

## Socialism and the Bible

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### Introduction:

It has been said that Socialism will solve the world's problems. There will be free housing, free education, free healthcare, free public transportation, free childcare, guaranteed jobs (if you want one), paid vacations, and free welfare for all the poor. The key word is *free*. It all sounds so wonderful. Socialism would be a perfect society. Who would not be in favor of this perfect society?

There is only one big question. Will it deliver on its promises? Will this idyllic dream be different from its historical and current reality?

The promise of socialism is that no one will be left behind because the government would assure equality for all. Maybe in a perfect world some degree of equality might be approachable, but in an imperfect world, equality is impossible. Sadly, large numbers of people fall for the promise of equality and that the government can and will deliver it. The deception of socialism continues even though in every place it is found, it perpetuates poverty, restricts freedom, and brings a depressing malaise.

What is socialism? There are various definitions, but essentially it is the primacy of the state over the individual. It is when the government dominates or controls the means of production and promises to spread the wealth in what is claimed to be an impartial way. The question that is never clearly answered at the start is who decides that impartial way.

When the topic of socialism arises, one of the luminaries, Karl Marx, often takes center stage. His vision of socialism takes the author's name, Marxism. Classic Marxism was based on humanistic social science and economics, industrialism, and state ownership of the means of production. This type of Marxism was not successful and often resisted. Therefore, a new type of Marxism developed, called Cultural Marxism. Cultural Marxism is a creeping change of the national culture through academia, entertainment, media, and even religion. Cultural Marxism has merged with the left adopting post-modernism, multiculturalism, environmentalism, racism, and identity politics, all of which are designed to engulf a society and create a new culture.

Marx coauthored a book with Friedrich Engels, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. The book presented their ideas arguing that class struggles, or the exploitation of one class by another, are the motivating force behind all historical developments. Their solution was to eliminate forcibly or violently all class distinctions, a process, of course, that ultimately destroys every society. However, in eliminating the classes, socialism inevitably creates two new classes, the rulers and the ruled. Oppressors and the oppressed.

Marx's philosophy was based, first, on the belief that materialism is the final reality. This means there is no God, and there is no human soul that survives death of the body. Secondly, he believed that economic forces propel history ever onward and upward. Thirdly, Marx believed

that private property is the source of evil (Erwin Lutzer, *We Will Not Be Silenced*. Harvest House. p. 179).

Since Marx did not believe in God, he rejected the Bible and opposed Christianity. He viewed Christianity as a source of oppression. He believed that God as presented by the Bible was an oppressor who kept people enslaved to unfair social restrictions. It was Marx who said that religion was the opium or drug of the people. Therefore, he wanted people to switch their devotion from the church to dependency on the state.

However, if God is removed from life's equation, then basic human rights do not come from God, but from the state. The state makes decisions regarding human rights. Furthermore, if the state is the entity giving the rights, then the state cannot be criticized.

The changes Marx envisioned were the removal of the closely knit family, fathers released from the responsibility of the family, oppressed mothers freed from the home to work for the state, children to be raised by government approved schools. Parents would not shape the minds of their children. The family unit was no longer to be understood as an autonomous, economic unit of society. Communal housing would replace private housing.

The foundational tenant of Marxism is that the poor are poor because the rich oppress them. In his system, capitalists are oppressors and the poor are their victims. The solution to his perceived injustice is for the state to confiscate the wealth and property of the rich and landowners and to redistribute it 'fairly' to the oppressed.

Karl Marx wrote in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." In other words, taking from the person who has any ability to give and giving to a person who has a need. The state makes the decision regarding the ability and the need.

### Quotations about Socialism

In his article in *Concealing Evil*, GOPUSA Commentary, 2014, Walter Williams described socialism as an evil. This evil is concealed by giving it an aura of moral legitimacy in noble-sounding socialistic expressions such as spreading the wealth, income redistribution, caring for the less fortunate, and the will of the majority.

Moreover, socialism uses evil methods. Williams continues, "[socialism] employs confiscation and intimidation, to accomplish what are often seen as noble goals—namely, helping one's fellow man. Helping one's fellow man in need by reaching into one's own pockets to do so is laudable and praiseworthy. Helping one's fellow man through coercion and reaching into another's pockets is evil and worthy of condemnation. Tragically, most teachings, from the church on down, support government use of one person to serve the purposes of another; the advocates cringe from calling it such and prefer to call it charity or duty."

