

Exposing Enemies Within the Church: A Seven-Session Bible Study Series
“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Eph. 5:11).

Participants’ Guide

Debriefing for Session 1: Social Justice Versus Biblical Justice, Part 1

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Session 1: Here’s what the social justice movement is really all about.

The online resource page for this debriefing is available at
<https://www.discoverbedrocktruth.org/dbrp01/>.

Both free speech rights and property rights belong legally to individuals, but their real function is social, to benefit vast numbers of people who do not themselves exercise these rights.

—Thomas Sowell¹—

After the first session of the Bible study series, you might be scratching your head and wondering, *Just what did I sign up for? This is about economics, not social justice!*

Let me reassure you that you *are* in the right place and that we *are indeed* examining social justice and its tenets. Most importantly, we’re exploring *what the Bible teaches* about the main ideas and principles the social justice movement is promoting and seeking to implement in society-at-large.

While after the first session (as we have indicated) many may be thinking, *This is about economics, not social justice*, all of us need to understand this reality: *The social justice movement is about economics — and a great deal more, and all of these elements make it especially dangerous.* It’s also about

- who we are as human beings,
- how we relate and should relate to others, and
- our accountability to God.

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If you don't quite understand all of this yet, don't worry. We'll connect the dots in the days and weeks ahead as we move forward. For now, trust me when I say that very few movements throughout history have been as ominous or as dangerous to orthodox Christianity as has the social justice movement.

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While Jesus Christ and His Church assuredly will win in the end, the social justice movement has taken and is taking a great many casualties in what is primarily a spiritual war. The documentary film *Enemies Within the Church*,² along with this Bible study series, are offered to mitigate that influence. These resources are designed to equip the church and individual Christians to

- recognize the errors of the social justice movement, to
- warn about the dangers it poses, and to
- rescue and recover those who've already been taken captive by its teachings.

What Is Social Justice?

Remember from the Bible study session that while the Wikipedia article on *social justice* innocuously says, “**Social justice** is justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society,”³ the article on social justice at conservapedia.com is more accurate, and it raises appropriate warning flags. Here is the first paragraph of that article:

Social Justice, also known as economic justice, is a term describing the redistribution of wealth supposedly for the common good of all. However, this comes at the expense of wage earners and liberty by demanding a society to conform. Those who work and have must give to those who don't work and don't have. This is the fundamental basis of Marxism and championed by liberal progressives. Everyone shall have equal advantages and everyone will have equal disadvantages. In reality it creates two classes, those with power, usually technocrats, party operatives and bureaucrats, and everyone else.⁴

→ Explain why the following words and phrases serve as “warning flags” in this paragraph.

1. *Redistribution*
2. *the common good of all*
3. *expense of wage earners*
4. *expense of...liberty*

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5. *demanding a society to conform*

6. *Marxism*

7. *liberal progressives*

8. *equal advantages*

9. *equal disadvantages*

10. *those with power*

11. *everyone else*

→ *How comprehensive does the social justice movement appear to be? In other words, if everything social justice crusaders say they want (or that they say society or certain groups in society “need”) were to be adopted or implemented, how much of society would remain untouched? Explain.*

→ *Based on the paragraph at [conservapedia.com](https://www.conservapedia.com/conservative-social-justice) cited above,⁵ how much or how little of social justice is really about justice? If it isn’t about justice (or if it isn’t about justice to a significant degree), then why do you suppose the term justice is used?*

The Connection Between the Social Justice Movement and Property Rights

Let’s think further about the connection between the social justice movement and property rights. Consider these questions:

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→ *Does another person’s or a group’s lack of a particular resource that I have or own entitle that person or group to take it or to have access to it —*

- *if the person or group “needs” it?*
- *if the person or group thinks he/she/they need it?*
- *if the government says he/she/they need it?*

Explain your answers.

This is the core issue: The social justice narrative sees justice in terms of “leveling the playing field” to make everyone “equal.” Of course, it is the government that does the leveling — and when it does, it levels (destroys) everything totally, leaving nothing behind.

