



[The War on Success](#)

By Tommy Newberry

**Chapter 7**  
**“God is Not a Socialist”**

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# GOD IS NOT A SOCIALIST

*"Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy; its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery."*  
—Winston Churchill

Socialization is always accompanied by secularization—the smaller God becomes, the larger government grows. Of course, that's a human perspective; God doesn't shrink at all. But as God fades from our attention, so does liberty. Evil in all its varieties is just the natural outgrowth of freedom without God. Review the whole history of godless Communism and fascism—did anything good come of it?

No doubt about it, America's system of free enterprise, like our founding documents, is inspired by the timeless truths revealed throughout the Old and New Testaments. But today, the diminishing of God has led Americans to feel lonely, confused, and isolated like never before. Disconnected from traditional and proven sources of value and love, more and more people now seek solace in government programs. The result has been a decline in individual freedom and the diminishing of our range of lifetime opportunities.

This is the inevitable result when a country moves toward socialism. The socialist deplores biblical absolutes or fixed truths of any kind, for they restrict his ability to manipulate feelings and influence the masses. Communist godfather Karl Marx was a philosophical materialist, meaning he didn't believe in God or any spiritual realm. To Marx, if you couldn't see it, it didn't exist: the material world is all there is. This warped atheism is a crucial component of the socialist mindset, justifying their attempts to create a utopian "workers' paradise" on earth.

Nevertheless, today's socialists deceptively weave biblical quotes and spiritual-sounding platitudes into their rhetoric to help win over the "innocently ignorant" people of faith. American socialists are particularly prone to selling their ideology in religious terms. After all, our nation was founded on biblical principles, and according to recent polls, 80 percent of Americans claim to believe in God, and 77 percent profess to be either Christian or Jewish.<sup>1</sup> Socialists can't explicitly reject God and expect to win election, so instead they try to co-opt Him as a salesman for their atheistic cause.

Because they don't really believe in God, many socialists are biblically illiterate, despite their biblical sales pitch. They twist God's instructions and the values He extols, extracting collectivist lessons where none exist. Unfortunately, many religious people, congregants and leaders alike, who recognize these distortions are reluctant to challenge them, either because they're intimidated by political correctness or because they don't fully understand the harsh reality of socialism.

Although the socialist claims to be doing God's work, the big, cold hand of the federal government is no match for the warm, loving hands of God. Socialism does not produce spiritual fulfillment anywhere, and it never brings man closer to God.

## **IT'S ALL ABOUT HUMAN NATURE**

Contrary to the appeals of socialists, their ideology is incompatible with both the letter and the spirit of the Bible. To understand why, one must understand the truth of God and the biblical worldview that naturally follows. The Bible teaches that God is all-loving, all-powerful, all-knowing, merciful, just, and unchanging. God knows everything about us and loves us anyway. God cares for us, cheers for us, and wants the best for us. The apostle Paul presents a beautiful description of God and the things of God as lovely, pure, true, gracious, just, excellent, and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8).

We can begin to understand God by looking at the beginning, the beginning of everything. The first chapter of Genesis shows that God was well-pleased with each act of creation. And, after He put the final touches on the sixth day, God looked upon the universe and all He had made and proclaimed that "indeed it was very good."<sup>2</sup>

The original entrepreneur and innovator of the universe had established the model of productivity and excellence to be emulated by all humanity. God took special delight in His priority creation of man and woman. How do we know? Well, He made us in His image and likeness as individual souls so that we could mirror His nature. Moreover, our Creator granted us authority over all living things, blessed us, and charged us with filling the earth with our offspring.<sup>3</sup>

For a while, everything was blissful. Then Adam and Eve gave in to temptation, willfully broke God's law, and ate from the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:6). That changed everything, corrupting the nature of mankind.<sup>4</sup> Ever since the Fall of Man, all men and women have had to deal with instinctive but counterproductive character traits. In fact, blaming was introduced to the world simultaneously by Adam, who pointed the finger at Eve, and Eve, who blamed the devil.<sup>5</sup>

Human nature has not changed since then. We come from the factory with standard flaws in our moral fiber such as laziness, selfishness, greed, ignorance, and vanity, to name a few. These traits can be mitigated or even leveraged for good, but we cannot eliminate them. We succeed in life if we develop enough virtue to override those vices. And society can assist our success by establishing rewards for the behaviors that we want repeated and penalties for behaviors we want diminished.

In opposition to the Biblical view, socialists think human nature can change. They believe people are intrinsically neither good nor bad, but simply the products of their environment. Thus, people who commit crimes or otherwise misbehave are excused as victims of capitalism, poverty, racism, sexism, bad parenting, and other ills that supposedly plague our society. Socialists believe that human nature is plastic and can

be twisted, fashioned, shaped, and molded by an improved environment. They suggest that human nature would improve if only society could be restructured with the perfect recipe of ingredients for paradise and delight.