Winston Churchill said, "Socialism is the philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy." In the House of Commons on 22 October 1945, he also said, "The inherent vice

of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings. The inherent virtue of Socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.” (<https://winstonchurchill.hillsdale.edu/socialism-is-the-philosophy-of-failure-winston-churchill/>)

Margret Thatcher said, “The problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people’s money.” And sooner than you think.

Ronald Reagan said, “Government does not solve problems; it subsidizes them.” Continuing, “Socialism only works in two places: Heaven where they don’t need it and hell where they already have it.” He also said, “Socialists don’t subscribe to our sense of morality; they don’t believe in an afterlife; they don’t believe in a God or religion. The only morality socialism recognizes, is what will advance the cause of socialism.”

### What is Socialism?

A few wave top points regarding socialism.

1. It is a utopian form of state government that claims to eliminate poverty.
2. It assumes that the basic nature of people is cooperative.
3. It views an idealized equality of mankind.
4. It relies on a largely unchecked centralized state power.
5. It views public ownership of most property and production control.
6. It attempts social equality through wealth distribution or redistribution.
7. It focuses on collective well-being of the community.
8. Its ideas and beliefs are regulated by government agendas.
9. It stifles and discourages initiative for problem-solving.
10. Its state intervention results in a weakened economy.
11. It ultimately removes individual freedoms.

### The Dangers of Socialism

Let’s look at some of the dangers of socialism.

Socialism is the polar opposite of capitalism or the free market. Socialism seeks to control or regulate the market. The individual becomes a serf of the few in control. Socialism becomes the

enemy of the family, private property, individual prosperity, and religious faith. Socialism seeks to supplant the individual's faith in God with faith in government.

There are several other *isms* that can be included in our study of socialism, but for time's sake, I will only list a few: Bolshevism, Leninism, Marxism, Nazism, Fascism, and Communism. Essentially, all of these *isms* are based on the same statist orientation, simply a different version of control and how they respond toward those who oppose them.

The following points are adapted from TFP Student Action  
<https://tfpstudentaction.org/blog/10-reasons-to-reject-socialism>

### 1. Socialism, Marxism, Communism are all based on the same ideology.

Marxism and Communism are but an extreme form of socialism. From the ideological standpoint, there is no substantial difference between the two. In fact, the communist Soviet Union called itself the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1922-1991) and communist China, Cuba and Vietnam define themselves as socialist nations.

### 2. Socialism violates personal freedom.

Socialism seeks to eliminate injustice by transferring rights and responsibilities from individuals and families to the State. In the process, socialism actually creates injustice. It destroys true liberty: the freedom to decide all matters that lie within our own competence and to follow the course shown by our reason. True freedom comes from our relationship with God (Jn 8:31-32), which we have seen and will see again that socialism opposes and resists.

### 3. Socialism violates human nature.

Socialism opposes the natural desire of human nature. It destroys personal initiative – a fruit of our intellect and free will – and replaces it with state control. It tends to totalitarianism, with its government and police repression, wherever it is implemented. Totalitarianism is founded and retained by force. Socialism is based on an arrogant viewpoint: We know what's best for you.

### 4. Socialism violates private property.

Socialism calls for redistributing the wealth by taking from the rich to give to the poor. It imposes taxes that punish those who have maximized their productive talents, capacity to work, or thrift. It uses taxation to promote economic and social egalitarianism, a goal that will be fully achieved, according to The Communist Manifesto, with the abolition of private property.

### 5. Socialism opposes traditional marriage.

By opposing religious faith, socialism also opposes biblical morality. Therefore, socialism sees no moral reason for people to restrict sex to marriage, that is, to an indissoluble union between a man and a woman. Furthermore, socialism undermines private property, which Engels believed to be the foundation of traditional marriage.

## 6. Socialism opposes parental rights in education.

Socialism has the State, and not parents, control the education of children. Almost from birth, children are to be handed over to public institutions where they will be taught what the state wants, regardless of parental views. Evolution must be taught. School prayer must be forbidden. In China even the decision for birth of a child belongs to the state. Women are required to report for medical examinations to test for pregnancies.

