

# Biblical Archaeology

*Kerby Anderson provides an update on recent archaeological finds that corroborate the historicity of the Bible.*

One of the most important proofs for the historical accuracy of the Bible can be found in archaeology. Ancient history and archaeology should confirm the accuracy of this record. That is what we find when comparing these finds with the written record of Scripture.

My focus will be to summarize a few of the past archaeological finds that confirm the Bible and then provide an update on some of the newest archaeological discoveries made in just the last few years that are very significant. On the Probe website, we have an excellent summary done twenty years ago of archaeology and the Old Testament ([probe.org/archaeology-and-the-old-testament/](http://probe.org/archaeology-and-the-old-testament/)) and archaeology and the New Testament ([probe.org/archaeology-and-the-new-testament/](http://probe.org/archaeology-and-the-new-testament/)).



Archaeology not only has confirmed the historical record found in the Bible, but it also provides additional details not found in the original writings of the biblical authors. Archaeology also helps explain Bible passages by providing context of the surrounding culture as well as the social and political circumstances.

We must also admit the limitations of archaeology. Although these archaeological finds can establish the historical accuracy of the record, they cannot prove the divine inspiration of the Bible. Also, we must admit that even when we have an archaeological find, it still must be interpreted. Those interpretations are obviously affected by the worldview perspective and even bias of the historians and archaeologists.

Even granting the skeptical bias that can be found in this

field, it is still amazing that many archaeologists acknowledge the biblical confirmation that has come from significant archaeological finds.

Dr. William Albright observed, "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition."[\[1\]](#)

Archaeologist Nelson Glueck and president of Hebrew Union College concluded, "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper evaluation of Biblical description has often led to amazing discoveries."[\[2\]](#)

Millar Burrows, Professor of Archaeology at Yale University, remarked that "On the whole, however, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine."[\[3\]](#)

## **Old Testament Archaeology**

There are so many significant archaeological finds that confirm the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. Perhaps the most famous and most significant find is the Dead Sea scrolls. A young shepherd boy found the first of them in a cave in 1947. Eventually over 800 fragments were found. This includes a complete scroll of the book of Isaiah.

Many of these scrolls are from before the time of Jesus Christ. That is important because it provided a way to check the accuracy of the transmission of the Old Testament. The earliest copies of the Old Testament that we had before this discovery were a thousand years later. When we compare the

Dead Sea scrolls to these later manuscripts, we can see that there were very few variations (mostly due to changes in spelling or grammar). The transmission through the scribe was very accurate.

Another significant find was archaeological documentation of King David. Archaeologists working at one site uncovered an inscription that means "house of David" that dates to the ninth century BC.

Another important archaeological find was the Hittite nation. The Hittites are mentioned nearly 50 times in the Old Testament, but there was no solid archaeological evidence they existed until the 20th century. Some argued that the Bible must be wrong since it mentions this nation but archaeological evidence was lacking.

The Hittites were a major force against the Jews. Israel needed to conquer them in order to enter the Promised Land (Joshua 11:3-4). King David had Uriah the Hittite killed because of his adultery with his wife, Bathsheba (2 Kings 11:3-21). Fortunately, archaeologists did uncover abundant evidence of the Hittites in Turkey. They found a temple, sculptures, a storeroom with 10,000 clay tablets. Later they even uncovered the Hittite capital city of Hattusha.

Archaeologists with the Israel Antiquities Authority digging at Tel Lachish found an ancient toilet that confirms Old Testament history. To understand its significance, we need to look at the record of King Hezekiah. We read in 2 Kings that he removed the Asherah poles from the high places and smashed the sacred stones that were used in the Canaanite cultic worship.

Archaeologists discovered large rooms that appear to be a shrine where four-horned altars were destroyed. They also found a seat carved in stone with the hole in it that was used as a toilet. It was mostly likely placed there as a form of

desecration for the whole room.<sup>{4}</sup> This correlates with the biblical description in 2 Kings 10:27 that Jehu and his followers “demolished the pillar of Baal, and demolished the house of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day.”

## **New Testament Archaeology**

Jesus spent much of his time in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. It is mentioned 16 times in the New Testament. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of the fishing industry there (anchors, fishhooks), which would have been used by many of the disciples. The houses were one-story buildings, with roofs of wooden beams or branches. This explains how men carried a man to the roof and let him down in front of Jesus (Mark 2:1-4). Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-22, Luke 4:31-36). The remains of a synagogue built in the 4th century sits atop the black basalt foundations of this synagogue that existed at the time of Jesus.

In Jerusalem are many archaeological discoveries from the time of Jesus. That includes the remains of the temple as well as the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15) and the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-7).

Archaeology (as well as history) verifies the existence of many political leaders mentioned in the New Testament. A Denarius coin shows a portrait of Tiberius Caesar. This is also significant because Jesus asked the people whose likeness was on the coin (Mark 12:17). The name Pontius Pilate was found in an inscription at Caesarea Maritima.

Sometimes archaeology can shed light on what seems like a sharp disagreement in the Bible. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he recounts what he said to Peter who stopped eating meals with gentile Christians. He argued that Peter lived like a Gentile even though he was a Jew.

The answer lies in the fact that Paul was a devout Pharisee,

who took kosher food laws and purity very seriously. Peter, though Jewish, was not a Pharisee and grew up in Bethsaida on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Archaeological excavations uncovered some non-kosher evidence. Some were eating wild boar and catfish, which were considered unclean and not to be eaten by Jew following the Torah.[{5}](#)

Archaeological finds at Corinth include the city's *bema* seat, where Paul stood trial (Acts 18:12-17) and an inscription with the name Erastus, a city administrator who was an associate of Paul (Acts 19:22; 2 Timothy 4:20; Romans 16:23).

Critics have challenged the historical record of Luke because of alleged inaccuracies. Classical scholar Colin Hemer documents that Luke is a very accurate historian.[{6}](#) He identifies 84 facts in the Book of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research. This includes nautical details, names of gods, designation of magistrates, and proper names and titles.

These are just a few of the archaeological discoveries in the past that have confirmed the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the next section we will look at some of the most recent archaeological discoveries.

## **Recent Archaeological Discoveries**

Within the last few years, there have been major archaeological discoveries that further confirm biblical history. An article in *Christianity Today* provides a list of the top ten archaeological discoveries.[{7}](#) Here are just a few of these important discoveries.

The Israel Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of a limestone column on which the word "Jerusalem" was spelled out in Aramaic. This is the oldest inscription of this nature found so far. You might expect that there would be lots of such inscriptions, but that turn out to be very rare.

The inscription was found in an ancient potter's village that must have served pilgrims making their way to the Temple in Jerusalem. A potter's field calls to mind the one bought by the priests (Matthew 27:7) with the money Judas returned.

The Jewish tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant were located for a time in Shiloh. Excavation there produced a clay pomegranate. In the Bible, the pomegranate was a common temple decoration (1 Kings 7:18; 2 Kings 25:17). Small pomegranates embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarns hung from the hems of the priestly robes (Exodus 28:33). This discovery affirms the sacredness of Shiloh.

Scientists and archaeologists believe they made have found the site of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. They found evidence that a "high-heat" explosive event north of the Dead Sea wiped out all civilization in the affected area. It killed all the people within a 25-kilometer circular area. The fertile soil would have been stripped of nutrients by the high heat. Waves of briny salt would have washed over the surrounding area and spread through hot winds.

The scientists suggest that a cosmic airburst event from a meteor was the reason for the disappearance from the site. It apparently took 600 years for the region to recover before it could once again be inhabited. This fits with the description in Genesis 19, which says that burning sulfur rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah and killed all the people and all the vegetation of the land.

Archaeologist Dr. Stephen Collins says that there was a violent conflagration that ended occupation at the site. There is "melted pottery, scorched foundation stones, and several feet of ash and destruction debris churned into a dark gray matrix as if in a Cuisinart." He and another author in a joint paper conclude that all of this provides "signs of a highly destructive and thermal event that one might expect from what is described in Genesis 19." [\[8\]](#)

## Recent Archaeological Discoveries

Above we looked at a few of the most recent archaeological discoveries that confirm the historical accuracy of the Bible. Most of them were found in an article in *Christianity Today*. Here are a few more significant discoveries.

An inscribed piece of limestone discovered in a tomb along the west bank of the Nile was revealed to be a Semitic abecedary (alphabet in ABC order). It dates back to the time of Moses and fits with the statement that “Moses wrote down everything the Lord had said” (Exodus 24:4). It turns out he wasn’t the only one writing in a Semitic script in Egypt at that time.

When ISIS terrorists captured Mosul, they blew up the tomb of the prophet Jonah. This uncovered the remains of a palace of the Assyrian King Esarhaddon. Previous archaeological teams stopped digging in certain sites in Iraq for fear of destroying them. That was a case of the traditional tomb of Jonah, until ISIS started digging beneath it to find artifacts to sell. As one article put it, “ISIS Accidentally Corroborates the Bible.”[\[9\]](#) The tunnels they dug revealed a previously untouched Assyrian palace in the ancient city of Ninevah. Inscriptions found in the old city of Nineveh give an order of Assyrian kings that matches perfectly with the biblical order.

Extra careful processing of dirt from an archaeological dig in the southwest corner of the Temple Mount provided a *beka* weight. This was used (Exodus 38:6) to measure the silver in the half-shekel temple tax that was collected from each member of the Jewish community.

Another seal impression seems to be (a letter is missing) the name “Isaiah the prophet.” It was found near the Temple Mount near another seal impression that says “King Hezekiah of Judah” that was uncovered two years earlier. Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah are mentioned in the same verse 17 times. This

clay seal gives the impression that Isaiah had access to the king's palace as his adviser.

A ring with the name "Pontius Pilate" on it was excavated decades ago but only could be read recently due to advanced photographic techniques. Of course, this is not the first time that his name has surfaced in archaeology, but it is still a significant find. The ring is not fancy enough to have been worn by Pilate. It was probably worn by someone authorized to act on his authority and would use it to seal official communications.

This is an exciting time for archaeological investigation. New finds provide even more evidence of the historical accuracy of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Archaeology has provided abundant confirmation of the Bible.

## Notes

1. William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religions of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 176.
2. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert* (New York: Farrar, Strous and Cudahy, 1959), 136.
3. Millar Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 1.
4. Richard Gray, "The wrong kind throne: Toilet discovered 2-800-year-old shrine," *Daily Mail*, 28 September 2016.
5. Craig A. Evans, "Why Archaeology Matters for Bible Study," *Bible Study Magazine*, March/April 2019, 18-19.
6. Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 1990).
7. Gordon Govier, "Biblical Archaeology's Top 10 Discoveries of 2018," *Christianity Today*, December 27, 2018.
8. Amanda Borschel-Dan, "Evidence of Sodom? Meteor blast cause of biblical destruction, say scientists," *Times of Israel*, 22 November 2018.
9. "ISIS Accidentally Corroborates the Bible," *Facts and Trends*, March 19, 2018.



# Thanksgiving Quiz

*Kerby Anderson offers a quiz concerning the origins of American Thanksgiving.*

This nation was founded by Christians, and Thanksgiving is a time when we can reflect upon this rich, Christian heritage. But many of us are often ignorant of our country's origins, so we have put together a Thanksgiving quiz to test your knowledge about this nation's biblical foundations. We hope that you will not only take this test and pass it on to others, but we also hope that you will be encouraged to study more about the Christian foundations of this country.

## 1. What group began the tradition of Thanksgiving?



A day of thanksgiving was set aside by the Pilgrims who founded Plymouth Colony. This colony was the first permanent settlement in New England. The Pilgrims were originally known as the Forefathers or Founders. The term *Pilgrim* was first used in the writings of colonist William Bradford and is now used to designate them.

## 2. Why did they celebrate Thanksgiving?

Life was hard in the New World. Out of 103 Pilgrims, 51 of these died in the first terrible winter. After the first harvest was completed, Governor William Bradford proclaimed a

day of thanksgiving and prayer. By 1623, a day of fasting and prayer during a period of drought was changed to one of thanksgiving because the rain came during their prayers. The custom prevailed in New England and eventually became a national holiday.

### **3. When did Thanksgiving become a national holiday?**

The state of New York adopted Thanksgiving Day as an annual custom in 1817. By the time of the Civil War, many other states had done the same. In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln appointed a day of thanksgiving. Since then, each president has issued a Thanksgiving Day proclamation for the fourth Thursday of November.

### **4. Why did the Pilgrims leave Europe?**

Among the early Pilgrims was a group of Separatists who were members of a religious movement that broke from the Church of England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1606 William Brewster led a group of Separatists to Leiden (in the Netherlands) to escape religious persecution in England. After living in Leiden for more than ten years, some members of the group voted to emigrate to America. The voyage was financed by a group of London investors who were promised produce from America in exchange for their assistance.

### **5. How did the Pilgrims emigrate to the New World?**

On September 16, 1620, a group numbering 102 men, women, and children left Plymouth, England, for America on the Mayflower. Having been blown off course from their intended landing in Virginia by a terrible storm, the Pilgrims landed at Cape Cod on November 11. On December 21, they landed on the site of Plymouth Colony. While still on the ship, the Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact.

### **6. What is the Mayflower Compact?**

On November 11, 1620, Governor William Bradford and the leaders on the Mayflower signed the Mayflower Compact before setting foot on land. They wanted to acknowledge God's sovereignty in their lives and their need to obey Him. The Mayflower Compact was America's first great constitutional document and is often called "The American Covenant."

