

How To Teach Your Teen About Government and Economics

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The Basics:

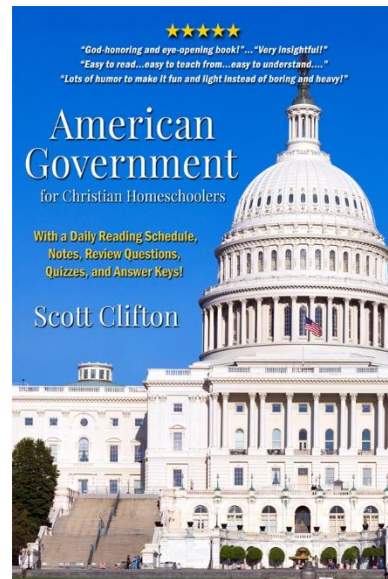
- If the Bible is correct on salvation and science, it'll be correct on what it teaches about government and economics.
- The way to teach subjects like government and economics is to **focus on Biblical principles**, not to fixate on outside sources like the Constitution, Supreme Court decisions, the opinions of historical figures and Greek philosophers, and so on.
- One common-but-fruitless way of discussing/debating government is to say something like, "In 1753, founding father Jacob James said that government should never tell businesses what they should pay employees." That's because someone else will dig up another founding father's opinion and say something like, "But in 1784, at 4:37 PM Eastern Standard Time, founding father William Thomas said that it was the government's job to tell businesses what they should pay employees."
- The same type of thing happens with Supreme Court rulings, interpretations of the Constitution, and so on. How does anybody know who's "right" using that method? (Of course, what many of America's founders said about government differs drastically from what most today say and believe!)

Part 1: Government

The Bible and Government

(see [American Government for Christian Homeschoolers](#)):

- If we want our teens to have a Biblical worldview, we should have them memorize what the **Bible** says about government, and judge everything by *that*.
- Of the hundreds of Bible verses on government, a common theme can be summed up with four key passages, two from the OT, and two from the NT.
- God’s Word says government exists for two basic reasons: (1) to punish violence and theft, and (2) to provide justice. Here are four key verses that sum up these principles:



Thus saith the Lord GOD; “Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice” (Ezekiel 45:9).

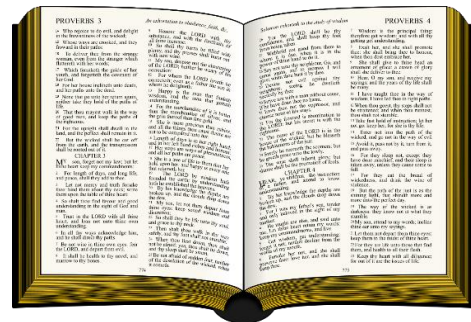
Thus saith the LORD; “Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor” (Jeremiah 22:3).

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil...for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Romans 13:3-4).

[Rulers] are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well (1 Peter 2:13-14).

In other words, the Bible says that rulers are to do these things:

1. Get rid of “violence” (murder, rape, assault, kidnapping, etc.) and “spoil” (theft).
2. Rule justly or set up just judges who rule fairly on disputes and charges, not with bias.
3. “Deliver” those whom the powerful steal from and oppress.
4. Be a “terror,” “revenger,” and punisher of “evil” and “evildoers.”

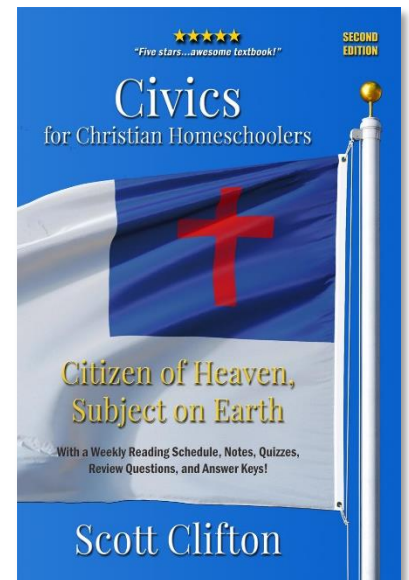


Important: “Evil” and “evildoers” refer not to simply *sins* and *sinners*, but to *crimes* and *criminals*. That word “evil” is translated “harm” elsewhere: when Paul told the jailer about to kill himself, “Do thyself no **harm**” in Acts 16:28, and once when a venomous snake bit Paul, but he shook it off and “felt no **harm**” (Acts 28:5).

