

What we believe ... and Why.

Socialism

The subject of socialism has again become prevalent in our current political atmosphere. Despite the current events in Venezuela, and the numerous failed attempts at implementing socialism in the past, it seems that many politicians, celebrities and especially young people are becoming more open about their belief in socialism and antipathy for capitalism than in the past. The purpose of this study is not to debate or compare socialism and capitalism as to which is a better economic system according to human wisdom, but to look to the Scriptures as the model for God's view of economics. We believe that the Scriptures are relevant to all areas of life. This means not just theology, but also philosophy, ethics, law, biology, politics and even economics.



Socialism

- a. What is it?
 - b. What do the scriptures say?
 - c. Socialism and Church history.
 - d. How should we respond?
2. What is it?
- a. Socialism:
 - i. Definition:
 1. 1. any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods.
 2. 2.a. a system of society or group living in which there is no private property.
 3. 2.b. a system or condition of society in which the means of production are owned and controlled by the state
 - a. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/socialism>
 - ii. Portrayed as the economic system of people who really care about less fortunate members of society.

- iii. A response to unequal distribution of wealth by taking from those who have it (by law, by taxes or by force) and giving to those who don't.
- iv. Businesses are no longer run or operated by individuals or corporations, but instead are owned by the workers, or the community (aka the government) and run by central planners such as academic elites, unions, government or political appointees.

b. What about "democratic socialism"?



- i. "Democratic socialists believe that both the economy and society should be run democratically—to meet public needs, not to make profits for a few. To achieve a more just society, many structures of our government and economy must be radically transformed through greater economic and social democracy so that ordinary Americans can participate in the many decisions that affect our lives." <https://www.dsusa.org/about-us/what-is-democratic-socialism/>
- ii. Difference between Communism, Socialism and Democratic Socialism
 1. Communism: Commissars take your stuff and give it to other people. If you resist, the government arrests you.
 2. Socialism: Bureaucrats take your stuff and give it to other people. If you resist, the government arrests you.
 3. Democratic Socialism: 51 percent of the voters take your stuff and give it to other people. If you resist, the government arrests you.

🚩 **"Socialism" VS "Democratic Socialism"** 🚩

Under "*Socialism*," two wolves and a sheep vote on what to have for dinner. A month after eating the sheep, the wolves have died of starvation.

Under "*Democratic Socialism*," two wolves and a sheep "*Democratically*" vote on what to have for dinner. A month after eating the sheep, the wolves have still died of starvation, but it was "*Democratic*."



- c. What's the appeal?
- i. Free stuff:
 1. Health care
 2. Child care
 3. Education
 4. Guaranteed employment with a "living wage"
 5. Etc.
 - ii. Save the planet from "climate change"
 1. Green New Deal
- d. Since 1990 college professors who consider themselves "liberal" has grown from 42% to 60% in 2014. Higher Education Research Institute
- i. This is why 53% of Americans under 30 view socialism favorably.
 1. Reason-Rupe poll August, 2014
 - ii. And 69% of Americans under 30 would be willing to vote for a socialist presidential candidate.
 1. Gallup poll June 2-7, 2015
- e. Summary:



- i. Winston Churchill is always good for a quote and since he saw socialism's effects in Russia under Stalin and had to fight against it in Great Britain, he has some amusing observations:

1. “Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy, its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery.”
 2. “There are two places only where socialism will work; in heaven where it is not needed, and in hell where they already have it.”
- f. Another consideration is what’s called “Christian socialism”.
- i. Many Christian socialists believe capitalism to be idolatrous and rooted in greed.
 - ii. Linked to “Liberation theology”: a synthesis of Christian theology and Marxist socio-economic analyses that emphasizes social concern for the poor and the political liberation for oppressed peoples. This began in Latin American Catholicism, but has spread and mutated into other areas (feminism, African-American).
 - iii. Essentially, rich is evil and poor is righteous. The Good Samaritan becomes a story of oppression by elites and an example of solidarity between the Samaritan and the victim of violence.
3. So, what do the scriptures say about economic systems?
- a. Verses used to support socialism:
 - i. Acts 2:44-45

⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common;
⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.
 - ii. 4th Nephi 1:4

⁴ And they had all things common among them, therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.
 - iii. Acts 4:32-37

³² And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. ³³ And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, ³⁵ And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. ³⁶ And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son

of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷ Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

iv. Matthew 25:31-46

³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶ Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

⁴⁰ And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

v. Matthew 6:24

²⁴ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

vi. Matthew 19:21

²¹ Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

vii. Luke 14:13-14

¹³ But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: ¹⁴ And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

b. Other verses about economics:

i. Exodus 20:15, 17

¹⁵ Thou shalt not steal.

¹⁷ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

ii. Acts 5:1-4

¹ But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, ² And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter

said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? ⁴ Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

iii. Isaiah 65:21-22

²¹ And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. ²² They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

iv. Deuteronomy 24:14-15

¹⁴ Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: ¹⁵ At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.

v. Proverbs 14:31

³¹ He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

vi. James 5:4

⁴ Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

vii. Jacob 2:22-24

²² Think of your brethren, like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all, and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. ²³ But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. ²⁴ And after that ye have obtained a hope in Christ, ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them, for the intent to do good; to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick, and the afflicted.

viii. Mosiah 2:43-44

⁴³ I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants, ⁴⁴ And see that

all these things are done in wisdom and order: for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than what he hath strength.

ix. Alma 1:40-46

⁴⁵ And thus in their prosperous circumstances they did not send away any which were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; ⁴⁶ And they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need;

x. 2nd Thessalonians 3:10

¹⁰ For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

xi. 1st Timothy 5:8

⁸ But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

xii. James 4:13-15

¹³ Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

¹⁴ Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. ¹⁵ For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

xiii. Proverbs 31:16, 24

¹⁶ She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

²⁴ She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

xiv. Helaman 2:127

¹²⁷ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did also go whithersoever they would, whether it were among the Lamanites or among the Nephites; and thus they did have free intercourse one with another, for to buy and to sell, and to get gain, according to their desire.

xv. Ether 4:70

⁷⁰And the whole face of the land northward was covered with inhabitants; and they were exceeding industrious, and they did buy and sell, and traffic one with another, that they might get gain.

c. Summary:

- i. Scriptures support the principle of private property
- ii. Scriptures support the principle that individuals have a responsibility to care for the poor and needy.
- iii. Scriptures support the use of wisdom when giving aid; giving only when financially able, rewarding virtue and discouraging vice.
- iv. Scriptures support the principle of a fair exchange of goods and services (free market capitalism) without fraud, coercion or theft.

