

Biblical Worldview Scope for *Heritage Studies 4*

Introduction: This document is an attempt to answer the question, “What must a fourth-grade student comprehend and value in order to think about US states and territories in a biblical way?” What follows is a list of the themes we believe are essential for students to understand and internalize. We anticipate that early in the course students will be asked to *recall* and *explain* these themes. However, as these themes recur, students will also *evaluate* ideas, *formulate* a Christian understanding, and *apply* what they have learned to real-life situations. High levels of internalization result when students apply their learning.

1. Environment: *How should people interact with their environment?*

God created a variegated world suitable for people, who He calls to exercise wise stewardship over its many different regions.

As a large country, the United States exhibits incredible environmental diversity. From the frozen tundra of Alaska to the tropical paradise of Hawaii, and from the imposing redwoods of California to the tumbleweed of Texas, God’s marvelous creativity is on display. Such diversity is not merely a curiosity but rather a powerful influence on the development of government and culture. Geographic features and natural resources shape the lifestyle of a region’s inhabitants. At the same time, people have a significant effect on their environment. This is according to the plan of God, who allots territory (Acts 17:26) and has given people authority to manage their environment for the purpose of human thriving (Genesis 1:28). Doing so requires wisdom, which God provides through natural and special revelation. Because the unique natural resources and features of each region have played an integral role in shaping the American states, students must consider the relationship between man and environment throughout a region’s history. This will help students to better understand the present.

The Fall has affected the earth and human stewardship of it.

Adam’s sin radically altered God’s perfect creation, introducing great suffering and difficulty (Genesis 3:17–19, Romans 8:20–22). This includes environmental challenges such as hurricanes, floods, famines, earthquakes, and epidemics. Some regions of the United States experience these challenges more than others.

Sin also impacts human stewardship of the environment. Reckless and destructive behavior is widely practiced and accepted (e.g., pollution, squandering resources, and mismanaging land). Some have reacted unbiblically to such abuse by moving to the opposite extreme and worshipping created things rather than the Creator. Still others, pressured by scarcity and discontentment with God’s provision, have coerced or attacked others to seize their resources. All these behaviors are present in US state and national history. Students of American history should evaluate the sin-cursed state of nature and identify how Americans have contributed to environmental problems. They should also consider how governments have interacted over resources and evaluate the worldview claim that human beings are a blight on the environment.

Wise stewardship requires love for God and others.

Christians should aim to be wise stewards of creation, a task that has become significantly more difficult after the Fall. They must learn to adapt to challenges while also learning to adapt their environments to meet their needs. Additionally, they should challenge the many improper ways people treat the earth (mentioned above). The goal of creation care is human flourishing with minimal environmental disruption, a balance of immediate need and long-term benefit. This is motivated by a love for God and those made in His image rather than devotion to the earth itself. With this mindset, students should formulate ways to wisely steward the resources in their region of the

United States. They should also practice applying these principles (which often requires sacrifice and effort) and try advocating for righteous governmental action regarding the environment.

Sample Objectives:

- 64–65.4 Describe geographical features of Florida and their importance.
- 55–56.4 Assess the impact of the coal industry on West Virginia’s history and economy.
- 139–40.6 Propose ways to direct worship to God as Creator through appreciation of the creation.
- 112–13.6 Apply principles of wise stewardship to environmental concerns.

2. Religion: How should I respond to people with different religious beliefs?

As God’s creatures, it is our highest privilege and responsibility to worship our Creator.

Religion, as systems of beliefs and worship practices regarding supernatural beings, is universal. All people are religious by nature because they are made in the image of God. They share an awareness of their Creator, a dependence on Him, and an innate need to worship (Romans 1:19–20). Religion helps to organize and unify people in their understanding of who God is and how He is to be worshipped. God’s revelation provides the intended framework for all religion.