### **7. What is the significance of the Mayflower Compact?**

After suffering years of persecution in England and spending difficult years of exile in the Netherlands, the Pilgrims wanted to establish their colony on the biblical principles they suffered for in Europe. Before they set foot on land, they drew up this covenant with God. They feared launching their colony until there was a recognition of God's sovereignty and their collective need to obey Him.

### **8. What does the Mayflower Compact say?**

"In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland king, defender of the faith, etc., Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these present solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends foresaid, and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign Lord, King James, of England, France, and Ireland."

## **9. Why didn't the pilgrims sail to the original destination in Virginia?**

The Pilgrims were blown off course and landed at Cape Cod in what now appears to be God's providence. Because their patent did not include this territory, they consulted with the Captain of the Mayflower and resolved to sail southward. But the weather and geography did not allow them to do so. They encountered "dangerous shoals and roaring breakers" and were quickly forced to return to Cape Cod. From there they began scouting expeditions and finally discovered what is now Plymouth. Had they arrived just a few years earlier, they would have been attacked and destroyed by one of the fiercest tribes in the region. However, three years earlier (in 1617), the Patuxet tribe had been wiped out by a plague. The Pilgrims thus landed in one of the few places where they could survive. [{1}](#)

## **10. What role did the lone surviving Indian play in the lives of the Pilgrims?**

There was one survivor of the Patuxet tribe: Squanto. He was kidnapped in 1605 by Captain Weymouth and taken to England where he learned English and was eventually able to return to New England. [{2}](#) When he found his tribe had been wiped out by the plague, he lived with a neighboring tribe. When Squanto learned that the Pilgrims were at Plymouth, he came to them and showed them how to plant corn and fertilize with fish. He later converted to Christianity. William Bradford said that Squanto "was a special instrument sent of God for their good beyond their expectation." [{3}](#)

## **11. Were the colonists dedicated to Christian principles in their lives on days other than Thanksgiving?**

The Pilgrims were, and so were the other colonists. Consider this sermon by John Winthrop given while aboard the Arabella in 1630. This is what he said about the Puritans who formed

the Massachusetts Bay Colony: "For the persons, we are a Company professing ourselves fellow members of Christ. . . . For the work we have in hand, it is by a mutual consent through a special overruling providence, and a more than an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ to seek out a place of Cohabitation and Consortship under a due form of Government both civil and ecclesiastical." They established a Christian Commonwealth in which every area of their lives both civil and ecclesiastical fell under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

## **12. How did the Pilgrims organize their economic activities?**

After the first year, the colony foundered because of the collective economic system forced upon them by the merchants in London. All the settlers worked only for the joint partnership and were fed out of the common stores. The land and the houses built on it were the joint property of the merchants and colonists for seven years and then divided equally. {4}

When Deacon Carver died, William Bradford became governor. Seeing the failure of communal farming, he instituted what today would be called free enterprise innovations. Bradford assigned plots of land to each family to work, and the colony began to flourish. Each colonist was challenged to better themselves and their land by working to their fullest capacity. Many Christian historians and economists today point to this fundamental economic change as one of the key reasons for the success of the Pilgrims at Plymouth.

## **13. What has been the significance of the Pilgrims and their legacy of Thanksgiving?**

On the bicentennial celebration of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, Daniel Webster on December 22, 1820, declared the following: "Let us not forget the religious character of our origin. Our fathers were brought hither by

their high veneration for the Christian religion. They journeyed by its light, and labored in its hope. They sought to incorporate its principles with the elements of their society, and to diffuse its influence through all their institutions, civil, political, or literary.”

The legacy of the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving is the legacy of godly men and women who sought to bring Christian principles to this nation. These spread throughout the nation for centuries.

#### **14. How were Christian principles brought to the founding of this republic?**

Most historians will acknowledge that America was born in the midst of a revival. This occurred from approximately 1740-1770 and was known as the First Great Awakening. Two prominent preachers during that time were Jonathan Edwards (best known for his sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”) and George Whitfield. They preached up and down the East Coast and saw revival break out. Churches were planted, schools were built, and lives were changed.

#### **15. How influential were Christian ideas in the Constitution?**

While the Constitution does not specifically mention God or the Bible, the influence of Christianity can plainly be seen. Professor M.E. Bradford shows in his book *A Worthy Company*, that fifty of the fifty-five men who signed the Constitution were church members who endorsed the Christian faith.

#### **16. Weren't many of the founders non-Christians?**

Yes, some were. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin are good examples of men involved in the drafting of the Declaration of Independence who were influenced by ideas from the Enlightenment. Yet revisionists have attempted to make these men more secular than they really were. Jefferson, for example, wrote to Benjamin Rush that “I am a Christian . . .

sincerely attached to his doctrines, in preference to all others." Franklin called for prayer at the Constitutional Convention saying, "God governs the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his notice?" While they were hardly examples of biblical Christianity, they nevertheless believed in God and believed in absolute standards which should be a part of the civil order.

### **17. How important was Christianity in colonial education in America?**

Young colonists' education usually came from the Bible, the Hornbook, and the New England Primer. The Hornbook consisted of a single piece of parchment attached to a paddle of wood. Usually the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, and religious doctrines were written on it. The New England Primer taught a number of lessons and included such things as the names of the Old and New Testament books, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and John Cotton's "Spiritual Milk for American Babies." Even when teaching the alphabet, biblical themes were used: "A is for Adam's fall, we sinned all. B is for Heaven to find, the Bible mind. C is for Christ crucified, for sinners died."

### **18. How important was Christianity in colonial higher education?**

Most of the major universities were established by Christian denominations. Harvard was a Puritan school. William and Mary was an Anglican school. Yale was Congregational, Princeton was Presbyterian, and Brown was Baptist. The first motto for Harvard was Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae (Truth for Christ and the Church). Students gathered for prayer and readings from the Scriptures every day. Yale was established by Increase Mather and Cotton Mather because Harvard was moving away from its original Calvinist philosophy and eventually drifted to

Unitarianism. The founders of Yale said that “every student shall consider the main end of his study to wit to know God in Jesus Christ and answerably to lead a Godly, sober life.”

**19. If Christianity was so important in colonial America, why does the Constitution establish a wall of separation between church and state?**

Contrary to what many Americans may think, the phrase “separation of church and state” does not appear anywhere in the Constitution. In fact, there is no mention of the words church, state, or separation in the First Amendment or anywhere within the Constitution. The First Amendment does guarantee freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion.

The phrase is found in a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote to Baptist pastors in Danbury, Connecticut in 1802 in which he gave his opinion of the establishment clause of the First Amendment and then felt that this was “building a wall of separation between church and state.” At best this was a commentary on the First Amendment, from an individual who was in France when the Constitution and Bill of Rights were drafted.

**Notes**

1. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: The Modern Library, 1967), Chapter XI.
2. Bradford Smith, *Bradford of Plymouth* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1951), 189.
3. Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 81.
4. Marshall Foster, *The American Covenant* (Thousand Oaks, CA: The Mayflower Institute, 1992), 86-87.



---

# The Dangerous Ideology of Transgenderism

*Transgenderism has been the topic in the news for more than a decade; therefore, Christians need to know what to think about the various claims being made. We also need to know how to respond to an aggressive push by trans activists to normalize this behavior and criticize anyone who does not accept it.*

Transgenderism is the belief that people have a “gender identity” that is distinct from their biological sex. If they feel there is a conflict between their gender and their sex, gender identity should take precedence. Although a very small fraction of the population may experience gender dysphoria (where a person experiences discomfort or distress from a mismatch between their biological sex and the gender they want to be), the current percentage of Americans identifying as transgender or nonbinary (not identifying as either male or female, masculine or feminine) has exploded.



## Sexuality, Gender, and Medical Studies

Dr. Paul McHugh has served as the Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Johns Hopkins Medical School. He has concluded that “gender reassignment surgery” doesn’t work. He, along with Dr. Lawrence Mayer, surveyed over 200 peer-reviewed studies done in various disciplines.[\[1\]](#) Here are four of the most important conclusions from their paper:

First, the “belief that sexual orientation is an innate, biologically fixed human property” is not supported. In other words, people are not “born that way.”

Second, the “belief that gender identity is an innate, fixed human property independent of biological sex—so that a person might be a man trapped in a woman’s body or a woman trapped in a man’s body—is not supported by scientific evidence.”

Third, “only a minority of children who express gender-atypical thoughts or behavior will continue to do so into adolescence or adulthood.” It goes on to say that children should not be encouraged to become transgender. They also should not be subjected to hormone treatments or surgery.

Fourth, people who are homosexual or transgender “have higher rates of mental problems (anxiety, depression, suicide), as well as behavioral and social problems (substance abuse, intimate partner violence), than the general population.”

While the paper only focuses on the scientific research, it obviously has implications for public policy. Incorrect scientific claims have been used to justify court rulings, government policies, and medical practices concerning sexual orientation and gender identity. They have not been based upon sound science.

## **American College of Pediatricians**

Above, we talked about some of the scientific research into homosexuality and transgenderism. Dr. Paul McHugh and Dr. Lawrence Mayer surveyed over 200 peer-reviewed studies and came to conclusions that are contrary to much of the current statements being made by trans activists.

Dr. Paul McHugh was also one of the authors of a statement by the American College of Pediatricians. The title of their statement was: “Gender Ideology Harms Children.”[{2}](#) Here is a summary sentence or two of the eight points they make in their statement.

1. “Human sexuality is an objective biological binary trait:

XY and XX are genetic markers of health, not genetic markers of a disorder.”

2. “No one is born with a gender: Everyone is born with a biological sex. Gender (an awareness and sense of oneself as male or female) is a sociological and psychological concept; not an objective biological one.”

3. “A person’s belief that he or she is something they are not is, at best, a sign of confused thinking.”

4. “Puberty is not a disease and puberty-blocking hormones can be dangerous.”

5. “According to the DSM-V [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition], as many as 98% of gender-confused boys and 88% of gender-confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty.”

6. “Pre-pubertal children diagnosed with gender dysphoria may be given puberty blockers as young as eleven, and will require cross-sex hormones in later adolescence to continue impersonating the opposite sex. These children will never be able to conceive any genetically related children even via artificial reproductive technology. In addition, cross-sex hormones (testosterone and estrogen) are associated with dangerous health risks including but not limited to cardiac disease, high blood pressure, blood clots, stroke, diabetes, and cancer.”

7. “Rates of suicide are nearly twenty times greater among adults who use cross-sex hormones and undergo sex reassignment surgery, even in Sweden which is among the most LGBTQ-affirming countries.”

8. “Conditioning children into believing that a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthful is child abuse.”

# Gender Dysphoria Research

Abigail Shrier wrote about the transgender craze in her book *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters*.<sup>{3}</sup> In [my radio interview with her](#), she explained that “gender dysphoria” was characterized by severe and persistent discomfort in one’s biological sex. It typically begins in early childhood. In previous generations, it afflicted a sliver of the population (roughly .01 percent) and occurred mostly in boys.

Prior to 2012, there was no scientific literature on girls (11-21) ever having developed gender dysphoria at all. Then the Western world experienced a sudden surge of adolescents claiming to have gender dysphoria and self-identifying as “transgender.”

In 2016, Lisa Littman (an ob-gyn, public health researcher) was scrolling through social media when she noticed a statistical peculiarity. Several adolescents (most of them girls) from a small town in Rhode Island had come out as transgender. In fact, they were all from the same friend group.

She admitted that she knew very little about gender dysphoria, but this statistical anomaly was interesting to her. And she then noticed there had been a sudden spike in the Western World of girls experiencing gender dysphoria. She immersed herself in the scientific literature on gender dysphoria to try to understand what was happening. Perhaps it was due to increased social acceptance of LGBTQ people, but she suggested in a peer-reviewed paper that the girls might be rushing toward “transition” because of peer contagion. As you might imagine, her suggestion was roundly criticized. She was also accused of anti-trans bigotry.

In a subsequent research project, she collected data anonymously from 256 parents whose kids had not met the

criteria of gender dysphoria in childhood, but suddenly identified as transgender in adolescence. She identified 16 traits in common. Here are a few.

1. The vast majority have zero indicators of childhood gender dysphoria.
2. Almost a third of them did not seem at all gender dysphoric.
3. A majority had one or more psychiatric diagnosis and almost half were engaged in self-harm prior to the onset of dysphoria.
4. Nearly 70 percent of the teenagers belonged to a peer group in which at least one friend had also come out as transgender.
5. Among parents who knew their children's social status, over 60 percent said the announcement brought a popularity boost.
6. Over 88 percent of the parents surveyed reported being supportive of transgender rights.

There is growing evidence that social contagion is a much better explanation for the notable increase in the number of young people (especially young women) who now claim to be transgender.

## **Promotion of Transgenderism**

Transgenderism has been promoted through social media, through the schools, and even through the medical establishment. Abigail Shrier began to look at the influence of social media on this transgender craze. In her chapter on "The Influencers" she talks about trans promoters who have become a YouTube sensation. We are seeing similar promoters on TikTok and other social media platforms. Here are a few of the ideas she

discovered.

1. If you think you might be trans, you are.
2. Testosterone is amazing. It may just solve all your problems.
3. If your parents love you, they will support your trans identity.
4. Deceiving parents and doctors is justified, if it helps transition.
5. You don't have to identify as the opposite sex to be trans.

She also found that transgenderism was being promoted through the schools. One program coordinator she talked to acknowledged that the "role of schools has changed." Now "schools have expanded to be the hub for a lot more social services and looking more holistically, emotionally, at what's going on with children." In other words, they have become a "source of social justice."

