

WHAT'S THE WORD?

Truth In An Uncertain World

Last Week's Topic

**Christian Persecution
around the world**

Next Week's Topic

**Social Media and
News Media**

Today's Topic

Biblical Economics

Does the Bible talk about money?

There are about 500 verses in the Bible about prayer

There are less than 500 verses in the Bible about faith

There are more than 2,300 verses in the Bible about money

15 percent of everything Jesus ever taught was on the topic of money and possessions — more than His teachings on heaven and hell combined.

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**What are the different
economic philosophies?**

The Bible does not explicitly endorse modern political systems like **capitalism**, **socialism**, or **communism**, as they emerged long after it was written.

However, it offers principles emphasizing voluntary generosity over forced redistribution, stewardship of private property, care for the poor, and condemnation of greed.

The biblical focus is generally on personal responsibility, voluntary generosity, and spiritual obedience, rather than a specific economic structure.

Comparison of Key Systems

Feature	<u>Capitalism</u>	<u>Socialism</u>	<u>Communism</u>
Ownership	Private individuals or companies	Public or worker collectives	The entire community (stateless)
Goal	Individual profit and growth	Collective welfare and fairness	A classless, moneyless society
Market	Free market (supply and demand)	Planned or heavily regulated	No market; needs-based distribution
Key Ideal	"To each according to their merit"	"To each according to their contribution"	"From each by ability, to each by need"

Capitalism

- **Definition:** An economic system based on private ownership of the means of production (capital) and their operation for profit.

- **Key Features:**

Free market competition, supply and demand, limited government regulation, and private property rights.

- **Strengths/Weaknesses:** Drives innovation and efficiency but can lead to unequal wealth distribution and worker exploitation.

- **Examples:** Generally, the United States, United Kingdom, and many Western nations have capitalist-based economies.

Socialism

- **Definition:** An economic and political system where the means of production are owned by the community or the state, aiming for more equitable distribution of wealth.
- **Key Features:** Government oversight of key industries, high taxes for social services (welfare), and cooperative management of resources.
- **Strengths/Weaknesses:** Focuses on reducing inequality and providing basic needs (e.g., healthcare) but may be less efficient than market systems.
- **Examples:** Often applied in "mixed economies" where democratic governments implement social programs, such as in Nordic countries.

Communism

- **Definition:** A theory (often associated with Karl Marx) advocating a classless, moneyless, and stateless society where all property is publicly owned.
- **Key Features:** Total state control of the economy, abolition of private property, and central planning to meet needs.
- **Strengths/Weaknesses:** Aims for complete equality, but historically often led to authoritarianism, lack of incentives, and inefficiency.
- **Examples:** Historical examples include the USSR; current examples include North Korea and Cuba.

Socialism and communism are not identical, socialism being for Vladimir Lenin a distinct stage between capitalism and communism. In broad terms, we could say that socialism implies social ownership of the means of production, while communism also insists upon an equitable and shared consumption of that production. **In popular parlance (in America at least) communism still sounds bad to most people, but socialism is increasingly celebrated and defended.** What contemporary proponents of socialism usually have in mind is a rhetorical nod in the direction of strong government intervention into the economy and a redistribution of wealth that ensures no one has too little (and no one has too much).

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/first-christians-socialists/>