As people spread throughout the earth and began to diversify, God’s standard for religion was intended to be an important influence in the development of cultures. It provided limits for cultures within an acceptable range of religious practices, requiring unity where necessary but allowing for healthy variety that glorified God. The foundational influence of religion on culture is evident in the development of the various regions of the United States. Students should especially consider the historically dominant role of Christianity on much of American life.

Fallen humans refuse to glorify God, instead inventing their own religions.

God intended for each civilization to develop its own unique flavor of religion, but they have done so in ways that ignore His revelation in creation and in Scripture. Despite knowing the truth about God, people refuse to honor Him or to worship Him as He requires. Instead, they invent other gods and deviant forms of worship (Romans 1:18–32). This occurs at a cultural and individual level (Deuteronomy 12:2–8, 29:18) as people attempt to satisfy their innate need to worship. The default religion of fallen man is self-serving, evident in the worship of so-called gods designed to meet a civilization’s needs or a belief in no gods at all (secular humanism). Such religions are merely tools used to legitimize sinful actions and values.

Even cultures founded strong biblical values can drift over time. Though religion drives culture at its formation, culture gradually changes over time and influences religion accordingly. A people group’s religion may completely change once enough time has passed. This is often in a negative direction as sin becomes more culturally acceptable.

Americans practice a variety of religions, and the prevalence of these religions is heavily influenced by geography. Students should trace the rise and fall of various religious groups throughout the United States. Additionally, they should evaluate unbiblical elements within them, including errors within American Christianity (e.g., prosperity gospel, pragmatism, syncretism with new age thought, and hyperindividualism).

The Christian gospel offers hope for people immersed in other religions.

False religions or false ideas that have been added to American Christianity need to be identified and challenged (Matthew 7:15–16). Students should compare biblical Christianity to other religions and consider the effects of these religions on US history and culture. They should also apply the lessons learned to their own practice of personal evangelism.

People with different religious views should not be avoided. Christians should love them and discern how best to share the gospel with them. God stands ready to forgive those who renounce false religion and submit to Him through Christ. All who have been converted to this true religion are obliged to share such good news with others

(1 Peter 2:9). While the goal of evangelism is personal salvation, it also restores religion to its proper role. Religion ceases to be a tool for permitting injustice and becomes an integral part of social life, a powerful righteous influence on culture.

Sample Objectives:

- 11.3 Identify different religions in the United States.
- 38–39.7 Compare and contrast Amish beliefs and practices with biblical truth.
- 44–45.8 Formulate a response to the position that the Bible and tradition are equally important.
- 133–34.6 Propose ways believers can influence the West with the gospel.

3. Culture: How can I help reform culture in the United States?

The Creation Mandate includes God's intention for people to create culture.

Culture is the natural result of being made in God's image. People were made to reflect Him not only in who they are but also in what they do. Culture is the outward expression of deeply held ideas. In other words, it is the expression of a worldview. As people organize around shared beliefs and values, they will establish certain customs and habits and produce everything from laws to literature and food to fashion. Creating and inventing mimic the Creator of all things and are necessary aspects of the Creation Mandate. A shared culture enables people to work together and thus more effectively exercise dominion over God's creation.

The people of the United States share a culture characterized by freedom, individualism, equality, and growth. Students should consider the biblical roots of these ideas. Students should also identify the distinct regional subcultures within the United States. Such cultures need not be identical to be consistent with creational norms. Variety was God's intention from the beginning. The glory of God is on display in the rich range of these cultures, just as it shines through ecological diversity and through the diversity of the universal church (Revelation 7:9– 11).

Every culture is now impacted by the Fall, including the cultures of the United States.

When fallen human beings carry out the Creation Mandate, they produce broken cultures. Their sin nature permeates their practices and products. Unbiblical worldviews like secularism, materialism, and pragmatism counteract righteous influences from religion and encourage misplaced priorities and debauched forms of entertainment. Students should evaluate how the Fall has negatively affected American culture and its regional subcultures. They should also analyze how the shared values of freedom, individualism, equality, and growth have been twisted in ways that dishonor the Creator.

While every culture is impacted by sin, no culture is as bad as it could be. Therefore, students should evaluate what is broken in a culture without overlooking the positive contribution each culture makes to human civilization. The image of God in man is only marred, not destroyed, so glimpses of God's good creation can still be found in human efforts.

Christians can develop ways to cultivate and reform their own culture.

Reform, rather than radical revolution, is the most effective way to transform a system (Matthew 13:33). Reforming culture in the United States is not about allegiance to a political party or an ideological movement. Instead, it depends on a return to creational and biblical norms. By keeping a clear eye on these norms, Christians can discern what is good in a culture and celebrate it. By the same knowledge they are able to detect what is broken, decry it, and formulate ways to restore what is best. This moderating path reinforces the good but presses for constant improvement toward the ideal. Formulating methods of reformation could include learning about the political process and the legislative process in order to improve the legal system. It could also involve comparing the American idea of freedom with the biblical concept of freedom. Students could also apply this mindset of reformation toward God-honoring culture -creation. Seeing how their hobbies and activities contribute to the Creation Mandate can be an exciting way for students to appreciate cultural reform.

Sample Objectives:

- 92–93.4 Analyze Indiana’s role in the Underground Railroad.
- 146–47.4 Evaluate the impact of gambling on Nevada’s economy and culture.
- 51–52.6 Formulate ways citizens can work for change peacefully.
- 72–73.6 Develop several criteria for choosing music that glorifies God.

4. Citizenship: How should I exercise my citizenship for the good of my community?

Citizens are people with certain rights and responsibilities under a government.

Each person is a unique reflection of his or her Creator and, as such, has been granted a degree of both personal autonomy and responsibility (Romans 2:6–11). At the same time, people were created for community. After all, God announced that it was not good for Adam to be alone (Genesis 2:18). All people are born into a number of communities beyond their choosing, such as a families, towns, and nations. Each person bears many obligations to his or her communities throughout life.

In order to fulfill the Creation Mandate, individuals must learn to cooperate with their communities, seeking good for others and for themselves. The conflicting priorities of the individual and the community must remain in proper balance. Neither the individual nor the community should become subservient to the other, but the two must be united in service to God according to His revelation. Governments exist to facilitate this difficult balance and united purpose (Romans 13:3–4).

The United States was established with the recognition that citizens are endowed—not by the government but by their Creator—with inalienable rights. Yet these same citizens also bear responsibility to contribute to the welfare of their communities by voting, working, and helping their neighbors. Students will investigate citizenship in a national context and will explore the ways each regional American culture further developed its own expectations for citizens.

Because we live in a fallen world, citizens often abuse their rights and neglect their responsibilities.

When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, He rejected God’s authority and embraced radical autonomy. Fallen people continue to do as they please, living as if they are unaccountable to God or any authority that He has appointed. Rather than living as image-bearers, they become usurpers of the divine role and live in conflict with one another, even in those natural communities to which they belong (Titus 3:3).

In response to such chaos, some make the community king through the power of government. They coerce individuals to meet the needs of the group, rejecting personal autonomy and the individual’s value as one made in God’s image. Such tyranny scorns God’s design.

Americans tend to be particularly emphatic about individual rights to the exclusion of their responsibilities. Students should evaluate some of these errors in their studies. Some Americans expect the government to wield almost no authority and provide them with absolute freedom. The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are twisted in self-serving ways that violate others’ rights. Other Americans adopt an entitlement mentality, even insisting that government guarantee additional rights beyond its God-ordained responsibility (e.g., free college, free housing, etc.). In either case, citizens fail to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. As a result, relationships in every sphere of American society suffer.

Christians should be known as the best citizens of the United States because they seek the good of their communities.

Christians are part of God’s redeemed community, the church. As members of the church, they relearn God’s expectation for the proper balance of rights and responsibilities. Most American Christians find that they have focused far too much on their own rights rather than serving others. The biblical alternative is exemplified in Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:3–11). The Bible requires sacrifice, seeking the good of other Christians and even unbelievers (Galatians 6:10).

That includes working to preserve the rights of other citizens and holding them accountable for their responsibilities as a means of loving one's neighbor. Students must formulate a clear idea of Christian citizenship in an American (and regional) context.

Christians must live as model citizens of their nation in service to their true King (Philippians 3:20). Students should learn to influence their governments toward closer alignment with God's design for citizens. Further, American Christians should be willing to surrender their rights for the good of others, especially for the advancement of the gospel. At the same time, they should caution citizens about the dangers of a government that overemphasizes community to the detriment of personal freedoms.

Sample Objectives:

- 21–22.6 Describe taxes and the role of citizens.
- 122–23.3 Evaluate the actions of the “sooners” during the Land Run of 1889.
- 169–70.4 Propose a way to help minimize a local environmental challenge.
- 53–54.3 Identify significant historical figures from Virginia.

5. Economics: *What should motivate my economic activity?*

Economics is an aspect of the Creation Mandate because it relates to the production and consumption of goods and services for the good of the community.

God's normal way of meeting needs is through our own labor and the labor of others. From the very beginning, the Creator provided both raw materials and the ability to work but expected humans to apply that ability (Genesis 2:15, 2 Thessalonians 3:10). Economic activity occurs when people harness natural resources and develop skills to meet their needs and to serve one another. An individual does not have to be a specialist in every field. When all citizens exercise their gifts and abilities, the entire community benefits. Such specialization and cooperation is a vital part of fulfilling the Creation Mandate and mimics the model given for God's church (1 Corinthians 12). Students should consider the many positive examples of cooperation, diligent effort, and specialized economic activity in the United States.

In a fallen world, there are no perfect economic systems. Some are better than others, but they are all riddled with problems.

Various economic systems have been created throughout history. And over time, each of these systems has been manipulated and abused to enrich one group (of any size, from international to individual) at the expense of others. This consolidation of power is then often used in unloving, self-serving ways. The sheer amount of biblical content condemning the abuse of the poor proves that it is both common and utterly despised by God.

The United States' free-market economy has been a model for countries around the world. Yet it too is corrupted by sin, specifically a love of money that multiplies evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Many of history's failures were driven by man's greed, sloth, and lack of self-control, sinful habits that continue to be a problem in America. Some businesses are dishonest (e.g., overcharging customers or knowingly selling faulty products). Some have dangerous work environments or fail to fairly compensate employees (James 5:1–5). Still others are underhanded toward their competitors. Able-bodied individuals may refuse to work and instead take advantage of services meant for the needy. And some people are irresponsible consumers who spend wastefully and fail to save for needs or to share with others (Proverbs 13:4).

Restoring confidence in the economic system of the United States requires a restoration of R integrity.

As with culture, reformation is the solution to a predatory economic system. Revolution will only perpetuate suffering, simply covering the same problems with a different veneer. Christians must lead the charge in reformation because they understand the necessary virtues that must replace cultural vices. They must work to restore trust and instill love in a system driven by sin.

God expects people to care for one another as fellow image-bearers, even if marred by sin. Christians' primary motive in economic activity should be love of neighbor. They should be honest in their dealings and genuine in their well-doing. They must work diligently and treat customers with dignity and respect. And they must be examples of hard work and discipline, serving their Lord (Colossians 3:23).

Students should formulate ways to protect consumers and employees from mistreatment in the American marketplace. They should also consider ways to benefit others through ingenuity and invention. Ultimately, students must learn to apply biblical wisdom to their money management (e.g., tithing, saving, spending, etc.). Realizing that most Americans are rich compared to the rest of the world, Christians should live by 1 Timothy 6:17–19. They must be generous with all that has been entrusted to them in service to their Lord.

Sample Objectives:

- 57–58.5 Identify major industries of North Carolina.
- 49–50.3 Explain the relationship of slavery to the early economy of the Southeast.
- 89–90.6 Formulate guidelines for compensating workers fairly.
- 96–97.7 Execute a plan in which the class combines their resources to meet a specific need in their community.