river belongs to all of us in common. But if I take a bucket, go the river and fill my bucket, and return to my home, the water has now become mine. If you were to take the water from me, you would be stealing.

The way to gain property is through work, "The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Proverbs 13:4). Man is not to steal, cheat, connive, manipulate, or gamble to gain the things that he desires to have, but he is to produce or attain them through his labor.

### **The God of the Universe Invites Us to Work With Him!**

How did God design for man to obtain all the goods and services that he needs and wants, things like iphones, Toyota truck, houses, broccoli and cheese casserole, cordless drill, air conditioning, a nice meal at the Red Lobster, and much more? Drum roll please.....Work! Yes, every human being is called to the noble task of work, six days per week. Obviously, we don't work only to obtain goods and services. We also work to fulfill God's calling on our lives, hence the concept of "vocation." What kind of example does the Godhead give us? The Father, Son and Holy Spirit work! "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working" (John 5:17). We must follow His example and command, and work.

In Genesis, one of the first things that we learn of God's character is He is a master Creator. Man was designed to work; work is the fulfillment of our calling. Vocation has at its Latin root, *voco* or to call. When we work, we are following the example of our Father. We create, and we serve others, fulfilling the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. Man worked before the fall and will work in heaven. Work was not part of the curse but rather sweat, thorns and thistles were the result of man's sin. When man refuses to work he **is not operating according to God's design for him, and he unjustly takes from the productivity of others.**

Because of our sinful nature and the fact that we must earn our living "by the sweat of our brow", we need to be motivated to work. God gives us this motivation by the possibility of gain or profit "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go" (Isaiah 48:17). See also Matthew 25:14-27; Luke 19:11-27, II Timothy 2:3-6. The desire for gain and profit are not evil as some allege, but very Biblical, in fact crucial to economic progress. Human beings generally do nothing unless they expect to gain or profit from it themselves, or expect to profit others.

From an economic standpoint, man works to survive, for without work, no one would have even the bare necessities of food and shelter "Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully" (Proverbs 10:4-5). See also Proverbs 6:6-11; 12:11, 27; 13:11; 16:26, 18:9; Psalms 128:2; II Timothy 2:6; Revelation 14:13; II Thessalonians 3:8-10; Genesis 3.

The Bible teaches that we are urged to work by our hunger pains "A worker's appetite works for

him, for his hunger urges him on" (Proverbs 16:26). Consider the wisdom of God; since hunger pains return 4-6 hours after we eat, God lovingly reminds us several times per day of this important obligation to work and produce.

Refusing to work, and living off the productivity of others, is sinful. I Thessalonians 3:10 soberly declares, "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." Obviously Christians must also shun unbiblical ways to obtain goods and services including stealing, gambling, taking "redistributed" wealth, engaging in immoral "work" such as drug dealing, prostitution, extortion, swindling, begging, etc. Christians should set the highest example as those who "do their work heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men" (Col. 3:23).

### **Six Ways, but only two are good**

There are ways to obtain the material things that man needs to live (food, shelter, clothing, and other items). **Not all of them are moral, legal or ethical.** The categories include:

1. Labor (including investing)
2. Gifts/Inheritance/legitimate charity
3. Stealing (begging, deception, cheating)
4. Gambling
5. Government redistribution of wealth (welfare, what some call "legalized theft")
6. Immoral "work"

These six obviously fall into two categories: the first two are Biblical and the last four are not.

### **Biblical**

We have established that Scripture teaches that we must work to obtain our wants and needs. "In all labor there is profit, but mere talk *leads* only to poverty" (Proverbs 14:23). Scripture also teaches that **we must be producers since we all are constant consumers.** In order for there to be something to consume, there must be something produced. Webster defines work as:

In a general sense, to move, or to move one way or another; to perform; to labor; to be occupied in performing manual labor whether severe or moderate. One man works better than another; one man works hard; another works lazily. To produce by action, labor or exertion. To work out, to effect by labor or exertion. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Phil. 2

Through work we produce, and then we have something to consume. This is God's order; there is no way around it, though some men wish there was some other way.

We can also obtain wealth and goods through gifts and inheritances. There is also Biblically appropriate charity. For the deserving poor, those who through no fault of their own either cannot work, or cannot produce enough to survive through their labor, it is appropriate that they receive assistance from their family members. God's "safety nets" consist of friends, voluntary associations and the church.

## Non-Biblical

Under the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> commandments, “Thou shalt not steal and thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:15, 17) are a host of non-Biblical ways to gain goods and services. These include but are not limited to: begging, deception, cheating, manipulation for monetary gain, slavery, etc. Ephesians 4:28 is clear that rather than taking from others what does not rightfully belong to us, we must work in order to become givers: “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”

The Bible clearly teaches that **gambling is an evil** for individuals and society. The root evil in gambling is covetousness, a violation of commandment ten. Those who gamble hope to gain a large sum with a very small expenditure. “A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished. A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth and does not know that want will come upon him” (Proverbs 28:20, 22). See also Proverbs 13:11, 21:25-26, 23:4-5, 30:8, and I Timothy 6:9.

As we established earlier, government **redistribution of wealth** (legalized theft) is a great evil in a society. Through this seemingly compassionate method of giving goods and services to those who “deserve” it, wealth is actually stolen from producers and given to those who may or may not be quite capable of working themselves. In the case of those able to work, they should do so, and not take stolen goods. For those not capable of providing for themselves, the deserving poor, they should look for assistance from family, church or voluntary associations.

Judas betrayed Jesus and was paid 30 pieces of silver. The silversmiths in Acts produced idols, silver shrines for Diana, for the people to worship. The woman with a spirit of divination brought her masters much money. Zacchaeus the chief publican cheated others in his work. What do these all have in common? “Work” was being done, but it was immoral, unethical or illegal. Not all work is equal; we must be involved in work that is done in accordance with God’s Word, and is beneficial, not harmful to our neighbor. Selling drugs and other illegal substances harms others. Sex trafficking, prostitution and pornography violate God’s commands for sexual purity and bring great harm to those abused. All forms of stealing, robbery, selling of defective goods, manipulating others for gain, and deceiving others in the marketplace are violations of the Biblical principle to love others as ourselves. Yes, we must work. Yet we must ensure that the work that we do glorifies God. We all must produce a quality good or service that will bless us and our neighbors. That’s God’s order for work, and it will result in the smiles of heaven upon us.

## Am I a Producer?

In what way is labor or work fundamentally different from the (four) non-Biblical ways of gaining money? When one labors, he or she produces a good or a service. The laborer benefits and someone else benefits from the good or service. It is “win-win.”

What is the relationship between producers and consumers? No economic principle is more obvious than this: **In order for there to be consumption, there must be production.** Although this truth is so obvious, there are many who want to be consumers, but not producers. It should be

obvious to these individuals that since they are consuming without producing, they must be living off of the production of others. This is a very troubling situation. It is against God's order and clear violation of His commandments. **Rather than being net takers, producing less than we consume, we are called to be net givers, consuming less than we produce.** The fact that we all are to be producers is clear from the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25) and The Parable of the Minas (Luke 19).

God's way is perfect and a wonderful source of blessing to us and our neighbors. Specialize in an area of passion and gifting, trade with others and "do business," thus fulfilling the Dominion Mandate.

