



French Market, New Orleans, Louisiana (c. 1910)

Table of Contents

Introduction vi

How to Use This Curriculum ix

1 Getting a Grasp of Economics 1

- 1 - What Would You Do with
Five Hundred Dollars? 3
- 2 - Big Topics in Economics 9
- 3 - More Big Topics 17
- 4 - Superstars of Economics 23
- 5 - More Big Names 31

2 God's Economics, Part 1 37

- 6 - The Lord Provides 39
- 7 - Rich and Poor in Ancient Israel 45
- 8 - The Righteous Will Flourish 49
- 9 - God Owns It All 53
- 10 - The Radical Economics of Jesus 57

3 God's Economics, Part 2 63

- 11 - To Each as Any Had Need 65
- 12 - Economics in Church History, Part 1 69
- 13 - Economics in Church History, Part 2 73
- 14 - Economics for Today's Christian 77
- 15 - The Love of Money 82

4 A Brief Economic History of the United States 87

- 16 - From Exploration to Confederation 89
- 17 - Money and the New United States 95
- 18 - Wars and Panics 101
- 19 - Prosperity and More Panics 106
- 20 - The Economy As We Know It 112

5 Choices 117

- 21 - Chocolate or Vanilla? 119
- 22 - Economic Choices 123
- 23 - Producers Choose 129
- 24 - We Choose 135
- 25 - Uncle Sam Chooses 141

6 Markets 147

- 26 - How Markets Work 149
- 27 - Supply and Demand 156
- 28 - How Much Does It Cost? 164
- 29 - When Markets Change 171
- 30 - When Markets Fail 179

7 Money 187

- 31 - What Is Money Worth? 189
- 32 - How Banks Work 196
- 33 - Wise Investing 203
- 34 - Inflation (Not Our Friend) 209
- 35 - What Is the Fed? 216

8 Trade 223

- 36 - Trade Is Good 225
- 37 - Restrictions on Trade 231
- 38 - The Case for Free Trade 237
- 39 - Have We Been Exported? 243
- 40 - Money Changes Clothes 251

9 Business 257

- 41 - Building Blocks of Business 259
- 42 - Small Business, Big Dream 265
- 43 - So You Want to Start a Business? 269
- 44 - It Comes Down to Profit and Loss 275
- 45 - The Economy-Go-Round 282

10 Labor 287

- 46 - Now Hiring 289
- 47 - Workers and Their Jobs 293
- 48 - Unions 299
- 49 - Income 305
- 50 - Out of Work 313

11 Government 317

- 51 - Government Departments
and Agencies 319
- 52 - Government Policies 325
- 53 - Regulations, Regulations 331
- 54 - Taxes, Taxes 337
- 55 - Making and Breaking the Budget 344

12 Measuring the Economy 349

- 56 - What's Gross About the
Domestic Product? 351
- 57 - A Few Important Numbers 356
- 58 - What Goes Up Must Come Down 361
- 59 - What's a Recession? 367
- 60 - Rich and Poor 371

13 Economic Issues, Part 1 379

- 61 - The Business of Health Care 381
- 62 - Social Security and Medicare 388
- 63 - Energy 393
- 64 - On the Road Again 400
- 65 - O Give Me a Home 405

14 Economic Issues, Part 2 411

- 66 - Old MacDonald Had a Farm 413
- 67 - The Environment 418
- 68 - Productivity and Growth 425
- 69 - What Happened in
the Great Depression? 430
- 70 - What Happened in the
Great Recession? 435

15 ME-conomics: The Ultimate Microeconomy 441

- 71 - What Difference Can
One Person Make? 443
- 72 - What Should I Do? 447
- 73 - Me and My Money 451
- 74 - When I Grow Up 455
- 75 - “Seek Ye First . . .” 459

Hunter Plant in Castle Dale, Utah, is a coal-fired power generation station.





Gray's General Store, Little Compton, Rhode Island (2008)

Introduction

A factory closes in your town. Three hundred people lose their jobs because the company has decided to move its production to Mexico. What will all of those former employees do for work?

You are thinking about applying for a summer job at a new clothing store because they carry attractive but modest apparel. However, it is the seventh clothing store in the same shopping area. If it doesn't stay in business, you may be out of work for the rest of the summer. What should you do?

A family that lives down the street is moving to a less expensive house. The mother in that family had to have surgery for a brain tumor, and they are having a hard time paying all of the medical expenses. What economic issues are they are facing?