In practice, for socialists, “improving a person’s environment” means providing him with property or other goods that were taken from someone who earned them. This caters to the downside of human nature—envy, greed, and laziness—while suppressing the upside—hard work and self-reliance. The socialists’ notion that this tactic, if repeated on a large enough scale, will ultimately elevate human nature, is of course absurd. Conveniently, however, this tactic also solidifies the socialists’ power base, comprising a growing number of people who rely on their benevolence. So we’re left to wonder whether socialists really believe in their own ideology, or if it’s just a good pretext for expanding their power.

<b>SOCIALISM VS. THE BIBLE</b>	
1. Socialism is about taking. <i>The Bible is about giving.</i>	6. Socialism hides the truth. <i>The Bible reveals the truth.</i>
2. Socialism is about dependence on government. <i>The Bible is about dependence on God.</i>	7. Socialism restricts free will. <i>The Bible creates free will.</i>
3. Socialism is rooted in fear. <i>The Bible is rooted in faith.</i>	8. Socialism changes the symptom. <i>The Bible changes the source.</i>
4. Socialism promotes sameness. <i>The Bible promotes uniqueness.</i>	9. Socialism elevates politicians. <i>The Bible elevates God’s children.</i>
5. Socialism produces mediocrity. <i>The Bible produces excellence.</i>	10. Socialism has never worked. <i>The Bible has never failed.</i>

### **OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN**

So that we could better grasp His love for us and the cherished connection He desires to have with us, God established the father-child relationship theme beginning in Genesis and running throughout the Bible. To fully appreciate the incompatibility of socialism with biblical truth, we should understand how this spiritual metaphor reinforces our correct standing with God.

There are many ways we can imitate our heavenly father. We imitate God when we tell the truth, when we act in love, when we show grace, when we are faithful to our spouses, when we are wise stewards of our resources, when we are industrious, when

we demonstrate faith, and so on. When we copy God's ways, we reflect His character in our lives. As the apostle Paul said, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children" (Ephesians 5:1).

We imitate God when we are productive human beings, when we employ our natural gifts, and when we encourage others, especially our children, to do likewise. When God created you and me, He planted within us the instinct and drive to work, invent, produce, create, and own, because in doing so, we imitate Him, assign credit to Him, and further His creation.

A natural validation of biblical truth, capitalism brings out all these qualities of character that God wants to develop within us. To succeed in the free market, we have to be creative, industrious, self-reliant, frugal, and resourceful. Whether we are a small business owner, plumber, banker, or chief executive, capitalism is all about learning from our mistakes, overcoming fear, and serving others in ways that are desired, appreciated, and rewarded. Developing these character traits mimics God and honors His acts of creation.

God made us with free will, with the insatiable appetite for freedom, for designing our lives to fit our individual dreams. And this is what inspired the Founders of our country. They wanted to create a government that is most in line with God's creation, most in line with rewarding and enhancing the positive aspects of human nature that lead to productive behavior. As historian Johan Norberg wrote, "Believing in capitalism does not mean believing in growth, the economy, or efficiency. Desirable as they may be, those are only the results. At its core, belief in capitalism is belief in mankind."<sup>6</sup>

On nearly every level, socialism violates all the positive character traits God gave us to develop. Independent thinking and entrepreneurial innovation are suppressed because they inhibit central planning. Instead of filling us with exhortations toward self-improvement, socialists preach victimization and government dependence. In socialism, the drive to improve, succeed, and prosper must be checked at the gate for the sake of the greater good. But the greater good is no substitute for the greater God. Despite their philanthropic public persona, socialists relish the idea of being in charge of a nation's wealth. Promoted under a shroud of selflessness, "show me the money" remains their battle cry. Socialist-leaning governments tend to think of themselves, not God, as the source of individual rights, and therefore see nothing wrong with taking one person's property and deeding it to another.

Far from being biblically inspired, socialists regard God as their biggest rival, even bigger than capitalism. Among other things, the Bible instructs private citizens to be wise, responsible, industrious, excellent, thrifty, charitable, debt-free, and optimistic. As you see, these habits of virtue conflict with the priorities of the socialist state. If citizens depend on God and become self-reliant, socialism loses its allure. To prevent God from stealing their thunder, so to speak, socialists work either outwardly or covertly to minimize the influence of God in culture and especially in public life.