“Evil” refers to *harm*: things like murder, rape, assault, kidnapping, theft, fraud, slander, and so on; “evildoers” are those who do those things. The Bible does not teach that governments are to punish sins such as hatred, drunkenness, jealousy, adultery, and so on. However, if those behaviors (or others) result in harm or theft—for example, if drunkenness leads to assault, or to driving drunk in a car and hitting someone or damaging property—the harm that results is certainly a matter for the law.

Summary:

- Don’t view government as a power struggle in which the majority gets to rule a minority, like many today do.
- Governments have very few legitimate, moral purposes, according to God’s Word. These purposes are to discourage and punish violence and theft, and to execute justice. Focus on these Biblical principles!
- Don’t worry about those who disparage America’s founders or laws or historical incidents. They’re usually wrong with their criticisms anyway, but if they say something like “Founding father Joseph Jay Witherspoon Clodhopper III had SLAVES!”...well, even if that *is* true, the Biblical principles of what government *should* do doesn’t depend on hypocrites or the actions of others in the least!
- This approach frees us up from being concerned if historians will discover (or make up) anything about America’s founders, and from having to know endless quotes from American founders to combat big-government fans, socialists, communists, and so on. “*What does the Bible say is government’s purpose, and how does it compare to Scenario X?*” should be how we approach issues.
- The greatest explanation of what government’s moral purpose is—besides the Bible, of course—can be found in an essay by Frederic Bastiat called *The Law*. (This entire essay is reproduced, a little each week, in my one-semester book *Civics for Christian Homeschoolers*.) [Click here](#) or click the book to the right for more information.
- If you want your teen to learn more about American government, and the topic of government in general, [click here](#) for information about in-person and online classes. Or [click here](#) to find out more about the book *American Government for Christian Homeschoolers*, including free sample pages.



Part 2: Economics (see [Economics for Christian Homeschoolers](#))

Two Main Things To Tell Your Teens About Economics:

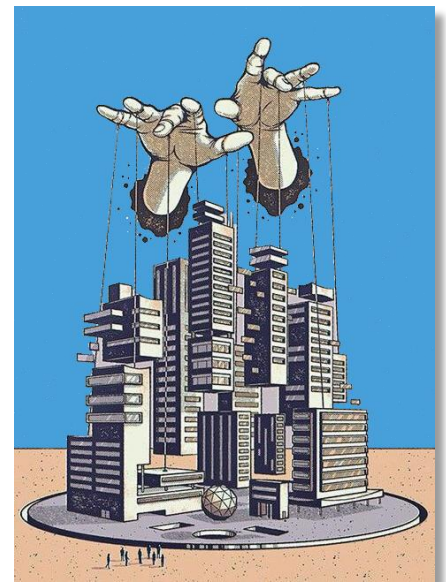
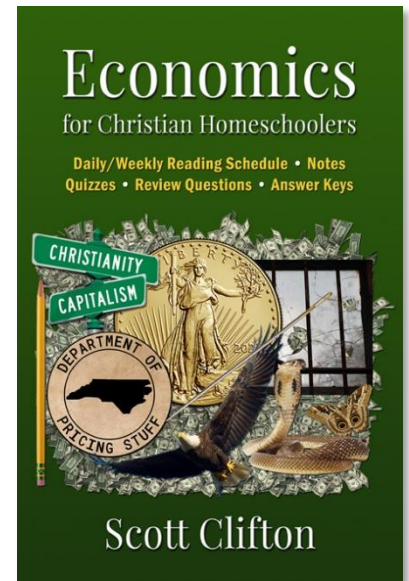
- “Yes, you can understand economics. If you study it, you can get the basics, and even better: Christians who know God’s Word increase their ability to understand the world and mankind (see Psalm 111:10 and Psalm 119:100).”
- “No, you can’t understand economics. You can’t possibly comprehend everything about the billions of decisions buyers and sellers make every day...but neither can government planners!”

Three Principles Teens Must Get About Economics:

1. The proper functions of government (see the study on government above; there is no command of God telling governments to “run economies,” although governments should handle violence/harm and fraud/theft issues)
2. An understanding of man’s nature
3. The impossibility of government’s ability to plan/run economies

Economic Systems and the Nature of Mankind:

- The Bible—and our common sense and experience—teaches that man is basically selfish and looks out for himself first. (God commands Jesus followers to love their neighbors as themselves, to look out for others’ interests as well as their own, and so on.)
- An economic system either (a) acknowledges man’s self-seeking nature and harnesses it to improve the economy, or (b) pretends it doesn’t exist or tries to mold it using force (really *violence*)—like communists and socialists try to do. But this is like trying to change the law of gravity!
- A voluntary exchange system (sometimes called “capitalism,” often by its critics) works well...but not because people look out for *others* first. It’s because they look out for *themselves* first. People in this kind of “system” try to make a living by producing goods and services that please others, so both parties benefit.