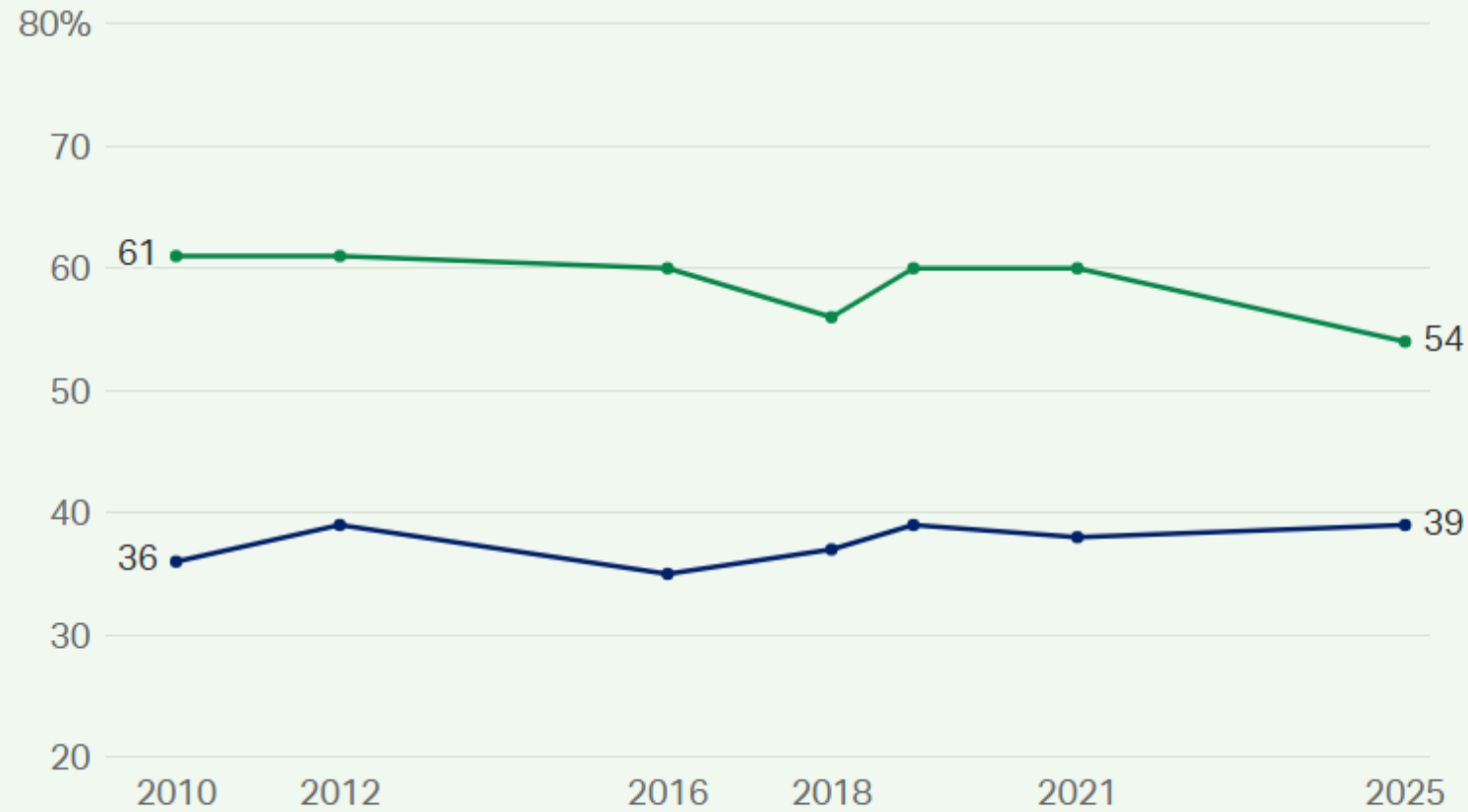
**What does our culture say about
money and economics?**

Trend in Americans' Positive Ratings of Capitalism and Socialism

Just off the top of your head, would you say you have a positive or negative image of each of the following?

% Positive

— Capitalism — Socialism



[Get the data](#) • [Download image](#)

GALLUP®

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/694835/image-capitalism-slips.aspx>