## BIBLICAL GIVING VS. SOCIALIST TAKING

To understand the spirit of God, we must study the word of God. There is no shortcut. And in examining the scripture, we see the stark contrast between socialism and the Bible can be articulated in just nine words:

*The Bible is about giving. Socialism is about taking.*

This is simple, direct, and -doesn't require scholarly understanding. For example, in the New Testament, we are reminded of the giving principle, that our giving determines our getting. Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38). In other words, similar to the ACORN voting method, we should give early and give often. There is no mention of stealing, expropriating, or redistributing of any sort.

Despite its hopey-changeey veneer, socialism poses this central question: "*How could I get more?*" The socialist -doesn't believe in giving, he believes in *taking*. For the socialist, Jesus' teaching transforms into something different: "*Take from others and you shall have plenty. For the more you take, the more you will be able to keep.*" Socialist politicians ask, "How can we get more cash from the successful?" And irresponsible citizens ask, "How can we get more for ourselves without contributing more?" Turning President Kennedy's words upside down, too many Americans seem to be asking not what they can do for their country, but what their country can do for them. Or more precisely, *what their favorite politicians can give them.*

Wise politicians ask, "How can we encourage citizens to generously give more time, more resources, and more service?" And responsible citizens ask, "How can I increase my service and contribution to others?" This, incidentally, is also the question that guides entrepreneurs. The super-successful raise the bar even higher and ask, "How could I go the extra mile? How could I over-deliver and give much more than my customers expect?" As the great personal success advocate Napoleon Hill wrote, "In every soul there has been deposited the seed of a great future, but that seed will never germinate, much less grow to maturity, except through the rendering of useful service."<sup>7</sup>

The Bible *never* advocates taking from one person for the purpose of giving to another. This is a manmade, spiritually corrupt concoction. St. Francis of Assisi said, "For it is in giving that we receive," and Maya Angelou added, "I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver." Note the emphasis on giving, not taking and redistributing.

Reflect upon the Golden Rule for a moment: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). If we use this biblical maxim as a gauge for personal decisions and public policy, the light of truth shines ever so brightly. If we don't want someone to kick us in the shin, then we don't kick them in the shin. If we don't want others to take from us, how could we ever condone, encourage, or promote taking from others?

Think of it this way: the *faithful* focus on giving. The *fearful* focus on taking.

## **SOCIALISM VIOLATES SOWING & REAPING**

The principle of the harvest states that we will reap what we have sown. The Bible says, “The point is this; he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6). This is a wonderful promise reminding us that the actions we take today create the world we live in tomorrow.

Socialism breaches this law by forcefully expropriating the fruit of people’s labor and transferring it to others. One citizen gets what he *didn’t plant* and another citizen doesn’t get what he *did plant*. (And the course of redistribution, of course, includes a generous “processing and handling fee” for the government bureaucrat.)

During moments of weakness, we’ve all probably wished for a socialist version of the sowing and reaping maxim. But I double checked the ancient scriptures and couldn’t find anything close. The apostle Paul was emphatic about this: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Obviously, we don’t imitate God when we steal or accept stolen goods. In the Eighth Commandment, God makes this clear in four words: “Thou shall not steal.” This Commandment clearly condemns expropriation, and Leviticus lays out an entire system for dealing with those who steal.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Tenth Commandment says, “Do Not Covet” (Exodus 20:17), which in and of itself repudiates the entire underpinnings of socialism. And remember, these are Commandments, not suggestions.

Socialists often cite biblical imperatives to generosity, but God would never make us break His own Commandments in order to be “generous.” And besides, expropriation is not generosity at all, it’s simply theft.

The principle of the harvest is intended to encourage us to make wise decisions: if we don’t study today, and then we flunk our physics test tomorrow, it’s not because God is punishing us, nor does it make us a victim. We just didn’t follow His principles. This is part of God’s design, intended to encourage wise decisions. And God doesn’t recommend that the government give us someone else’s harvest—He wants us to responsibly plan for our own future.

From a practical standpoint, if we have something we haven’t earned, we often don’t get to keep it anyway. Sooner or later, people tend to get separated from dishonest or easy gain. Lottery winners often go broke within a few years of their windfall. Get-rich-quick attempts usually backfire. Of course, common thieves don’t typically invest their money wisely, which is why they steal again and again.

There is, of course, a cosmic justice in all this. God wants us to work hard and earn our own keep. And as in all things in life, good things tend to happen to those who listen to Him.

## **FALSE COMPASSION**

Redistribution is not endorsed in scripture. To the contrary, the Bible expressly rejects the notion of preferential treatment—for the poor or the rich—with this teaching from Moses: “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly” (Leviticus 19:15). Let’s think of this as the original, premium standard of fairness. Both sides treated without preference—what a concept! Understand, though, that socialists habitually blur the distinction between public justice and private compassion.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible advocates generosity and compassion toward the poor and the hungry—but this is a private matter. It’s a personal duty, not a government mandate. This is not callousness; rather, it reveals God’s wisdom in knowing the inevitable abuse and exploitation that would result from expropriations. And all sorts of other ills arise from turning God’s love for all his children into divisive political pandering. This is not “hope,” nor is it the path to positive “change.”