## 7. Socialism promotes radical equality.

A supposed absolute equality among men is the fundamental assumption of socialism. Therefore, it sees any inequality as unjust in itself. Private employers (capitalists) are quickly portrayed as ‘exploiters’ whose profits really belong to their employees (workers). Socialism eliminates any system of employee advancement and compensatory reward. Therefore, socialism does not recognize the application of individual God given gifts, skills, and pursuits that ensure inequality.

## 8. Socialism promotes atheism.

Socialism is based on the philosophy that only matter exists. Therefore, it rejects the spiritual realm—God, the soul, and eternal life. These are illusions according to socialism.

## 9. Socialism promotes relativism.

In socialism there are no absolute truths or revealed morals that establish standards of conduct that apply to everyone, everywhere, and always. Everything evolves, including right and wrong, good and evil. There is no place for biblical standards, neither in the private mind nor in the public square.

## 10. Socialism mocks/opposes religion.

According to Karl Marx, religion is “the opium of the people.” Lenin, founder of the Soviet Union, agreed: “Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.” If that sounds screwy to you, who wants to spend any time trying to understand Lenin.

## What Does the Bible Say about Socialism?

Periodically, someone remarks that the Bible supports socialism. This is not true. There are numerous passages in Scripture that refute the socialist position. However, there are people who use certain biblical passages to support socialism, but we will see that they are mistaken.

### 1. Genesis 2:15 – God’s requirement for work in the garden.

Labor is biblical. It is a principle that was established in the garden by the Creator. Prior to the fall, man was given work. He was “to tend [serve] and keep [guard]” the garden (Gen 2:15). After the fall, man was told that in order to eat, he would be required to work (Gen 3:17-19).

Therefore, labor was a requirement prior to the fall, and after the fall it remained part of life, albeit more difficult. We would do well to obey the guidance found in Proverbs that uses the ant's industriousness as an example. "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise" (Prov 6:6).

2. Exodus 20:17 – The Mosaic Law prohibited the sinful attitude of greed and coveting.

The final mandate of the Ten Commandments addressed the attitude of greed and covetousness. Moses gives God's list of what was strictly prohibited and concluded the proscription of coveting with the phrase, "nor anything that is your neighbor's" (Ex 20:17; Deut 5:21). The commandment against coveting was essentially a prohibition of greed or lusting for something that belonged to someone else. In this commandment God recognized the inequality of success, possessions, or anything that was associated with another person. God was requiring individuals to be content with what they had, not dissatisfied with what they did *not* have, and not be lustful for what someone else possessed (Phil 4:11). Socialism is based on greed, the desire to have the success, wealth, or possessions of another. In fact, socialism questions the judgment of God, who has provided the possessions of each person. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas 1:17). Socialism promotes greed, envy, lust, and coveting.

3. Proverbs 31:10-31 – King Lemuel exemplifies wisdom as a virtuous wife.

In the final chapter of Proverbs, the author captures the themes of wisdom that have been taught in the book and presents them as a virtuous wife. Wisdom is represented as a woman who provides for her household, considers a field and buys it, from the profits plants a vineyard, spins clothes for her family, gives to the poor, provides clothes for herself, makes garments to sell, and has a husband and children. All of these activities of the virtuous wife are contrary to socialism.

4. Matthew 21:33–40; 22:2–10; 25:14–19 – Jesus uses the wealthy in His parables to teach spiritual lessons.

Jesus often used parables to teach godly principles. The parables varied with diverse characters and taught various lessons. Several of these parables used wealthy landowners or other personalities who were wealthy. In none of the parables was there criticism or judgment made toward those who owned land, prospered in business, or provided occupation for employees. In fact, often the landowner or wealthy individual represented God, who was providing employment for those needing jobs. In none of His parables do we find a hint of socialism. Rather, in the parables and throughout Scripture we find that private property ownership is encouraged.

5. Matthew 26:6-11 – Jesus taught on poverty.

Jesus told His disciples that the poor would always be with them (v. 11). Socialism desires income equality, but generally achieves poverty equality. Jesus knew there would be classes of society and while providing for the poor was important and godly, His definitive pronouncement to His disciples confirms that there will *always* be the poor. This assures us that no amount of

government programs will eliminate the poor. The biblical principle is that while we hope the best for everyone, there will always be those on the lower end of society.