However with the **non-Biblical ways, nothing is produced.** Wealth is simply transferred in various ways, some coercive and some voluntarily. However, in order for one party to win, another one must lose. It is win-lose, or a zero sum gain. Another reality is that ultimately **there is a loss of wealth:**

- With stealing, items are destroyed or sold for amounts less than their value. Consider those who destroy an air conditioning system by ripping out the copper which they sell for scrap. A \$5000 air conditioner was destroyed to earn \$200 from scrap copper.
- With gambling there is a loss because the house always wins. In addition, there are administrative costs for those who manage the games. Consider the opportunity costs; monies wasted on gambling could have been spent on productive goods and services.
- With government welfare there are the costs of government bureaucracies. Estimates vary, but between 1/4 and 1/2 of government welfare monies actually gets to the intended recipient. The greatest loss with government welfare is the loss of human dignity, for God has designed each of us to labor and produce, for our sake, for our family, and for those that He wants us to bless.

As Proverbs 13:11 puts it, "Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase." Put in an honest day's labor six days per week and enjoy the blessings of a Holy God.

## **A Shout Out for Tools!**

It's easy to take tools for granted. For most of us, they are ubiquitous. We have kitchen tools, garden tools, computer tools, tools on our phone, automotive tools, hand tools, power tools. Go to Home Depot or Lowes and enter tool heaven! What are tools all about?

After the fall, man was to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. But God, in His mercy, provided a way to lessen the labor and multiply the production of man. As Charles Wolfe observed "God created the three basic factors of production – natural resources, human energy, and tools." <sup>xxxiii</sup> God gave man the ability to invent laborsaving devices (tools) to multiply his expenditure of energy. "Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox" (Proverbs 14:4). There is a cost to owning and maintaining an ox, but an ox is very powerful tool.

By nature man desires to obtain the greatest results with the least trouble. According to Frederick Bastiat, “Men have a natural inclination, if they are not prevented by force, to go for a bargain—that is, for something that, for an equivalent satisfaction, spares them labor— whether this bargain comes to them from a foreign producer or from a capable mechanical producer. <sup>xxxiii</sup> Man’s material welfare equals his use of natural resources plus his energy multiplied by the use of tools.

It’s easy to take for granted the hundreds, even thousands of tools that we own and use. Just to be clear, I do not take for granted my cordless drill. It is a close friend! Tools make life incredibly easier for us than previous generations who did not have access to them. We should pause and thank God for giving man the vision, ingenuity, and incentive to invent and use tools.

Tools are one of life’s great blessings, multiplying human effort. Without tools, we all would have to “work harder” and not necessarily “work smarter.” Many tools are mentioned in the Bible: Hammer, axe, tools of iron (I Kings 6:7), millstones (Isa. 47:2), mortar and pestle (Pro. 27:22), furnaces for refining gold and silver (Pro. 27:21), ovens, baking and frying pans (Lev. 2:4, 5,7). Jesus advocated the purchase and use of tools. In Luke 22:36, He urged the use of a purse, script (wallet) and a sword.

Economists recognize the truth of the equation  $MMW = NR + HE \times T$ . <sup>xxxiv</sup> Man’s material welfare equals natural resources plus human energy multiplied by tools. Unlike natural resources and human energy, **tools can be increased without limit**, which is one reason why wealth can grow. To create tools men must deny themselves, save and invest.

Dr. Charles Wolfe observed, “To a large extent, economic progress is externally the consequence of the development of better tools.” <sup>xxxv</sup> What makes the GDP of some nations greater than others? Nations with high GDP **have the most tools**. More tools, multiplying our human energy, result in more productivity.

### **Thank a Businessman or Businesswoman today**

An entrepreneur is a man or woman who envisions something that does not exist and brings it to pass. God of course is The Entrepreneur as He envisioned this world and each of us and said, “Let it Be.” Entrepreneurship is not just about goods and services. Benjamin Franklin thanked his mother for being an entrepreneur. How insightful he was, as parent envisions what a child is to be, and works diligently to bring this vision to pass.

Entrepreneurs are responsible for the creation of the goods and services that we enjoy. They see a need, devise a way to meet that need, and greatly bless all those who profit from that good or service. Consider the blessing to the family and community of the female entrepreneur in Proverbs 31. Other entrepreneurs in the Bible include Nehemiah; Lydia, the seller of purple; Saul; and the servants who gained by trading in Matthew 25:14-23.

Did you know that small businesses are the backbone of the American economy, creating approximately 70% of all jobs? *World* magazine editor-in-chief Marvin Olasky observed concerning businessmen, “Politicians call themselves ‘public servants’ but our real servants risk their livelihoods each week to bring us what we rarely think about and often take for granted.” <sup>xxxvi</sup>



Thank God for entrepreneurs who have seen a need of their friends and neighbors, took a risk, and met that need with a quality good or service. Thank God for their vision, their sacrifice, their wise management and stewardship, and their hard work day after day, so we consumers can benefit. Without small business owners (and large business owners too) we would not enjoy the blessings of all the goods and services that we can easily take for granted each day. As I type this I can see only a fraction of them: computer, printer, light, desk, paper, books, a handgun, music, a stapler, watch, glasses, camera, and iPhone.

Today, I purpose to thank all of the small business owners that I meet for their incredible public service. My life is so much richer because of you entrepreneurs and business owners, I am so grateful for you!

A very short list (I could list hundreds) of the small businesses that have and do impact my life include: Adele Diamond, Melaleuca, The Foundation for American Christian Education, World Magazine, Edward Jones, Focus Asset Management, StoneBridge School, Fresh Fare Café, Planet Plumbing, StoneBridge School, Ethicom, Haskell's Heating and Cooling, Frutive.

If I could mention several larger businesses, I would give a shout out to Kroger, Chic-fil-A and Home Depot for serving me and my family so well. What would I do without food and screws?

Purpose to show appreciation to small business owners, managers or workers that you come in contact with.

Ponder these additional principles related to labor:

1. Capitalism means private ownership of capital (land, buildings, and machines). Capital goods are not consumed but rather are what is used to produce the consumable goods. Saving is a form of spending. Money placed in the bank is loaned to someone in order to earn interest to pay the saver. Most likely the money is lent to someone for the purchase of capital, land, building of a new building, machinery, etc. Saving is discouraged by taxation, inflation, and uncertainty of government action.
2. Two can produce more working together than the sum of their individual efforts. "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm *alone*? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three *strands* is not quickly torn apart" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). See also Leviticus 26:8 and Deuteronomy 32:30. Therefore, unity in the marketplace is to be desired.
3. Christians must do their work diligently as unto God, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). Christians should be the best employees, the ones with the best attitude, the hardest work ethic, the most honest, the one who honors authority the best, etc. Even non Christian business owners should want to hire Christians as they would know that they would be getting the best possible employee.

## Private Property- No Freedom Without It

“Government is instituted to protect property of every sort...This being the end of government, that is NOT a just government... nor is property secure under it, where the property which a man has ... is violated by arbitrary seizures of one class of citizens for the service of the rest.” <sup>xxxvii</sup>  
James Madison

### Freedom or Free Stuff - you can only have one

Did you ever wonder why we never have to teach children the concept of “mine? Watch a toddler take a toy from another toddler, and watch the sparks fly! “Mine!” cries the offended child, right? We are born with a sense that something can belong to someone to the exclusion of others.