Socialism claims a monopoly on compassion, but it’s really a counterfeit compassion, a cruel knock off of the real deal that creates far more ills than it repairs. Socialism is not compassion; it’s blunt force. And history proves that the short-term, expedient fix that socialism may supply is far outweighed by the unhealthy, long-term addiction it causes. Furthermore, government-enforced “giving” robs the citizen of the spiritual joys that come from freely giving of one’s self and one’s resources, while infusing the recipient with a warped sense of entitlement.

While the Founders had soft hearts for the needy, they didn’t want the federal government in the welfare business. They believed family, friends, churches, charities, and if necessary, local governments should fill the role, but not the federal government which, they foresaw, would get carried away playing God. And they were right.

## **IN GOVERNMENT WE TRUST**

The Bible teaches that God loves us as individuals. He made each of us a purpose-filled, unique work of art—an unrepeatably miracle, each with a different gift to deliver to the world. It’s the same attitude we, as parents, have toward our own children—each child is priceless and irreplaceable.

Socialists, however, don’t trust the individual. Independent-thinking, self-reliant citizens are a real thorn in their side. They don’t like dissent either, as individuals are expected to yield their hopes and dreams for the sake of the collective good. They believe individual rights are conferred by the government to its subjects, not by God to His children. In fact, the only group that socialists regard as having individual merit is socialist politicians. Because they are ostensibly bringing us a socialist paradise, their own fortunes become synonymous with the “greater good.”

As the instrument for bringing about a socialist society, the federal government is upheld by the socialist as the closest thing to heaven on earth. It offers glory, power, prestige, other people’s money—all the things socialist leaders expect to be waiting for

them just beyond the pearly gates, but without the delay, suspense, or inconvenience of death. Believing they are surrogates for the one, true God, socialists worship themselves instead of their Creator. With their exaltation of government, socialists pull citizens' devotion away from God and toward the government.

Consider the very first line of the Founders' greatest achievement, the United States Constitution. It begins with "We the people...." That in itself conveys the entire point of the document.

In contrast, consider the opening of Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*: "What follows is for those who want to change the world from what it is to what they believe it should be. *The Prince* was written by Machiavelli for the Haves on how to hold power. *Rules for Radicals* is written for the Have-Nots on how to take it away."<sup>9</sup> Likewise, the *Communist Manifesto* begins, "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles"—a fitting start to a tome advocating class warfare.

The socialist believes in power and class conflict, not individualism and freedom. If there were a socialist Bible, it would no doubt begin with the phrase, "In the beginning, the government..."

## **PROFIT: GOD'S WAY OF SPREADING THE WEALTH AROUND**

Earth—God's magnificent creation—is abundant. God made a wonderful home for us filled with natural bounty. And he gave people the capacity to create even more abundance by being productive and generating wealth.

Yet socialism relies on spreading the perception of scarcity. Even in America, the richest country on the planet, blessed with so many natural and human resources, there's always supposedly some devastating scarcity—money, healthcare, water, you name it—that requires a major redistribution scheme to rectify.

Imagine there are exactly 300 million potatoes in America, and we have to feed everyone out of the 300 million. If someone, such as the founder of Starbucks, has too many potatoes, then, to the socialist, that means someone else won't get any potatoes at all. Because of this fear-induced blind spot, the only option in socialism is to grab someone else's extra potato, chop it up, and hand it to the potato-less individuals. It never occurs to them to plant and harvest bigger crops of potatoes. It's simply *unfair* that some have planned, planted, nurtured, and produced excessive potatoes. The socialist views the distribution of society's resources as a harsh, zero-sum game: there is a fixed amount of resources, so every transaction has a winner who gets something and a loser who gives it up. In other words, the success of one citizen diminishes the success of another. But can you imagine our all-loving, all-wise Heavenly Father designing the world so that one person's gain equates to another person's loss? Did God really create us to profit at the expense of one another? Can it really be true that wealth can't be expanded, but only "spread around"? Both the word of the Bible and the historical record of capitalism testify otherwise.

Why is the socialist hell-bent on taking from the successful? Contrary to the socialist view, God wants us to create wealth, which happens by adding value to other people's lives. That's not without limits, of course—He expects us to earn our living honestly. God also warns that worldly possessions present major temptations to conceit, pride, greed, and a lust for power.