Economist Walter E. Williams (1936-2020) understood the threat posed by the social justice movement and countered it with his own definition of the term. He said, “But let me offer you my [own] definition of social justice: I keep what I earn and you keep what you earn. Do you disagree? Well then tell me how much of what I earn belongs to you — and why?”⁶

→ *How does the social justice movement justify theft? Explain how its justification is deceptive.*

→ *How does the social justice movement provide fertile ground for envy and greed, and consequently division, conflict, and growing conflict between people in society?*

→ *Pastor Adrian Rogers warned about redistributing wealth and where it would lead. He said, “When half of the people get the idea that they do not have to work because the other half is going to take care of them, and when the other half gets the idea that it does no good to work, because somebody else is going to get what they work for, that my dear friend, is the beginning of the end of any nation.”⁷ Why did Pastor Rogers say such a scenario “is the beginning of the end of any nation” Explain how protecting and honoring property rights protects a nation against taking this dangerous path.*

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Why do you think Dr. Rogers' insights on this subject are so difficult for many to understand?

A Violation of Divine Law...and Common Sense

Theft and coveting (or envy) are violations of the Eighth and Tenth of the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20:15,17). You see, property ownership and property rights are *upheld* in the Ten Commandments! Therefore, these rights are God-given! They also make perfect sense! Recall Walter Williams's rhetorical argument against the social justice narrative:

But let me offer you my [own] definition of social justice:
I keep what I earn and you keep what you earn. Do you disagree?
Well then tell me how much of what I earn belongs to you — and why?⁸

The Connections Between Property Rights, Being Made by God in His Image, and What It Means to Be Human

There's something about the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20:1-17; also Deut. 5:1-22) that most people don't realize, but that you, if you don't know it already, are about to learn. Once you understand it, you'll want to share it with others. From this point forward you will never see the Ten Commandments as you have in the past. As you read, frequently refer to “Exploring the Ten Commandments,” **Item 1.1DB**, available on the resource page for this debriefing but also included in this Participants' Guide. Remember, the web address for the resource page is <https://www.discoverbedrocktruth.org/dbrp01/>.

First of all, note this: All of the Ten Commandments but two are framed negatively; eight of them (the **First, Second, Third, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth**) prohibit wrong attitudes and actions, while the remaining two (the **Fourth and Fifth**) command good or right attitudes and actions.

Second, even though two of the Commandments are framed positively and the rest negatively, *all of them* have positive principles behind them. We might even call these principles “rights.”

We tend to think of the Ten Commandments as a list of guidelines or rules — laws — to which we are to submit and by which we are to regulate our behavior. Certainly, they are that. But they're also a list of personal rights. Quite likely we rarely, if ever, have thought of them this way.

- **Commandments 1 through 4** give us the right to worship God on His terms, without being hindered by other people or by the government.

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- **Commandment 4** gives us the right to work and the right to regular rest from work. Implied in the right to work are the right to accumulate wealth (a matter addressed in Deut. 8:18). Also implied is one’s accountability to God, or, put another way, the responsibility to use resources wisely and effectively.
- **Commandment 5** gives parents the right to be treated by their children respectfully and with honor. By implication, it also affirms society’s responsibility to recognize appropriate parental authority over their children and parental rights.
- **Commandment 6** upholds the right to life.
- **Commandment 7** gives each of us who is married the right to have his or her marriage respected and honored by others, including (and especially) the individual’s spouse. Implied in this commandment, however, is the responsibility of all to respect, not just individual marriages, but God’s design for marriage. This matter is explicitly addressed in Hebrews 13:4 (NIV).
- **Commandments 8 and 10** uphold for us the right to property ownership and the right to have our decisions about the use of our property respected. While the Eighth Commandment forbids active theft, the Tenth Commandment forbids attitudes such as envy and greed. On the positive side, it commends contentment. This does not prohibit a person from desiring to improve his lot or from making efforts to do so, but rather implicitly encourages him or her to improve it legitimately, through hard work and wise use of available opportunities and resources.
- **Commandment 9** gives us the right to honest and truthful reputations. Further, it protects us from being misled or defrauded.

Keep in mind that the rights upheld in the Ten Commandments also are regulated by them. In other words, the right to work, which is upheld in the **Fourth Commandment**, is not a right to work incessantly or to become materialistic in one’s accumulation of wealth. How do we know this? Because of all the **Fourth Commandment** says, as well as the fact that the Commandments before it call on all people to honor and worship God and God alone. Idolatry is forbidden.

Each right upheld in the Ten Commandments is what social commentators call a “**negative right**.” They are “negative” because to exercise them, people need other people and government to stay out of their way, respect their freedoms, and refrain from hindering them. On the other hand, there are rights called “positive rights” that exist only after government creates them, and that depend on government oversight to maintain them.

→ A brief article available at <https://bit.ly/3JWrLXr> uses Franklin Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” to illustrate negative and positive rights. After reading it, briefly explain why the first two of the Four Freedoms — 1) Freedom of Speech and Expression and 2) Freedom of Worship — are fundamentally different from the last two — 3) Freedom from Want and 4) Freedom from Fear.

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It is *critical* that we understand that property rights, which the **Fourth, Eighth, and Tenth Commandments** uphold, are God-given rights. This means **they are rights that are linked inseparably to what it means to have been created by God in His image and, consequently, what it means to be human.** Theft, whether performed by other individuals, by groups, or by government, is a violation of those rights. **The unvarnished truth is that the social justice movement is all about violating property rights,** which, as has been shown, the Ten Commandments uphold. Remember, social justice is about the *redistribution* of wealth and resources to achieve equality or some semblance of equality.

The Ten Commandments do not apply to plants or animals. They apply to people. Why? Because human beings are the only members of God’s creation that the Lord made in His own image (see Genesis 1:26-28; 9:6).

Freedom, but With Appropriate Limitations

Thus, being human means not only that we reflect God’s image in that we possess qualities that set us apart from animal and plant life; it also means possessing rights that

- are inherent and God-given, that
- set fundamental, yet appropriate, boundaries in place for human relationships, but also that
- give people a great measure of freedom, but not freedom to do whatever they want or might get the urge to do.

People do *not* have the freedom or the right to violate the inherent rights of others. Government doesn’t have it either, and America’s Founding Fathers understood this. They spoke and wrote often of God-given rights that included property rights. Remember: Property rights and other rights upheld in the Ten Commandments can be called “negative rights.” Here is a summary statement.

Negative rights are the rights we enjoy because government is restricted from forbidding or hindering personal activity. Positive rights are “rights” that are secured when government intervenes in citizens’ lives to give them resources or to otherwise enable them to do or to have certain things. Generally speaking, America’s Founders and early leaders upheld the former, and in only a few instances the latter (such as an individual’s right to a trial by jury). Accordingly, they drafted and ratified the Bill of Rights to the US Constitution, which secured foundational rights of citizens through government *limitations*.

Although the right to property is not mentioned among the rights explicitly named in the most quoted portion of the Declaration of Independence (<https://bit.ly/3JZKVf7>), property rights cannot be separated from one’s right to pursue happiness. After reviewing the Scripture passages in **Item 1.2DB** (available at <https://www.discoverbedrocktruth.org/dbrp01/>), write a brief statement explaining the connection.

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There’s more! **Item 1.3DB** carries a list of quotes about property rights from six Founding Fathers, two US Presidents from the early 20th century, and a conservative African-American economist. We do well to listen to them today.

→ Which two or three of the quotes in **Item 1.3DB** especially stand out in your mind, and why?

→ Why is it not necessarily materialistic to say that ownership and control of one’s own property (property and property rights) are essential to one’s ability to pursue happiness?

→ Many people today, including a growing number in the church, are buying into the idea that accumulating wealth and exercising control over one’s own resources has to be a bad thing because it inevitably fosters greed and selfishness. How can individual Christians and the church counter this idea?

Here’s a great place to start: The virtuous wife of Proverbs 31:10-31 has a lot to teach us about work, the proper and wise use of wealth and resources, and helping those in need (visit <https://bit.ly/3JK4Dua> and <https://bit.ly/3K0htFJ>). Are there any indications in Proverbs 31:10-31 — any — that she was selfish? Yet she improved her own and her family’s situation through hard work and wise use of resources. She didn’t forget the poor, either! List several lessons that 21st-century Americans, including believers — men and women alike — need to learn from this godly woman.

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A Couple of Definitions

Before moving ahead, let's become familiar with two very different economic systems *capitalism* or *free enterprise*, and *socialism*.