You might wonder how schools teach about transgenderism to young children. Teachers begin by talking about gender identity. A book intended for kindergarten teachers to read to their students reinforces the idea that gender is a social construct. It begins with a familiar origin story: "Babies can't talk, so grown-ups make a guess by looking at their bodies. This is the sex assigned to you at birth, male or female." It then provides a list of gender options: trans, genderqueer, non-binary, gender fluid, transgender, gender neutral, agender, bigender, etc.

Transgender charts and diagrams are being used in many schools. There is a "Genderbread Person" that is supposed to help children sort through how their gender identity and their gender expression relates to their biological sex. And there

is a “Gender Unicorn” that is supposed to help them understand who they may be physically attracted to and emotionally attracted to.

The American Psychological Association has even put together guidelines for the Care of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming (TGNC) patients. Doctors must provide “gender affirming care” which is defined as being “respectful, aware, and supportive of the identities and life experiences of TGNC people.”

## How to Respond to the Transgender Moment

Ryan Anderson is the author of the book, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*.<sup>{4}</sup> When [I interviewed him](#) on his book, he explained how transgender ideology promotes the opportunity for children to change their gender with surgery and drugs. And parents “are told that puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones may be the only way to prevent their children from committing suicide.”

Ryan Anderson countered that the best studies of gender dysphoria have found “that between 80 and 95 percent of children who express a discordant gender identity will come to identify with their bodily sex if natural development is allowed to proceed.” He also documented that even children going through “transitioning” treatment still have an extraordinarily high rate of suicide attempts compared to the general population.

He reminded us that we should be tolerant and loving toward children (and adults) who struggle with their gender identity. But we should also be aware of the potential harm when transgender identity is normalized.

Unfortunately, we are living in a world where transgender activists want more than tolerance and kindness. They demand affirmation. We aren’t allowed to question whether using

medical treatments to aid in transgender transformation is positive for children. In his book, Ryan Anderson shows that the best biology, psychology, and philosophy support an understanding of sex as a bodily reality. As he puts it: "Biology isn't bigotry."

Abigail Shrier also offers several suggestions. First, don't get your kid a smartphone. She explains that nearly every problem teenagers face traces itself back to the introduction of the smartphone years ago.

Second, don't relinquish your authority as a parent. You don't have to go along with every idea your teenager has, nor do you have to go along with every educational or psychological fad being promoted in society.

Third, don't support gender ideology in your child's education. She provides an example of what happens when schools do a seminar on anorexia or suicide. Often the prevalence increases. A small number of students may have gender confusion or gender dysphoria. But talking about it will spread confusion.

Finally, don't be afraid to admit, that it's wonderful to be a girl.

While she talks about the benefits and opportunities of being a girl, Christians can go even further. We believe God is responsible for who we are and what we are. Each one of us is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26). We can celebrate girls and boys and encourage them to use their gender and their gifts to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 1:31).

## Notes

1. Dr. Lawrence S. Mayer and Dr. Paul R. McHugh, "Sexuality and Gender," *The New Atlantis*, Fall 2016, [www.thenewatlantis.com/collections/sexuality-and-gender](http://www.thenewatlantis.com/collections/sexuality-and-gender).
2. "Gender Ideology Harms Children," September 2017, [https://acped.org/assets/imported/9.14.17- Gender-Ideology-](https://acped.org/assets/imported/9.14.17-Gender-Ideology-)



Harms-Children\_updated-MC. pdf.

3. Abigail Shrier, *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters*, Regnery Publishing, 2021.

4. Ryan Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*, Encounter Books, 2019.

©2023 Probe Ministries

---

## Money Management in a Crisis

*The COVID pandemic caused a worldwide financial crisis, making stewarding God's money more important than ever. Kerby Anderson provides a biblical view of money, giving, debt, and savings.*

A number of years ago, I wrote a book with the appropriate title, *Making the Most of Your Money in Tough Times*.[{1}](#) Although there have been tough times in the past, we certainly need some biblical wisdom about our money and how to manage it in our current circumstances. Here are some key principles that I discuss in that book and in a more recent book on the subject of *Christians and Economics*.[{2}](#)

### Biblical View on Money

Let's start by correcting a common cliché that money is the root of all evil. Actually, the biblical passage says: "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness" (1 Timothy 6:10).



Money is not evil, but the love of money can be a concern. Money can be used to promote good or evil. Money can provide

for your family, feed the poor, and promote the gospel. It can also be used to buy drugs, engage in prostitution, and destroy individuals and society.

The real question is: What is your attitude towards money? What do you plan to do with the financial resources God has placed into your hands? Jesus warned us that we should not love money because we cannot serve God and Mammon (Matthew 6:24). In order to have a proper biblical perspective on money, we need to understand what the Bible teaches about wealth and poverty.

While we are talking about money, let's focus some attention on wealth. Within the Christian community, we are often bombarded with unbiblical views of wealth. At one extreme are those who preach a prosperity gospel of "health and wealth" for all believers. At the other extreme are radical Christians who condemn all wealth and imply that a rich Christian is a contradiction in terms.

What is a biblical view of wealth? First, wealth itself is not condemned. The Bible teaches that God gave material wealth to Abraham (Genesis 13), Isaac (Genesis 26), Jacob (Genesis 30), and Joseph (Genesis 39). Other characters in the Old Testament were also wealthy, such as Job (Job 42) and Solomon (1 Kings 3). In fact, we see in Job 42 that God once again blessed Job with material possessions after his trials. In Deuteronomy, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, wealth is seen as evidence of God's blessing (Deuteronomy 8; 28; Proverbs 22:2; Ecclesiastes. 5:19).

Even though wealth might be an evidence of God's blessing, believers are not to trust in it. Passages in the Old Testament and the New Testament teach that the believer should not trust in wealth but in God (Proverbs 11:4; 11:28; Jeremiah 9:23; 1 Timothy 6:17; James 1:11; 5:2).

Second, when wealthy people in the Bible were condemned, they

were condemned for the means by which their riches were obtained, not for the riches themselves. The Old Testament prophet Amos railed against the injustice of obtaining wealth through oppression or fraud (4:11; 5:11). Micah spoke out against the unjust scales and light weights with which Israel defrauded the poor (6:1). Neither Amos nor Micah condemned wealth per se; they only denounced the unjust means by which it is sometimes achieved.

Third, Christians should be concerned about the effect wealth can have on our lives. We read in many passages that wealth often tempts us to forget about God. Proverbs 30:8-9 says: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, That I not be full and deny You and say, 'Who is the Lord?'" Hosea 13:6 says of those who were satisfied that "their heart became proud" and ultimately forget about the Lord.

## **Biblical View on Giving**

In order to develop a biblical point of view on money, we should first focus on the subject of giving. The concept of the tithe is introduced in the Old Testament. The word tithe means "a tenth part." Once you understand that someone who, say, makes \$3000 a month and gives only \$100 a month is not tithing. A number of studies have found that only 2-3 percent of households tithe their income to their church.

There is no explicit command in the New Testament to tithe. The primary reason is that the tithe was for the Levites and the priests. The substitutionary death of Christ for our sins did away with the need for a temple and priests.

In the New Testament, we do see numerous verses calling for believers to give. For example, we are to give to those who minister (1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 2:10). We are to give to those who trust God to supply their needs (Philippians

4:19). We are to give as God has prospered them (1 Corinthians 16:2) and are to give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). And the Bible teaches that we will ultimately give account of our stewardship (Romans 14:12).

The first century believers set a high standard for giving. They sold their goods and gave money to any believer in need (Acts 2:45). They sold their property and gave the entire amount to the work of the apostles (Acts 4:36-5:2). And they also gave generously to the ministry of Paul (2 Corinthians 8:1-5) on a continual basis (Philippians 4:16-18).

Even though the tithe was no longer required, it appears that the early believers used the tithe as a base line for their giving. After all, a large majority of the first century believers were Jewish, and so they gave not only the tithe but above and beyond the requisite ten percent.

Paul makes it clear that Christians are not to give "grudgingly or under compulsion" but as each believer has "purposed in his heart" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Although the tithe was no longer the mandatory requirement, it seems to have provided a basis for voluntary giving by believers.

There is also a correlation between sowing and reaping. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says: "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." Elsewhere in Scripture, we read that the size of a harvest corresponds to what we scatter. Proverbs 11:24-25 says: "There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered." Notice that a spiritual harvest may be different from the kind of seed that is sown. For example, a material seed (giving to ministry) may reap a spiritual harvest (1 Corinthians 9:9).

Finally, we are to give according to what we have purposed in

our hearts. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says: "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

## **Biblical View on Debt – Part 1**

The Bible has a number of warnings concerning debt. Proverbs 22:7 says: "The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is a servant to the lender." When you borrow money and put yourself in debt, you put yourself in a situation where the lender has significant influence over you.

Many other verses in the Proverbs also warn about the potential danger of taking on debt, especially another person's debt (Proverbs 17:18; 22:26-27; 27:13). While this does not mean that we can never be in debt, it does warn us about its dangers.

If you are debt free you are free to follow the Lord's leading in your life. If you are in debt, you are constrained and become a servant to the lender. People who are in financial bondage are not emotionally or spiritually free. Their financial obligations wear heavy upon their mind and spirit.

The Bible also teaches that it is wrong to borrow and not repay. Psalm 37:21 says: "The wicked borrows and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious and gives."

Some have taught that Christians should never go into debt. The basis for that teaching is usually the passage in Romans 13:8 because it says: "Owe nothing to anyone."

Although some have argued that this verse prohibits debt, the passage needs to be seen in context. This passage is not a specific teaching about debt but rather a summary of our duty as Christians to governmental authority. Paul is teaching that we should not owe anything to anyone (honor, taxes, etc.). But he is not teaching that we should never incur debt. While it

is better that we are debt-free, this passage is not commanding us to never go into debt.

The Bible is filled with biblical passages that provide guidelines to lending and borrowing. If debt was always wrong, then these passages would not exist. After all, why have passages providing guidelines for debt if debt is not permitted? Certainly there would be a clear prohibition against debt. We should point out that the clear implication of Romans 13:8 is that we should pay our debts and it would be wise if we would pay our debts off as quickly as possible.

## **Biblical View on Debt – Part 2**

One of the consequences of debt is that we can often deny reality. In order to realistically deal with the debt in our lives we need to get rid of some of the silly ideas running around in our heads.

For example, you are NOT going to win the lottery. Your debt problem is NOT going to go away if you just ignore it. And a computer glitch in your lender's computer is NOT going to accidentally wipe out your financial records so that you don't have to repay your debt.

Another consequence of debt is a loss of integrity. When we cannot pay, we start saying "the check's in the mail" when it isn't. We not only kid ourselves but we try to mislead others about the extent of our problem with debt.

Sometimes debt even leads to dishonesty. Psalm 37:21 says: "The wicked borrows and does not pay back." We should repay our debts.

A third consequence of debt is addiction. Debt is addictive. Once in debt we begin to get comfortable with cars, consumer goods, furniture, etc. all funded through debt. Once we reach that comfort level, we go into further debt.

A final consequence of debt is stress. Stress experts have calculated the impact of various stress factors on our lives. Some of the greatest are death of a spouse and divorce. But it is amazing how many other stress factors are financially related (change in financial state, mortgage over \$100,000). When we owe more than we can pay, we worry and feel a heavy load of stress that wouldn't exist if we lived debt free.

## Biblical View on Savings



It is always important for us to get out of debt. I have written another booklet on the subject of debt. If you are in debt or want to learn more about government debt and personal debt, I encourage you to obtain that booklet. Email me your name and address at [kerby@probe.org](mailto:kerby@probe.org) and I will send it to you.

We should not merely work to get out of debt and eventually break even. Savings and investing should be part of your budget and part of your life plan. Saving and investing are ultimately a means to an end. You may be saving for your kids' college or saving for your retirement.

America used to be a nation of savers. In fact, thrift was a foundational element of American society. The architect Louis Sullivan even carved the word THRIFT over the door of his bank. Thrift was seen as a private moral virtue that made public prosperity possible. Americans supported institutions that encouraged savings.

The Bible encourages us to save. In Proverbs it encourages those who do not save to consider how a lowly creature like

the ant prepares for the future. "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest" (Proverbs 6:6-8).

The writer of Proverbs also talks about how wise people save in contrast to foolish people who do not. "In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has" (Proverbs 21:20).

We should always have a budget. Author and speaker, John Maxwell, has a great definition of a budget: "A budget is people telling their money what to do instead of wondering where it went." A budget is a plan for saving and spending.

The book of Proverbs admonishes us to plan. Proverbs 16:3 says, "Commit your works to the LORD And your plans will be established." But as we develop these plans for the future, we also need to be sensitive to the Lord's leading. "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).

The Bible promises that good things will happen when we plan. "Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity" (Proverbs 21:5, NLT). By contrast, the Bible also teaches that your plans will fail if these plans are not within the will of God. Isaiah 30:1 says, "'Destruction is certain for my rebellious children,' says the Lord. 'You make plans that are contrary to my will. You weave a web of plans that are not from my Spirit, thus piling up your sins.'"

If you do not have anything in savings, you need to begin by putting aside a cash reserve for emergencies. Proverbs 22:5 says, "The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it." Everyone needs a cash reserve for major emergencies (fire, tornado, earthquake) and even for small emergencies and inconveniences (broken appliance, car repair, flat tire).



Most financial advisors suggest that you have six months' worth of income set aside for an emergency or unexpected expense. You may not have that set aside right now, but today is a good time to start setting aside some money. Make your first goal to set aside one month's worth of income.

This has been a brief overview of money management. I encourage you to read books{3} and visit websites that will give you even more direction on how to use your money. The Bible provides insight in giving, savings, and debt. Apply these principles and allow God to bless you.

