

# ***Civics: A Christian Worldview. “Mr. President, Can You Do That?” (20 minutes)***

## **TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY**

### **Instructions**

**Objective:** Students discover how **tiny** the President’s actual constitutional powers are compared to what people *think* he is allowed to do.

1. Print this page and Page 2 for yourself—**no student handouts today!**
2. Put a chair at the front of the room facing the students.

### **STEP 1 — Pick the First President**

- Choose one student to go first.
- Say this: “You are now the President of the United States. The class represents all U. S. citizens. They will ask you to do things, and you decide if you have the legal right to do them.”

### **STEP 2 — Citizen Makes a Request**

- Pick a student to read the first request on Page 2 (**HIDE ALL REQUESTS BELOW THE ONE HE READS**) to the President.
  - The “President” must answer either “YES, I can do that,” or “NO, I can’t do that.”
  - **ROTATE ROLES:** The citizen who just made the request now becomes President, and the first President becomes a citizen. (Continue around the class rotating these roles.)
  - **WATCH THE TIME!** You’ll want to complete Steps 3 and 4—about 5-7 minutes—before class ends.)
- (You’ll see the class start to realize: “Wait...the President can’t actually DO much....”)

### **STEP 3 — The Reveal**

Ask the class:

1. “Is this how people talk about Presidents during elections?”  
*They’ll probably answer, “No,” they just talk about “their candidate” winning.*
2. “Why do people act like Presidents can fix everything?”  
*Students will probably answer something like “Because people **expect** Presidents to have powers the Constitution never gave them, especially if they want ‘their guy’ to do things **THEY** want him to do.”*

### **STEP 4 — Final Questions**

Ask students this:

1. “If Presidents only did what Article II allows, would people freak out over elections like they do now?”  
*Students should answer, “No, because no matter what a President believed about his powers (“weak” or “strong” Presidents), and no matter what his philosophy on government’s proper role was...he’s still supposed to be bound by the WRITTEN LAWS in the U. S. Constitution!*
2. “Why do you think so many Americans think the President has almost unlimited powers today?” (That is, where do they get this idea?)  
*AWV, but certainly the news, lack of knowing about the Constitution, and certainly government schools, which commonly tout big/powerful government as desirable—unless, of course, THEIR presidential candidate loses!*
3. “If the President ONLY did what the Bible says rulers should do, what kind of people would be angry?”  
*If a President only prevented injustice—being a “terror” to “evil” (harm) and punishing “evildoers” (those who harm others), who on earth would object, other than those who benefit from a ruler’s taking illegitimate powers and doing unjust actions?*

## ***Civics: A Christian Worldview. “Mr. President, Can You Do That?”***

### **CITIZEN REQUESTS (Cover up all requests below the one the current student is asking!)**

1. “Raise taxes to pay for free college.” (NO)
2. “Veto a bill that Congress just passed.” (YES)
3. “Pardon a man convicted of a federal crime.” (YES)
4. “Send the army to invade a country because he’s angry at a nation’s leader.” (NO)
5. “Create a new federal law banning social media for those under the age of 18.” (NO)
6. “Command the military after Congress declares war.” (YES)
7. “Make a treaty with France without asking anyone.” (NO)
8. “Make a treaty if 2/3 of the Senate agrees.” (YES)
9. “Recommend ideas to Congress for new laws.” (YES)
10. “Cancel a federal law because you think it’s a bad idea.” (NO)
11. “Place a new tariff on imported steel because you want to protect U.S. factories.” (NO)
12. “Appoint an ambassador to another country if the Senate approves.” (YES)
13. “Spend money on a new program that Congress never approved.” (NO)
14. “Nominate a Supreme Court justice if the Senate approves.” (YES)
15. “Call Congress into a special session.” (YES)
16. “Pass a nationwide mask law.” (NO)
17. “Give a State of the Union speech.” (YES)
18. “Remove a governor from office.” (NO)
19. “Receive foreign ambassadors.” (YES)
20. “Create an executive order that changes a law Congress made.” (NO)
21. “Make sure existing federal laws are carried out.” (YES)
22. “Decide who wins a court case.” (NO)
23. “Command the Navy during a war that Congress has officially declared.” (YES)
24. “Create a rule that all public schools must use the same history textbook.” (NO)
25. “Rewrite an existing federal law using an executive order.” (NO)