Socialists often cite these warnings to argue that God disapproves of the wealthy. In particular, they cite Matthew 19:21–22, where Jesus says, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But Jesus' intent here is best understood in connection with Matthew 10:37, when Jesus says, “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

This passage is no more about promoting dysfunctional families than the previous passage is about promoting socialism. The key to understanding these passages is that Jesus utilizes one central theme—nothing, absolutely nothing, must come between Him and His followers. In the first passage, it's one's possessions; in the second, it's one's immediate family. Both stories exemplify Christ's demands for complete devotion. Wealth, family, and many other things are valuable, but should not stand between you and Him. The moral of the story is sacrifice, not socialism.

In *An Introduction to the Devout Life*, St. Francis de Sales (1577–1622) explains that living a spiritually fulfilling life requires you to “make your property profitable and fruitful.” He continues, “You can possess riches without being poisoned by them if you merely keep them in your home and purse, and not in your heart. To be rich in effect and poor in affection is a great happiness.” He concludes, “Let us exercise this gracious gift of preserving and even of increasing our temporal goods whenever just occasions present themselves.”<sup>10</sup>

Undoubtedly, some capitalists are selfish and materialistic, but that is neither the cause nor the necessary effect of capitalism. The free market only promotes these character flaws in the same sense that driving “promotes” car accidents, eating promotes obesity, and marriage promotes divorce. Capitalism simply offers the freedom to focus on whatever you want—God, material wealth, or both. Socialism, on the other hand, focuses exclusively on material wealth. So who exactly is greedier? Is it the businesswoman who provides excellent service and, in exchange, receives an excellent profit? Or is it the mediocre office worker who lusts for an unearned share of that businesswoman's money? Or is it, perhaps, the politician who amasses ever greater job security with each redistribution scheme?

The Founders wanted to create winners. Inspired by the scriptures, they wanted to multiply success, not divide it into chunks of mediocrity. They knew the Creator's possibilities are not in short supply. There is infinite wealth because God is the never-ending source. When we add value to the resources we now have, we bring about opportunities for creating even more value in the future. In other words, profit is the

divinely inspired dynamic that expands society's overall wealth.

For the socialist, "profit" is a filthy little word, a virtual synonym for "greed" or "self-indulgence" or "exploitation." But far from being evil, profit, in fact, is an invention of God, the special reward reserved for the risk-takers and status-quo breakers. It is the utilization of surplus resources to create even more resources. The prospect of profit inspires entrepreneurs to risk and innovate. Profits multiply wealth for the good of all. God uses our success to help others while we help ourselves. Our success blesses others. We -don't succeed at the expense of others, but in service to others. This certainly seems to be the view of the Bible's many wealthy heroes, including Moses, Abraham, and Boaz.

Authentic success spills over to benefit many more people beyond the minority who accepted the risk. Becoming financially successful is not just tolerable; it is one of the most unselfish aims anyone could undertake. It is God's way of sharing abundance.

No redistribution is required. The bottom line is this: God doesn't care whether we have ten dollars or ten million. He cares where our heart is. He cares what we are living for, what we are devoted to, and what we are depending on. There is no amount of academic distinction that is sinful. Likewise, there is no amount of financial wealth that is immoral. However, either of these worldly accomplishments may swell our opinion of ourselves to the point where we stop looking to God and seek our own reflection instead. That's what we must resist—not wealth. It's not *what we have* that separates us from God; rather it's *what has us* that really matters.

#### EIGHT PROVEN WAYS TO RAISE A SOCIALIST

1. Withhold discipline, no matter the cost. Aside from being passé, spanking may cause nightmares about evil capitalists. Using "time-outs" may cause emotional isolation. And "withholding privileges" may hurt a teenager's self-esteem.
2. Spoil your child whenever possible. Shower him with what is fashionable and trendy. Give him whatever he wants even if he hasn't earned it. Reward his tantrums with gifts.
3. Share everything from iPods to underwear; to do otherwise would be selfish. Eliminate the use of possessives like "mine," "his," "hers," "ours," and "theirs." Remind them that you're the real owner of their toys.
4. Encourage, model and reward good excuse-creation and delivery; offer a bigger prize if a child's excuse evokes emotion. Make sure he understands that America is inherently unjust and that the deck is stacked against him.
5. Find a progressive school for your child that doesn't keep track of grades. Objective scoring systems are harsh, judgmental, biased, and promote competition.
6. Only pay your child an allowance until he gets an after-school or summer job. If responsibility and self-reliance are rewarded too early, your child may show signs of independence.
7. Emphasize feelings over reason, especially during the teen years. Avoid judgmental words like "right," "wrong", and "no." Begin as many sentences as possible with the phrase, "I feel..."
8. Meditate together upon Mother Earth with your child before bedtime and reassure him that he's special and secure within his assigned demographic subgroup.