The Bible is clear regarding the individual ownership of private property- possibly the greatest (of God’s) inventions of all time. Ownership of private property, with deeds to property, and a system to transfer a deed from one individual to another was well established by the time of Abraham, around 2000 BC. In Genesis 23, Abraham purchased a field from Ephron to bury Sarah. This principle is taught throughout the Bible (1 Kings 21:1-16, Exodus 10:24-26, 22:1, 7, 1 Chronicles 21:18-25, Proverbs 15:25, 19:14, Mark 11:1-3). In Luke 10:7 Jesus affirmed that a man’s labor was his property, and he should be paid in exchange for it: “Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages.” One of the main points that Jesus intended in the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20) is, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will **with mine own?**”

Ownership of private property is a cornerstone of a sound economic system. Acts 2:44-45 is not an example of communism but rather confirms the principle of private ownership of property “And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” Notice that private property is affirmed because believers sold possessions that they owned in order to provide for fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who had an urgent need.

The story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 affirms the principle of private property. Peter said to Ananias, “while it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own power?” Even Communist Manifesto co-author Frederick Engels recognized that: “If some few passages of the Bible may be favorable to Communism, the general spirit of its doctrines is, nevertheless, totally opposed to it.” <sup>xxxviii</sup>

The principle of ownership of private property is in great peril today. The greatest threat is confiscation of our property by all levels of government (local, state, federal) to be squandered and redistributed to their entitled citizens. If someone can forcefully take from me what I have

labored for, what does that make me? Essentially, a slave.

### **Greed- A Deadly Sin Indeed**

“Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its possessors.” Proverbs 1:19

“If riches increase, do not set your heart upon them.” Psalm 62:10

There are few “sins” left in modern America: intolerance, discrimination, generating excess CO<sub>2</sub>, and... greed. We often hear some of our leaders and politicians rail against the sin of greed. The “greedy” are typically presupposed to be businessmen, businesswomen, entrepreneurs, the successful and the wealthy. Is this accusation warranted? What is the most likely word to be filled in the blank, “those greedy \_\_\_\_\_?” It’s businessmen of course. We hear this frequently in TV programs, in movies, in the newspaper, and on social media.

Does the person hurling the accusation of “being greedy” actually know the person that he is accusing, and therefore have some basis for the “greedy” label? No, he doesn’t. He assumes that the successful person is greedy. Why? The Bible is clear that all men are sinners, and therefore, we all, poor, middle class, and wealthy are susceptible to the sin of greed. And yet you almost never hear the phrase, “those greedy welfare recipients.” If someone is capable of working, and deliberately chooses not to, but instead lives off of the productivity of those who do work, by the means of taxation and wealth redistribution, would this not be considered greed?

So, why is the successful business owner automatically greedy? I believe the root is jealousy or envy. We hate the successful individual because he or she has more than we do. I Timothy 6:10 declares, “For the **love of money** is the root **of** all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Many assume that this verse is a warning to the wealthy. Certainly so, but it is equally a warning to those who are not wealthy but desire riches. These must not covet the money and goods of those who have what they lack.

Are there some greedy businessmen? Undoubtedly. But remember that to be successful the entrepreneur had to see a need of his fellow human beings, devise a plan to meet that need, produce a quality good or service at a competitive price, sacrifice to invest to produce this good or service, work very diligently often for many years before seeing the fruit of his work. To the businessman/businesswoman or entrepreneur we owe our amazing lifestyles filled with tens of thousands of tools, and conveniences. Each of our lives is tremendously enriched because of them. Instead of labeling these amazing and productive individuals “greedy” or even “super greedy” we should thank God that they get out of the bed in the morning, and essentially say, “What can I do today” to make life easier, happier, or more fulfilling for my fellow man?”

Commandments #8 and #10 are instructive. We must not covet our neighbors “stuff” (house, wife, servants, ox, etc.) and most certainly must not steal it. Jesus warns, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses” (Luke 12:15). This applies to every human being, not just those assumed, because they have material success, to be greedy.

Let’s have a reality check: business owners, entrepreneurs and the wealthy are not more prone to

coveting and greed than the rest of us. Politicians and bureaucrats are not less prone either!

## Income Equality

It is not Biblical to force economic equality, in the sense that that we must erase the categories of poor, middle class, and rich. Today, under the guise of the supposed truth of this position, much concern is shown over the “gap” between the “rich” and the “poor.” The socialists answer to the problem of economic inequality is to redistribute money from the wealthy to the poor, and sometimes the middle class as well. This redistribution is done by the force of civil government who alone has the coercive power to take from one and give to another. Biblically, this is blatantly unfair and unjust, a great evil of our day.

God, for reasons known to Him only, gives resources to people in varying amounts, for them to steward. In the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, one person received five talents, one received two and one received only one. In addition, people vary in their level of productivity. In general, the more you produce, the more you are rewarded.

Jesus commanded the soldiers in Luke 3:14 to, “Be content with what you have.” Paul commanded the same for all of us “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (I Timothy 6:6).

Perhaps the best way to avoid covetousness, greed and stealing is to be content with what God has given us.

Consider and ponder these five additional principles regarding private property:

1. Ownership of private property is imperative to a good economic system. A man’s labor is his property, “When you eat the **labor** of your hands, You *shall be happy, and it shall be well with you* (Psalm 128:2). Adam Smith observed, “...the whole produce of labor belongs to the laborer. He has neither landlord nor master to share with him.” <sup>xxxix</sup> There are those who allege the greed of owners of corporations however, the reality is that in the average corporation, 90% of money available for distribution goes to employees and 10% to owners.
2. To increase man’s material welfare we must increase output per worker. According to Charles Wolfe, “The Christian way to increase wages is to increase output per worker- by working harder, smarter or more cooperatively, by introducing better management methods, and by increasing the quantity and quality of tools the workers use.” <sup>xl</sup>
3. Wealth is both material and non-material. Webster defines wealth as “Prosperity; external happiness,” <sup>xli</sup> so wealth is not just stuff, as you can have much material success and not be happy. Denis Peacock observes that, “Riches are something we have; wealth is something we are...wealth will pass through death but riches will not.” <sup>xlii</sup> It is obvious from Matthew 9:19-20 that some wealth passes from this life into heaven “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” See also I Corinthians 3:9-15.

Spiritual wealth is the result of your salvation. You have wealth in good relationships with family members, friends and neighbors. You also have wealth in your bodily and mental health, your life, liberty, emotions, time, and creative abilities and skills. Your most important wealth is not “the things that you possess” but non-material wealth.

4. Resources are to be used for legitimate purposes such as providing for family, tithes and offerings, taxes for the legitimate functions of civil government, savings, and assisting the deserving poor.
5. For reasons of His choosing, God allows some people to become wealthy or even very wealthy. “Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is this day*” (Deuteronomy 8:17-18). “The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts” (I Samuel 2:7). See also Job 42:10. Those that are blessed with material wealth are to use it for Godly purposes.

## Stewardship and Money

We don't own anything, not even ourselves! God owns everything "The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Psalms 24:1). However, he loans the earth's resources to man and entrusts him with stewardship. Man is accountable to God to properly steward these resources for Him. Noah Webster tells us what a steward is:

The steward was then originally a chamberlain or a butler. A man employed in great families to manage the domestic concerns, superintend the other servants, collect the rents or income, keep the accounts, etc. See Genesis 15:2 and 43:19. It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:1. <sup>xliii</sup>

Charactered and faithful stewards are highly prized, and will be given increasing levels of responsibility "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that **he will put him in charge of all his possessions**" (Matthew 24:45-47). See also Genesis 1:26-28; Matthew 25:14-30, Mark 8:8, and Luke 12:42-48.