## Notes

1. Kerby Anderson, *Making the Most of Your Money in Tough Times* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House), 2009.

2. Kerby Anderson, *Christians and Economics* (Cambridge, OH: Christian Publishing House), 2016).

3. Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possession and Eternity* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House), 2003.

Kerby Anderson, *Christians and Economics* (Cambridge, OH: Christian Publishing House), 2016.

Kerby Anderson, *Making the Most of Your Money in Tough Times*. (Eugene, OR: Harvest House), 2009.

Larry Burkett, *How to Manage Your Money: An In-Depth Bible Study on Personal Finances* (Chicago, IL: Moody), 2002.

Jay Richards, *Money, Greed, and God* (NY: Harper One), 2009.

©2020 Probe Ministries

---

# The Liberal Mind

*Kerby Anderson tries to understand the liberal mind from a biblical perspective. What are the assumptions the liberals*

*make? How do those assumptions square with the Bible?*

As we begin this discussion, I want to make a clear distinction between the terms “liberal” and “leftist.” We often use the terms interchangeably but there is an important difference.



Dennis Prager wrote about this and even described those differences in a PragerU video.[\[1\]](#) His argument is that traditional liberalism has far more in common with conservatism than it does with leftism. Here are some examples he uses to make his point.

Liberals and leftists have a different view of race. The traditional liberal position on race is that the color of one’s skin is insignificant. By contrast, leftists argue that the notion that race is insignificant is itself racist. Liberals were committed to racial integration and would have rejected the idea of separate black dormitories and separate black graduations on university campuses.

Nationalism is another difference. Dennis Prager says that liberals always deeply believed in the nation-state. Leftists, on the other hand, oppose nationalism and promote class solidarity.

Superman comics illustrate the point. When the writers of Superman were liberal, Superman was not only an American but also one who fought for “Truth, justice, and the American way.” The left-wing writers of Superman comics had Superman announce a few years ago that he was going to speak before the United Nations and inform them that he was renouncing his American citizenship.

Perhaps the best example is free speech. American liberals agree with the statement: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend your right to say it." Leftists today are leading a nationwide suppression of free speech everywhere from the college campuses to the Big Tech companies.

Capitalism and the free enterprise system would be yet another example. Dennis Prager says, "Liberals have always been pro capitalism," though they often wanted government "to play a bigger role" in the economy. Leftists oppose capitalism and are eagerly promoting socialism.

Liberals have had a love of Western civilization and taught it at most universities. They were promoters of the liberal arts and fine arts. In fact, one of the most revered liberals in American history was President Franklin Roosevelt who talked about the need to protect Western Civilization and even Christian civilization.

Today Western Civilization classes are rarely if ever taught in the university. That's because leftists don't believe Western Civilization is superior to any other civilization. Leftists label people who attempt to defend western values as racist and accuse them of promoting white supremacy. And attempts to promote religious liberty are dismissed as thinly disguised attacks on the LGBT community.

In conclusion, liberals and leftists are very different.

## **Ethics and a Belief in Right and Wrong**

The philosophical foundation for most liberal perspectives is secularism. If you don't believe in God and the Bible, then you certainly don't believe in biblical absolutes or even moral absolutes. Dostoyevsky put it this way: "If God is dead, then everything is permitted."

Even atheists admit that a view of God affects human behavior.

Richard Dawkins recently expressed his fear that the removal of religion would be a bad idea for society because it would give people “license to do really bad things.”

He likens the idea of God to surveillance, or as he puts it, the “divine spy camera in the sky.”<sup>{2}</sup> People generally tend to do the right thing when someone is watching them. They tend to do bad things when no one is watching. He goes on to add that the “Great Spy Camera theory” isn’t a good reason for him to believe in God.

It is also worth mentioning that more and more young people aren’t making decisions about right and wrong based on logic but instead based on feelings. I began to notice this decades ago. College students making a statement or challenging a conclusion used to say “I think” as they started a sentence.” Then I started to see more and more of them say “I feel” at the start of a sentence. They wouldn’t use reason to discuss an issue. Instead, they would use emotion and talk about how they felt about a particular issue.

The liberal mind also has a very different foundation for discussing right and wrong. Dennis Prager recently admitted that he had been wrong. All of his life, he has said that the left’s moral compass is broken. But he has concluded that “in order to have a broken moral compass, you need to have a moral compass to begin with. But the left doesn’t have one.”<sup>{3}</sup>

He doesn’t mean that conclusion as an attack. It is merely an observation that the left doesn’t really think in terms of good and evil. We assume that other people think that way because we think that way. But that is not how most of the people on the left perceive the world.

Karl Marx is a good example. He divided the world by economic class (the worker and the owner). One group was exploiting the other group. Good and evil aren’t really relevant when you are

thinking in terms of class struggle. Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, operated “beyond good and evil.”

To the Marxists, “there is no such thing as a universal good or universal evil.” Those of us who perceive the world from a Judeo-Christian worldview see ethics as relevant to the moral standard, not the person or their social status.

A biblical view of ethics and morality begins with the reality that God exists and that He has revealed to us moral principles we are to apply to our lives and society. Those absolute moral principles are tied to God’s character and thus unchanging.

## **A Naïve View of Human Nature**

In this article we are talking about the liberal mind, while often making a distinction between liberals and the left. When it comes to the proper view of human nature, both groups have a naïve and inaccurate view.

You can discover this for yourself by asking a simple question: Do you believe people are basically good? You will get an affirmative answer from most people in America because we live in a civilized society. We don’t have to deal with the level of corruption or terror that is a daily life in so many other countries in the world.

But if you press the question, you will begin to see how liberals have difficulty explaining the holocaust and Muslim terrorism. Because the liberal mind starts with the assumption that people are basically good. After all, that is what so many secular philosophers and psychologists have been saying for centuries. Two world wars and other wars during the 20th century should have caused most people to reject the idea that people are basically good.

The Bible teaches just the opposite. Romans 3:23 reminds us

that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” This statement about the deceitfulness of our heart may seem extreme until we realize that Jesus also taught that “out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander” (Matthew 15:19).

This naïve view of human nature should concern all of us. Young people, two generations after Auschwitz, believe people are basically good. One reason is biblical illiteracy. Another reason is historical illiteracy. A recent survey found two thirds of young people did not know six million died in the Holocaust and nearly half could not name one of the Nazi death camps.[{4}](#)

This naïve view of human nature may also explain another phenomenon we have discussed before. One of the untruths described in the book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, is the belief that the battle for truth is “us versus them.”[{5}](#) If you think that people are basically good and you have to confront someone who disagrees with you, then they must be a bad person. They aren’t just wrong. They are evil.

Tribalism has been with us for centuries. That is nothing new about people joining and defending a tribe. But that has become more intense because of the rhetoric on university campuses and the comments spreading through social media. We don’t have to live this way, but the forces in society are making the divisions in society worse by the day.

A biblical perspective starts with the teaching that all are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27) and thus have value and dignity. But all of us have a sin nature (Romans 5:12). We should interact with others who disagree with us with humility (Ephesians 4:2) and grace (Colossians 4:6).

# Big Government

We will now look at why liberals and the left promote big government. The simple answer relates to our discussion above about human nature. If you believe that people are basically good, then it is easy to assume that political leaders and bureaucrats will want to do the best for the citizens.

Christians agree that government is necessary and that it is one of the institutions ordained by God (Romans 13:1-7). There is a role for government to set the rules of governing and to resolve internal disputes through a legal system. Government is not God. But for people who don't believe in God, then the state often becomes God.

Friedrich Hayek wrote about this drive toward big government and the bureaucratic state in his classic book, [\*The Road to Serfdom\*](#). He argued in his book that "the most important change which extensive government control produces is a psychological change, an alteration in the character of the people."[\[6\]](#)

The character of citizens is changed because they yield their will and decision-making to a more powerful government. They may have done so willingly in order to have a welfare state. Or they may have done so unwillingly because a dictator has taken control of the reins of power. Either way, Hayek argues, their character has been altered because the control over every detail of economic life is ultimately control of life itself.

Friedrich Hayek wrote *The Road to Serfdom* to warn us that sometimes the road can be paved with good intentions. Most government officials and bureaucrats write laws, rules, and regulations with every good intention. They desire to make the world a better place by preventing catastrophe and by encouraging positive actions from their citizens. But in their desire to control and direct every aspect of life, they take us down the road to serfdom.

He argued that people who enter into government and run powerful bureaucracies are often people who enjoy running not only the bureaucracy but also the lives of its citizens. In making uniform rules from a distance, they deprive the local communities of the freedom to apply their own knowledge and wisdom to their unique situations. A government seeking to be a benevolent god, usually morphs into a malevolent tyrant.

The liberal mind is all too willing to allow political leaders and bureaucrats to make decisions for the public. But that willingness is based on two flawed assumptions. First, human beings are not God and thus government leaders will certainly make flawed decisions that negatively affect the affairs of its citizens. Second, liberals do not believe we have a sin nature (Romans 3:23), and that includes government leaders. Even the best of them will not always be wise, compassionate, and altruistic. This is why the founders of this country established checks and balances in government to limit the impact of sinful behavior.

## Tolerance?

If there is one attitude that you would think would be synonymous with the liberal mind, it would be [tolerance](#). That may have been true in the past. Liberalism championed the idea of free thought and free speech. That is no longer the case.

Liberals have been developing a zero-tolerance culture. In some ways, that has been a positive change. We no longer tolerate racism. We no longer tolerate sexism. Certain statements, certain jokes, and certain attitudes have been deemed off-limits.

The problem is that the politically correct culture of the left moved the lines quickly to begin to attack just about any view or value contrary to the liberal mind. Stray at all from the accepted limits of leftist thinking and you will earn



labels like racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic.

Quickly the zero-tolerance culture became the cancel culture. It is not enough to merely label an opponent with a smear, the left demands that an "enemy" lose their social standing and even their job and livelihood for deviating from what is acceptable thought. A mendacious social media mob will make sure that you pay a heavy penalty for contradicting the fundamental truths of the liberal mind.

One phenomenon that promotes this intolerance is the use of smears and negative labels. For example, patriotism and pride in your country is called xenophobia. Acknowledging the innate differences between males and females is labelled sexist. Promoting the idea that we are all of one race (the human race) and that all lives matter is called racist. Questioning whether we should redefine traditional marriage is deemed homophobic. Arguing that very young children should not undergo sex assignment surgery is called transphobia. Pointing out that most terrorist attacks come from Muslim terrorists is labelled Islamophobic.

Should Christians be [tolerant](#)? The answer is yes, we should be tolerant, but that word has been redefined in society to argue that we should accept every person's behavior. The Bible does not permit that. That is why I like to use the word [civility](#). Essentially, that is the Golden Rule: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12).

Civility requires humility. A civil person acknowledges that he or she does not possess all wisdom and knowledge. That means we should listen to others and consider the possibility that they might be right, and we could be wrong. Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself." We can disagree with other without being disagreeable. Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that "A gentle answer turns away wrath."

This is an important principle as we try to understand the liberal mind and work to build bridges to others in our society.

## Notes

1. Dennis Prager, *Left or Liberal?*, <https://www.prageru.com/video/left-or-liberal/>.

2. David Sanderson, "Ending religion is a bad idea, says Richard Dawkins," *The Times*, October 5, 2019, [www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ending-religion-is-a-bad-idea-says-richard-dawkins-sqqdbmcpq](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ending-religion-is-a-bad-idea-says-richard-dawkins-sqqdbmcpq)

3. Dennis Prager, "The Left's Moral Compass Isn't Broken," September 15, 2020, [townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2020/09/15/the-lefts-moral-compass-isnt-broken-n2576225](http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2020/09/15/the-lefts-moral-compass-isnt-broken-n2576225).

4. Ryan Miller, "Almost two-thirds of millennials, Gen Z don't know that 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, survey finds," *USA Today*, September 16, 2020, [www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/09/16/holocaust-history-millennials-gen-z-cant-name-concentration-camps/5792448002/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/09/16/holocaust-history-millennials-gen-z-cant-name-concentration-camps/5792448002/).

5. Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff, et al., *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*. New York City: Penguin Press, 2018, [probe.org/coddling-of-the-american-mind/](http://probe.org/coddling-of-the-american-mind/).

6. F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents, the Definitive Edition*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 48.

©2020 Probe Ministries

---

# Cohabitation and Living Together – A Biblical, Christian Worldview Perspective

*Kerby Anderson takes a hard look from a biblical perspective at a common practice among Americans, cohabitation. Not only does he find it counter to biblical instruction for Christians, he finds that living together in a sexual relationship reduces the probability of a long-lasting marriage later on.*



*The original version of this updated article is also available in [Spanish](#).*

More than twenty years ago, I did a week of radio programs on cohabitation and cited a study done by the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University. Sociologists David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead came to this conclusion: “Cohabitation is replacing marriage as the first living together experience for young men and women.”<sup>{1}</sup>

What was true then is true today, but there is even more evidence of changing attitudes as well as additional social research on cohabitation. A survey by Pew Research asked American adults when it was acceptable to live together. Two thirds (69%) said it was acceptable “even if they don’t plan to get married.” Another 16 percent said it was acceptable “only if they planned to get married.” Only 14 percent said it was “never acceptable.”



That may explain why living together has gone from rare to routine in the secular world, but also explains why so many

Christian couples also see living together as acceptable. In the 1960s and 1970s, only about a half million were living together. One study from a few years ago, estimated that over 18 million Americans were cohabiting, and nearly a quarter of them were people over the age of 50 years old.[{2}](#)

Another reason to revisit the social phenomenon of cohabitation is to remind couples that the “premarital cohabitation effect” still exists. The effect is the research finding from decades ago that living together before marriage increases your likelihood of marital struggles and even divorce. Scott Stanley with the Institute for Family Studies acknowledges that it may be counterintuitive “that living together would not improve one’s odds for a successful marriage. And yet, whatever else is true, there is scant evidence to support this believe in a positive effect.”[{3}](#) We will look at the latest research data below.

