



## Lesson 52

### Principle or Policy?

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Principle and policy- it's a topic we must understand. It is two ways to categorize things, two ways to apply things. In this lesson we'll look at three documents, two from the Bible and one from the world, and determine if they are a Principle, or if they are a Policy.

## **Principle and Policy**

### **What is Principle?**

What is principle? If you look it up in the dictionary, it is "a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning." Principle is something that is fixed. It cannot be changed. It is the foundation of something, whether it be truth or something else.

### **What is Policy?**

So what is policy? We looked at what principle is; policy is related to principle. A policy is a rule or law. A policy is a principle applied to a specific time or circumstance. So policy is an example of a principle; you can say that it is an application of a principle. Policies are affected by culture, so different cultures can have slightly different policies that come from (or are examples of) the same principle. An example is showing respect, that is a principle, but in different cultures there are different policies of how to show respect. Policies also change over time. For example, as God has expected humans to grow in their understanding and acceptance of equality, policies (rules) on how to treat others has changed. While a principle is a foundational law, a policy shows how that principle should be used in a certain time or culture.

# The Constitution

## A brief history of the Constitution

The Constitution is the highest ranking law in the United States. Before the Constitution, the first thirteen US states were under the Articles of Confederation, but many Americans believed that the Articles didn't make a good government. In May of 1787, delegates from 12 of the 13 states (Rhode Island didn't send delegates because they didn't want a powerful government) came together in Philadelphia to begin reconstructing the government. This was the Constitutional convention, it lasted from May 14, 1787 to September 17, 1787. On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 39 of the 55 delegates signed the Constitution. But there was a problem, it was decided that the Constitution could only become official if ratified by at least 9 of the 13 states. The legislative bodies in each state then had to call a constitutional ratification convention. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, five states ratified the Constitution. In February of 1788, a compromise was made: amendments would immediately be proposed if more states ratified the Constitution. The compromise worked and on June 21, 1788 the 9<sup>th</sup> state ratified the Constitution (the other 4 States later ratified it). It was agreed that on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1789, a new government would begin under the Constitution. The first 10 amendments to the Constitution were ratified on December 15, 1791, among those were the amendments of freedom of speech and religion. The Constitution continued to be amended until 1992 when the 27<sup>th</sup> and so far the last amendment was ratified. So, on September 17, 1787, the Constitution was signed, it was later ratified and then began governing America on March 4, 1789.

## The Constitution isn't perfect

The Constitution of the United States is not a perfect document. While it did not directly say "slavery", it's inferred in the Constitution in more than one place. One place is the Fugitive Slave Clause in Article 4 Section 2 Clause 3. It says, "No person held to service or labour in one state, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labour may be due." You can see it's clearly talking about a slave escaping the South and going to the North. It says the slave must be returned to their master. Article 1 Section 2 Clause 3 is another instance of referencing slavery. It says, "Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons." This was made because the South didn't want to pay full taxes on the slaves, so instead, the slaves were counted as 3/5<sup>th</sup>s a person instead of a whole person. The reason the Constitution has these clauses was because it is a compromised document.

## **The Constitution is Principle**

The Constitution is not perfect but it is still important. It is, or is supposed to be, the foundation of the United States' government: the modern glorious land. It is a principle; it should serve as a blueprint. We should take what it says and apply that to our time. An example of how the Constitution is a principle is the Judicial branch; the Constitution did not say much about this part of the government, so it wasn't until after it was implemented that the specifics of the Judicial branch were laid out. The Constitution is also made to be amended, and although that is not an easy process, it is still possible. The first 10 amendments (the Bill of Rights) are about the rights of individual people and this was added to the Constitution in 1791, after it was ratified. This was what the writers intended, because the Constitution was made to be a blueprint that was to be expanded, applied, and changed over time, to fit the time. We should not read it literally- we need to make policies for our specific time based on it. The Constitution is a principle and applications of it are policies.

## **The Constitution is Policy**

The Constitution is also policy. We know that the Constitution is a principle, but can it be a policy as well? The definition of policy is something that applies to a culture, and can change over time. The Constitution fits this description. It was a document that applied to the time it was written in. It contained approval of slavery, which was popular in the time of 17-1800s. Policy also means something that can change. We also saw that a compromise allowed the Constitution to be amended. The amendments changed things that were in the original document, but that was okay because the Constitution was made to be able to be changed. Therefore, the Constitution is also policy because it allowed slavery and allowed amendments- it is a compromised document. We should be happy that the Constitution is policy- otherwise no one would have free speech or freedom of religion (in the US). So the Constitution can be principle or policy, it depends on your perspective.