Webster also defines steward as, "a minister of Christ, whose duty is to dispense the provisions of the gospel, to preach its doctrines, and administer its ordinances." Our most vital stewardship is our relationship with Christ and our witness to others.

God's plan for our character growth involves stewardship. We grow in character, maturity, and responsibility as we steward the property that God gives us. In the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:10-12) Jesus teaches the principles: (1) that we have to be faithful in "the least" so we will be faithful with much, (2) that we have to be faithful with natural things before we can be trusted with "true riches," and (3) that we must show ourselves faithful with another's property before God can trust us with our own.

Denis Peacocke observes: "He (God) has given all of us at least five assets for which we will have to answer to Christ about our stewardship: (1) our physical bodies, (2) our conscience, (3) our relationships, (4) our talents, and (5) our possessions. All of these items are on loan from God, and we are to properly manage them under the stewardship of God's Word and bring them back to God with increase." <sup>xliv</sup>

One aspect of stewardship is the sinfulness of waste. Did you know that natural gas was once considered pollution and it was burned just to get rid of it! The truth of scarcity requires that we not waste time, goods and services, etc. Jesus modeled this by having his disciples collect the leftovers after the feeding of the 5000. "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is **a great waster**" (Proverbs 18:9). Entrepreneurs are most motivated to conserve and not waste in any way. Why? Waste of resources, employee's time, raw materials, etc results in a higher cost to

the employers, reducing the potential profit for a business. Consider the concept of the assembly line; the purpose was to make the best use of human energy, a huge cost in many businesses. The best entrepreneurs will figure out better and better ways to utilize man's energy, raw materials, and tools.

## **Money**

A Christian must embrace a Biblical view of money. Many people fall into the trap of idolizing money, believing that more money will solve all their problems.

What is the proper perspective on money? Jesus taught us to “love the Lord your God...and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). We should not love and serve money, for money is not true riches and we “cannot serve God and wealth” (Luke 16:11-13). Do not seek riches; if they come to you, don't set your heart on them (Psalm 62:10). See also I Tim. 6:10, Matthew 19:23-24, Luke 18:22, Luke 19:8.

We are commanded to honor the Lord with our substance: “Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce” (Proverbs 3:9). This means practically that we must use, enjoy and steward everything that God entrusts to us as He directs.

Theoretically anything can be used as money, or a medium of exchange. Historically “money” has always been a product that people valued. For example, gold and silver are valued for their beauty and usefulness. Biblically, gold and silver are indicated as being valuable, and historically they have been used as a predominant source of money. Speaking of the concept of wisdom, God declared, “Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield *better* than choicest silver” (Proverbs 8:18-19). See also Genesis 2:12; 47:13-19; Psalms 19:10; Proverbs 2:4; 3:14; 8:10-1.

Being in debt is to be avoided, as it is a form of slavery. “The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower *becomes* the lender's slave” (Proverbs 22:7). See also Romans 13:8.

# WWJD in Business?

## Introduction

An interesting study of economics is to simply read the gospels and examine what Jesus had to say about it. Be prepared to spend some time on this project!

Imagine if as a freshman in college you signed up for Economics 101 and you found out, to your utter amazement, that the Lord Jesus Christ was your professor! What text would you expect to have to buy? No worries, you already have the words of Jesus found in the Bible!

Lesson one is simple yet incredibly profound: “Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). First class over; now its homework time: How does this teaching of Christ impact your life in your market-based activities? What things must you do and what things must you refrain from doing?

We have already examined a number of things that Jesus has said on the subject of economics. Let’s look at some additional principles that He taught and exemplified.

## Today, I will serve ~~myself~~ others!

Jesus taught that the two greatest commandments were to “love the Lord” and to “love our neighbor as we love ourselves” (Matthew 22:37, 39). I easily love myself, as most all naturally do, but I have to work at following Jesus’ command to love Him and my neighbor. Self-love and self-interest are inherent in the nature of man. However, we must not allow healthy and normal self-interest to become unhealthy and sinful selfishness.

Applying the principle of self-interest to economics, in a free market, I will not be able to prosper and meet my own needs unless and until I serve you with the goods and services that you want and need. In Philippians 2:4-5 we see that having the mind of Christ means not just caring about and look after our own affairs, but also the needs and concerns of others.

## Jehovah Jireh, My Provider

One of the most important economic/financial principles we need to remember is that we must look to our loving heavenly Father to provide for us. **We are not alone**, using only our strength, efforts and wisdom to try and provide for ourselves and loved ones. Luke 12:22-34 and Matthew 6: 25-34 underscore the truth that God cares for the animals, ravens to be precise, so He will care for us, providing food and clothing. In addition, these passages teach that life is more



than the material. As Christians, we must make the spiritual primary and the material secondary. Otherwise we may end up serving mammon, not God (Matthew 6:24).

### **ROI-Return on Investment Needed**

"I don't like the banks; I think I will just place my money under my mattress. At least I know that I will not lose any of it." A Biblical method of saving? Hmm...how would Jesus invest his money? That is a good question since we cannot see this directly from His actions. It seems clear from His teachings though, that **Jesus would get a return on his investments, even if only minimal**. As we have seen previously in Luke 19, commonly called the Parable of the Minas, there was a nobleman about to "leave town" who called ten servants and gave them each ten minas. He commanded them to, "Occupy (do business or trade) until I come." When the nobleman returned he called the servants to account, demanding to know, "how much every man had gained by trading."

The first had produced a ten-fold return. "Well done, good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities." The second produced a five-fold return, still exceptional. He was given authority over five cities. The last one spoken of in the parable gained nothing. However he did not lose anything either, and supposed that the nobleman would be happy about this. His excuse for not gaining by trade was a false accusation against the nobleman, that the nobleman was a thief. The nobleman's response was severe: "Why did you not give my money to the bank; then at my coming I would have received my money with interest?"

Why is money in the bank better than money kept in cash? Money saved in an institution is typically borrowed by an entrepreneur or businessman who uses loaned resources for increased productivity. Rather than receiving a reward for doing business, trading and gaining, the last servant ended with nothing, not even the knowledge that he enabled someone else to make a gain.

God has given all of us something to steward for Him: time, labor, talent and treasure. Do business with it, and bring a return for your King.

### **No "right to buy"**

Allegedly a new form of "discrimination" is menacing our society: Christians who decline to do business with homosexuals. This is not discrimination; it entirely consistent with our shared heritage of religious and economic liberty.

First, I will address the religious liberty argument. Christians do not hate homosexuals, but must "speak the truth in love" on all issues of morality. This would also include adulterers, fornicators, pornographers, polygamists, and multitudes of other sinful behaviors.

Christians have done business with homosexuals for ages. For that matter, they do business with many people that do not hold to Biblical standards of morality or conduct. But, for the most part,

one's lifestyle and moral standards are not disclosed in a business transaction. Christians have every right not to be seen as promoting an unbiblical lifestyle. For a Christian baker to not want to make a wedding cake and put two men's names on it is quite understandable because this is a matter of conscience. The Bible is clear that we should not violate ours, or someone else's conscience "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men" (Acts 24:16). See also Acts 23:1, I Timothy 3:9 and Hebrews 9:14.

The American imperative of religious liberty ensures us that we do not have to violate our religious convictions. This is a precious heritage that protects all Americans of all religious persuasions, and is vital for the preservation of a free society.