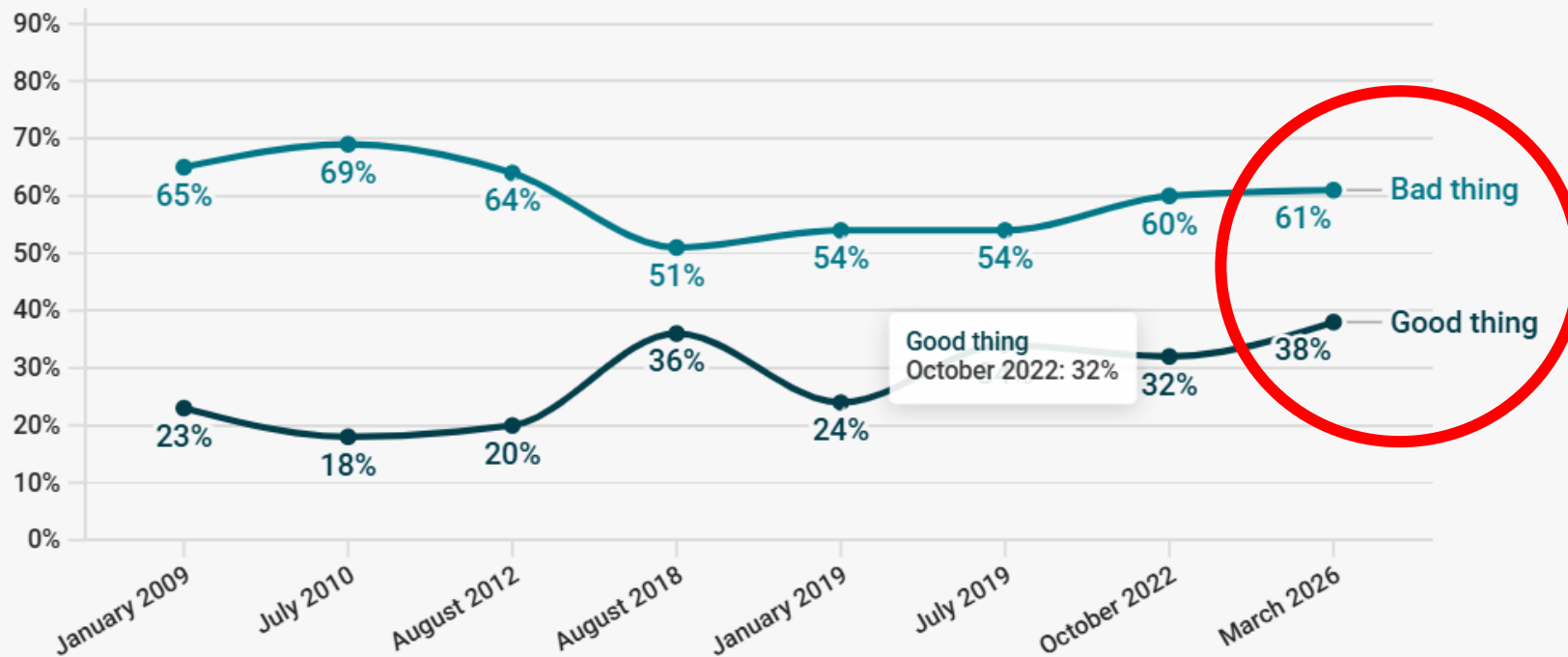
Published 9/8/2025

**WHAT'S THE
WORD?**

AN INCREASING NUMBER SAY A MOVE TOWARD SOCIALISM WOULD BE GOOD IN THE U.S.

Do you think it would be a good thing or a bad thing for the United States to move away from capitalism and more toward socialism?

■ Good thing ■ Bad thing



<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fox-news-poll-socialism-gaining-ground-among-voters>

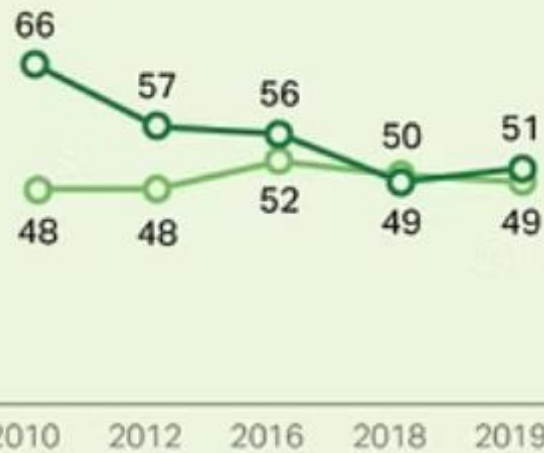
Published 3/5/26

Source: Fox News Poll •
Conducted: February 28-March 2, 2026
Registered Voters +/- 3% Pts.

