

Economics: A Christian Worldview – Short Film: “Bison and the Tragedy of the Commons”

(TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY)

Purpose

Students see how private property, rather than communal property, works more effectively, in a short film called “Bison and the Tragedy of the Commons.”

Time

8-10 minutes

Instructions

1. Play the short film “Bison and the Tragedy of the Commons” (5:18) for students:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKXcubr1-0M>

2. Ask for volunteers or go around the room asking students their thoughts on the film.

3. Ask students to explain the lesson of the sheep/grazing land.

With common land, shepherds overused it; with their own, they were careful of how they used it.

4. Ask students to explain the lesson of the bison and elephants.

- *Bison – Population went from 30 million to a thousand because “everybody owned them.” People shot them for fun out of train windows! Entrepreneurs took over and bred them to make sure they thrived and multiplied—for profit.*
- *Elephants – Communal land; elephants destroyed crops; villagers encouraged poachers; the population dwindled. When the elephants’ value was acknowledged, and villagers gained proceeds from trophy hunts and safaris, and made sure there were more elephants to keep this going—population doubled.*

5. Ask students if they have DVDs or Blu-rays at home. Then ask if they’ve ever checked out DVDs at the library, and what the condition of some/many of those DVDs was. What is the lesson?

AWV, but probably pretty scratched up compared to their own! The lesson: People do not take care of communal property as well as their own.