Secondly, the free market economic argument is that **there is no "right" to do business** with someone. Jesus weighs in on this argument in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:15). He declared the principle of sovereignty of the business owner when he asked "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

Our inalienable rights consist of rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. No right to do business with someone exists. In a free market, you and I are free to buy and to sell our goods or services. **I have no right to buy from you, and I have no right to make you buy from me.** If either were coerced (buying or selling), the market would no longer be free! In most instances (99.9 % of the time), I would sell to anyone who wanted to buy my product, but if I refused to sell my product, this is my prerogative. This is part of the freedom that we all enjoy.

Do lawyers take every case? No. Are doctors compelled to have you as their patient? No. Do pharmacies have to fill your prescription for you? No. Does a bartender have to give you a drink? No. Do private schools accept every student? No. Must a restaurant serve you? No. Must a taxi cab driver transport you? No. Do businesses refuse service to people who are not appropriately dressed, who do not display proper conduct, or who use inappropriate language? Yes. Must billboards, printers, publishers, or marketers publish your message? No. Must a law firm whose mission is to help men through divorce, also represent women? No. Must those managing a parade accept every float proposal? No way. Must those organizing a convention accept all potential exhibitors or speakers? I can assure you, they don't! This is the free America that we know and love. Man has long understood that in the market there must be an internal agreement and unity before there is an external transaction.

Am I harmed because someone may not sell to me? Not as long as they do not enjoy a monopoly. In a free market there typically are many competitors. If a homosexual couple cannot purchase a customized wedding cake from a Christian baker, they simply have to go to a competitor.

What is the reason for this controversy? Why are couples like the Kleins in Oregon declared to be evil, persecuted for their faith, fined and put out of business? Obviously, the homosexuals pursuing them do not want to be told that their chosen behavior is sinful. This brings up another subject doesn't it? No right to not be offended exists! Being a member of civil society insures that you will hear many things that you object to or don't agree with.

Consider these additional Biblical topics that Jesus taught about:

1. **Not everyone who seems concerned for the poor really cares about them.** “But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.” (John 12:4-6).
2. **Realize that “you always have the poor with you”** (John 12:8), so abandon utopian schemes that propose to eliminate poverty absolutely.
3. **Be a giver, even if poor.** “And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of *them*; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on” (Luke 21:3-4).
4. **Give and lend generously.** “Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back” (Luke 6:30). See also Luke 14:12-14.
5. **Give of your own money.** There is no virtue in taking care of others with someone else’s money (that which was taken from taxpayers). “On the next day he (Good Samaritan) took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you” (Luke 10:25).
6. **God can use financial deprivation to show us our need for repentance.** The prodigal son was a dramatic example of this. “And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving *anything* to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men” (Luke 15:11-32).
7. **Government is limited to punishing evil.** It is not to be a doer of good, not a benefactor. “And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors’” (Luke 22:25).
8. **Taxes for the legitimate work of government (punishing evildoers) are appropriate.** Jesus paid taxes, “However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and me” (Matthew 17:27).
9. **Business is proper,** but it must be done God’s way and in the proper place “and to those who were selling the doves He said, ‘Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business.’” (John 2:16).

10. **A worker deserves his wages:** ...for the laborer is worthy of his wages... (Luke 10:7), so redistribution of wealth is a great evil.

11. **Be a wise financial planner.** Carefully plan all areas of your personal finances and your business according to Biblical principles. “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’” (Luke 14:28-30).

## The Economics of Loving Our Neighbor

But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 John 3:17)

He who steals must (1) steal no longer; but rather he must (2) labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will (3) have *something* to share with one who has need. (Ephesians 4:28)

Christians have an unequivocal mandate and blessing to care for our brothers and sisters, the poor, sick, orphans, widows, oppressed, down hearted, etc. This loving aspect of God's design was revealed to His people, the Israelites, in the Old Testament, and confirmed by Jesus and other writers in the New Testament. In Matthew 25: 31-48 Jesus affirms that we must give to the hungry and thirsty, take in the stranger, and visit those in prison and those who are sick. This is proof that we are a sheep, not a goat. The \$64,000 question is: How? Methods matter. A good thing, done with unbiblical methods is wrong.

We must do all things God's way. The prevailing governmental charity model today is not Biblical, but to oppose it means you get accused of callousness, even "wanting people to die in the street." It is assumed that if the civil government does not do something, it won't get done. Nothing could be further from the truth.

### Causes of Poverty

Poverty is not primarily a lack of goods and services "for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses" (Luke 12:15). The most visible aspect to poverty, lack of adequate food, clothing, health care, can be due to circumstances beyond one's control. However, poverty may also be the result of certain chosen attitudes, assumptions and behavior. If we want to truly assist someone in need we must "lay the ax to the root" (Luke 3:9), which means first locating the root.

Dennis Peacocke teaches that there are five kinds of wealth:

- Relational peace with God
- Relationships that God has given you
- Revelational wealth (truth)
- Time (good health means time to fulfill your destiny)
- Material contentment <sup>xlv</sup>

If you are missing one or more of these types of wealth it is easy to see how you might end up having a measure of material poverty as well.

Bryant Myers defines poverty as, "the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings."<sup>xlvi</sup> The story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) is a good example of relational breakdown that needed restoration. It was good that no one gave the prodigal anything to eat

when he was famished because this forced him to repent to his father, whom he had greatly offended, and be reconciled.

If we don't deal with the root of poverty, we will forever be dealing with the fruit. Dennis Peacocke observes, "Poverty is the result of sin: be it personal sin, parental sin, social sin, or national sin. Because it is "sin based," poverty won't just go away by throwing money at it as we have already seen. Neither will it go away by spreading blame." <sup>xlvii</sup>

## People Need the Lord

Absolute poverty (inadequate food/shelter/medical care) is... absolutely awful. We should all be concerned about those who lack proper "food and covering" (I Timothy 6:8). The good news is that free enterprise is lifting millions out of absolute poverty. Since 1990, extreme poverty, defined by the World Bank as earning less than \$1.90 a day (adjusted for purchasing power), has declined from around 40 percent to **10 percent of the world population**. If we continue to see advances in limited government and free markets, in the next decade **we can see absolute poverty almost eliminated in the world**.

Relative poverty, people that are "poor" relative to others in their neighborhood, city, state or nation, is something that needs to be addressed by families, churches, businesses, and voluntary associations. The causes of relative poverty are many and diverse including:

**Laziness-** "A lazy man does not roast his prey, but the precious possession of a man is diligence" (Proverbs 12:27). A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, then your poverty will come as a robber and your want like an armed man. (Proverbs 24:33-34).

**Lack of self-government** including drug and alcohol abuse "Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit" (Proverbs 25:28)

**Being the victim of a disaster-** "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died" (Job 1:18-19).

**Greed-** "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed" (Luke 12:15).

**Bad decisions-** "he (Prodigal Son) squandered his estate with loose living..." (Luke 15:13).

**Lack of education and skills-** This often results in those who work but do not earn enough to properly provide for themselves and their family.

**Age (young or old) –** This often means inability to work, or working but not earning enough.

**Physical or mental disabilities or challenges** "And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them" (Matthew 15:30).

**Single family parenting-** “I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die” (I Kings 17:12).

**Motivation** (don't really care to work too hard) “At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*” (I Timothy 5:13).

**Oppression** by others- “Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath” (James 5:4).

**Wrong Motives** “you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures (James 4:3).

We must not be collectivists but rather deal with people as individuals, so when attempting to assist people, we must deal with their unique situation and specific root causes of their troubles.