6. 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 – Paul commands believers to mind their own business.

The Thessalonian believers had an excellent reputation of loving one another, but Paul desired for their love to increase. The increase of that love was to be seen in living a quiet life, to mind their own business, and to work with their hands. Paul meant for the Thessalonians to support themselves as he had done when he was with them. One of the goals of socialism is to control the lives, affairs, or business of individuals. Paul's teaching rejects socialism's overreach into individual's lives, affairs, or businesses.

7. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 – Paul mandates, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."

Paul addresses the problem that certain members of the Thessalonian church were acting in an irresponsible way. Paul had taught proper conduct for the Body of Christ, but there were some who Paul now calls "disorderly," unruly, or undisciplined. In v. 6, Paul exercises his apostolic authority by giving a command to "withdraw" from those believers who were disorderly. Paul and his gospel team had demonstrated the proper conduct of Christians and he reminds the Thessalonians that they should follow, imitate, his example. Then in one of his most adamant commands, Paul demands that "if anyone did not work, neither shall he eat" (v. 10). This principle certainly would not fit a socialistic policy.

8. Ephesians 4:25–28 – Paul admonishes the believer to perform honest work.

Paul is directing the Ephesians how to live the Christian life. Paul commands Christian conduct, specifically personal relationships between believers, "because we are members of one another." Paul commands us not to give the devil an opportunity by continuing to sin, but to alter our conduct. Furthermore, Paul commands that the believer who had previously routinely stolen is to no longer steal, rather "he must labor [toil], working with his hands what is good." The sense of "what is good" is better understood as "doing honest work with his own hands" (ESV). One of the results of a person doing honest work was so that he could earn enough not only to support himself, but also to be generous to those in need. This was a command to the individual believer. Instead of taking what belongs to someone else, a Christian should earn enough to share some of his or her earnings with the needy. This is not merely a call to stop stealing, which apparently was common, but it was a call to be generous, to have a complete change of attitude. Notice, that this was the individual having a generous mind, not having his production taken from him and then doled to whomever the government merits is in need.

The following passages are mistakenly viewed as support for socialism.

9. Matthew 25:31–46 – Jesus teaches the conduct of the believer during the Tribulation.

Socialists would say that this passage supports socialism by giving support to the oppressed. But this is not the intent of Jesus' teaching. Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation to rescue the Jews and to defeat their enemies. Matthew 25:31 describes an event at the time of the Lord's 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming (Rev 19:11). The conduct described in vv. 35-36, are believing Gentiles' treatment of

Jews during the Tribulation. The Church is not mentioned nor present in any way in Matthew 24-25. Only believing Gentiles will help the Jews. All unbelieving Gentiles will serve the antichrist. Treatment of the Jews is the sign of the division of believer and unbeliever, not the basis for eternal life. Jesus' teaching was not guidance for the Church Age believer, but for Gentile believers in the Tribulation. Yes, Church Age believers should be sympathetic and treat compassionately the Jews and anyone in need, but this treatment is an individual decision, not a governmental directive. In fact, the antichrist's governmental directive during the Tribulation is to kill Jews.

10. Acts 4:32–35 – What was the financial policy of the early church in Jerusalem?

Socialists say that the financial policy of the early church in Jerusalem was socialism. Luke writes, "Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common" (4:32). This was not governmental confiscation, but a voluntary act by the believers in which anyone in the church could participate or not. Moreover, there were many believers congregating in Jerusalem expecting Jesus to return any day. And while Jesus could return at any time, they were overlooking the Great Commission that they were to take the gospel to all the world.

11. Acts 5:1–9 – Ananias and Sapphira lied to God the Holy Spirit.

Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead when they withheld proceeds for themselves. Peter makes it clear why Ananias and Sapphira died. It was not because they did not give *all* the proceeds of the sale of property. They died because they lied about retaining part of the proceeds of the sale. Peter clarified that the land and the money received for the land was theirs to give or keep (Acts 5:4). In other words, the land was theirs, and they were free to sell it and keep the money or keep ownership of the property. *Deception* was their only sin.

12. 1 Samuel 30:23-25 – David establishes a wise leadership policy for his military force.

