

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview:
Build a Government without Creating a Tyrant (15-20 minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY

Goal

Students apply Enlightenment-era concerns about reason, power, religion, liberty, and human nature to the creation of a government. They decide which Enlightenment ideas would protect freedom and which could become dangerous if taken too far.

Instructions

1. Tell students: “It is the late 1700s. Your country has just broken away from a powerful ruler. Some people in your new nation strongly support Enlightenment ideas like reason, science, liberty, and individual rights. Others warn that when people trust human reason too much and ignore God or moral limits, governments can become dangerous in new ways. Your job is to help build a government that protects freedom without becoming oppressive.”
2. Divide students into teams of 3–5.
3. Students discuss the question after each “crisis” scenario as teams (give 8-10 minutes), then as a class.

Example Round (Do One Together)

“The Rational Experts” – A group of educated leaders claims citizens are too emotional and ignorant to make important decisions. They argue that trained experts should control speech, education, and laws “for society’s own good.” **Ask students these questions on that scenario (answers will vary):** What danger does the country face? What is a government protection, law, or limit needed? How could this scenario become dangerous?

Scenarios (Student Answers Will Vary!)

1. **“One Approved Religion”** – Government leaders argue that national unity requires one officially approved religion. Families who disagree are fined or publicly punished because leaders claim differing beliefs create instability. Create a protection or limit for government power.
2. **“Reason Above Everything”** – Several powerful writers insist that human reason alone should determine truth. They argue that religious beliefs and biblical morality should have no influence on public life or laws. How could a government protect liberty while preventing rulers from treating themselves as the ultimate source of truth?
3. **“The Perfect Society Plan”** – A new ruler promises to create a perfectly rational and orderly society. To accomplish this, the government begins regulating speech, education, businesses, and public behavior “for the common good.” What protections could prevent this government from becoming tyrannical?
4. **“The Fearful Nation”** – After years of unrest and division, many citizens say freedom has gone too far. They want one strong national leader with greater authority to silence conflict and restore order quickly. What limits should exist on government power, even during difficult times?

Wrap-Up/Final Direction

After finishing and discussing as a class:

- Ask: Which Enlightenment ideas seem helpful? Which are dangerous if removed from Biblical truth?
- Ask: Can reason be useful without becoming the highest authority?
- Say something to this effect: The Enlightenment helped spread key ideas about liberty and limiting rulers. But human reason alone can become dangerous when people treat it as higher than God or absolute truth. America’s founders wrestled with both the benefits and the limits of Enlightenment thinking.

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Read each scenario and choose either “Need More Government Control” or “Government Needs More Limits”; write a brief sentence explaining your reasoning, based on what we’ve learned so far.

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