

Is Socialism Biblical?

Sunday Evening Bible Study

March 13, 2016

What's the Difference?

Socialism is an economic system in which the government owns the means of production (the businesses and farms), and goods are almost entirely produced and distributed by government direction.

Communism is an economic system in which the government owns not only the means of production but also all other property, including people's labor, ...genuine socialism must be brought about by violent revolution as a step toward eventual utopian society that is classless and moneyless.

Capitalism [a free market system] in which economic production and consumption are determined by the free choices of individuals rather than governments, and this process is grounded in private ownership of the means of production. (From Wayne Grudem, *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution*)

Stats To Start You Thinking

1. The top one-tenth of one percent owns almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent.
2. 58% of young people choose socialism over capitalism [38%].
3. 66% of young people say corporate America embodies all that is wrong with America.
4. 28% of young people say the most pressing issue facing the country is income inequality
5. Bernie Sanders beat Hillary Clinton by 70% among young people in Iowa and leads Clinton nationwide.
6. The U.S. private sector creates almost all of the wealth; The US government (the public sector) is the greatest spender of wealth.
7. The U.S. government obtains (through taxes and borrowing) and redistributes 39 percent of the GDP (Switzerland, 34%; Denmark, 57%).
8. Of 5.6 million in Denmark, 1.8 million are not directly dependent on the state for payments of some sort. 800,000 are employed by state; 2 million receive a pension.

Biblical Standards to Keep You Thinking Clearly

1. The right to private property: All the Bible assumes legitimacy and necessity of private property. (Ex. 20:15; Lev. 25:10; Dt. 19:14; 1 Sam. 8:10-18; 1 K. 21; Ez. 46:8).
2. The responsibility of private property: All the Bible assumes that God owns it all, we are entrusted with much, and we are ultimately accountable to him for the way we acquire and distribute property (Ps. 24:1; 1 Cor. 16:19; 1 Tim. 6:10).
3. The right to the fruit of our labor: Our reward should be proportionate to our risk and labor (Ps. 128:2; 78:46; Pr. 31:16; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Mt. 20:12).
4. The role of limited government: Maintain the rule of law; restrain evil, punish evildoers, enforce contracts, protect citizens (Ro. 13:1-6; 1 Peter 2:13,14; Gen. 41:35)
5. The role of the church: We are obligated to freely share our private property with those *in the church* who are *unable* to work. No one *in the church* should go hungry, homeless, or without medical care. But this sharing with the poor is free and not coerced (Acts 2:44-45; 2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Tim. 5:8,9).
6. The responsibility to work: We are not obligated to feed those in the church who are *unwilling* to work. No one in the church should be enabled to continue in sin. So, the worthy poor are *willing* but *unable* to work. The unworthy poor are *able* but *unwilling* to work (1 Th.4:11; 2 Th. 3:10-12).

7. The dignity of work: By denying a human being the responsibility to work or the fruit of his/her labor (by enabling, stealing, exploitation, etc.) we deny him or her the dignity of being made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26,27; 9:6; Jas. 3:9; Lev. 23:22).

Communism	Socialism	Capitalism
Public ownership of all means of production and capital managed by centralized government. Competition removed. “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.”	High level of public ownership of means of production and capital. Competition fettered by subsidies, bailouts, protectionism.	Private ownership of all means of production and capital (aka, free enterprise, free market, competitive enterprise). Competition unfettered.
Very high “taxes” and regulation.	High taxes and regulation.	Very low taxes and regulation.
No limited government. Strict unification of economy and state.	More limited government	Most limited government. Strict separation of economy and state.
Least likely accompanied by religious freedom	← →	Most likely accompanied by religious freedom.
Pros Assists the poor and powerless for a season.	Pros ← →	Pros Recognizes private property. Protects incentive to work. Increases quality and lowers prices of goods and services. Encourages responsibility. Best hope for the poor to rise.
Cons Naïve about human nature. Steals private property. Decreases quality of goods and services. Incentivizes laziness and irresponsibility. Low economic growth and standard of living. Creates dependence. Wasteful gov’t spending.	Cons ← →	Cons <i>Without Christian Virtue:</i> Survival of fittest Management exploits labor Success kills competition Severe income inequality Favors smart, ruthless, privileged

“Tweetable” Principles

1. Only God re-distributes wealth with perfection.
2. Voluntary wealth re-distribution is the norm for Christians.
3. Hunger is a great motivator to work.
4. Profit is an honorable motive.
5. Capitalism – Christianity = Cruelty
6. The less virtuous a people, the more inclined they are to abuse capitalism.
7. The more the minority abuses capitalism, the more likely the majority will vote for socialism.
8. Government expands in proportion to fatherlessness.
9. Socialism takes money from responsible fathers to pay for the sins of irresponsible fathers.
10. The freer the market, the better for missions!