Capitalism or **free enterprise** is “an economic system in which capital assets are privately owned, and the prices, production, and distribution of goods and services are determined by competition within a free market.”⁹ When we use either one of these terms in this study, we will be using it to refer to a free-market system that isn't being abused, one that is operating according to biblical guidelines. The term *capitalism* has gotten a bad rap in recent years, maligned because it often has been described in terms of its abuses. We don't need to replace it with socialism; instead, we need to rid it of abuse.

By contrast, **socialism** is “an economic system based upon governmental or communal ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods and services.”¹⁰

As you continue, keep in mind that a key difference between **free enterprise** and **socialism** is that free enterprise cannot operate without individual property rights, and socialism cannot exist with them.

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Additional Bible Passages that Uphold Property Rights

Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-22 are the two places in Scripture that showcase the Ten Commandments. As we have noted, the Ten Commandments uphold property rights. Certainly Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 would be all the Scripture we would need to understand that these rights are God-given and therefore inherent; they are ours simply because we are human beings made in God's image. However, a *great many more* Bible passages also affirm property rights and the free market system. Here are several.

Genesis 1:28 — The Cultural Commission

Although not explicitly mentioned in Genesis 1:26-28 where God says He will create human beings in His image, property rights are *implicitly* affirmed. Here is this passage:

1²⁶ Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the

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earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 1:28 has been called the “cultural commission.”¹¹ It is difficult to imagine fulling this divine command without owning and having control over one’s property and resources. In fact, the word translated *dominion*¹² means to rule, dominate, to have authority over.” This strongly implies, and even assumes, possession. Moreover, because God gave this commission to the first married couple and to Adam and Eve as individuals, this was not directive given to the government. At this point, government didn’t even exist.

Therefore, the cultural commission is a divine commission given to every individual. Each person is responsible to God to be productive and to make the most of the resources and opportunities at his or her disposal.

→ Can you imagine trying to fulfill the cultural commission under a socialist government, without owning or having control over any resources? How difficult would it be? Explain your answer.

Genesis 23 — A Burial Place for Sarah

As early as Genesis 23, we see clear elements in Scripture of both property rights and of the free enterprise economic system. Without property rights (as we have said), free enterprise could not operate or even exist. Having just lost his wife Sarah, Abraham needed a place to bury her body. He was able to purchase, and consequently own, a field on which a cave was located, and in that cave he buried Sarah. Abraham acquired the cave by purchasing it from its owner, Ephron the Hittite, for four hundred shekels of silver. The boundary for the property was clear, the money was exchanged, and Abraham received a deed for the property. Genesis 23:16-18 states unambiguously,

23¹⁶ And Abraham listened to Ephron [the owner of the property]; Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.

¹⁷ So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, which were within all the

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surrounding borders, were deeded ¹⁸ to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

These verses tell us that, having been purchased by Abraham at a price agreed upon both by him and its owner, the field became his own **possession** as a matter of public record. **You can explore the implications of what transpired in Genesis 23 in parts 1 and 2 of “Private Property and Private Property Rights Are Affirmed Early in Scripture” at**

<https://www.discoverbedrocktruth.org/propertyrightsgen23/>.

→ Describe the significance of ownership. What are some rights that pertain to owning property and other assets? What responsibilities are involved?

→ Why is it important that property rights and elements of the free-market system are showcased so early in Scripture?

Property Rights are Part of the Fabric of Scripture

Where else in the Bible can we find the principles of private property and the free market economy?

- In both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- In Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, with Proverbs 31:10-31 being especially noteworthy.
- In Jesus’ parables.
- In Acts.
- In Paul’s letters.

Nearly everywhere we look in Scripture, the principles of private property ownership and of the free market system of producing and exchanging goods and services are either explicitly affirmed or are assumed. Private acts of charity also are commended and upheld.¹³ Visit

<https://www.discoverbedrocktruth.org/bibleandproperty/>

or **<https://bit.ly/3FFKvrG>** for an article highlighting these passages. You might have been given a printout of this article in the Bible study session. It is designated as **Item 1.1/Item 1.4DB**.

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→ Read 2 Thessalonians 3:10. You may recall discussing this verse during the Bible study session; now you can reflect on it further. Why did Paul take the approach he took with the Thessalonian Christians?