Since such a high percentage of American adults believe it is acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together, they have developed new legal documents to establish financial and medical obligations to one another. Several cohabiting couples will draft a cohabitation agreement.[{4}](#) Such an agreement supposedly ensures certain rights or obligations in the relationship that would typically be legally conferred upon marriage.

Although some people will say that a cohabiting couple is “married in the eyes of God,” that is not true. They are not married in God’s eyes because they are living contrary to biblical statements about marriage. And they are not married in their own eyes because they have specifically decided *not* to marry.

Cohabitation is without a doubt changing the cultural landscape of our society. That is why we look at the social, psychological, and biblical aspects of cohabitation in this article.

## Test-drive Relationships and Other Myths

No doubt you have heard couples justify cohabitation by arguing that they need to live together before marriage to see if they were compatible. First, that argument does not justify cohabitation. Second, it is fallacious since so many couples living together never plan to get married.

Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher wrote *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier and Better Off Financially*.<sup>{5}</sup> It not only makes the case for marriage; it also challenges contemporary assumptions about cohabitation.

The thesis of the book is simple. Back in the 1950s, the rules were clear: first love, next marriage, and only then the baby carriage. But the social tsunami of the 1960s changed everything. The Pill, the sexual revolution, feminism, mothers in the workplace, no-fault divorce, and the rise of illegitimate births changed our views of marriage and family. The authors marshal the evidence to show that marriage is a good thing. As the subtitle says, married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially.

Nevertheless, the conventional wisdom is that you should “try before you buy.” In fact, one of the oft-repeated questions justifying living together is: “You wouldn’t buy a car without a test-drive, would you?”

The problem with such questions and slogans is they dehumanize the other person. If I decide not to buy a car, the car doesn’t feel rejected. When you test-drive your car, you don’t pack your personal luggage in the trunk. And rejecting a car model doesn’t bring emotional baggage into the next test-driving experience. The car doesn’t need psychological counseling so that it can trust the next car buyer. Frankly, test-driving a relationship is only positive if you are the driver.

Research has shown that those who cohabit tend to view marriage negatively because it involved the assumption of new responsibilities that contrasted with their former freedoms. On the other hand, those marrying through the conventional route of dating and courtship did not feel constrained by marriage but liberated by marriage.

Consider the contrast. A couple living together has nearly everything marriage has to offer (including sex) but few commitments or responsibilities. So, cohabiting people feel trapped when they enter marriage. They must assume huge new responsibilities while getting nothing they didn't already have.

Couples entering marriage through dating and courtship experience just the opposite, especially if they maintain their sexual purity. Marriage is the culmination of their relationship and provides the full depth of a relationship they have long anticipated.

This is not to say that cohabitation guarantees marital failure nor that marriage through the conventional route guarantees marital success. There are exceptions to this rule, but a couple who live together before marriage stack the odds against themselves and their future marriage.

## **Cohabitation and Perceptions**

Although cohabitation is becoming popular in America, sociologists studying the phenomenon warned that living together before marriage, puts your future marriage in danger. That was the conclusion of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University done by sociologists David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead.[{6}](#)

They found that cohabiting appears to be so counterproductive to long-lasting marriage that unmarried couples should avoid living together, especially if it involves children. They

argue that living together is “a fragile family form” that poses increased risk to women and children.

Part of the reason for the danger is the difference in perception. Men often enter the relationship with less intention to marry than do women. They may regard it more as a sexual opportunity without the ties of long-term commitment. Women, however, often see the living arrangement as a step toward eventual marriage. While the women may believe they are headed for marriage, the man often has other ideas. Some men resent the women they live with and view them as easy. Such a woman is not his idea of a faithful marriage partner.

People who live together in uncommitted relationships may be unwilling to work out problems. Since there is no long-term commitment, often it is easy to leave the current living arrangement and seek less fractious relationships with a new partner.

In recent years, there has been the occasional study that suggests there are no significant problems for couples if they live together. But Scott Stanley of the Institute for Family Studies dismisses those few studies because they fail to consider long-term problems. And he points to another recent study that does show an increased risk for divorce among those living together before marriage.[\[7\]](#)

The significant increase in cohabitation in the last few decades is staggering. The reasons for the growth are many: fewer taboos against premarital sex, earlier sexual maturity, later marriage, adequate income to live apart from their families.

Whatever the reasons for cohabiting, this study documents the dangers. Couples who live together are more likely to divorce than those who don't. They are less happy and score lower on well-being indices, including sexual satisfaction. And cohabiting couples are often poorer than married couples.

Even if millions are doing it, living together is a bad idea. As we will see below, there are clear biblical prohibitions against premarital sex. But apart from these biblical pronouncements are the ominous sociological predictions of failure when a couple considers cohabitation rather than marriage. The latest research backs up what the Bible has said for millennia. If you want a good marriage, don't do what society says. Do what the Bible teaches us to do.

## **Consequences of Cohabitation**

Contrary to conventional wisdom, cohabitation can be harmful to marriage as well as to the couples and their children. One study based on the National Survey of Families and Households found that marriages which had prior cohabitators were 46 percent more likely to divorce than marriages of non-cohabitators. The authors concluded from this study and from a review of previous studies that the risk of marital disruption following cohabitation "is beginning to take on the status of an empirical generalization."[\[8\]](#)

Some have tried to argue that the correlation between cohabitation and divorce is artificial since people willing to cohabit are more unconventional and less committed to marriage. In other words, cohabitation doesn't cause divorce but is merely associated with it because the same type of people are involved in both phenomena. Yet, even when this "selection effect" is carefully controlled statistically, a "cohabitation effect" remains.

Marriages are held together by a common commitment which is absent in most, if not all, cohabiting relationships. Partners who live together value autonomy over commitment and tend not to be as committed as married couples in their dedication to the continuation of the relationship.[\[9\]](#)

One study found that "living with a romantic partner prior to marriage was associated with more negative and less positive



problem-solving support and behavior during marriage.” The reason is simple. Since there is less certainty of a long-term commitment, “there may be less motivation for cohabiting partners to develop their conflict resolution and support skills.”[{10}](#)

Couples living together, however, miss out on more than just the benefits of marriage. Annual rates of depression among cohabiting couples are more than three times higher than they are among married couples.[{11}](#) Those who cohabit are much more likely to be unhappy in marriage and much more likely to think about divorce.[{12}](#)

Cohabitation is especially harmful to children. First, several studies have found that children currently living with a mother and her unmarried partner have significantly more behavior problems and lower academic performance than children in intact families.[{13}](#) Second, there is the risk that the couple will break up, creating even more social and personal difficulties. Third, many of these children were not born in the present union but in a previous union of one of the adult partners (usually the mother). Living in a house with a mother and an unmarried boyfriend is tenuous at best.

These studies, along with others, suggest that cohabitation is less secure, less fulfilling, and even potentially more harmful than traditional marriage.

## **Cohabitation and the Bible**

God designed sexual intimacy to occur exclusively within the sacred commitment of marriage (Genesis 2:21-24). When we trust God’s design, we can honor marriage as we are commanded in Hebrews 13:4.

The Bible teaches that the act of sexual intercourse can have a strong bonding effect on two people. When done within the bounds of marriage, the man and the woman become one flesh.

Ephesian 5:31 says: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

Sexual intercourse outside of marriage also has consequences. Writing to the church in Corinth, Paul said that when a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her (1 Corinthians 6:16). The context of the discussion arose from a problem within the church. A man in the church was having sexual relations with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1-3). Paul calls this relationship sinful. In 1 Corinthians 6:18 he says we are to flee sexual immorality.

Sexual immorality is condemned in about 25 passages in the New Testament. The Greek word is *porneia*, a word which includes all forms of illicit sexual intercourse. Jesus taught in Mark 7:21-23: "For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean."

Paul taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God."

Marriage is God's plan. Marriage provides intimate companionship for life (Genesis 2:18). It provides a context for the procreation and nurture of children (Ephesians 6:1-2). And finally, marriage provides a godly outlet for sexual desire (1 Corinthians 7:2).

In the New Testament, believers are warned against persistent sin, including sexual sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). The church is to keep believers accountable for their behavior. Believers are to judge themselves, lest they fall into God's hands (1 Corinthians 11:31-32). Sexual sin should not even be named

among believers (Ephesians 5:3).

Living together outside of marriage not only violates biblical commands but it puts a couple and their future marriage at risk. In this article, I have collected several sobering statistics about the impact cohabitation can have on you and your relationship. If you want a good marriage, don't do what society says. Do what the Bible teaches us to do.

## Notes

1. David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know about Cohabitation before Marriage," *The National Marriage Project*, the Next Generation Series, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, January 1999.

2. Patricia Reaney, "More Americans 50 Years and Over are Cohabiting, Research Shows," Reuters, April 6, 2017,

[www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-cohabitation/more-americans-50-years-and-over-are-cohabiting-research-shows-idUSKBN1782RI](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-cohabitation/more-americans-50-years-and-over-are-cohabiting-research-shows-idUSKBN1782RI)

3. Scott Stanley, "Premarital Cohabitation Is Still Associated with Greater Odds of Divorce, Institute for Family Studies, October 17, 2018, [ifstudies.org/blog/premarital-cohabitation-is-still-associated-with-greater-odds-of-divorce](http://ifstudies.org/blog/premarital-cohabitation-is-still-associated-with-greater-odds-of-divorce)

4. [money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/family-finance/articles/what-is-a-cohabitation-agreement](http://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/family-finance/articles/what-is-a-cohabitation-agreement)

5. Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier and Better Off Financially* (New York: Random House, 2000).

6. David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The National Marriage Project*, January 1999.

7. Scott Stanley, "Premarital Cohabitation," *Institute for Family Studies*, October 17, 2018

8. Alfred DeMaris and K. Vaninadha Rao, "Premarital Cohabitation and Subsequent Marital Stability in the United States: A Reassessment," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 54(1992), 178-190.

9. Stephen Nock, "A Comparison of Marriages and Cohabiting Relationships," *Journal of Family Issues* 16(1995), 53-76.
10. Catherine L. Cohan and Stacey Kleinbaum, "Toward A Greater Understanding of the Cohabitation Effect: Premarital Cohabitation and Marital Communication," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64(2002), 180-192.
11. Lee Robins and Darrel Reiger, *Psychiatric Disorders in America* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 72.
12. Andrew Greeley, *Faithful Attraction* (New York: Tom Doherty, 1991), 206.
13. Elizabeth Thompson, T. L. Hanson, and S.S. McLanahan, "Family Structure and Child Well-Being: Economic Resources versus Parental Behaviors," *Social Forces* 71(1994), 221-242.

### **Additional Resources**

Kerby Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005, chapter thirteen.

Jeff Van Goethem, *Living Together: A Guide to Counseling Unmarried Couples*, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004.

Glenn Stanton, *The Ring Makes All the Difference: The Hidden Consequences of Cohabitation and the Strong Benefits of Marriage*, Chicago: Moody Press, 2011.

Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier and Better Off Financially* (New York: Random House, 2000).

©2023 Probe Ministries

[This article is an updated version of Kerby's 2003 transcript titled "Cohabitation."]

---

# Heresy: Nothing New Under the Sun

*Kerby Anderson provides an overview of some ancient Christian heresies that are still being embraced today: legalism, gnosticism, mysticism, and marcionism.*

In this article we address ancient heresies that still exist in only a slightly different form today. Jesus warned us in Matthew 13:24-25 that the “kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.” But then there is a twist in the story.

“But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.”

Later Jesus explained the parable. The wheat is the “people of the kingdom.” The tares are the “people of the evil one.” The illustration would make sense to people living in the first century. There was even a Roman law against sowing tares in another person’s field. Some have called it a “primitive form of bioterrorism.”



Jesus is teaching that both true Christians and false Christians will live together. They both may even go to church and seem like Christians. But the false Christians believe and spread heresy within the church and into society.

Paul also warned about false teaching and heresy. In what might have been his last epistle, he warned Timothy that: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn

aside to myths.” (2 Timothy 4:3)

Peter also gave a warning that these false teachers will come from inside the church. “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words.” (2 Peter 2:1)

Notice that these heresies and false teachers will arise from among you. They will secretly introduce these heresies. And they will use greed and sensuality to seduce Christians. Jude (1:4) also adds that these false teachers “have crept in unnoticed” and “turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

In this article we look at heresies in the past that can be found in a slightly altered form today. Just as believers in the first century were warned about false teachers and destructive heresies, so we need to warn each other today about these heresies in the 21st century.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 reminds us that there is “nothing new under the sun.” As we will see below, that is true of these ancient heresies.

## **Legalism**

Legalism is an ancient heresy going all the way back to the first century. Paul in his letter to the Colossians (2:16-17) said, “Therefore, no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath-day things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” He warned them about those in their midst who were taking them captive through the

subtle lies of legalism.

You might notice that what is listed in these verses are not instructions on purity or righteousness. Rather they are specific Old Testament practices that were given to Israel before the coming of Christ. The Passover is a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice as the Lamb of God. While the deliverance of Israel is significant, consider how much more significant is Christ's death which provides us with deliverance from the slavery of sin and separation from God. The previous feasts and festivals are no longer necessary now that we have Christ in our lives.

