

PARENT / TEACHER
LESSON PLANS

A black and white photograph of a classical statue, likely Plato, with a long beard and curly hair, pointing his right index finger towards the sky. The statue is set against a background of classical architectural columns.

POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

FOR HIGHSCHOOL
STUDENTS

ARPACANADA.ca

SUMMARY

In this lesson, students are introduced to a left-right political spectrum. After reviewing a basic summary of different Canadian political ideologies, students engage with scripture to see how it sheds light on our understanding of the importance of the individual and also the importance of the group. This activity is to be seen as an introductory activity on political ideologies. It is intended to get students thinking on a deeper level about how social and economic issues apply to the left-right political spectrum.

For more information or to give feedback, contact info@arpacanada.ca

POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

OVERVIEW

Are you right wing or left wing, conservative or liberal? What do these terms even mean?

We hear these terms all of the time, be it in the news or even in church. The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand some basic differences between political ideologies and then analyze how their Christian beliefs fit into these categories.

As evidenced in the chart included with this lesson, each political ideology is guided by a different **worldview**, or the lens through which someone makes sense of the world. Understanding the underlying worldview goes a long way in helping us determine an ideology's consistency or inconsistency with our Christian faith.

It is also important for students to understand that an ideology may sound good in theory but that does not necessarily translate to it being good in practice. For example, if the underlying worldview is optimistic about human nature and our potential (such as communism or socialism) it is actually out of step with biblical reality and can end up causing a great deal of harm.

Although one ideology may be more consistent with our faith, a Christian worldview does not fit neatly in any single category. The Bible emphasizes that we are citizens of God's kingdom first. Earth is our temporary home. Our ultimate king is God. We are commanded to obey our civil government (Romans 13) but not to the point of disobeying God. There is no clear calling in the Bible for civil government to do anything beyond restraining evil and promoting good so that we may live in peace (see Belgic Confession Article 36). These points seem consistent with the "conservative" category in the chart below. But the Bible also calls Christians to be generous and to share with those in need (2 Corinthians 8:1-14). This was especially evident in the early church where believers shared freely with each other out of love (Acts 2:42-47). Private property and ownership are protected in Scripture, but there are many warnings about greed and materialism. For example, Proverbs 30:8-9 asks God to give us only what we need, not too much or too little. Capitalism and conservatism have been associated with greed and a lack of compassion for the needy, so the Christian worldview clearly doesn't always fit comfortably here either.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can the Bible inform our understanding of the principles around which political ideologies are based?

This essential question is intended to orient the students around what the Bible has to say about our involvement in society. It is intended to make students understand that allegiance to biblical teachings needs to come before allegiance to political party platforms.

EXPLAIN THE VARIOUS POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Provide the included *Handout 1 – Introduction to Political Ideologies*. It is an introductory look at different left/right political ideologies. Depending on the academic level of the students, adaptation may be necessary (e.g. changing the name of the ideologies to political parties, or spending more time explaining why each ideology's worldview is important, or adding other important considerations).

EXPLORE IDEOLOGY ON SOCIAL ISSUES

Distribute *Handout 2 - Social Issues*. Students will work in groups of 2-3 and determine based on their current events knowledge where they think each of these social issues would be placed on the left-right political spectrum.

Place the issue on the spectrum with a checkmark (indicating the party is in favour)

Place the issue on the spectrum with an "x" (indicating the party is opposed)

When all groups are complete, debrief with the class. Note that there will be variety in some of the responses and this is to be expected. The goal is to get students comfortable discussing various issues and how political parties view these issues.

EXPLORE IDEOLOGY ON ECONOMIC ISSUES

Distribute *Handout 3 - Economic Issues*. Students continue to work in small groups of 2-3 on this more difficult assignment. The economic issues handout has a slightly different left-right political spectrum.

Students should again place the issue with a checkmark or an "x" (indicating if they think the party is in favour or opposed).

When all groups are complete, debrief with the class. Determine whether students think that economics can also be considered a moral issue. Can the Bible inform our understanding of economic

EXPLORE WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY

issues? Are we able to learn principles from the Bible about rest, work, play, property ownership, wealth and taxes?

It should be noted that biblical evidence will not be found to support a particular ideology but rather that we must search the scriptures and see whether political orientations align themselves with God's word.

Provide students with *Handout 4 - Textual References*. This is only a starting point and students should be encouraged to bring other texts into their assignment.

Students work in groups of 2-3 with a selection of about five different scriptural references. The teacher can use their discretion in assigning these texts to ensure balance and variety.

Working together or with the help of a commentary or concordance, students are to determine what these scriptural references mean in their context. The context of the text is important to determine the correct meaning.

Students should discuss in their small groups what they think the principle is that is contained in the text.