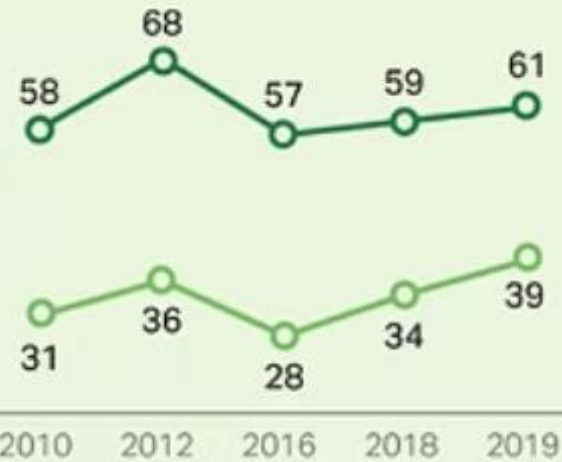
Trend in Positive Views Toward Capitalism and Socialism, by Generation

○ Capitalism (% Positive) ○ Socialism (% Positive)

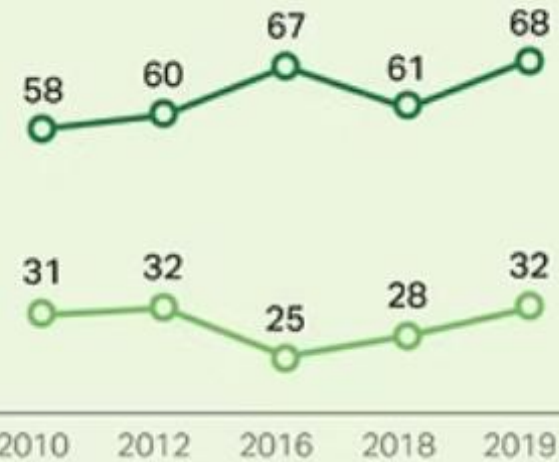
Millennials/Gen Zers



Gen Xers



Baby boomers/Traditionalists



Millennials/Gen Zers: Ages 18 to 39 in 2019

Gen Xers: Ages 40 to 54 in 2019

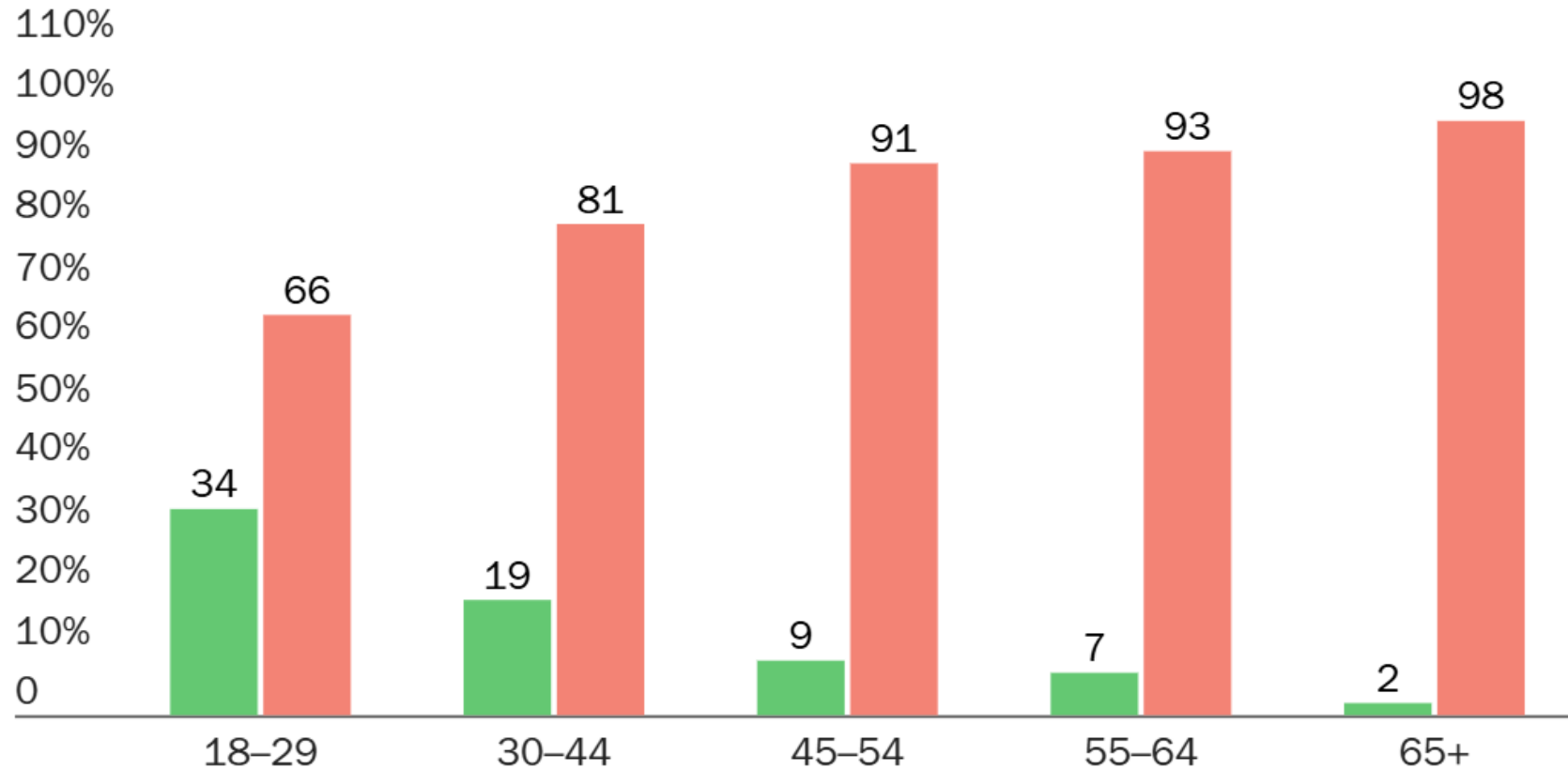
Baby boomers/Traditionalists: Ages 55 and older in 2019

GALLUP

Third of Americans under 30 say they like communism

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of communism?

● Favorable ● Unfavorable



Sources: Cato 2025 Fiscal Policy Survey.

<https://www.cato.org/blog/81-say-they-cant-afford-pay-higher-taxes-next-year>

Published 4/14/25

To quote Frenchman, Stephane Courtois, whose group documented the socialist atrocities of the 20th century...

“Between 85 million and 100 million human beings lost their lives to communist experiments in the twentieth century. **Never has an idea had such catastrophic consequences.**”

Source: Money, Greed, and God, Jay Richards

WHAT'S THE
WORD?

One dominant feature of capitalism is economic freedom, the right of people to exchange things voluntarily, free from force, fraud, and theft. Socialism, on the other hand, seeks to replace the freedom of the market with a group of central planners who exercise control over essential market functions. There are degrees of socialism as there are degrees of capitalism in the real world. But basic to any form of socialism is distrust of or contempt for the market process and the desire to replace the freedom of the market with some form of centralized control. Generally speaking, as one moves along the continuum of socialism to capitalism, one finds the following: the more freedom a socialist allows, the closer his position is to interventionism; the more freedom an interventionist allows, the closer his position is to capitalism. The crux is the extent to which human beings will be permitted to exercise their own choices in the economic sphere of life.

Socialism is a societal system in which property, natural resources, and the means of production are owned and controlled by the state rather than by individuals or private companies. A basic belief of socialism is that society as a whole should share in all goods produced, as everyone lives in cooperation with one another. Various theories of socialism have been put forward from ancient times, including a form of Christian socialism.

The most prominent philosopher to argue in favor of socialism was Karl Marx, who taught that the driving factor behind all of human history is economics. Marx embarked on a mission to prove that human identity is bound up in a person's work and that economic systems totally control a person. Arguing that mankind survives by labor, Marx believed that human communities are created by the division of labor.

