

Economics: A Christian Worldview – Private Property Analysis

(TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY)

Purpose

This activity reinforces ideas in the “Right to Property” section.

Time

15-20 minutes

Instructions

1. Print this instructions/key page and a Page 2 for all students.
2. Hand out Page 2 to students and read instructions together.
3. Give students 6-8 minutes to finish Part 1, and discuss in pairs/groups first (if time), then as a class.
4. Ditto for Part 2.

Answer Key (Part 1)

Human Nature – Correct reasoning should include ideas like these:

- People naturally act in their own self-interest, especially when resources are limited.
- If something belongs to no one in particular, individuals have an incentive to use as much of it as possible before others do.
- Without ownership, people have less motivation to maintain, protect, or improve resources.
- Individuals are more likely to neglect/abuse property when they do not personally bear the cost of damage.

Biblical Teaching – Correct reasoning should reference Scripture’s support for private property:

- “Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15) assumes property ownership exists.
- “Thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:17) assumes individuals possess property.
- Acts 5:4 (“Was it not thine own?”) confirms ownership.
- Ephesians 4:28 teaches individuals should work and give voluntarily—not be forced.

Tragedy of the Commons – Students should recognize the incentive problem caused by lack of ownership:

- When no one owns a resource, individuals tend to overuse it.
- No one has strong incentive to preserve or invest in something they do not own.
- This leads to depletion, neglect, or destruction of resources.

Answer Key (Part 2)

1. **For an economy to grow.** Private property encourages people to invest, improve, and produce more because they can keep the rewards of their efforts. This leads to more goods, services, innovation, and overall economic growth.

Examples students may include:

- A business owner expands his company because he keeps the profits.
- A farmer improves his land because he owns it.
- An inventor creates new products because he can benefit from selling them.

2. **To foster work and trade.** Ownership creates motivation to work and produces goods and services that can be traded with others. Trade happens when individuals control their own property and can voluntarily exchange it.

Examples students may include:

- A worker earns money and buys food.
- A carpenter builds furniture and sells it.
- A person provides services in exchange for payment.

3. **To satisfy the productive, healthful inner urge of mankind to accomplish things and be rewarded for working.** People naturally desire to accomplish meaningful work and see the results of their effort. Ownership allows individuals to experience the reward and satisfaction of productive effort.

Examples students may include:

- Encourages investment and improvement
- Motivates people to work
- Enables voluntary trade
- Supports economic growth
- Provides personal motivation and satisfaction
- Connects effort with reward

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Part 1:

You hear someone say this:

“If nobody owned anything, people would share peacefully, and resources would be used wisely.”

Write reasons why this is unrealistic, using these three angles: (1) human nature, (2) Biblical teaching, and (3) the “tragedy of the commons” principle.

Human Nature – The above statement is unrealistic because _____

Biblical Teaching – The above statement is unrealistic because _____

The “Tragedy of the Commons” Principle – The above statement is unrealistic because _____

Part 2:

The last part of the book section titled “The Right to Property” points this out:

“Private property is necessary (a) for an economy to grow, (b) to foster work and trade, and (c) to satisfy the productive, healthful inner urge of mankind to accomplish things and be rewarded for working.”

In your own words and with an idea for each, explain these concepts:

“Private property is necessary for an economy to grow because...”

“Private property is necessary to foster work and trade because...”

“Private property is necessary to satisfy the productive, healthful inner urge of mankind to accomplish things and be rewarded for working because...”