In the early 1960s, gasoline cost twenty-five or thirty cents a gallon. Today, gasoline prices change constantly and can go from two dollars a gallon to four dollars a gallon and back again in a year. What causes these changes?

The promises that a presidential candidate makes regarding economic policy sound good—but the promises of another candidate sound good also, even though they embody the opposite policy priorities. Which candidate should you support? Are either candidate's proposals realistic?

You hear people at church talking about an increase in taxes that the government is considering.

They say that it will be a one percent increase. That doesn't sound like very much. What's the problem?

Every day the news reports some statistic: the unemployment rate, new housing starts, a change in the Consumer Price Index, the Dow Jones average. What do all of these numbers mean?

You want to be a good steward of the resources, including the money, that God provides for you. You want to live, work, and think about the world around you in a way that will honor God. What do you need to understand in order to accomplish these goals? All of these are reasons you need to study economics.

Goals and Purpose

Exploring Economics provides a thorough survey of the basic terms and concepts of economics. However, our goal has been not just to assemble the required definitions, statistics, and charts, but to provide an understanding of what economics is, what it means to you now, and what it will mean to you in your adult life.

Some of you who study this course will go on to take an economics course in college. Probably very few of you who study this curriculum will become economists. But everyone who studies this course will face economic issues and decisions. Having a grasp of the basic issues in the field will be helpful.

If you shop for clothes or groceries or gasoline, if you buy imported goods, if you start a business, if you read the headlines, if you support and vote for political candidates, economics will affect you. If you are ignorant of the subject, people who have all sorts of agendas can mislead you. The danger of ignorance is real in many areas of life, but it is especially dangerous when it comes to your money.

Content and Structure

This curriculum begins with an overview of economic terms and concepts and some of the more important economic theories. Two units (ten lessons) are devoted to what we call God's Economics: what the Bible says about economics, business, and wealth; a survey of economic ideas in church history; and economic issues that Christians face today. One unit (five lessons) provides a brief survey of the economic history of the United States to put our present situation in context. Eight units (forty lessons) present economic ideas, terms, and realities in greater detail. Two units then discuss vital economic issues that confront America today and show how the ideas presented earlier in the curriculum relate to these issues.

We hope to make the field of economics more clear by this three-fold presentation: brief overview, detailed discussion, and application to contemporary issues. The final unit in the curriculum puts all of what we discussed on a personal level by presenting economic priorities and decisions that affect individuals and families.

Our Perspective

We approach the subject of economics from a perspective of faith in God and a reliance on the Bible as God's infallible Word. Since issues involving money are so important and can have such a huge impact on a person's walk with the Lord, the teachings of the Bible are essential to a proper understanding of economics.

We believe in the strengths of the capitalist free-market system. We believe that the free market system has done more than any other economic system to help people live well in material terms; to provide outlets for them to use their God-given talents and resources; and to enable them to know personal, political, and economic freedom. By contrast, command economies that central government bureaucrats run have proven to be an inefficient and sometimes destructive way to guide the economic life of a country.

At the same time, we recognize the imperfections of capitalism. Capitalists are humans, and humans are sinners. Capitalists can be greedy, unjust, and exploitative. Sometimes people take advantage of a free system to do wrong for personal gain, just as those who are committed to or involved with a socialist or government-planned economy can do wrong and be selfish. Sometimes, for any number of reasons, the free market does not work completely smoothly. As a result, economic difficulties occur.

The human factor is why some government regulations are necessary even in free-market economies. However, unreasonable or ineffective government regulations that go too far are hurtful and counterproductive. The dynamic of imperfect people seeking to live by (and sometimes work around) economic principles makes economics fascinating and leads to lively debates.

Economics is not the study of business administration, although business activity is a vital part of the economy. You will not learn about the best way to organize a business, how to hire and motivate employees, good bookkeeping and accounting practices, or other matters related to running a business.

Economics is also not a study of personal finance. You will not learn how to balance a checkbook or how to shop wisely. These are important topics, but you can learn about these and other such issues in a course on consumer math. This course considers personal financial matters in the context of broader economic activity.

The World of Economics Today

We live in a time when economic events and government policies have challenged the classic definitions of economics. For instance, the communist nation of China, which has a history of central economic planning, is promoting capitalist enterprises within its borders (the Chinese call it socialism with a Chinese flavor). At the same time, the traditionally capitalist United States has seen a great increase in government involvement in economic planning and oversight in recent decades. Understanding the classic definitions is important, but we must also understand the changing economic realities of today.