What the poor, and all of us, need the most **is the gospel**. No matter the cause of relative poverty, we must not treat people as only physical beings. To do so makes us practical materialists. People are both body and soul/spirit and our greatest needs are spiritual. Jesus declared, “the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, and set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). What? Preach the gospel, heal, preach deliverance, set at liberty? Why didn't Jesus say He came to feed, clothe, and provide housing? Jesus knows our real needs, and they are primarily spiritual; physical needs are secondary. When Jesus cured many of their infirmities, of evil spirits and plagues, and gave sight to the blind, wholeness to the lame, cleanse lepers, etc (Luke 7:21-22), guess what? Now they, who undoubtedly were poor, were free and able to work, produce and get out of their material poverty. So they were **doubly blessed, set free spiritually and materially!**

### **Work Essential to Our Prosperity**

It is clear in the Bible that I am responsible to work to gain my wants and needs “For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God” (I Thessalonians 2:9). See also I Thess. 4:11 and Titus 3:14. God is serious about our working, as there is no “Plan B.” There is simply no other just way for us to obtain goods and services that we need and want.

**What about those who cannot work, or their work is not sufficient to provide for them and their dependents?** Isn't this what we really mean when we talk about helping the poor? Let's be clear. Some “poor” are lazy, moochers, freeloaders, stealing from those who work. However there are those who cannot work **for reasons that are not under their control** (age, physical health, mental health, disability, etc.). There are also those who are working, but do not earn enough to provide for themselves and their family.

Let's admit that there are many who are gaming the system. They are quite capable of working but unfortunately choose not to, and are quite willing to let someone give them the necessities and niceties of life. Proverbs 21:25 contrasts the sluggard and the righteous person “The sluggard's

craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.” Notice that the sluggard refuses to work but his craving never ceases, while the righteous, because he works, has something to give. God’s ideal is for all able bodied to work, to produce for ourselves and also so we can give to those who are truly needy.

Assisting the needy, whether materially, spiritually, emotionally or in any other way is a perpetual obligation of all Christians. You cannot love God unless you also love your neighbor tangibly. The Old Testament laws governing the nation of Israel reveal God’s principles for caring for the poor. The poor were to be allowed to glean in the fields and the vineyards, “Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger” (Leviticus 19:9-10). See also Leviticus 23:22 and Deut. 24:19. God commanded this loving provision for the poor. Harvesters were not to reap all of the harvest; they were to leave a small portion so that the “poor,” who were able to work, could come into a field and gather food for themselves. The tithe of the third year was to be set aside for the poor and needy (Deut. 14:28, 29). Furthermore, Jubilee laws (Leviticus 25) limited to no more than 50 years the time that family property could be leased to others. By having family owned lands revert to the original owner every half century, provision was made for equal opportunity for Israelites to earn income, without destroying economic incentives to work and produce.

Biblically there should be **equality of opportunity**, not equality of material prosperity. By the way, those who think Biblically about this issue will be against welfare to all socio-economic groups including the middle class and the wealthy. So-called corporate welfare is wrong as well.

As Stephen Perks observed in his study of the Old Testament, the emphasis was upon individuals meeting their own needs, with the family as the “safety net”:

Of the 613 laws in the Torah only a small number relate to the role of the civil magistrate or civil government. Most require individuals to govern themselves and their families in terms of just principles of behavior and compassion for the poor as expounded in the Torah. God judged Israel for failing in this respect, but the Torah does not require the State to rectify this failure through wealth redistribution programs for the poor...<sup>xlviii</sup>

There are over 2000 verses of Scripture referencing assisting the widow, orphans, oppressed and poor. How many of them advocate for government-forced redistribution of wealth? None!

Aid is always given in the context of the family. The beautiful story of Ruth and Boaz is one such example. God took care of Ruth and Naomi through family members.

Practice charity to others? Absolutely, but we must do so willingly, not just when coerced, “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (II Cor. 9:7).

### **Charity - Who’s Jurisdiction?**

Does the government have a role in assisting the poor (abused, widow, orphan, oppressed)? Yes, of course. Some of its major roles include:

- Insuring justice for all, and making sure that oppression is minimized
- Insuring the rule of fixed written law equally applied to every citizen



- Strong laws to enforce contracts
- Laws that ensure that our private property is protected
- Defending citizens against foreign invaders and lawbreakers, insuring swift justice
- Ensuring a free market economy, guaranteeing that all may participate freely in the market as both producers and consumers
- Having minimal regulations only to ensure health and safety; having a minimal need for a license to perform services, so that there are few barriers to start a business, work and produce
- Making sure government is limited to its Biblical responsibilities, and citizens are only taxed to provide for these limited responsibilities.

One role the civil government doesn't have: providing welfare. **Civil rulers are not to become benefactors** "And there came to be a dispute among them, who of them seems to be greater. And he (Jesus) said to them, The kings of the nations lord it over them, and the (ones) wielding authority over them are called benefactors" (Luke 22:23- 24). A benefactor (euergetes) is a worker of good, a philanthropist. Jesus teaches that we are to wield power through service, as individuals, churches and associations, not from a position of power as civil rulers.

And yet, a nation conceived in liberty, has abandoned God's way in this area of life. In the supposed interest of helping others, our government has provided strong incentives to not work. According to research done at the Cato Institute:

*Last year (2013), at all levels of government, we spent approximately one trillion dollars on wealth transfer programs to the "poor." 40 million remain below the federal poverty line. If we had simply given these the money, each person would have received \$25,000, or \$100,000 for a family of four. The trillion dollars spent is roughly the same as the federal deficit for each of the last five years. In addition, **17 trillion dollars has been spent in the "war on poverty" since it began.** This is roughly the same amount as our current national deficit. <sup>xlix</sup>*

We must avoid **the errors of not assisting those whom we should and giving assistance to those who can work and refuse to** (II Thess. 3:10). We also must honor God's biblical principle of jurisdiction, so in short we must provide for ourselves if at all possible, with the family (blood relatives) as the safety net "if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God...But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Timothy 5:4,8). If there are no blood relatives, or they are not able or willing to assist, then the church and voluntary associations are secondary safety nets, "A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, *having been the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work*" (I Timothy 5:9-10).

### **What Did Jesus Do? (For the Poor)**

In Luke 4 we saw that Jesus declared that the poor would "have the gospel preached to them." The greatest need of us all, rich, middle class and poor, is the good news, not food. Jesus started no soup lines, gave no handouts, and made no commands to government for welfare programs.

Jesus taught principles of liberty that if followed will ultimately bring the greatest freedom to mankind.

Jesus preached and taught the truth, healed sickness, gave sight to the blind, healed lepers, got rid of demons, and delivered people from sinful lifestyles. That meant previously unemployable people were now able to work!

Wasn't the feeding of 5000 an example of how Jesus modeled feeding the hungry? It was not about providing a free lunch but rather proving the deity of Christ. This was not the civil government doling out a meal. Jesus nowhere advocated for people to receive a check every month when not working. Entitlements to a class or people or special interest group were not part of his teaching. He never once taught that we should care for people who were capable of caring for themselves. Jesus never proclaimed that we should rob people of fulfilling their calling in the marketplace.