Marx saw the Industrial Revolution as changing the basic lifestyle of humanity, because, in Marx's mind, those who had freely worked for themselves were now forced by economics to work in factories instead. This, Marx felt, stripped away their dignity and identity, and now they were reduced to mere slaves controlled by a powerful taskmaster. This perspective made the economics of capitalism the natural enemy of Marx's brand of socialism.

Socialism seeks to do away with private property. Karl Marx surmised that capitalism emphasizes private property and, therefore, reduced ownership to the privileged few. Two separate “communities” emerged in Marx’s mind: the business owners, or the bourgeoisie; and the working class, or the proletariat. According to Marx, the bourgeoisie use and exploit the proletariat with the result that one person’s gain is another person’s loss. Moreover, Marx believed that the business owners influence lawmakers to ensure their interests are defended over the workers’ loss of dignity and rights. Last, Marx felt that religion is the “opiate of the masses,” which the rich use to manipulate the working class; the proletariat is promised rewards in heaven one day if they keep working diligently where God has placed them (subservient to the bourgeoisie).

In the socialism Marx envisioned, the people own everything collectively, and all work for the common good of mankind. Marx’s goal was to end the ownership of private property through the state’s ownership of all means of economic production. Once private property was abolished, Marx felt that a person’s identity would be elevated and the wall that capitalism supposedly constructed between the owners and working class would be shattered. Everyone would value one another and work together for a shared purpose. Government would no longer be necessary, as people would become less selfish.

There are at least four errors in Marx's thinking, revealing flaws in socialism

First, his assertion that another person's gain must come at another person's expense is a myth; the structure of capitalism leaves plenty of room for all to raise their standard of living through innovation and competition. It is perfectly feasible for multiple parties to compete and do well in a market of consumers who want their goods and services.

Second, Marx was wrong in his socialist belief that the value of a product is based on the amount of labor that is put into it. The quality of a good or service simply cannot be determined by the amount of effort a laborer expends. For example, a master carpenter can more quickly and beautifully make a piece of furniture than an unskilled craftsman can, and therefore his work will be valued far more (and correctly so) in an economic system such as capitalism.

There are at least four errors in Marx's thinking, revealing flaws in socialism

Third, Marx's theory of socialism necessitates a government that is free from corruption and negates the possibility of elitism within its ranks. If history has shown anything, it is that power corrupts fallen mankind, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. People do not naturally become less selfish. A nation or government may kill the idea of God, but someone will take God's place in that government. That someone is most often an individual or group who begins to rule over the population and seeks to maintain their privileged position at all costs. This is why socialism has led to dictatorships so often in world history.

Fourth and most importantly, socialism is wrong in teaching that a person's identity is bound up in the work that he does. Although secular society certainly promotes this belief, the Bible says that all have equal worth because all are created in the image of the eternal God. True, intrinsic human value lies in God's creation of us.

-<https://www.gotquestions.org/socialism-Christian.html>

**WHAT'S THE
WORD?**

Capitalism is not economic anarchy. It recognizes several necessary conditions for the kinds of voluntary relationships it recommends. One of these presuppositions is the existence of inherent human rights, such as the right to make decisions, the right to be free, the right to hold property, and the right to exchange what one owns for something else. Capitalism also presupposes a system of morality. Capitalism should be thought of as a system of voluntary relationships within a framework of laws which protect people's rights against force, fraud, theft, and violations of contracts. "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not lie" are part of the underlying moral constraints of the system. Economic exchanges can hardly be voluntary if one participant is coerced, deceived, defrauded, or robbed.

Once we grant that consistency with the biblical doctrine of sin is a legitimate test of political and economic systems, it is relatively easy to see how well democratic capitalism scores in this regard. The limited government willed to Americans by the Founding Fathers was influenced in large measure by biblical considerations about human sin. If one of the more effective ways of mitigating the effects of human sin in society is dispersing and decentralizing power, the conservative view of government is on the right track. So too is the conservative vision of economics.

The free market is consistent with the biblical view of human nature in another way. It recognizes the weaknesses of human nature and the limitations of human knowledge. No one can possibly know enough to manage a complex economy. No one should ever be trusted with this power. However, in order for socialism to work, socialism requires a class of omniscient planners to forecast the future, to set prices and to control production. In the free market system, decisions are not made by an omniscient bureaucratic elite but made across the entire economic system by countless economic agents.