Jesus addressed legalism among the Pharisees and scribes. They established all sorts of rules and regulations that were binding on all Jews. Starting with the law, they set out to compile the various oral traditions and even began to develop interpretations of these laws. In the end, they even had interpretations of the interpretations that were collected in numerous volumes.

By the time of Christ, the Pharisees and the scribes were actually following the traditions of men rather than the law of God. Jesus pointedly asked them, "Why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3) Jesus also condemned the Pharisees by saying, "You also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:28). Jesus therefore accused them, on numerous occasions, of being hypocrites.

Legalism is our attempt to produce righteousness apart from God. We are challenged to follow additional rules and regulations that we believe will merit favor before God. But in the end, these unbiblical rules bind us and drain the joy from our lives.

When we give people an ever expanding "to-do list" that is uncoupled from God's power, we wear people down and ultimately

drive people away from the gospel. Paul warned Timothy that in the last days there would be people “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:5). He counsels him to avoid such people.

## **Gnosticism**

Gnosticism is an ancient heresy that surfaced in the last century, partially because of the discovery of the Gnostic Gospels. The Gnostics were prevalent in the first few centuries after the time of Christ. The word *gnosis* means “knowledge.” The focus was on hidden knowledge that contradicted biblical revelation.

For example, the Gnostics denied the existence of sin. Instead, they proposed that the world was corrupted by the demiurge who created it and rules over it. If they believed in sin, they would say that the only sin is ignorance.

The Gnostics taught that Jesus came not to save the world but to impart special knowledge that would lead us to what they called a “divine pleroma.” If you were fortunately to find this knowledge, then you would achieve salvation.

In the first centuries, the Gnostics presented themselves as Christians and worked to popularize their ideas among the growing church of believers. They also produced their own texts (Gospel of Mary, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Judas).

Iraenaeus was a church father who wrote a critique of Gnosticism in AD 180. He explained that the Gnostics used the Bible alongside their own texts to demonstrate their “perverse interpretations” and “deceitful expositions.” They also reinterpreted parables and allegories from the Old Testament in a fraudulent manner.

Nevertheless, Gnosticism appealed to many Christians in the first centuries because it had many elements that were very similar to Christianity. They believed in Father, Son, and



Holy Spirit. They quoted from the Bible. They practiced some of the sacraments.

Many of these same heretical ideas appeal to Christians today. Leaders of progressive Christianity argue that they have a more mature view of God and the Bible. These leaders believe they have special knowledge that allows them to set aside the standard interpretations of biblical passages. One evangelical pastor said: "The church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense."[\[1\]](#)

The Gnostics and modern heretics claim sources of knowledge outside the Bible. They say we know so much more now than the early Christians. C.S. Lewis refers to this as "chronological snobbery." They assume they know better than any believer in the past.

Today, we have people claiming to know what the Bible really means and invite you to join them as they impart their "special knowledge" to you. More than ever we should be alert to such leaders who will ultimately lead us away from the true Gospel.

## **Mysticism**

Mysticism is another ancient heresy that we still see today. When Paul wrote to the Colossians (2:18-19), he warned them about false teachers who would attempt to seduce them into mystical ideas: "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God."

The word mysticism comes from the Greek word (*mystes*) for the

mystery religions that existed at the time Paul was writing to these Christians. He is describing someone who is "taking his stand on visions he has seen." In other words, this is a person who has had some vision and is mixing that vision with the revelation of Scripture.

At the time Paul was writing to a church that was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Many were young Christians and may have brought their pagan ideas into the church. This would include the idea that you receive spiritual revelations by entering into an ecstatic state. These Christians also lived in a culture where many claimed they were receiving visions from the gods. If these young Christians did not have discernment, they might actually believe that someone who has these visions was spiritually superior to them.

Mysticism has been a major area of cultural captivity both in church history and even in our present day. We see in Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, that believers were confused about speaking in tongues and other spiritual manifestations. Some of the believers were essentially "babes in Christ" who could not handle the solid food of God's word. He reminded them that when they were pagans, they had been led astray (1 Corinthians 12:1-3). Because of their previous exposure to paganism, they were vulnerable to false doctrine.

Throughout church history, certain churches and denominations have brought mystical rituals and practices into their worship experience. They may take the form of chants, icons, or prescribed practices not found in Scripture but part of a tradition that borrows heavily from mystical ideas. And many of these practices are found today not only in North American churches but in churches in other parts of the world.

Mysticism is quite prevalent outside of the church and can have a strong cultural influence on Christians. Many of the books on the best-seller lists over the last few decades dealing with spirituality are not books that promote biblical

Christianity but rather books that promote an Eastern philosophy of religion or the New Age Movement.

## **Marcionism**

Marcionism was taught by a theologian named Marcion in the second century. Although some of his ideas parallel Gnosticism, he made a distinction between the God of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament. He taught that the benevolent God of the gospels who sent Jesus was inconsistent with the mean, vindictive, malevolent God of the Old Testament. Hence, he concluded they were two different deities.

He also considered himself a follower of Paul, who he preached was the only true apostle of Jesus Christ. In fact, he even created his own "Scriptures" that included ten of Paul's epistles and the Gospel of Marcion (which was a shorter version and highly edited version of the Gospel of Luke). He emphasized Paul because he felt he freed Christianity from the Jewish Scriptures.

He also rejected most of the orthodox teachings of Christianity. For example, he rejected the ideas of God's wrath and rejected the ideas of hell and judgment. Those ideas, according to him, were tied to the God of the Old Testament, whom he called the Demiurge. That God was merely a jealous tribal deity of the Jews and represented a legalistic view of justice.

A similar idea exists even today. For example, one evangelical theologian said this: "The Bible is an ancient book and we shouldn't be surprised to see it act like one. So seeing God portrayed as a violent, tribal warrior is not how God is but how he was understood to be by the ancient Israelites community with god in their time and place."[\[2\]](#)

We might add that an increasing number of pastors and

Christians no longer want to talk about God's wrath and refuse to teach what the Bible does say about hell and judgment. Books and articles are being written denying the existence of hell. Instead, they teach universal salvation for all.

Jesus talked more about hell than he talked about heaven. In Luke 16 he describes it as a great chasm that does not allow people to cross to the other side. In Matthew 25 he predicts a future in which people will be separated into two groups. One will enter heaven. The others will be banished to "eternal fire."

We live in a world where heresy, false teaching, and a false gospel are proliferating. That is why we need to develop biblical discernment. Paul said he was amazed that some of the early Christians adopted "a different gospel" which he said was a distorted gospel of Christ. He added, "If we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-8).

These ancient heresies are being preached today. We need to return to the essential gospel and sound biblical teaching.

## Notes

1. "Rob Bell Suggests Bible Not Relevant to Today's Culture | CBN News," [www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2015/February/Rob-Bell-Suggests-Bible-Not-Relevant-to-Todays-Culture](http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2015/February/Rob-Bell-Suggests-Bible-Not-Relevant-to-Todays-Culture) accessed 2/5/2023.
2. Peter Enns, *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It* (NY: Harper One, 2014).

©2023 Probe Ministries

---

# George Washington and Religion

*Kerby Anderson presents a compelling argument for the view that George Washington was a devoted Christian rather than a deist. He points to Washington's insistence on the importance of services for his soldiers, his personal church attendance, his prayer life and his commitment to the spiritual upbringing of his godchildren.*

## Background

What was George Washington's view of religion and in particular of Christianity? The historical perspective used to be that Washington was a Christian and orthodox in most of his beliefs. But the modern view has been that he was either a lukewarm Anglican or more likely a Deist.



I want to look at some new research that argues for the traditional view and against the modern view of George Washington's religion. One book is *Washington's God: Religion, Liberty, and the Father of our Country*.<sup>{1}</sup> It is written by Michael Novak (American Enterprise Institute and winner of the Templeton Award) and Jana Novak. Another book, written by Peter Lillback with Jerry Newcombe, is *George Washington's Sacred Fire*.<sup>{2}</sup>

George Washington was born into a Virginia family of moderate wealth and was exposed to various religious activities: lessons in religion, regular prayer, Sunday school attendance, and reverence for God. His mother had a daily ritual of retiring with a book of religious readings.

By the time he was a teenager, Washington had already assumed serious responsibilities as a professional surveyor and then

as a major in the Virginia militia. His adventures in the wild lands gave him invaluable lessons about the military, Indians, and the British. Years later in a speech to the Delaware chiefs, Washington said, "You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ. These will make you a greater and happier people than you are."[\[3\]](#)

He studied the Bible as well as the writings of ancient heroes. The busts and portraits at Mount Vernon demonstrate this. There are busts of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Charles XII of Sweden, and Frederick II of Prussia. In the dining room are portraits of the Virgin Mary and St. John.

Washington's own stepgranddaughter "Nelly" Custis saw him as a religious man. She wrote this to one of Washington's early biographers:

It was his custom to retire to his library at nine or ten o'clock, where he remained an hour before he went to his chamber. He always rose before the sun, and remained in his library until called to breakfast. I never witnessed his private devotions. I never inquired about them. I should have thought it the greatest heresy to doubt his firm belief in Christianity. His life, his writings, prove that he was a Christian. He was not one of those who act or pray, "that they may be seen of men." He communed with his God in secret.[\[4\]](#)

In what follows we will look at the evidence for George Washington's faith as it surfaced in his letters and actions as general and president.

## **Deism vs. Christianity**

Pick up a book about George Washington written during the nineteenth century, and you will probably see that he is described as being a Christian. However, if you pick up a book

written in the last seventy years, it will describe him as a Deist. Why the change?

The turning point seems to be a study by historian Paul F. Boller, Jr. entitled *George Washington and Religion*. His conclusion can be summarized in a single sentence: To the “unbiased observer” George Washington appears as a Deist, not a devout Christian.<sup>{5}</sup> Most historians since Boller accepted this idea and were less likely to assert that Washington was a Christian.

What do we mean by “Deism”? Deism is the belief that God is merely a watchmaker God who started the universe but is not involved in the affairs of humans and human history. One definition of Deism is that “There is no special providence; no miracles or other divine interventions intrude upon the lawful natural order.”<sup>{6}</sup>

Was George Washington a Deist? He was not. It is worth noting that even historian Paul Boller admitted that religion was important to Washington as a leader. Boller writes, “he saw to it that divine services were performed by the chaplains as regularly as possible on the Sabbath for the soldiers under his command.”<sup>{7}</sup> We might reasonably ask, Why would chaplains be important to a Deist?

Boller even admits there are testimonials of Washington’s church attendance. This is important since many historians even go further than Boller and assert that Washington did not even attend church as a mature adult.

Michael Novak admits that some of the names Washington often used for God *sound* Deist, but that does not mean that he was a Deist. In fact, his prayers for God’s action were just the opposite of what you might hear from a Deist. Washington believed God favored the cause of liberty and should be beseeched to “interpose” his action on behalf of the Americans. He called for public thanksgiving for the many ways

in which Americans experienced God's hand in key events in our history.

Washington used more than eighty terms to refer to God, among them: Almighty God, Creator, Divine Goodness, Father of all mercies, and Lord of Hosts. The most common term he used in his writings and speeches was "Providence." When he did so, he used the masculine personal pronoun "he." Washington never refers directly to God as an "it," as he does occasionally with Providence. God is personal.[{8}](#)

If we look at the history of the eighteenth century, there were many with orthodox religious beliefs who sometimes used the philosophical language of the enlightenment. Washington was a Christian, even though he often used terms for God associated with Deists.

## **A Religious Nation Goes to War**

There has been some dispute about how religious America was during the Revolutionary War. There was a shortage of churches and clergy (especially along the paths of westward migration). But we should also remember that this War of Independence followed the First Great Awakening.

At the first meeting of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia (September 1774), the first motion from the floor was for prayer to seek guidance from God. But there was resistance, not because of the prayer, but because of the theological disagreements among the members (Anabaptist, Quakers, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians). Sam Adams settled the dispute by saying he was no bigot and could pray along with any minister as long as he was a patriot.[{9}](#) I have in my office a picture of a painting showing George Washington praying with men like Patrick Henry, John Jay, and Richard Henry Lee.

At the second meeting, they proposed that Washington be



appointed commander in chief of the Continental Army. He did not think he was equal to the command but accepted it. He wrote his wife, "I shall rely, therefore, confidently on that Providence, which has heretofore preserved and been bountiful to me, not doubting but that I shall return safe to you in the fall."[{10}](#) At the time, Washington was the only man on the continent in uniform since no Continental Army yet existed. To the British, he was the supreme traitor, in open rebellion to the King. His neck was at risk, and the American independence depended on him.

One event that George Washington believed showed God's providence was the Battle of Long Island in 1776. Washington and his men were trapped on Brooklyn Heights, Long Island. The British were poised to crush the American army the next day and that would have been the end of the rebellion. Washington planned a bold move and began evacuating his troops under the cover of darkness using everything from fishing vessels to rowboats. But there was not enough time to accomplish the task. When morning came, the fog of night remained and only lifted in time for the British to see the last American boat crossing the East River beyond the reach of their guns. You can read more about this miraculous event in Michael Novak's book, *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding*.[{11}](#)

Washington also required chaplains for the Continental Army, and personally took time for prayer. He forbade his troops under pain of death from uttering blasphemies, even profanity. He called upon them to conduct themselves as Christian soldiers because the people demanded it.[{12}](#)

Washington's actions during the Revolutionary War demonstrate his Christian character.

## First in War and First in Peace

In his eulogy for George Washington, Henry Lee said he was "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." We could also say the Washington demonstrated Christian character both in war and in peace.