Economic developments are constantly in the news. The times in which we live should encourage your generation to realize that a study of economics is relevant and vital. We hope that this curriculum will help you understand current economic realities while you gain an insight into topics that have long been associated with the study of economics.

In addition, please note that the websites and specific Internet sources cited in the text were current when this curriculum was written. Websites change and sources can be taken down at any time. We do not control the content accessed through these links, and a link to any site does not imply our endorsement. Please use care and discretion while browsing the Internet, and let us know if any of the links are outdated or inappropriate.

Acknowledgments

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May we all be wiser stewards (the Greek word is *oikonomoi*, from which we get the English word economics) of the great gifts God gives us, and may He be honored through this curriculum.

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Clothing factory in Bangladesh (2012)

How to Use the Curriculum

Exploring Economics is a one-semester high school course that helps students understand economic terms and issues that have an impact on the United States and its citizens. This course introduces both microeconomics and macroeconomics. In states where a year-long course is considered one high school credit, the economics and English components count as one-half credit each. In states where a year-long course is considered two high school credits, each course is counted as one credit.

To earn credit for both economics and English, the student should:

- Read the lessons in the text.
- Read the assigned documents in *Making Choices*.
- Complete a project for each unit (see explanation below).
- Read the four assigned books.
- Read the literary analysis for each book in the *Student Review*.
- Complete the assignments found at the end of the literary analysis for each book.
- **Optional:** Complete daily review questions, quizzes, and exams in the Student Review Pack.

If you do not wish to use *Exploring Economics* for English credit, you can omit half of the projects

and the four assigned books, but we encourage you to include them because they greatly enhance your student's understanding of economics.

Unit Projects. Our design for students earning one-semester credits in both economics and English is for the student to complete one project per week as suggested in the unit introductions. The student can choose to do *either* a writing assignment or a hands-on project. For students completing the one-semester English credit, we recommend that the student choose the writing assignment at least six times during the semester.

Time Required. A student should complete each day's assignments, listed at the end of each lesson, on that day. The actual time a student spends on a given day might vary, but you should allow your student about one hour each day for economics and one hour for English. If you are using the *Student Review* material, the work for the last day of each unit includes the unit quiz, which will require a few more minutes that day. Three days in the semester will include taking an exam over the previous five units, so you should allow some more time for this activity.

We Believe in You. We believe that you are in charge of your child's education and that you know how best to use this material to educate your child. We provide you with tools and instructions, but we encourage you to tailor them to fit your child's

interests and abilities and your family's situation and philosophy. Being able to do this is one of the benefits of homeschooling!

Course Descriptions

You can use the following course descriptions as you develop your school records, produce a high school transcript, or report grades.

Economics. The student will receive an introduction to Biblical teaching related to economics, economics in church history, and the economic history of the United States. The student will then explore the basics of macroeconomics and microeconomics, learning about markets, money, trade, business organization, and labor. The student will also learn how government is involved in the economy and look at modern economic challenges. The student will read a significant number of original source documents and essays about economics while studying the lessons.

English (Economics in Fiction and Non-Fiction). The student will read two novels, one book about the global economy, and one autobiography (see list below). The student will read literary analysis of the books and discuss them in writing. The student will also complete a project each week, either an essay or another creative project related to the study of economics.

Student Review Pack

The *Student Review Pack* has material that you might find helpful for increasing your student's understanding of the course and for giving you a way to know and grade your student's grasp of the content. It is an optional supplement that contains the following three components.

The *Student Review* includes review questions on each lesson, literary analysis of the books assigned in the curriculum, and essay questions on the books. The literary analysis is also available at notgrass.com/ee.

The *Quiz and Exam Book* has a quiz to be taken at the end of each unit that is based on the lesson review questions. In addition, after every five units, it has an exam that is based on the quizzes from those five units. This makes a total of fifteen quizzes and three exams over the course of the semester. The lesson review questions can serve as a study guide for the quizzes, and the quizzes can serve as a study guide for the exams.

The questions at the end of the literary analysis for the four books provide the material needed for grading English.

The *Answer Key* contains answers for the lesson review questions, literary analysis questions, and the quizzes and exams.

Assigned Literature

Assigned Literature		
Units 1-3	<i>Silas Marner</i>	George Eliot
Units 4-7	<i>The Rise of Silas Lapham</i>	William Dean Howells
Units 8-11	<i>The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy</i>	Pietra Rivoli
Units 12-15	<i>Mover of Men and Mountains</i>	R. G. LeTourneau