The Bible Upholds the Right of Private Property:

- “Thou shalt not steal,” “Thou shalt not covet,” and “Let him who stole steal no more” (Exodus 20:15, 17, Ephesians 4:28) only make sense if someone else owns that property.
- The examples of Ananias and Sapphira and Jesus’ parable of the employer and laborers also affirm private property.
- Those who point to Acts 2 and 4 and claim that it supports socialism as an economic system (a) usually don’t care about anything else the Bible has to say, and (b) miss the entire point: that this was *voluntary* among Christians, not a model for a government to enforce upon everyone by law.



Why Christians Should Oppose Socialism/Communism:

- It violates the Biblical reasons why law exists: stopping/punishing violence and theft, and executing judgement and justice.
- It denies the obvious reality of man’s nature.
- It has *never* worked in history, and it *can’t* ever work. This is because government planners can’t possibly accurately replicate the billions of daily buying/selling/pricing decisions made by the people, who act as both buyers and sellers.
- It robs from the poor and enriches an elite class of rulers and their friends...which is the *opposite* of what socialists/communists say they’re in favor of!

Observations About Government Planners:

- They can’t possibly make accurate economic decisions for everyone. (See ↑.)
- Economist Adam Smith observed that those who claim they can “run an economy” are the *last* ones who should ever be allowed to try to run an economy, since this claim clearly shows their brains to be—to use a very famous, technical economics term—“two tacos short of a combo platter.”
- Government planners are either cluelessly overconfident in their ability to run an entire economy, or they are liars who just want power over others.
- Barney Fife is funny, but pompous, blundering bureaucrats in *real* life ain’t that funny.



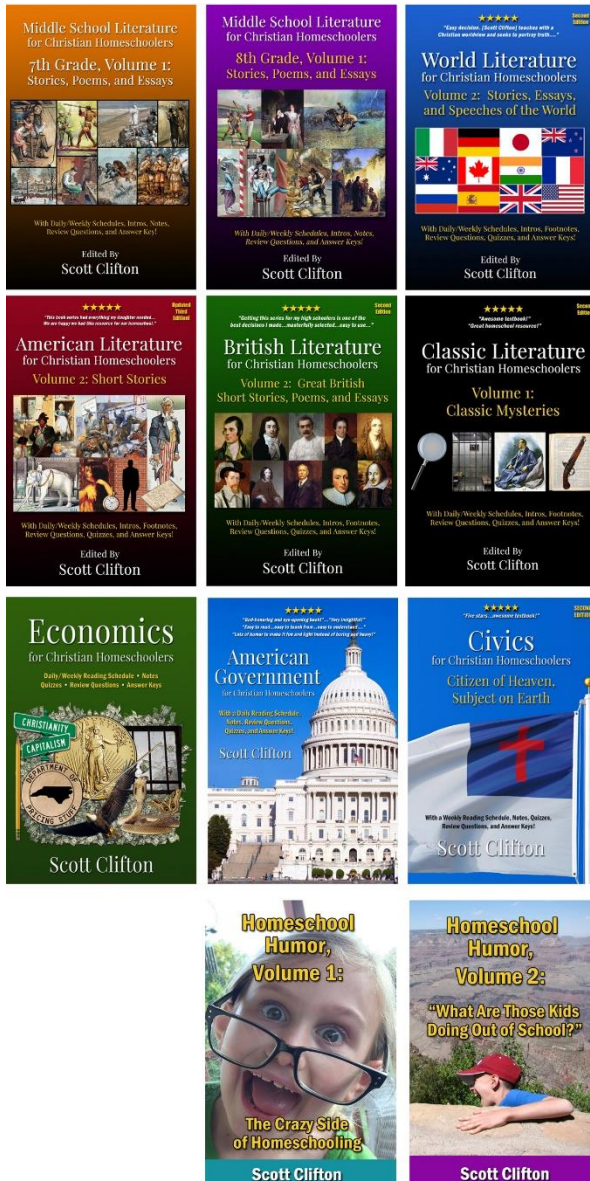
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