While fulfilling his duties as general, he came to be known as a "nursing father." This is a biblical phrase (Num. 11:12, Is. 49:23 KJV) that appears in many of the tributes to Washington after his death. He brought together very diverse groups to fight the Revolutionary War by bridging ethnic and social divisions. This ranged from the regiment from Marblehead, Massachusetts (that included men of mixed race, blacks, and Indians), to the Virginian and southern aristocrats to the yeomen in hunting shirts from western Virginia.

One of his orders stated that "All chaplains are to perform divine service tomorrow, and on every succeeding Sunday. . . . The commander in chief expects an exact compliance with this order, and that it be observed in future as an invariable rule of practice—and every neglect will be consider not only a breach of orders, but a disregard to decency, virtue and religion."[13](#)

Washington grew even more explicit as the war dragged on: "While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of a Christian."[14](#)

Washington lost a great deal of money during the war by paying for things out of his own pocket and by refusing a salary. He happily returned to Mount Vernon and spent happy years with his wife. But the constitutional convention in 1787 brought him to elective office. He was elected as president by unanimous vote in 1789.

In his inaugural address, Washington said, "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."

He issued a thanksgiving proclamation in 1789 in which he asserted "the duty of all nations" in regard to God. His thanksgiving proclamation of 1795 proclaims there are signs of "Divine beneficence" in the world. And in his farewell address, he reminded Americans that "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports."

Washington demonstrated Christian character in war and in peace.

## **Washington as Christian: Pro and Con**

Let's summarize the arguments historians make about Washington's religious faith. Those who believe that George Washington was a Deist and not a Christian usually make the following observations.

First, Washington never took communion at Sunday services. Second, he refused to declare his specific beliefs in public. Third, he rarely used the name of Jesus Christ in private correspondence and in public utterances. Finally, while he believed in God and had an awareness of Providence in his life, it all seems more like a Greek or Roman view of fate.

Michael Novak's response to these observations is helpful. "All these objections have a grain of truth in them. Still, they are consistent with Washington's being a serious Christian who believed that he had a public vocation that required some tact regarding his private confessional life."[\[15\]](#) Novak adds:

It is not at all unusual for public men in pluralistic American life to maintain a notable reserve about their private convictions. They do not burden the public with declarations of their deepest beliefs, whose general force they trust their actions will sufficiently reveal. In the public forum, they happily give to Caesar what is Caesar's and in the private forum, to God what is God's. [\[16\]](#)

What are some of the reasons to believe Washington was a Christian? First, he religiously observed the Sabbath as a day of rest and frequently attended church services on that day. Second, many report that Washington reserved time for private prayer. Third, Washington saved many of the dozens of sermons sent to him by clergymen, and read some of them aloud to his wife.

Fourth, Washington hung paintings of the Virgin Mary and St. John in places of honor in his dining room in Mount Vernon. Fifth, the chaplains who served under him during the long years of the Revolutionary War believed Washington was a Christian. Sixth, Washington (unlike Thomas Jefferson) was never accused by the press or his opponents of not being a Christian.

It is also worth noting that, unlike Jefferson, Washington agreed to be a godparent for at least eight children. This was far from a casual commitment since it required the godparents to agree to help insure that a child was raised in the Christian faith. Washington not only agreed to be a godparent, but presented his godsons and goddaughters with Bibles and prayer books.

George Washington was not a Deist who believed in a "watchmaker God." He was a Christian and demonstrated that Christian character throughout his life.

## **Notes**

1. Michael Novak and Jana Novak, *Washington's God: Religion,*

- Liberty, and the Father of our Country* (NY: Basic Books, 2006).
2. Peter Lillback, with Jerry Newcombe, *George Washington's Sacred Fire* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Providence Forum Press, 2006).
  3. Novak, *Washington's God*, 93.
  4. Ibid., 136.
  5. Lillback, *Sacred Fire*, 28.
  6. Novak, *Washington's God*, 110.
  7. Lillback, *Sacred Fire*, 28.
  8. Ibid., 577.
  9. Novak, *Washington's God*, 123.
  10. Ibid, 64.
  11. Michael Novak, *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding* (San Francisco: Encounter, 2002).
  12. Novak, *Washington's God*, 30-31.
  13. Ibid., 90.
  14. Ibid.
  15. Ibid., 219.
  16. Ibid., 219-220.

© 2009 Probe Ministries

---

## **The Great Reset**

*The Great Reset means different things to different people. Kerby Anderson provides an overview and a biblical perspective.*

Is the idea of “The Great Reset” merely a conspiracy theory? That seems unlikely, given the fact that if you type in those three words in a search engine you will find more than 900 million hits. But the phrase “great reset” apparently means different things to different people, so getting a clear definition is important.



In 2020, the founder of the World Economic Forum co-authored and published a book called *COVID-19: The Great Reset*.[\[1\]](#) This organization is composed of political, economic, and cultural elites who meet regularly in Davos, Switzerland. The two authors of this book see the current situation in the world as a means of dealing with the “weaknesses of capitalism” supposedly exposed during the pandemic.

But to understand the history of “The Great Reset” you need to go back to the beginning of the World Economic Forum. Klaus Schwab introduced the idea of “stakeholder capitalism.”[\[2\]](#) This is a term sometimes used by progressives to reset the management goals in corporations from shareholders to stakeholders.

The actual term “Great Reset” can be found in a book by that title written by urban studies scholar Richard Florida.[\[3\]](#) He argued that the 2008 economic crash was the latest in a series of great resets that included the Great Depression of the 1930s. A few years later, the book and its ideas became the basis for wanting to “push the reset button” on the world economies.

As you might expect, the pandemic and lockdowns have provided a context in which a reset could take place. The goal would be to make the world greener, more digital, and fairer. Given what the world has been through these last few years, the proponents hope to change the economies of nations, so that they benefit not only shareholders but employees, consumers, communities, and the environment.

Some of the comments proponents have made about “The Great Reset” have become fodder for various conspiracy theories. But it is probably fair to say that the phrase “The Great Reset” means different things to different people. Environmental groups want to reset how we use resources and focus on

sustainability. Business leaders want banks and corporations to use an ESG index (environmental, social, and governance index). Globalists want to reset the economy and move us toward a different view of [capitalism](#).

Critics talk about some of the other factors associated with “The Great Reset.” That would include such things as the promotion of uncontrolled immigration along with significant money printing that results in such problems as open borders and uncontrolled inflation.

In this article we look at this important issue from an economic, political, and biblical perspective. As you will see, Christians need to pay attention to this issue in the news.

## **The Great Reset of Capitalism**

The primary focus from the World Economic Forum has been on the attempt to move our current economic system into “stakeholder capitalism.” Some critics have renamed it “corporate [socialism](#)” or even “communist capitalism.”

The plan is to change the behavior of corporations to no longer benefit shareholders but to focus on stakeholders. This would be done by requiring businesses and corporations to take a more central role when a crisis, like the recent pandemic, adversely affects society.

[Climate change](#) is another “crisis” that corporations need to address. Put simply, corporations need to be involved in social justice issues. That is why we are seeing major corporations getting more involved in political issues and expressing their opinions on issues ranging from transgenderism to voter integrity laws. One effective tactic being used is to rate businesses and corporations with an ESG index (environmental, social, and governance index).

The ESG index can be used to force businesses to comply with a [woke](#) agenda or else be squeezed out of the market. Some have suggested that the ESG index is essentially a social credit score being applied to businesses and corporations.

Andy Kessler, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, argues that ESG is a loser and that you pay higher expenses for a fund with similar stocks but worse performance.[{4}](#) In fact, he encourages [investors](#) to buy stocks of companies with great prospects over the next decade at reasonable prices.

Aren't the companies and countries with a high ESG score better investments? A professor at the University of Colorado evaluated the system in the *Harvard Business Review* and made four key points about ESG.[{5}](#)

First, ESG funds have underperformed. Second, companies that tout their ESG credentials have worse compliance records for labor and environmental rules. Third, ESG scores of companies that signed the UN Principles of Investment, didn't improve after they signed, and their financial returns were lower for those who signed. His final point was even more significant. He concluded that often companies publicly embrace ESG as a cover for poor business performance. In other words, when earnings are bad, the company cites its ESG score.

Klaus Schwab believes that companies should try and optimize for more than short-term profits and focus on achieving the goals set forth by the UN for sustainable development. That may sound like a good idea until you look at the economic data behind it.

## Why Now?

Why has there been such a push for significant changes in this decade? Activists wanting to make changes in society and our economy see the pandemic and governmental response as a political opportunity. It is the familiar phrase, "Never let a



crisis go to waste.”

Most social and political change occurs gradually. The crisis of the pandemic forced big government and big pharma to move at a much faster rate. Public acceptance of larger governmental control became a paradigm shift that allowed political leaders and even corporate leaders to move faster than the incremental pace of the past. The pandemic threw open the window for change. The only question is how much of “The Great Reset” will be put in place before it closes.

The pandemic is the external reason for pushing “The Great Reset” but there is also an internal reason. An entire generation of college students learning woke ideology in the universities are now filling positions in various companies. Many commentators naively suggested that once coddled college students enter the “real world,” they will drop their woke ideas and face the reality of making a living in the business world and the free market.

Instead, those woke students brought their ideas into corporate boardrooms and embraced attempts to reset capitalism and corporations. Their professors taught them that capitalism is evil, and that America is riven with racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia. It is time, they believe, to join arms with activists and reformers and bring about “The Great Reset.” We might add that the American consumer hasn’t been so accepting of these ideas, which is why we sometimes hear the phrase “go woke, go broke.”

The push for a “Great Reset” is also taking place during what many commentators refer to as the fourth industrial revolution. The first industrial revolution was a mechanical revolution. The second and third revolutions were electrical and digital revolutions. This fourth industrial revolution brings together diverse technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, and biotechnology. It also includes philosophical ideas like [transhumanism](#).

In previous programs, I have discussed the impact of surveillance on our [privacy](#). We warned about the influence of [Big Tech](#) and [Big Data](#). And we have also talked about [the merging of humans and machines](#). Each new technological development brings progress and benefits, but they also bring legitimate concerns about how these technologies can be abused in the wrong hands.

How then will this be accomplished?

## **Administrative State**

It may be difficult to imagine how the great reset programs could be implemented in the US. Only a few members of Congress would support these ideas. As we have discussed above, many of these ideas have been implemented in woke corporations. But these programs could also be implemented by the administrative state or what some have called “the deep state.”

Two books document the deep state. Michael Glennon (Tufts University law professor) wrote about *National Security and Double Government*.[\[6\]](#) This dual-state system, he explained, began under President Bush but was continued under President Obama.

Mike Lofgren (former congressional aide) wrote about *The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government*.[\[7\]](#) He argued that there is “the visible government situated around the Mall in Washington, and then there is another, more shadowy, more indefinable government that is not explained in Civics 101 or observable to tourists at the White House or the Capitol.” He explained that it wasn’t a “secret, conspiratorial cabal” but rather “the state within a state is hiding mostly in plain sight.”

The reason we have an executive bureaucracy is to benefit from the research and experience of public servants who have devoted their lives to understanding the social and political

implications of federal policies. This has always been a necessary function, but especially with the last few presidents. The experts in the bureaucracy can provide context and prevent presidents and their cabinets from making huge mistakes.

But there is another side to the federal bureaucracy. We may suppose that bureaucrats are there to implement the policies of the President and administration. Political appointees to the cabinet always say that they “serve at the pleasure of the president.”

That may be true for them. But a career civil servant has a different perspective and expects to be in government much longer than the four or eight years a president holds office. We may think of the bureaucracy as like a military unit (where every order is routinely obeyed). But the bureaucracy is often more like a university faculty (where you are part of a team but also have many of your own ideas about what should be done). Often the federal bureaucracy slows down the implementation of the president’s policies or even chooses to ignore them.

As I discussed in a previous program on [The Liberal Mind](#), even with the best of bureaucrats, the “[road to serfdom](#)” can be paved with good intentions. Fredrick Hayek wrote his book with that title because he was concerned that most government officials and bureaucrats write laws, rules, and regulations with good intention. They desire to make the world a better place and may believe that the best way to achieve that is to implement many of the great reset policies. That is why we need to pay attention to the “deep state” and administration policies.

## **Biblical Perspective**

What is a biblical perspective on the great reset? It would be

easy to merely link all these ideas to end-time prophecy. It is easy to see how these emerging technologies and the concept of the “great reset” could be used by the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation 13). Computer technology and enhanced surveillance would allow this future leader to control the world. But it is important to consider how we should respond in our current world to these proposals.

We are seeing many examples of leftist authoritarianism today and need to be alert and involved. James 4:7 says we have a responsibility to resist evil, and Paul tells us to fight the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7). Jesus teaches that we are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16).

Christians can agree with the goals of addressing economic inequality and the need to care for the environment. We are to defend the poor and oppressed (Psalm 82:3) and to be good stewards of God’s creation (Genesis 1:27-28). But we should also be concerned about the authoritarian impulses we see not only in government but in major corporations.

First, we should separate the message from the messenger. The World Economic Forum and its participants are sometimes naïve and they even propose disturbing solutions to very real problems in our society. We can agree with their attempts to deal with poverty and economic inequality, but we must reject some of the ways in which they want to reset the world and bring about change.

Second, we should apply the Bible and a biblical worldview to each issue. For example, a biblical view of justice usually differs from many of the secular, progressive ways of working for justice that also includes such things as the promotion of sexual and gender identities.

Third, we should apply a biblical perspective to technology. The Bible does not condemn technology but often reminds us

that tools and technology can be used for both good and evil. The technology that built the ark (Genesis 6) also was later used to construct the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). A wise and discerning Christian should evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of each technology.