## **PRIVATE PROPERTY: STARVATION IS NOT A VIRTUE**

Like wealth, private property is another biblically sanctioned concept that socialists reject. One of the earliest recorded real estate transactions was conducted by Abraham, who paid four hundred shekels of silver to secure a proper burial spot for his wife, Sarah. He purchased a deed of possession to Ephron's property east of Hebron, which included the field with all its trees, as well as the cave of Machpelah.<sup>11</sup> Noticeably, Abraham insisted on paying for this property, refusing Ephron's offer of the land as a gift.

The Founders drew a direct connection between private property, liberty, and the mandates of the Bible. As John Adams wrote, "The moment the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence. Property must be secured or liberty cannot exist."

This was a lesson learned in the first moments of American history. The Jamestown colony, established in 1607, initially rejected private property, instead adopting a communal system similar to socialism. Everyone worked the land together and divided up the harvest. As a result, according to colony secretary Ralph Hamor, most of the work was done by one-fifth of the men, the other four-fifths living as freeloaders.<sup>12</sup> Despite fertile soil and abundant game, most of the colonists died of starvation. Chaos emerged with reports of settlers eating cats, dogs, rats, and even their deceased neighbors. Then the colony converted to private property and it quickly thrived, attracting new settlers from all over Europe.<sup>13</sup> Hamor noted that after the switch there was "plenty of food, which every man by his own industry may easily and doth procure."<sup>14</sup>

A near-identical situation emerged at the Plymouth colony, which also began with a communal farming system. The governor of the colony, William Bradford, recounted that "young men that are most able and fit for labor and service" protested having to "spend their time and strength to work for other men's wives and children."<sup>15</sup> To correct the terrible situation, Bradford assigned each family their own parcel of land and told them to provide for themselves. And that's exactly what they did. Bradford saw a divine hand in the adoption of private property, relating that "instead of famine, now God gave them plenty." In 1624, there were even enough surpluses to begin exporting corn.<sup>16</sup> Bradford concluded, "The failure of this experiment of communal service, which was tried for several years, and by good and honest men proves the emptiness of the theory of Plato and other ancients, applauded by some of later times, that the taking away of private property, and the possession of it in community, by a commonwealth, would make a state happy and flourishing; as if it were wiser than God."<sup>17</sup>

Despite these practical lessons as well as biblical teachings, socialism seeks to minimize private property or abolish it altogether. That's because private property spawns competition and inequality, and acts as a check on government control. And

keep in mind, private property refers to more than just land. It's your home, your car, your cash, and all your other physical possessions. Socialists are free to share their own possessions with whomever they please, of course, but that's not enough for them. It's our possessions that capture their interest.

## **STEWARDSHIP AND THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS**

If private ownership, profit, and wealth were sinful and oppressive to the poor, scripture would condemn such practice. It does not. The Bible never condemns wealth. To the contrary, scripture speaks of prosperity as a blessing. Throughout the Bible, God rewards people who please him with wealth and property. For example, when God told Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted, Solomon asked for wisdom. God was so pleased with this unselfish answer that he rewarded him not only with unmatched wisdom, but with vast riches and honor as well.<sup>18</sup>

Or consider the story of Job, a wealthy man who lost everything when he was tested by God.<sup>19</sup> Because he remained faithful to God through unimaginable adversity, God blessed and rewarded Job in the latter part of his life even more than in the first. He had the three most beautiful daughters in all the land, 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 donkeys.<sup>20</sup> Today Job would be the scorn of socialists. Not only did he have more than he needed, he passed his wealth on to his children. God ordains wealth because it provides the opportunity for individual stewardship. And God loves stewardship. Throughout the Bible, we are called to be wise and faithful stewards. Stewardship is the practice of taking care of the blessings that are entrusted to us. Stewardship can refer to taking care of money, physical talent, creative talent, relationships, children, property or physical possessions, and much more. We should also, of course, be good stewards of our nation. Stewardship is a great concept to teach our kids because it is all about taking care of things, and that capability might just come in handy when they start caring for us one day.

But stewardship requires ownership. Ownership can be mental, meaning that one takes responsibility for his own work and the choices he has made. Or it can be physical or financial, such as ownership of our home or savings account. True stewardship, though, flows from earned ownership. When we own something as the result of our labor, it pleases God. And the socialist is meddling in God's business when he tries to dodge natural law. When everyone is simply given things, as in the socialist model, no one really owns anything. There is no appreciation, no accountability, and consequently, no stewardship.

