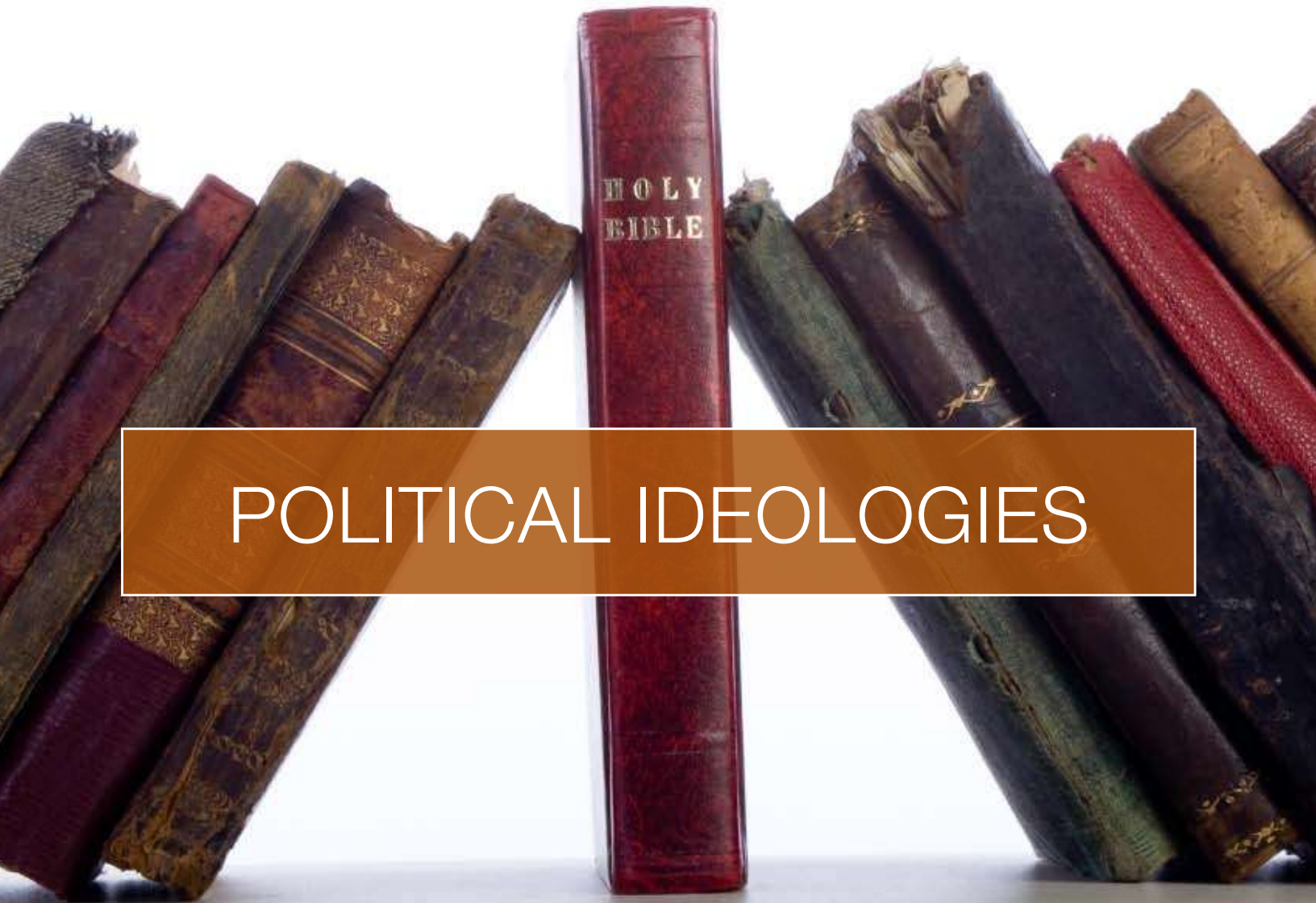


PARENT / TEACHER LESSON PLANS



POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES



Summary

In this lesson, students are introduced to a left-right political spectrum. After reviewing a basic summary of different Canadian political ideologies, students engage with Scripture to find out how it sheds light on our understanding of the importance of the individual and also the importance of the group. This activity is to be seen as an introductory activity on political ideologies. It is intended to whet the appetite and to get students thinking on a deeper level about how economics in particular applies to the left-right political spectrum.

Essential Question

How can the Bible inform our understanding of the principles around which political ideologies are based?