**If the Bible does not specifically
mention modern economic systems...**

**Does the Bible teach principles that can
help us understand this topic?**

Book of Leviticus

“Now when you [landowners] reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very **corners** [*peah* פִּיּאָה] of your field, nor shall you gather the **gleanings** [produce that falls to the ground while being harvested, *leket* לֶקֶט] of your harvest. Nor shall you **glean** your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God. You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the Lord.’ ”

Leviticus 19:9-12

“You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning. You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the Lord.’ ” Leviticus 19:13-14

- The original Hebrew word for “*shall not remain with you all night*” is “*talin*”, a word that literally means to stay overnight. In modern Hebrew, this word is used to describe the act of delaying a salary payment, which is illegal under Israeli law. It is this very verse that has served as the basis for the modern Israeli statute.

Book of Ruth

Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field and **glean** among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.” So she departed and went and **gleaned** in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, “May the Lord be with you.” And they said to him, “May the Lord bless you.” Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” The servant in charge of the reapers replied, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. “And she said, ‘Please let me **glean** and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while.” Ruth 2:1-7

Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to **glean** in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.” Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” Boaz replied to her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.” Then she said, “I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.”

Ruth 2:8-13

At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.” So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. When she rose to **glean**, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, “Let her **glean** even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may **glean**, and do not rebuke her.” So she **gleaned** in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had **gleaned**, and it was about an ephah of barley. She took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had **gleaned**. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. Ruth 2:14-18

Her mother-in-law then said to her, “Where did you **glean** today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.” Again Naomi said to her, “The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.” Then Ruth the Moabitess said, “Furthermore, he said to me, ‘You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.’ ” Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field.” So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to **glean** until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law. Ruth 2:19-23

- The Bible does not specify a minimum quantity for *pe'ah* (crops in the corners of the field), and therefore according to the letter of the law, even if one ear of corn has been left, the precept has been fulfilled. The rabbis, however, established a minimum of one-sixtieth of the harvest (Pe'ah 1:1–2; Hulin 137b).
- *Pe'ah* was left standing, and the poor plucked it. They were not permitted to cut it with a scythe or uproot it with a spade. The Talmud was concerned that in their need, the poor would assault one another (Pe'ah 4:4).
- The poor were permitted to pick *pe'ah* at three times during the day: in the morning, at midday, and in the afternoon. If a poor man came at some other time he was forbidden to pick. This was to provide all of the poor with an equal opportunity to access the gleanings. The Talmud explains that these times were chosen because some of the poor were nursing mothers who must eat at the beginning of the day, and some were minors who do not wake up early and could reach the field until midday, and some were aged who could not reach the field until the afternoon (Pe'ah 4:5).
- Basing themselves on the fact that the Bible does not state “Thou shalt give,” but “thou shalt leave,” the rabbis maintained that the farmer was forbidden to select the poor to whom these gifts would be given; any poor person was free to take them (Hulin 131a).

Book of Acts

They [early followers of Jesus] were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and **were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need**. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47

- This passage teaches and endorses ownership of private property

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and **not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.** And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For **there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.** Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. Acts 4:32-37

The property was **voluntarily, freely sold, not forcibly confiscated**, which is what socialism does.

The economic sharing of wealth was **not done on the basis of class warfare**, as socialism is. There is no hint that private ownership is deemed *immoral* in the New Testament or Old Testament.

The state is nowhere in sight. No government is **confiscating property and collectivizing industry**. Socialism is **government ownership** of the means of production and control of the distribution of goods.

Acts 4 is an example of **voluntary generosity** to meet a temporary crisis, **not a state-run economy**. Scholars estimate that Jerusalem's population swelled by 100,000 as Jews from around the Mediterranean returned to Jerusalem to celebrate The Day of Pentecost. When Peter stood up and preached 3,000 came to faith in Christ. A few days later the number came to 5,000 just men. The only source of teaching about this new life was in Jerusalem. So, thousands decided to **extend their stay in Jerusalem**—putting an enormous burden on their hometown brothers and sisters in Christ to provide hospitality for them.