Read a commentary (many are available at www.blueletterbible.org) to help them determine the meaning of the text in its context. Combining the online reading of a commentary with the "Search" function makes it quite easy to focus one's research.

After reading the commentary, students should add to their discussion of what principle is contained in the text.

They should rank those that strongly emphasize:

- Focus is compassion for others (-2)
- Neutral (0)
- Focus is looking out for oneself (+2)

Students should include a brief statement of the principle contained in the text.

When regrouping and debriefing as a class, each individual group should present:

- One thing their activity confirmed that they already knew.
- One thing their research introduced them to that was new to them.
- One thing they are still wondering about.

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

	<div> <div>Left</div> <div></div> <div>Right</div> </div>				
	Communism	Socialism	Liberalism	Conservatism	Fascism
Origin	1800s with Marx	1800s with Marx	1700s with Locke	1700s	1920s with Franco, Hitler, and Mussolini
Source of Authority	The people collectively/the state	The people collectively	The individual	History and tradition	The state
Main Value	Equality	Equity	Freedom	Order	Power
View of What Government Should Do	The government should be involved in everything	The government should provide lots of services but leave personal lives alone	The government should provide some services but leave personal lives alone	The government should provide few services but regulate personal lives	The government should be involved in everything
View of Private Property	No private property as everyone owns things collectively	Allows private property but redistributes wealth heavily	Allows private property and redistributes some wealth	Champions private property	Allows private property if the state doesn't need it
Taxation	No taxation (everyone owns things in common)	High taxes	Moderate taxes	Low taxes	High taxes
View of Religion	Hostile to religion	Tolerant of private religion	Tolerant of religion	Often based on religion	Uses religion to further state goals

PLACING SOCIAL ISSUES

- Discuss with your partner where the following social issues should be placed on the political spectrum. Use your current knowledge to make the best placement you can.
- If you know a particular party is in favour of an issue, place it next to that party's name with a checkmark.
- If you know a particular party is opposed to an issue, place it next to that party's name with an "x".

Social issues:

abortion, euthanasia, state-run elder care, state-run child care, independent schools, ban on conversion therapy, same-sex marriage, acceptance of transgender identities, prostitution, human trafficking, pornography, free speech, religious freedom, conscience rights



PLACING ECONOMIC ISSUES

- Discuss with your partner where the following economic issues should be placed on the political spectrum. Use your current knowledge to make the best placement you can.
- If you know a particular party is in favour of an issue, place it next to that party's name with a checkmark.
- If you know a particular party is opposed to an issue, place it next to that party's name with an "x".

Economic Issues:

low taxes, free trade, welfare state, social security, fair trade, progressive taxes, minimum wage, universal basic income, universal health care, housing for homeless, labour unions, government control and production of necessities, balanced budgets



TEXTUAL REFERENCES

What can we learn from the Bible about work, money, and rest?

Working in groups of 2-3 students, read five different scriptural references. Determine what these scriptural references mean in their context. The context of the text is important to determine the correct meaning. Discuss what you think the principle is that is contained in the text. If possible, read a Bible commentary (many are available at www.blueletterbible.org) to help you determine the meaning of the text in its context.

After reading the passage, discussing its meaning, and consulting a commentary, determine if the passage emphasizes compassion for others (-2), is neutral, or emphasizes looking out for oneself (+2). Write a brief statement of the principle contained in the text.

GROUP 1

Gen 41: 25-42
Deut 15: 7-8
Ex 23: 10-11
Lev 19:9-17
Lev 23:22

Prov 10:4, 15
Prov 13:4
Prov 13:31
Prov 19:15
Prov 20:13

GROUP 4

Prov 21:5
Prov 22:7, 9, 16, 22
Prov 23:21
Prov 28:8, 15

GROUP 5

Prov 29:7,14

Prov 30:7-9, 14
Prov 31:8
Jer 22:1-5, 13-17
Jer 32:10-12

GROUP 6

Ezek 16:49
Ezek 19:12
Matt 6:19-21, 24
Matt 7:12
Matt 19:16-24

GROUP 7

Matt 25:31-46
Luke 10:25-37
Luke 12:15
Mark 12:41-44
Mark 14:3-9





GROUP 8




Acts 2: 43-47
Acts 5:1-4
1 Cor 12: 19-26
2 Cor 9:6-9
Phil 4:11

GROUP 9

2 Thess 3:10
1 Tim 5:8-16
1 Tim 6:10
1 Tim 6:18
James 1:27

Text	Discussion Notes	Rating

		 <p>0: neutral</p> <p>-2: compassion for others +2: focus on individual responsibility</p>
Principle		
Text	Discussion Notes	<p>Rating</p>  <p>0: neutral</p> <p>-2: compassion on others +2: focus on individual responsibility</p>
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