Socialists say that David's policy of giving the spoils of his military operation to all his men, even those who did not participate in the fight, reflect the tenants of socialism. Is that true? David was the leader of a paramilitary organization. He had the authority to make decisions that benefitted the organization. If anyone disagreed with David, they were free to depart. A large portion of the spoil from the operation against Amalek was already the property of the men in pursuit of the enemy. Much of the families and property were not a gift from a government but were previously the men's possession and being returned to them. The men who wanted to restrict the spoils from being shared with all the men were being bitter, selfish, and greedy, instead of being compassionate and unified in purpose. God the Holy Spirit's inspired description of these evil men was "wicked and worthless." Literally, "men [sons] of Belial." The entire troop of David had traveled 80 miles from Aphek to Ziklag, only to set off immediately in pursuit of the Amalekites. The physical weariness and emotional stress of the situation had various effects on the men. Some needed to rest, others were able to continue. The men who remained at the Brook Besor, were given a responsibility by David, "to stand by the stuff," (or supplies) as found in the King James Version. Today we would say they guarded the supply point. It is not as if those men had not been serving or were lazy. They were exhausted. David's



decision to divide the excess spoil evenly is not a form of socialism, but wise leadership policy. In fact, Scripture says that *all* the spoil belonged to David (v. 20). It was common for the king or military leader to possess the spoils from a battle. When David became king of the nation and fought many campaigns, we are told he continued the policy within the military force. David did not make it a policy, nor did any other ruler of Israel, to take from one person to give to someone else. However, it was a Mosaic Law for the affluent to be compassionate to the poor.

13. Genesis 41:53–57; 47:5–6, 13–26 – Joseph’s (controls the) economic policy during the famine in Egypt.

Socialist say that Joseph’s economic policy reflects the ideals of socialism. There is much that could be said about Joseph’s policies, and we will examine them, but in fact, God was truly guiding the events in Egypt over 400 years to bring about a situation that had been promised to Abraham many years prior (Gen 15:13). The conditions in Egypt after Pharaoh’s dream and decision to place Joseph in control of the economy were extraordinary. The seven years of plenty were so blessed by God that the agricultural production was beyond all Egyptian storage capability. Joseph built grain bins, silos, and storehouses to store the excess grain, up to 20 percent of the production (Gen 41:34). Every year for 7 years, Joseph gathered 20 percent of the production into the cities, which was a reserve not touched until needed during the 7 years of famine. So much food was gathered that it was immeasurable (41:49). When the famine years arrived, Joseph was prepared to feed the populous of Egypt and many other nations also. This was not a mild or even extreme famine; it was so severe that nothing would grow (47:13). The people came to Joseph and he sold food to anyone who approached him. God used the famine to bring Israel, Jacob, and his family to Egypt. The money collected for the food was placed in the Pharaoh’s treasury. As the famine continued, Joseph traded food for all the livestock, the land, and then moved the people off the land and into cities. The people purchased or bartered for food until they exhausted their means to do so. At that point Joseph supplied food without charge. Having the people in cities facilitated feeding them. When the famine ended, Joseph gave the Egyptians seed to plant in their land (Gen 47:23). Joseph did not charge the people for the seed but wanted them to farm the land. They would keep 80 percent of the profits for themselves and give 20 percent to Pharaoh. The system that Joseph created seems to have been a feudal type arrangement where the lord and serf support each other. Pharaoh allowed the people to return to their land, but they paid 20 percent taxation to Pharaoh for whatever amount they produced. This was not an example of biblical socialism; it was God creating conditions in a pagan country to fulfill His plan for Israel. Israel moved to Goshen, prospered, multiplied, and in time became slaves to Pharaoh. They awaited God’s deliverance by His servant Moses.

## Conclusion and Closing

While there are those who believe that the Bible teaches socialism, the only way they can come to this conclusion is by misreading or misinterpreting passages that support their position. God originally ordained labor and throughout the Bible represents it as the normal and godly activity of mankind. Socialism opposes the principles that the Bible teaches, and its goal is to remove biblical norms and standards from our lives. We must honor God by rejecting socialism and the philosophies that come from it. We also must never allow false doctrine to confuse the truth that

Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches us that God expects us to apply our lives honorably to work, doing it as unto the Lord (Col 3:22–25).