4. Socialism and church history

- a. During the 19th century, social theorists from Europe began experimenting with utopian communal societies in the United States.
 - i. New Harmony, Indiana
 - ii. Oneida, New York
- b. On a farm owned by a man named Isaac Morley near Kirtland, OH, there was a group of about 50 people who had established a cooperative venture called "The Family". This group was made up of followers of Sidney Rigdon, a Baptist pastor in the area who was also associated with the Disciples of Christ organization of Alexander Campbell.
- c. In October, 1830, missionaries from the Church of Christ arrived in the area and many members of this group joined the church. Sidney Rigdon was baptized in November, 1830, and quickly rose to a position of power and influence on Joseph Smith.
- d. Joseph Smith moved his family to the area in early 1831 and for a short time lived on the same farm that had been part of this cooperative venture. As more Church members immigrated into the area, many, including Joseph, were in great financial stress. Shortly afterward a revelation was received and publicized.
- e. The United Order (Law of Consecration)
 - i. Based on a revelation dated February 9, 1831 in Kirtland, Ohio.
 - ii. Book of Commandments, Chapter 44 (LDS D&C 42)
 1. Also called the "United Order of Enoch".

- iii. Participants would deed (consecrate) all their property to the United Order, which would in turn deed back an "inheritance" (or "stewardship") which allowed members to control the property.
 - iv. At the end of each year, any excess that the family produced from their stewardship was voluntarily given back to the Order.
 - v. Originally, the United Order was intended to be "an everlasting order for the benefit of my church, and for the salvation of men until I come".
 - vi. In practice, however, several attempts to implement the Order were relatively short-lived.
 - vii. 20th century LDS leaders attempted to distance the "Law of Consecration" from the 19th century utopian movement and Marxist communism and capitalism.
- f. In 1916-1917, quite a few members of the Church of Christ organized themselves into a group called Zion's Co-operative Industrial Association.
- i. Led by A. O. Frisbey & Charles N. Denham, it attempted to demonstrate that "all things common" could be successful.
 - ii. At the April 17, 1918, conference the assets were turned over to the Church to be administered by the Church.
 - iii. Church officers selected to administer it eventually closed it and liquidated the assets.

5. How should we respond?

- a. We should understand that most of those who promote socialist forms of government have good intentions.
 - i. They seem to really care about the poor.
(So should we.)
 - ii. We can agree that our political system may need reform.
(But, socialism isn't the answer.)
 - iii. Socialism can sound compassionate and even Christian.
But it is contrary to what Christianity teaches.
This is the key point.

- b. Socialism is contrary to Christianity.
 - i. Socialism is based on a purely materialistic worldview.
 - 1. No acknowledgement of spiritual issues.
 - a. “The issue of wealth and income inequality is the great moral issue of our time, it is the great economic issue of our time, and it is the great political issue of our time.” – Bernie Sanders
 - b. Suffering is caused by unequal distribution of stuff.
 - c. Salvation is achieved by the re-distribution of stuff.

Christianity sees both a material world and a spiritual world.

- 1. Mankind’s greatest problems are spiritual issues.
 - d. Suffering is caused by sin.
 - e. Salvation is achieved through Jesus Christ.
 - f. Our quality of life is not determined by how much stuff we have, but by our relationship with Christ.
- ii. Socialism endorses stealing.
 - 1. “Compassion” by government coercion.

Christianity condemns stealing.

- 1. Instead, assistance given voluntarily and cheerfully
 - a. 2nd Corinthians 9:7
 - i. ⁷ Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.
 - b. Moroni 7:7
 - i. ⁷ For behold, if a man being evil, giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God

- iii. Socialism rewards irresponsibility, punishes producers of goods and wealth.

Christianity gives the responsibility to labor if able and gives direction for use of accumulated wealth.

1. The Church has a special responsibility to her members. If a believer is in need, he or she should first seek help from members of their household. If they can't find help here, they should seek relief from their local congregation.

- iv. Socialism encourages envy.

1. "Let us wage a moral and political war against the billionaires and corporate leaders on Wall Street and elsewhere, whose policies and greed are destroying the middle class of America." – Bernie Sanders
2. This URL is to an excellent video by Prager University about the selfishness of socialism.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3GfCmbPDN0&t=1s>

Christianity teaches us not to covet

(Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21; Mosiah 7:124)

Christianity also teaches us to be content in all circumstances

1. Philippians 4:11-13
 - a. ¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. ¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.
2. 1st Timothy 6:6-8
 - b. ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

- v. Socialism ultimately replaces God and the family unit with the government.
 - 1. Government provides all a person's needs, including the care and education of children.
 - 2. Marriage is considered a form of female slavery.

Christianity sees God as the Creator of all things, the Provider of all needs and the Granter of all gifts.

- 1. The family unit, is the best institution for raising children, and the responsibility for teaching them rests on the parents.
- 2. Marriage is designed to meet the physical and emotional needs of both the woman and the man.