Christians will need discernment (Proverbs 18:15) in judging the ideas associated with the “great reset.” The phrase can mean different things to different people. Many of the ideas associated with it are bad for our country and us. But we can join hands with those who desire to make a better world and want to do it in ways that don’t contradict the Bible.

### **Additional Resources**

Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical View on The Great Reset*, Point of View booklet, 2022.

Marc Morano, *The Great Reset: Global Elites and the Permanent Lockdown*, Washington, DC: Regnery, 2022.

Vivek Ramaswamy, *Woke, Inc.* New York: Center Street, 2021.

Michael Rectenwald, “What is the Great Reset?” *Imprimis*, December 2021.

### **Notes**

1. Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret, *COVID-19: The Great Reset*, Agentur Schweiz, 2020.

2. Klaus Schwab, *Stakeholder Capitalism: A Global Economy that Works for Progress, People and Planet*, NY: Wiley, 2021.

3. Richard Florida, *The Great Reset: How the Post-Crash Economy Will Change the Way We Live and Work*, NY: Harper Business, 2011.

4.

[www.wsj.com/articles/esg-loser-funds-costs-basis-points-blackrock-500-environment-green-sec-11657461127](https://www.wsj.com/articles/esg-loser-funds-costs-basis-points-blackrock-500-environment-green-sec-11657461127)

5. [hbr.org/2022/03/an-inconvenient-truth-about-esg-investing](https://hbr.org/2022/03/an-inconvenient-truth-about-esg-investing)

6. Michael Glennon, *National Security and Double Government*.

Oxford University Press, 2016.

7. Mike Lofgren, *The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government*, NY: Penguin Books, 2016.

## Notes

1. Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret, *COVID-19: The Great Reset*, Agentur Schweiz, 2020.

2. Klaus Schwab, *Stakeholder Capitalism: A Global Economy that Works for Progress, People and Planet*, NY: Wiley, 2021.

3. Richard Florida, *The Great Reset: How the Post-Crash Economy Will Change the Way We Live and Work*, NY: Harper Business, 2011.

4.

[www.wsj.com/articles/esg-loser-funds-costs-basis-points-blackrock-500-environment-green-sec-11657461127](http://www.wsj.com/articles/esg-loser-funds-costs-basis-points-blackrock-500-environment-green-sec-11657461127)

5. [hbr.org/2022/03/an-inconvenient-truth-about-esg-investing](https://hbr.org/2022/03/an-inconvenient-truth-about-esg-investing)

6. Michael Glennon, *National Security and Double Government*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

7. Mike Lofgren, *The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government*, NY: Penguin Books, 2016.

©2023 Probe Ministries

---

# Socialism and Society

*Kerby Anderson provides an overview of the popularity of socialist ideas in America from a biblical perspective.*

Socialism is more popular today than anyone would have predicted a few years ago. A significant number of socialist characters can be found in Congress. Universities have many professors who are promoting socialism. And more young people than ever believe socialism is superior to capitalism.



Why is socialism so appealing to so many Americans? Young people are drawn to the siren song of Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Part of the reason is that it appeals to their sense of fairness. Another reason is that it promises lots of free stuff.

Free college tuition and student loan forgiveness are examples. The millennial generation (Generation Y) and the iGen generation (Generation Z) have lots of student debt. They see the need but forget that someone would have to pay for this new massive entitlement. And they rarely stop and think about why someone who didn't go to college and took a blue-collar job should pay for their university education. These may be the most educated generations in history, but they don't seem to spend too much time reflecting on what they supposedly learned in economics.

The cost of some of these policies is enormous. Just covering the cost of tuition at public colleges and universities is estimated at \$70 billion a year. One study of the cost of government-run health care (called "Medicare for All") was estimated to cost \$32 trillion during the first ten years. Some estimate the cost of the "Green New Deal" to be \$93 trillion. We can certainly debate how accurate some of those estimates are, but we can't ignore that they would be very expensive once these programs are implemented.

There is some evidence that the popularity of socialism is waning. A post-election survey done by the Cultural Research Center shows a significant decline in support for socialism. George Barna believes that another reason for this decline is the aggressive marketing of a government-driven culture that show young and old what socialism in America would really be

like.

He found that the most precipitous decline in support for socialism was among Americans ages 30 to 49. Just a decade ago, they were the demographic I often pointed to as those who supported socialism more than capitalism. That has changed significantly.

Socialism is less popular even for Americans who are age 50 years or older. In the past, they have been the group most consistent in their support of capitalism. But even in this group, there was an eight percentage-point decline of support for socialism.

The demographic groups with the least support for socialism were Christians who had a biblical worldview and what George Barna calls SAGE Cons (Spiritually Active Governance Engaged Conservative Christians). But there are still a small percentage of them who support socialism. That is why I also address whether the Bible teaches socialism.

## **The Promise of Socialism**

In order to understand the appeal of socialism, we need to make a clear distinction between capitalism and socialism. *Capitalism* is an economic system in which there is private property and the means of production are privately owned. In capitalism, there is a limited role for government. *Socialism* is an economic system in which there is public or state ownership of the means of production, and the primary focus is on providing an equality of outcomes. In socialism, the state is all-important and involved in central planning.

Often when young people are surveyed about socialism, the pollster does not provide a definition. If you merely believe socialism means more equality in society, then you can see why so many choose socialism over capitalism. Also, young people under the age of 30 are probably the least likely to associate



socialism with Soviet-style repression. Instead, they may have in their minds the current government push toward European socialism and find that more attractive.

There is also an important philosophical reason for the popularity of socialism. When Karl Marx first proposed the concepts of socialism and communism, he enjoyed an intellectual advantage. He could talk about the problems with capitalism the modern world was going through as they were adapting to the difficult process of industrialization. He could contrast the *reality* of capitalism with the *utopian* ideal of socialism.

Utopian visions will always win out over the harsh reality of the world. But we now have the terrible record of socialism. Unfortunately, socialism's death toll never quite gets factored into any equation. The late columnist Joseph Sobran said: "It makes no difference that socialism's actual record is terribly bloody; socialism is forever judged by its promises and supposed possibilities, while capitalism is judged by its worst cases."[\[1\]](#)

Dinesh D'Souza reminds us that many countries have tried socialism and all failed. The first socialist experiment was the Soviet Union, then came lots of countries in eastern Europe (Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and East Germany). Add to that countries in Asia (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, North Korea, and China) and countries in South America (Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Venezuela) and Africa (Angola, Ghana, Tanzania, Benin, Mali, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). By his count, there are 25 failed experiments in socialism.[\[2\]](#)

The typical answer to these failures is that each of these wasn't done correctly. The failure of these socialist experiments was a failure of implementation. But this time, they say, we will get it right. Believing in socialism apparently mean never having to say you're sorry.

In the next section we will look at the argument that democratic socialism is the ideal we should pursue. We should ignore this list of socialist failures and focus on socialism in the Scandinavian countries.

## **A Different Kind of Socialism**

Proponents of socialism not only argue that it was not implemented correctly in the past but also argue that what they are proposing is “democratic socialism.” They usually point to the Scandinavian countries as examples.

Anders Hagstrom in one of his videos asks, “What does socialism mean to [people such as actor and comedian Jim Carrey]?” He says that conversations about socialism often go like this: “A liberal says we should be socialist. A conservative points to Venezuela, and says socialism doesn’t work. A liberal says, What about Sweden and Norway? The conservative then points out that those countries aren’t actually socialist.”[\[3\]](#)

He says that even if we accept the comment by liberals, there is a problem. “Nordic countries have tiny populations of less than 10 million. And copying and pasting their policies to a country of 330 million isn’t going to work.” These Nordic countries were successful before they adopted the redistributive policies they have now. Here’s a reality check: if Sweden were to join the U.S. as a state, Sweden would be poorer than all but 12 states.

Hagstrom also explains that the policies of true socialists like Senator Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez go far beyond what the Nordic countries have. For example, Bernie Sanders wants a planned economy. None of the Nordic states have this. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez wants to abolish profit. None of the Nordic countries have done that. And both of them want a universal minimum wage. None of the Nordic states have

that.

There's another problem with the argument. These countries aren't socialist. John Stossel in one of his videos interviewed a prominent Swedish historian.<sup>{4}</sup> Johan Norberg makes it clear that "Sweden is not socialist—because the government doesn't own the means of production. To see that, you have to go to Venezuela or Cuba or North Korea." He does admit that the country did have something that resembled socialism a few decades ago. The government heavily taxed the citizens and spent heavily. That was not a good period in Swedish history, especially for the economy.

Yet even with the high Swedish taxes, there was simply not enough money to fund Sweden's huge welfare state. Norberg explains that "People couldn't get the pension that they thought they depended on for the future." At this point, the Swedish people had enough and began to reduce the size and scope of the government.

John Stossel says, "They cut public spending, privatized the national rail network, abolished certain government monopolies, eliminated inheritance taxes and sold state-owned businesses like the maker of Absolut vodka." While it is true that Sweden does have a larger welfare state than the US and higher taxes than the US, there are many other areas where Sweden is actually more free market.

## **Socialism and Equality**

One of the moral arguments for socialism is that it creates a society with more social and economic equality. Proponents want us to consider the fairness argument when applied to a free market. How fair is it that basketball star LeBron James makes more than \$37 million when a social worker starting out only makes about \$30,000? Even more extreme is the estimate that Jeff Bezos makes more than \$320

million a day while the average Amazon salary is around \$35,000 a year.

Of course, this is what happens in a free society where people with different skills, different abilities, and different motivations are allowed to participate in a free market. You will get inequality, but you also have a free society where people can use their gifts to pursue their calling and still receive a good income.

We don't have to guess what will happen in a socialist economy because we have lots of historical examples. In a desire to bring equality, socialism doesn't bring people up out of poverty. Instead, it drives them into poverty. Consider two test cases (Germany and Korea).

After World War II, Germany was divided into two countries: West Germany was capitalist, while East Germany was socialist. Throughout the time they were divided, there was a striking difference between the two countries. When the two countries were reunified, the GDP of East Germany was a third of the GDP of West Germany.

An even better example is North and South Korea, because it lasted longer and continues to this day. South Korea is now more than 20 times richer than North Korea. Of course, people in South Korea are also freer than North Korea. They are also taller and live about 12 years longer than people in North Korea.[\[5\]](#)

By contrast, capitalism provides every person a chance to influence the society. In his book, *United States of Socialism*, Dinesh D'Souza doesn't ignore the issue of justice but actually embraces it. Capitalism, he says, "far more than socialism, reflects the will of the people and expresses democratic consent."[\[6\]](#) A consumer is like a voter. As a citizen, we get to vote in an election every two to four years. But a consumer gets to vote every day with his or her

dollar bills. That money represents the time and effort put in to get those dollar bills.

The free market provides you a level of popular participation and democratic consent that politics can never provide. You get to vote every day with your dollars and send economic signals to people and companies providing goods and services. Essentially, capitalism, like democracy, is a clear form of social justice.

## **The Bible and Socialism**

Perhaps you have heard some Christians argue that the Bible actually supports socialism. The book of Acts seems to approve of socialism. In Acts 4, we find a statement that the believers in Jerusalem “had all things in common.” It also says that those who possessed land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles’ feet. They distributed these gifts to anyone in need. This looks like socialism to many who are already predisposed to believe it should be the economic system of choice.

First, we need to realize that this practice was only done in Jerusalem. As you read through the rest of the book of Acts and read the letters of Paul and Peter, you see that most believers in other parts of the Roman world had private property and possessions. Paul calls upon them to give voluntarily to the work of ministry.

Second, the word voluntary applies not only to Christians in other parts of the world, but it also was a voluntary act by the believers in Jerusalem to give sacrificially to each other in the midst of persecution. This one passage in the book of Act is not a mandate for socialism.

If you keep reading in the book of Acts, you can also see that the believers in Jerusalem owned the property before they voluntarily gave the proceeds to the apostles. The next

chapter (Acts 5) clearly teaches that. When Peter confronted Ananias, he clearly stated that: "While it remained, was it not your own? After it was sold, was it not in your own control?"

Owning property contradicts one of the fundamental principles of socialism. In the *Communist Manifesto*, "the abolition of property" is a major item in the plan for moving from capitalism to socialism and eventually to communism.

By contrast, the Ten Commandments assume private property. The eighth commandment forbidding stealing and the tenth commandment about coveting both assume that people have private property rights.

In fact, we can use biblical principles to evaluate economic systems like capitalism and socialism. Although the Bible does not endorse a particular system, it does have key principles about human nature, private property rights, and the role of government. These can be used to evaluate economic systems like socialism and communism.

Socialism is still a popular idea, especially among young people. Recent polls along with various books about capitalism and socialism illustrate the need for us to discuss and explain the differences between capitalism and socialism. Socialism may sound appealing until you begin to look at the devastating impact it has had on countries that travel down the road of greater governmental control.

## Notes

1. Joseph Sobran quoted by Robert Knight, "Bernie's siren song of socialism," *Washington Times*. September 13, 2015, [www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/sep/13/robert-knight-bernie-sanders-siren-song-of-sociali/](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/sep/13/robert-knight-bernie-sanders-siren-song-of-sociali/)
2. Dinesh D'Souza, *United States of Socialism*, New York: All Points Books, 2020, 3.
3. Anders Hagstrom, "When you are forced to argue socialism

with a liberal,” [www.facebook.com/watch/?v=234493017230024](http://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=234493017230024).

4. John Stossel, “Sweden is not a socialist success,” [www.facebook.com/watch/?v=407319650027595](http://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=407319650027595).

5. Ibid., 5.

6. Ibid., 186.

©2021 Probe Ministries