One of the greatest illustrations of God's expectation of stewardship is told in the Parable of the Talents, beginning in Matthew 25:14. Parables illustrate spiritual principles that apply beyond obvious spiritual matters. God uses all of scripture and especially the parables to teach us spiritual lessons and lessons about life in general. In fact, it's more accurate to say that spiritual lessons are life lessons. It is we, not God, who have insisted on separating life into the spiritual and the secular. To God, it's all spiritual. We came from someplace and we are going someplace, and what we do in

between matters greatly.

In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus relates the story of a master who gives three of his servants money—he gives five talents to one servant, two to another, and one to the third. The first two servants invest their talents and double their money, and this pleases their master. Having simply buried his talent in the ground, the third servant earns his master’s fury.

It’s hard to imagine a clearer repudiation of socialist principles. First, the parable rejects equality for merit: the master gave his servants different amounts of money, according to what each could handle effectively. Second, it endorses stewardship: the master was pleased with the first two servants because they were both good stewards of what they were given.

Perhaps most important, the story rejects the victim mentality and excuse-making. This was the approach of the third servant, who suggested his master was unfair, greedy, and possibly corrupt, then blamed his decision to bury his talent on his overwhelming fear of his master. Unlike so many leaders today, however, the master was not cowed by this counterfeit appeal to compassion. Instead, he gave the servant’s single talent to the servant who’d earned ten—that is, to the most successful servant—and then ordered the “worthless slave” into the outer darkness where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. He summed up his attitude by saying that if you demonstrate good stewardship, you will experience abundance, and if you aren’t faithful with what you have, no matter how little it is, you will lose even that.

**YOU MIGHT BE A SOCIALIST IF . . .**

1. You’ve ever prayed for an average surgeon to operate on your child.
2. You’ve ever gone to renew your driver’s license and said to yourself, “If only going to my doctor could be more like this.”
3. You’ve felt safer knowing the pilot flying your family home from vacation finished in the middle of his class at flight school.
4. You do your children’s homework for them and brag when they get a good grade.
5. You used a scale at your last dinner party to make sure everybody got exactly the same amount of food.
6. You’ve counted the number of M&M’s that each child is given at your daughter’s birthday party.
7. You lead a standing ovation when the game ends in a tie.
8. You’ve ever said, “Honey, I think the government would make a great business partner.”
9. You feel every American deserves a turn as the American Idol.
10. You’ve ever said, “Honey, if taxes were just a little bit higher, all our dreams could come true.”
11. The word “freedom” makes you think of Social Security.
12. You’ve ever told your child to get mediocre grades and work equally hard as everyone else, so that some of her smaller dreams might come true.
13. You model your personal spending habits after the government.
14. You’ve ever told you child “I just want to bring out the average-ness in you.”
15. You’ve ever proudly declared yourself a pretty ordinary guy and then felt self-conscious that others may think of you as conceited.

The old Boy Scout rule is to leave things in as good a condition as you found them. But the Parable of the Talent goes beyond that, insisting we should make things *better* than we got them. It seems God is not so interested in how much we have; he wants to see what we do with whatever we've got, whether we multiply it or diminish it. In light of that, consider this question: what are the chances that the creator and owner of the largest assortment of real estate in the universe would be a socialist

## **THE JOB CREATOR AND THE VINEYARD WORKERS**

In another parable, the Parable of the Vineyard Workers, Jesus tells the story of a wealthy landowner who goes out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing on compensation of a denarius for the day, the laborers begin working. A few hours later, the landowner hires some more laborers, and this is repeated three more times throughout the day, with the last set of workers arriving at the eleventh hour.

At the end of the day, the landowner pays all the workers the same amount, regardless of when they arrived. As you might imagine, this upsets the earliest arriving workers who labored the longest. But when they complain about the unfair arrangement, the landowner curtly reminds them that he'd kept his promise to pay them a denarius, and he insists he can pay the others however much he wants.

Aside from the spiritual lessons, this story is rich in life wisdom and offers some lessons relevant to our discussion here. First, this wealthy man, the master, clearly owns and has possession of his own property. Second, as is almost always the case, the wealthy are job creators, providing work and income to men who would otherwise remain idle. Third, the laborers are paid after they do their work, not before. Success is not like a fancy restaurant where you get to eat before you pay. In the real world, you work and then you eat. Fourth, the parable illustrates the subjective value of work—the business owner has the leeway to pay his workers whatever he wants, not what someone else deems to be “fair.” Finally, in the disgruntled workers, we see envy rearing its ugly head, as they begrudge those who secured a better deal for themselves. Once again, scripture leaves socialism out in the cold.