This essential question is intended to make the students first orient themselves in terms of what the Bible has to say about our involvement in our society. It is intended to make students think about the principle that allegiance to biblical teachings needs to come before allegiance to political party platforms.

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Engage the students by matching social issues to political parties

- Provide the attached *Handout 1 - Political Ideologies*. It is an introductory look at different left/right political ideologies. Depending on the academic level of the students, adaptation may be necessary.
- Distribute *Handout 2 - Social Issues*. Students are required to work in groups of 2-3 and determine based on their current events knowledge where they think each of these social issues would be placed on the left-right political spectrum.
- Place the issue on the spectrum with a checkmark (indicating the party is in favour)
- Place the issue on the spectrum with a cross (indicating the party is opposed)
- When all groups are complete, debrief with the class. Note that there will be variety in some of the responses and this is to be expected. The goal is to get students comfortable discussing various issues and how political parties view these issues.

Explore deeper by trying to match economic issues to political parties.

- Distribute Handout 3 - economic issues. Students continue to work in small groups of 2-3 on this more difficult assignment. The economic issues handout has a slightly different left-right political spectrum.
- Students should again place the issue with a checkmark or a cross (indicating the party is in favour or opposed).

- When all groups are complete, debrief with the class. Determine whether students think that economics can also be considered a moral issue. Can the Bible inform our understanding of economic issues? Are we able to learn principles from the Bible about rest, work, play, property ownership, wealth and taxes?
- It should be noted that biblical evidence will not be found to support a particular ideology but rather that we must search the Scriptures and see whether political orientations align themselves with Scripture.

Task – Explore what the Bible has to say

- Provide students with *Handout 4 - Textual References*. Students need to understand that this is only a starting point and they should be encouraged to bring other texts into their assignment.
- Students work in groups of 2-3 students with a selection of about five different Scriptural references. The teacher can use their discretion in assigning these texts to ensure balance and variety.
- They are to use a good-quality commentary and concordance to determine what these Scriptural references mean in their context. The context of the text is important to determine the correct meaning.
- Students should discuss in small group what they think the principle is that is contained in the text.
- Read a commentary (many are available at www.blueletterbible.org) to help them determine the meaning of the text in its context. Combining the online reading of a commentary with the "Search" function makes it quite easy to focus one's research.
- After reading the commentary, students should add to their discussion of what principle is contained in the text.
- They should rank those that strongly emphasize
 - Focus should be compassion for others (-2)
 - Neutral (0)
 - Focus should emphasize looking out for oneself (+2)
- Students should include a brief statement of the principle contained in the text.

Debrief

- When regrouping and debriefing as a class, each individual group should present:
 - One thing their activity confirmed that they already knew.
 - One thing their research introduced them to that was new to them.
 - One thing they are still wondering about.

Teacher Overview – Political Ideologies: Discerning the Right from the Left

Are you right wing or left wing, conservative or liberal? What do these terms even mean?

We hear them all of the time, be it in the news or even in church. The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand some basic differences between political ideologies and then analyze how their Christian beliefs fit into these categories. Should Christians be conservative? Is there something wrong with the fact that many who identify themselves as Christians in Canada tend to vote exactly the same way as the rest of the population? As evidenced in the chart included with this lesson, each political ideology is guided by different worldviews. For example, a socialist perspective is much more optimistic about human nature than conservatism. Understanding the underlying worldview goes a long way in helping us determine their consistency or inconsistency with our Christian faith.

It is also important for students to understand that an ideology may sound good in theory but that does not necessarily translate to it being good in practice. For example, if the underlying worldview is optimistic about human nature and our potential (such as communism or socialism) it is actually out of step with reality (from our Biblical perspective) and can end up causing a great deal of harm.

Although one ideology may be more consistent with our faith, a Christian worldview does not fit neatly in any single category. The Bible emphasizes that we are citizens of God's kingdom first. Earth is our temporary home. Our ultimate king is God. We are commanded to obey our civil government (Romans 13) but not to the point of disobeying God. There is no clear calling in the Bible for civil government to do anything beyond restraining evil (through justice etc.) and promoting good so that we may live in peace (see Belgic Confession Article 36). These points seem consistent with the "conservative" category in the chart below. But the Bible also calls Christians to be generous and

to share with those in need (2 Corinthians 8:1-14). This was especially evident in the early church where believers shared freely with each other out of love (Acts 2: 42-47). Private property and ownership is never disapproved of, but there are many warnings about greed and materialism. For example, Proverbs 30:8-9 asks God to give us what we need, not too much or too little. Capitalism and conservatism have also been associated with greed and a lack of compassion for the needy.