There is nothing about the generosity of the hometown believers doing everything they could to take care of their brothers and sisters in Christ who overstayed the shekels they had brought on their trip to Jerusalem to suggest the state **confiscating** property or **crushing the market economy** that allowed the believers to sell their privately owned land and give the proceeds to care for their brothers and sisters. **That** would have been socialism.

There is no evidence that the first Christians shared in the means of production and no record that they abolished private property. We see nothing like a workers collective, let alone state-run enterprises in the book of Acts. The Christians were generous, but they did not disavow personal ownership of their possessions. To be sure, we see Christians selling their land and houses in order to provide for the needy (Acts 4:34, 37). And yet, as Acts 5:4 makes clear, these assets remained in possession of private owners and could be used as the owners saw fit. Even after properties were sold, the proceeds belonged to the individual or family, not to the state, nor to a collective, nor even to the church. This is confirmed in the history of the early church as we see congregations meeting in private homes and persons still in possession of private property (Acts 16:15).

The distribution of possessions in Acts was not by force or coercion, but chosen freely and voluntarily. To say the church had a wonderful communal spirit is far different from saying they practiced anything remotely like state-enforced communism. The expression “everything in common” was used to describe radical generosity in the early church. Sharing in the church was and is a clear sign of the in-breaking of the kingdom (1 John 3:16-17). But nowhere in the New Testament do we see the church embody or support a practice that forces wealth redistribution at penalty of church-run discipline or penalty of the state-run sword. “Everything in common” [Acts 4:32] spoke to the *love of the Christians, not to a law among the Christians.*

How can ancient principles from the Bible guide modern economies to reward hard work, respect private property, and care for those in need?

REQUIREMENTS OF AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM THAT OPTIMIZES FLOURISHING

Because of the fall, God's design for creation prosperity will allow the strong to oppress the weak without The Rule of Law. Here is a brief list of just some of the biblical principles that need to accompany a free market.

1. Protection of Private Property

The proper functioning of the market requires protection of our *stuff*, our *labor*, our *time*, and our *ideas*. There must be laws against theft, kidnapping and slavery.

Exodus 20:15 *You shall not steal*. Since the moral law of God is written on every heart, the concept of private property is written on every human heart.

Peruvian economist Fernando De Soto argues conclusively that there is a very strong link between the wealthy countries like the US, European Countries, and Japan and their strong property laws, while poverty-stricken nations have virtually no laws protecting private property.

The poor in Israel were provided for NOT by taxing landowners or forcing a redistribution of wealth, but by requiring that landowners not reap to the edges of their fields, or strip their fields bare through multiple harvests—but to leave a portion behind for the poor and the alien. (Leviticus 19:9, Deuteronomy 24:9-22).

- <https://www.forgingbonds.org/blog/detail/thinking-biblically-about-socialism-as-the-answer-to-injustice>

2. Honesty in Business Dealings

Proverbs 11:1 A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight.

Leviticus 19:36 You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin.

Proverbs 20:10 Unequal weights and unequal measures are both alike an abomination to the Lord.

3. Material Reward Being Linked to Work

Proverbs 13:4 The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied

Proverbs 22:29 Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

Proverbs 28:19 Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.

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4. Protections for the Poor Against Oppression

Proverbs 13:23 The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.

Deuteronomy 24:15 You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets (for he is poor and counts on it), lest he cry against you to the Lord, and you be guilty of sin.

Proverbs 29:7 The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor; the wicked does not understand such concern.

- <https://www.forgingbonds.org/blog/detail/thinking-biblically-about-socialism-as-the-answer-to-injustice>

**As followers of Jesus, God's Word
should guide every aspect of our
lives... including relationships,
economics, and government.**

**How can we honor the Savior and
build a generous society?**

Hear [Shema], O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.** These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. **You shall teach them diligently to your sons** and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 6:4-7

*The more that we love God and obey His Word, and the more we teach our children to do the same, the more likely we are to build a society that works for all people.

Apostle Paul wrote...

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:11-13