## **GOD LOVES EXCELLENCE**

Just observe His creation and you'll see that God loves excellence. The human heart beats 40 million times a year with no days off; and although the human brain weighs only three or four pounds, it contains about 100 billion neurons, which happens to be about the same number of stars as inhabit our galaxy. God made each individual person with the utmost precision. Just look at our DNA. If transcribed into English, the DNA in a single human cell would fill a 1,000-volume set of encyclopedias approximately 600 pages each.<sup>21</sup> The average adult carries with him about 100 trillion cells in various sizes and shapes, and with different functions and life expectancies.<sup>22</sup> And consider that the moon is positioned just the right distance from earth to control the tides and prevent us from needing a really big boat!

God made the world excellent, and he intended us for excellence as well. From Proverbs through the parables, God loves excellence, prudence, and productivity.

Here's a sampling:

1. "In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty."<sup>23</sup>
2. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."<sup>24</sup>
3. "When you eat or drink or do anything else, always do it to honor God."<sup>25</sup>
4. "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed."<sup>26</sup>
5. "Let the thief steal no more, but rather let him be industrious, making an honest living with his own hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need."<sup>27</sup>
6. "A lazy man buries his hand in the bowl, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again."<sup>28</sup>
7. "Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings."<sup>29</sup>
8. "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty."<sup>30</sup>
9. "Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty."<sup>31</sup>
10. "The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor."<sup>32</sup>

In scripture, excellence is honored and indolence is condemned. Painful as it may be for some of our present leaders to digest, this is the stubborn truth. And it's really just common sense. In his second letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul emphasized several fundamentals of successful living. When it came to the work ethic, he wrote,

You surely know that you should follow our example. We didn't waste our time loafing, and we didn't accept food from anyone without paying for it. We didn't want to be a burden to any of you, so night and day we worked as hard as we could. We had the right not to work, but we wanted to set an example for you. We also gave you the rule that if you don't work, you don't eat.

Now we learn that some of you just loaf around and won't do any work, except the work of a busybody. So, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, we ask and beg these people to settle down and start working for a living. Dear friends, you must never become tired of doing right. Be on your guard against any followers who refuse to obey what we have written in this letter. Put them to shame by not having anything to do with them.<sup>33</sup>

This couldn't be more contrary to socialism, which inhibits excellence by rewarding mediocrity, pardoning irresponsibility, and artificially leveling results and rewards without corresponding merit. Hard work, long hours, and quality output are not simply unrewarded, they are often penalized.

The socialist also believes time and effort trump results. To him, just like everything else, all work should be equal. This means effort is valued as much as or more than results, and people should be compensated for effort regardless of the quality or timeliness of the work done. To a socialist, if you work for an hour and produce nothing, you should still be compensated just for showing up. As Karl Marx wrote, "We

“We should not say that one man’s hour is worth another man’s hour, but rather that one man during an hour is worth just as much as another man during an hour. Time is everything, man is nothing: he is at the most time’s carcass.”<sup>34</sup>

So it doesn’t matter whether you drive a truck, sell million dollar accounts, dig ditches, extract brain tumors, manage ten people, or run a billion dollar conglomerate—all work has equal inherent value. You put in an hour’s work, you should get paid according to your effort or time and possibly according to your need, but not according to the result you produce or the value you create.

Follow the “logic” here? If society rewards better results, some people might produce better results, and that would ultimately lead to inequality of income, and that’s not fair. Socialists just -can’t abide that kind of freedom, where individuals can rise to the height of their dreams, goals, and work ethic.

### **SOCIALISM: IT SOUNDS REALLY NICE**

Sounding best to those who understand it the least, socialism is a road paved with good intentions. It highlights some legitimate grievances, and sometimes draws attention to real injustices. But as any smart preacher, counselor, or detective could verify, the best of lies are peppered ever so effectively with bits of truth. Socialism limits freedom, depresses excellence, and rewards mediocrity. Socialist practices put arbitrary and artificial limits on personal ambition, suffocating the divine spark of innovation that has historically increased prosperity for millions—and will continue to do so, if it’s not snuffed out in the near or distant future.

Professing values that contradict the fundamental principles of the Bible, socialism is not the way, the truth, or the light. And can we really expect the continued blessings of God if we continue ignoring the laws of God? As Thomas Jefferson wrote, “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever.”<sup>35</sup>

The free market is not perfect, but that’s no reason to accept the terrible injustices of socialism. Recall Henry van Dyke’s remark, “The best rose bush, after all, is not that which has the fewest thorns, but that which bears the finest roses.”<sup>36</sup> Capitalism is in alignment with natural law and in harmony with man’s instincts. It’s also simple to explain, and remember, simplicity is one of God’s most valuable trademarks. Socialism, to the contrary, is convoluted, violates natural law, and opposes man’s positive natural instincts.

One of the main reasons our nation has been richly blessed is ...

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