

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview:
Founding a Free State – Religious Liberty (15-20 minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY

Goal

Students apply Jefferson’s ideas about religious liberty to realistic government situations while comparing those ideas to biblical principles about faith, coercion, and government power.

Instructions

1. Divide students into groups of 3–4.
2. Read the instructions together as a class.
3. Give students about 12–15 minutes to complete the questions.
4. Ask for volunteers to offer their answers, and discuss as a class.

Questions/Suggested Key

1. **Scenario 1: The Church Tax** – The legislature proposes a tax on all citizens to support one official church, because leaders say religion helps keep people moral. *AWV, but students should oppose this!*
2. **Scenario 2: “Christians Only”** – A proposed law says only people who publicly declare belief in Christianity may hold public office. *AWV, but Christians should oppose this. It is beneficial to have office-holders fear God and be motivated by that to do right in office, but it might create liars/hypocrites who claim this only because they want public office.*
3. **Scenario 3: Mandatory Worship** – Every citizen must attend a weekly church service or pay a fine. *AWV, but students should surely oppose this.*
4. **Scenario 4: The Unpopular Religion** – Most citizens dislike a small religious group and want to ban its public meetings. *Students should surely oppose this, unless those public meetings turn into rioting or violate the personal liberties of others.*

Wrap-Up/Final Direction

After finishing and discussing as a class, ask students these questions:

- Why might forced religion weaken sincere faith?
- Why do governments often want influence over religion?
- Is protecting religious liberty the same as approving every belief?

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview – Founding a Free State (Religious Liberty)

Your group has been chosen to help write the laws for a brand-new American state in the late 1700s. Below are several proposed laws involving religion and government. For each one, decide whether your group would **ALLOW** it, **BAN** it, or **MODIFY** it. Explain **WHY**, using Jefferson's ideas from the reading and Biblical verses we've discussed.

Scenario 1: The Church Tax – The legislature proposes a tax on all citizens to support one official church, because leaders say religion helps keep people moral.

Your Group's Decision: ☐ Allow ☐ Ban ☐ Modify

Why?

Questions to Consider:

- Would Jefferson approve?
- Is forced financial support genuine worship?
- Could this create resentment or hypocrisy?

Scenario 2: "Christians Only" – A proposed law says only people who publicly declare belief in Christianity may hold public office.

Your Group's Decision: ☐ Allow ☐ Ban ☐ Modify

Why?

Questions to Consider:

- What warning did Jefferson give about this?
- Would some people lie to gain office?
- Does political reward cheapen faith?

Scenario 3: Mandatory Worship – Every citizen must attend a weekly church service or pay a fine.

Your Group's Decision: ☐ Allow ☐ Ban ☐ Modify

Why?

Questions to Consider:

- Did Jesus or the apostles spread faith this way?
- Can forced worship be sincere?
- What happens when government controls worship?

Scenario 4: The Unpopular Religion – Most citizens dislike a small religious group and want to ban its public meetings.

Your Group's Decision: ☐ Allow ☐ Ban ☐ Modify

Why?

Questions to Consider:

- Should government punish beliefs alone?
- What rights should minorities have?
- What happens if government decides which beliefs are "approved"?