

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview: Antifederalist Alarm Bells
(20–25 minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY

Goal

Students will analyze four real quotes from “Antifederalists” (that is, the real Federalists, not the Nationalists who called themselves Federalists) to uncover the specific dangers many Americans believed the Constitution posed to liberty, state sovereignty, and limited government.

Instructions

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

Questions/Suggested Key (Answers Will Vary!)

1. “A free republic cannot succeed over a country of such immense extent.” – Federal Farmer
Simple Words: A central government cannot possibly effectively/justly govern a nation as large as the U.S., since it is so vast and the people of various states so different.
What Danger Could Happen: States lose sovereignty, powerful, faraway government is so far away from most state citizens that they ignore their protests or other input.
Modern Issue Connection: AWV, but America is much larger today, with a federal government that is out of control and almost totally apathetic to needs of anyone except special interest groups who fund them.
2. “The fate of America may depend on this. Have they said, ‘We the States?’ No, sir. ‘We the People.’”
Simple Words: The Nationalists were trying to sidestep states’ sovereignty by claiming that one “people” would create the U.S. government, instead of respecting the 13 individual states that joined voluntarily.
What Danger Could Happen: The U.S. government rules/dominate the states and their residents.
Modern Issue Connection: AWV, but the U.S. government certainly treats states as counties/provinces, thundering down orders/directives upon all 50 states, just as Henry (and other real Federalists) predicted.
3. “The wealthy and ambitious...will be enabled to accomplish their schemes of oppression.” – Centinel
Simple Words: The U.S. government will quickly be taken over by the rich and scheming and will use the central governments powers to steal from and violate the rights of all Americans.
What Danger Could Happen: Exactly what the quote says!
Modern Issue Connection: AWV, but certainly America’s government has been ruled for decades largely by those who are pursuing their own self-interests and wealth (i.e., members of Congress regularly leave fantastically wealthier than when they entered, enriched by lobbyists/corporations who “influence”/bribe them to pass legislation, just to name one example).
4. “A standing army in time of peace is one of the greatest mischiefs....” – Federal Farmer
Simple Words: A permanent army is dangerous for many reasons.
What Danger Could Happen: Exactly what the quote says!
Modern Issue Connection: America’s armed forces currently (2026) have 200,000+ troops stationed in 170+ nations, in 800+ military bases around the world. Virtually all small-government-favoring American founders warned against standing armies, which they said (correctly) would do the bidding of corrupt poli-

ticians, be better armed than the people, and violate their rights. (We will look at this issue in more detail later during a study of the Second Amendment.)

Wrap-Up/Final Direction

Ask students:

- Does everyone see that the battle between ratifying/not ratifying the Constitution was viewed by limited-government supporters as a battle between freedom and tyranny?
- We asked this question before in a previous book section, but it bears repeating: If the 13 states/nations all had constitutions and branches of government...why do you think powerful-government supporters insisted that there was a “need” for a constitution that created a powerful central government over the states?
- What do you think now of the Constitutional Convention’s (a) meeting in secret, (b) refusing to release the notes for more than 30 years, and (c) rewriting an entirely *new* constitution, instead of revising the Articles of Confederation as they said they were going to do?

Final Point: We’re going to see in upcoming book sections how the “Antifederalists” (the real Federalists) were absolutely right about their predictions of what the U.S. government would do under the Constitution.

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview: Antifederalist Alarm Bells

It is 1788. The Constitution has just been proposed, and Americans are fiercely debating whether it protects liberty—or threatens it. Each quote below comes from a real “Antifederalist” (an actual Federalist, not a Nationalist) writer or speaker. Your group’s three jobs:

- Put into simple words the fear or warning in the quote.
- Explain what danger the writer believed could happen.
- Connect the quote to a **modern** issue, debate, or government power.

1. “A free republic cannot succeed over a country of such immense extent.” – Federal Farmer

In simple words:

What danger could happen:

A modern issue connection:

2. “The fate of America may depend on this. Have they said, ‘We the States?’ No, sir. We the People.” – Patrick Henry

In simple words:

What danger could happen:

A modern issue connection:

3. “The wealthy and ambitious...will be enabled to accomplish their schemes of oppression.” – Centinel

In simple words:

What danger could happen:

A modern issue connection:

4. “A standing army in time of peace is one of the greatest mischiefs....” – Federal Farmer

In simple words:

What danger could happen:

A modern issue connection: