

Is greed good? Is socialism bad?

by Nathan Oppman

Do rich people really deserve all the wealth they possess? How can we end poverty? Are taxes too high? Too low? Does government need to do more?

These questions are debated every four years at election time. Most of the solutions politicians offer differ based on the underlying worldview they hold about economics. For some, the problem in our economy is inequality, and the solution is to take the “excess” wealth of the rich and give it to the poor. For others, the solution to economic problems is to encourage everyone to strive for wealth and the “American dream.”

What is the best option? Is the perceived generosity of socialism the solution to the perceived greed of capitalism?

There is a clear answer. God established a set of principles in Scripture to guide our economic system. I like to call it the “stewardship model” of economics. Here are the principles upon which it is based:

1. **God owns the wealth of the world** (Psalms 24:1). This means He makes the rules for how resources are to be used.
2. **God gives people goods and expects that they steward (use) them for his glory** (Matthew 25:14-46). What does stewardship mean? In the words of a recent Sunday School lesson at my church, “Stewardship is managing resources for the good of the owner.” But note: Since *God* owns the earth’s resources, we are called to manage them for His glory.
3. **God has established principles and rules to govern economic transactions: especially generosity and justice**

(Proverbs 19:17; Exodus 20:15; Leviticus 19:35-36). This means that we should neither steal the goods of our neighbor nor refuse to help those in need when we are able.

The scriptural model of economics does not replace individual responsibility with state control of resources (socialism), nor does it encourage unbridled greed as a motive for economics. It teaches us to manage our goods for God's glory, wisely investing and generously giving.

We should not hold to "isms" that are external to Scripture, but should instead seek to apply Scripture to every area of our lives, including economics.