Jesus could not have been more forceful when He declared in Matthew 25 that mankind will be separated into sheep and goats. The sheep, those on the right, would enter eternal life for they had fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, provided shelter for the stranger, gave clothing to those in need, looked after the sick, and visited those in prison. The goats, those on his left, did not do these things, and would go to eternal punishment. But wait, **Jesus was speaking to individuals** ("the people") not to civil governments! Clearly Jesus will hold us as individuals accountable for how we treat "the least of these."

Isaiah 58 is very similar as God describes the "fast" that He desires in order for the nation of Israel to show true repentance: share your food with the hungry, provide the poor wanderer with shelter, when you see the naked clothe him, and don't turn away from your own flesh and blood. **This was directed to "my people," not civil government.**

Did Jesus send the disciples out with a truckload of food, clothing, medicine, etc.? In Matthew 10 they were told to: "preach the message of the kingdom of God, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and drive out demons. Do not take any gold or silver, but as you work expect to get paid (food and shelter)."

### **Justice God's Way**

The term "social justice" often means ultimately the redistribution of wealth. But is such action just? "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly" (Leviticus 19:15). So to act justly means not to show favoritism; all are to be treated equally under the law, because God made "both rich and poor" (Proverbs 22:2).

Justice among other things means being able to enjoy the fruits of your labor "They will build houses and dwell in them: they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat" (Isaiah 65: 21-22). Laws that are just for all- poor, rich, and in the middle- will assure the inviolability of private property.

Stealing is most unjust. That is why it is condemned in no uncertain terms in the Bible. Commandment eight simply says, "Thou shalt not steal." Ephesians 4:28 directs, "Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need." The thief is not just to not take what justly belongs to others but to work so that he becomes a giver himself. Stealing is wrong, even if

it is to satisfy one's hunger "Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house" (Proverbs 6:30-31).

## **Deserving vs. Undeserving Poor**

"Feed the hungry!" we are told by advocates for the poor.

Did you know that In I Timothy 5 there were strict qualifications for widows asking the church for aid? For more than two centuries Americans practiced Biblical charity. This is well documented by Marvin Olasky in *The Tragedy of American Compassion*. Here is one of the primary principles:

It is sinful to not assist the truly needy. It is also a sin to enable someone who needed to work, needed character development, needed to repent of sin, or who needed to be restored to their family.

All human beings have responsibilities to the poor, and the Christian more so. The first is to discern if the person is poor due to no fault of his own, or for reasons under his control. In other words, we must discern **between the deserving and the undeserving poor**. Our response to each will be different. What should our response be to the undeserving poor? Those who can work, and don't or won't, need to gain a Biblical perspective on work. Their primary need is to gain this Biblical perspective. Our efforts to assist them may also include:

- Sharing the gospel to bring them to salvation
- Character training and instruction - teaching Biblical principles related to their areas of need
- Counseling - giving specific Biblical instruction and counseling
- Assistance with addictions or harmful habits
- Assistance obtaining job training or help finding work
- Help with the responsibilities of single motherhood

Their immediate need is to find gainful employment, as God expects them to work, so they can eat and have shelter.

**Our response to the deserving poor is quite different.** Often deserving poor cannot work because of physical conditions, sickness, disability, age, mental condition, etc. It may be that they are working but cannot make enough money to adequately provide for their family. This is often the case with single parents who do not have very marketable skills. We need to assist deserving poor with the basic necessities of life, i.e. food, shelter, clothing, medical care. In addition, we may need to assist them with some of the same things that the undeserving poor need: education, counseling, job training, etc.

What actions help and what actions harm "the poor?" The deserving poor are harmed by either ignoring their needs, or by just band-aiding the problem. In other words, giving them handouts once or on an occasional basis, while ignoring the possible assistance that could help them become more self-sufficient. The undeserving poor are harmed by undiscerning handouts which only enable them to circumvent God's method for them to obtain the material necessities of life. It ultimately shields them from reaping what they have sown, allows them to remain in a sinful lifestyle, and destroys their self-dignity.

### The Biblical Model: Two Groups of Poor

<b>Deserving Poor</b>	<b>Undeserving Poor</b>
Cannot work through no fault of their own, or working but not able to adequately provide for their needs and/or the needs of their family	Able to work but refuse to do so, or are underemployed for reasons under their control
Their spiritual/character needs are primary	Their spiritual/character needs are primary
Often should be initially assisted with food, shelter, or clothing	Initial assistance given to gain a proper work ethic. Emergency, not permanent aid given (food/shelter).

### Tithe is Essential

Proper care of God's house, God's people and our neighbor in need cannot happen without the tithe and giving. The tithe is first a reminder that everything that we own belongs to God. Secondly, it is a reminder that we are to live our lives for Jesus, and others, and not selfishly. We must not steal from God by refusing to give, "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings" (Malachi 3:8). If we will steal from God, we will most likely do the same from our neighbor.

### Explosion of Productivity Needed

"This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America." – President Lyndon B. Johnson, State of the Union address, January 8, 1964

It has been over 50 years, and the war has been lost. The poverty rate in the US has hovered between 10 -15 percent for the past half century. More alarming, the two institutions that contribute the most to economic prosperity, marriage and work, are in decline. Since Johnson's declaration of war, the rate of children born outside of marriage has skyrocketed from 7 to 40 percent! The workforce participation rate for men is at an all time low, 68%.

A new paradigm is needed. A war on poverty, whose main weapon is redistribution of wealth, is clearly unbiblical. I emphasize, it is evil to take from someone who has worked and produced, and give it to someone else who refuses to work and produce. Assisting those who are poor but not capable of working is clearly the responsibility of (first) family members and (secondarily) the church and voluntary associations.

Since war results in wounding and death, a war on poverty kills four things:

1. **Incentive to work.** Why work, when one can get the goods and services that one wants and needs without labor? With the welfare state, an entitlement mentality is likely to gain ascendance in a large proportion of the population.

2. The **human dignity and self worth** that results from self reliance. We were created with the ability and desire to work to provide for ourselves and others. When we do not work, our human dignity is diminished because we are not behaving as God designed us.
3. **Productivity of the non-worker.** A “war on poverty” greatly diminishes productivity while consumption goes on unabated. It is axiomatic that without production, there can be no consumption.
4. **Enthusiasm and productivity of the worker.** Nothing kills the spirit of a producer more, than knowing that some of what he or she has produced will be removed by force (unreasonable taxation) and given to someone who chooses not to exercise an equal amount of effort to produce.

What would happen if we could restore the foundational principle that man was designed by his Creator to work and provide for himself? What would be the consequences of implementing, “If a man does not work, neither let him eat?” (I Thessalonians 3:10). What great good could come about if we returned to a Biblical view of welfare, where those who cannot work through no fault of their own were assisted by their family, and then the church (I Timothy 5) as a “safety net?” What would happen if we returned to our founding principle of limited government, where the role of civil government would be to insure justice, provide for defense and punish evildoers?

Instead of a “War on Poverty” I propose an “Explosion of Productivity!” At least four things would come to life:

1. **Incentive to work.** Why work? Because you know that the fruit of your labor will be under your control. You will be able to distribute the fruits of your productivity as you deem proper.
2. **Human dignity.** You will be blessed by the joy that comes from knowing that you are laboring as you were designed to. You are honoring the Biblical way that God has designed man to obtain the goods and services that he and his loved ones want and need. You will be blessed as you serve your fellow man with the gifts and talents that God has given you, and you will reap accordingly.
3. **Productivity.** In order to have something to consume, you will produce something that others want or need. Through trade, both of you will gain and be blessed.
4. **Zest for life and work.** All of us will joyfully produce as we realize that our earnings will be ours to save, invest, give, or use for our needs and wants.

Forget the lost war but learn its lesson. Man was designed to work. Let him fulfill that destiny and he will produce amazing things!

## A Summary-Contrasting Views of Economics

To summarize and conclude, let us contrast the Biblical view of economics with the prevalent un-Biblical view. This is not to say that there is only one un-Biblical view; indeed there are many. This contrast is between what God says about economics and the prevalent thinking of many in America today.

<b>Biblical</b>	<b>Un-Biblical</b>
The market is free; there is free (un-coerced) interaction between buyers and sellers.	The market is partially free. Government laws and regulations place many restrictions on the market. These include but are not limited to minimum wage laws, subsidies, tariffs, unnecessary bureaucratic regulations, and protectionist policies.
There is no redistribution of wealth; each man is able to enjoy the fruits of his own productivity.	Wealth redistribution programs abound: welfare, SNAP (food stamps), public education, Medicare, Medicaid, social security, college grants, subsidies, disaster relief, funding for the arts, corporate welfare, etc.
Money is tied to something of value such as gold or silver.	Money is simply a document printed by the government; printing more can easily debase it.
The economy is controlled from the bottom up by the billions of choices that consumers and producers make each day.	The economy is controlled from the top down by government that arbitrarily manipulates the economy in such ways as establishing federal controls such as a Federal Reserve System, which expands or shrinks the money supply, and raises or lowers interest rates.
Entrepreneurs see a need in the market, take a risk to meet the need, and (sometimes) are rewarded accordingly with profits. Competition between entrepreneurs ensures that the customer receives excellent products at the lowest possible price.	Competition is stifled by government regulations and policies. Civil government acts as an intermediary, placing itself between the entrepreneur and the consumer. The result is lower quality products and higher prices, because producers can get away with it without consequences.
The employer and the employee privately negotiate and come to an agreement concerning the proper wage. The free market allows for the purchasing of a man's labor to be controlled by market forces only.	Civil government interferes in the free market by establishing a minimum wage, mandating benefits and other similar laws.
People see diligence and hard work as the way to economic prosperity.	People spend great amounts of time trying to figure out how to prosper economically in ways other than working (examples: gambling, getting their fair share from the civil government, stealing, selling illegal products, initiating frivolous lawsuits, etc.)
Ownership of private property is viewed as a "pillar" of the economy.	The concept of ownership of private property is weakened by such things as government unnecessarily owning property, taxes levied against owners of property such as cars and houses simply because

	they possess them; taxes remove property from the diligent to care for the “poor.”
The profit motive is viewed as good. Profits are absolutely necessary to motivate entrepreneurs to take risks. Profit is not viewed as an end, but as a means to serve and glorify God.	People criticize so - called excessive profits, price gouging, and corporate greed. Consequently, laws are introduced that are designed to reduce the wealth of these presumably greedy individuals and corporations.
A free people live in relative economic prosperity, with savings, protection against losses, and a minimum level of debt.	People live on the edge with little or no savings and a great deal of debt. A large part of their current income is spent on debt service.

In summary, I believe that free-market economics is the system that is **most consistent with the teaching of Scripture** for these reasons:

- It honors the Biblical principle of private ownership of property.
- The civil government is limited to punishing of evildoers according to Romans 13.
- It is in accord with the teaching of five spheres of authority: individual, family, church, voluntary associations, civil government.
- It helps us avoid the twin errors of not assisting those whom we should (Matthew 25: 31 - 46) and giving assistance to those who can work and refuse to (II Thess. 3:10).
- It acts to decentralize power, thereby placing limits on human authority that are needed because of the sinful nature of man.
- There is free interaction between buyers and sellers, consistent with Proverbs 20:14 and Acts 5:1 -4.
- The quest for profit is part of the design of mankind and is good, leading us to serve each other.
- Market competition reduces waste, a good end.
- Envy and greed, both sins, are stymied, because in order to gain, one must serve others.
- Voluntary cooperation is encouraged rather than coerced cooperation.
- It reduces the ability of thieves to steal (waste, fraud and abuse) because there is less government spending and more private spending. Those managing private funds will be much more diligent in avoiding a loss.
- Better goods and services are produced and available at a lower cost.
- The principle of freedom of choice is honored.

## Resources for Teaching and Learning Economics Biblically

Resources from the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE)

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Gwartney, Stroup, and Lee, *Common Sense Economics* (St. Martin's Press: NY, NY, 2005)

Frederick Bastiat, *The Law* (Atlanta, GA: Foundation for Economic Education, 1950)

Frederick Bastiat, *The Economics of Freedom* (Jameson Books: Arlington, Va.)

Fred G. Clark and Richard S. Rimanoczy *How We Live* (Cleveland, Ohio: American Economic Foundation, 1944)

### **Resources with an explicitly Biblical Worldview**

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Dennis Peacocke, *Doing Business God's Way* (Santa Rosa, CA: Rebuild, 1995)

Burton W. Folsom, Jr., *The Myth of the Robber Barons* (Herndon, Va.: Young America's Foundation, 1991)

R.C. Sproul Jr., *Biblical Economics* (White Hall, WV: Tolle Lege Press, 1985)

Vic Lockman, *Biblical Economics in Comics* (Ramona, CA: Vic Lockman, 1985)

Charles Wolfe, *The Principle Approach to American Christian Economics* (a chapter in *A Guide to American Christian Education* by James B. Rose)

Steven Perks, *The Political Economy of a Christian Society* (Taunton, England: The Kuyper Foundation, 2001)

David Nobel, *Understanding the Times* (Manitou Springs, Co.: Summit Press, 1991) chapter 9

Jay Richards, *Money, Greed, and God* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Books, 2009)

Shawn Ritenour, *Foundations of Economics, a Christian View*  
<https://www.hiphonconomics.com/>

### **High School/College Curriculum**

*Economics in a Box* by Pam Cooper: <http://www.economicsinabox.com/contact.php>

Free resources from John Stossel (<http://stosselintheclassroom.org/economics/>)

Tom Rose, *Economics Principles and Policy from a Christian Perspective*



Bettina B. Greaves, *Free Market Economics, A Syllabus and Free Market Economics, A Basic Reader*, Foundation for Economic Education (FEE)

*Economics of Entrepreneurship* is an eight-module online course designed for high school students. Produced by FEE, it provides the free-market perspective that is generally missing from officially-sanctioned economics curricula. Its forty lessons are keyed into National Standards, providing home-school parents and high-school teachers with convenient access to materials that substitute for or supplement the required lessons in a conventional textbook.

*Biblical Foundations for the Economic Way of Thinking and Understanding God's Calling!* (Institute for Faith, Work & Economics)

*Marginal Revolution University* (mruniversity.com) has over 800 free video presentations. This was created by Tyler Cowen and Alex Tabarrok, both George Mason University professors.

### **Principle Approach High School Curriculum**

Economics Course (\$230 complete course including lectures) by Dr. Paul Jehle, Plymouth Rock Foundation

#### **Organizations:**

FACE- The Foundation for American Christian Education

Ludwig Von Mises Institute

FEE-The Foundation for Economic Education

Hayek Society

The Heritage Foundation

Prager University

Acton Institute

Strategies at Work

The Nehemiah Institute

Coalition on Revival

Go Strategic

The Providence Foundation

Summit Ministries

### **Notes**

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<sup>iv</sup> Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828 (Chesapeake, VA: The Foundation for American Christian Education)

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