Here's some background information. In Thessalonica, a number of Christians were focusing their attention so thoroughly on Jesus' second coming that they quit their jobs to wait for it. As a result, they became dependent on the local community and hurt their testimonies. Paul challenged them to take responsibility for themselves. Does the apostle's approach seem harsh? Why was this approach necessary?

→ Read Ephesians 4:28, another verse you may also have discussed or heard mentioned during the Bible study session. Here are some elements in this verse to consider, if you haven't thought them through already. What elements of property ownership and the free-market system are evident in this verse? How does the verse indicate the needs of the poor ought to be addressed?

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→ *Define charity. If people are coerced to “give” to help those in need, have they engaged in acts of charity? Explain your answer. Why is the government incapable of being “compassionate,” and incapable of engaging in acts of charity?*

The Unvarnished Truth

Let’s return to several ideas we presented earlier and develop them further. Earlier, we said, “The unvarnished truth is that the social justice movement is all about violating property rights, which, as has been shown, the Ten Commandments uphold. Remember, social justice is about the *redistribution* of wealth and resources to achieve equality or some semblance of equality.”

Let’s elaborate:

Because the social justice movement is all about achieving equality or some semblance of equality in the name of justice, it is all about violating property rights. As we have shown, the Ten Commandments explicitly uphold property rights, rights that are tied to and that help define what it means to be human. God made people, and only people, in His image. Property rights are God-given, and violating them not only is an offense against the one from whom assets have been unjustly taken; it’s also an affront to God and His design for humanity. *This* is what the social justice movement really is all about.

By contrast, biblical justice is all about making sure people get what they rightly deserve.

We uphold biblical justice when we render “impartially and proportionally to everyone his due in accord with the righteous standard of God’s moral law.”

—Dr. E. Calvin Beisner¹⁴—

Given these realities, it should not be surprising that the social justice movement has Marxist underpinnings. It clearly does, and perhaps it is getting away with this because of the movement’s emphasis on *justice*. As we are seeing, *justice* is a term that social justice advocates have redefined.

The ideas we have explored in this follow-up “debriefing” for Session 1 may have surprised you. Not everyone who is promoting the social justice narrative understands the connections between its tenets and unbiblical teachings, including those of Marxism. Nevertheless, these ideas are increasingly coming through and being promoted — even in overt ways.

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→ Read this Gospel Coalition article titled “That Little Red Hen Was a Pharisee,”¹⁵ by Jared C. Wilson.¹⁶ Write a brief paragraph responding to the article in light of the first session of the Bible study and this debriefing. What caution lights turn on in your mind, if any?

Again, the unvarnished truth is that the social justice movement is all about violating property rights, which, as has been shown, the Ten Commandments uphold. Remember, social justice is about the *redistribution* of wealth and resources to achieve equality or some semblance of equality in the name of justice — even though it’s an effort that is inherently unjust.

Next Time, During Session 2

While in Session 1 and in this Debriefing for Session 1 we explored that and how the social justice movement and its tenets show disdain for property rights by encouraging people and government to violate the Eighth and Tenth Commandments; next time, in Session 2, we will explore yet another of the Ten Commandments the social justice movement regularly violates.

We’ll also explore eleven specific differences between social justice and authentic, biblical justice. Buckle up! You’re in for the ride of your life!

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Notes:

¹<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/278522?ref=property-rights>

²<https://enemieswithinthechurch.com>

³https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice

⁴https://www.conservapedia.com/Social_Justice

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⁵<https://bit.ly/3JZrDq2>

⁶<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/500241>

⁷<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/879027>

⁸<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/500241>

⁹Jeff Myers and David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: A Survey of Competing Worldviews*, (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2016), 100.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹<https://www.wordfoundations.com/an-excerpt-from-the-cultural-commission/>

¹²<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h7287/kjv/wlc/0-1/> or <https://bit.ly/3JZPOot>

¹³Proverbs 14:31; 19:17; 21:13; 22:9,16; 22:22; 28:3; 31:10,20; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Ephesians 4:28; Philippians 4:10-20; 1 Timothy 6:17-19 ~ Visit <https://bit.ly/3Ty9N0N> for these passages.

¹⁴<https://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF13E133.pdf>

¹⁵<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/little-red-hen-pharisee/> or <https://bit.ly/40jHBkQ>

¹⁶<https://www.mbts.edu/about/faculty/jared-c-wilson/>