# The laws for the Israelites

## The laws aren't perfect

Moses' laws were not perfect. We find his law in the first five books of the Bible- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Those laws were written for the time of the Israelites, not for us. That is why some of them don't make sense to us. They were perfect for the Israelites then but not for us today. For example, Deuteronomy 22:5. For the Israelites back then, it made perfect sense- that woman should not do the job of a man by wielding a weapon. But when you bring that verse into our time, we do not directly apply that. That is just one example of how Moses' laws aren't perfect for us.

## The laws are Policy

We see that there are many strange things in the rules/ laws in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. That is because most of those rules are policies. Many of them aren't even actual laws, they're just good advice. They were given to the Israelites so they could know how to act in their time. But most of those rules don't apply today. A very prominent example is the sanctuary service and the sacrifices. Those things are policies. They were examples of how to worship God in those days. Today we worship God differently- we have a different policy. God also gave them laws on what animals to eat and what animals not to eat: those were policies. Now we are not supposed to eat meat at all; we now obey a different policy on diet. Many of the laws and rules in the books of Moses are policies that God gave him for Ancient Israel.

# God's law

## The 10 Commandments aren't perfect

The 10 Commandments aren't perfect. We saw that the Constitution and Moses' law were both imperfect. Because of that imperfection, the Constitution is policy, but in another perspective, despite its imperfection, it can still be principle. Moses' law is imperfect, but unlike the Constitution, it is policy and not principle. Not everything can be both principle and policy, so what about the 10 Commandments? Well, as blasphemous as it might sound, the 10 Commandments are not perfect. The second commandment says not to bow down to images: Christians don't bow down to idols so that commandment can't literally apply to every time period- it is imperfect. The fourth and tenth commandments allow slavery- that is nowhere near perfect. With the Constitution, we saw that even if a document is imperfect it can still be principle. With Moses' laws, we saw that the imperfectness of that document made it policy. So are the 10 Commandments both principle and policy, just policy, or are they just principle?

## The 10 Commandments: principle & policy

The 10 Commandments are both policy and principle. How are they policy? The 10 Commandments were written for the Israelites in that time. They were instructions for them. They weren't written for the twenty-first century. Policy is meant to change over time with the circumstances. The 10 Commandments are meant to change according to the circumstances, therefore they are policy. But they're also principle. How are they principle? They are still the rules that we are to follow today. They are the foundation that everything is built upon.

## The Principle of God's law

The 10 Commandments are both a principle and a policy, as we have seen. But there is another way that we can look at them, which is the two great commandments Jesus tell us in Mark 12 and Matthew 22. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matthew 22:37-39). Christ says that we need to love God and love our neighbor. We usually compare loving God to the first 4 commandments and loving our neighbor to the last 6 commandments. We can do that, but what type of laws are these two great commandments- are they both principle and policy like the 10 Commandments? These two rules are the principles of God's law. Christ says, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:40). The foundation of God's law is to love God and love everyone else. Different times and cultures define how we do that (policies) and those policies change. But the principles of God's law never change: love Him supremely and love everyone else supremely. " 'This do, and thou shalt live,' Jesus said. He presented the law as a divine unity, and in this lesson taught that it is not possible to keep one precept, and break another; for the same principle runs through them all. Man's destiny will be determined by his obedience to the whole law. Supreme love to God and impartial love to man are the principles to be wrought out in the life." (DA 498.1).

**In Summary:**

## Principle

A fundamental truth that serves as the foundation of a belief.

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A fundamental truth that serves as the foundation of a belief.

## The Constitution

The Constitution is Principle because

it is supposed to be the foundation of the US government (and principles are foundations).

The Constitution is Policy because

it permits slavery and allows amendments- it can change and was affected by it's surroundings which is the definition of policy.

# Moses' Laws

Moses' laws are  
Policy because

they were given to the Israelites so  
they would know how to act in  
that time.

# God's Law

The 2  
commandments  
are Principle  
because

they never change:  
love God and others.

The 10  
Commandments  
are Policy  
because

they were written  
for the Israelites in  
that time.

The 10  
Commandments  
are Principle  
because

they are rules for us  
to follow today.

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