



CHAPTER FOUR

The Bill of Rights

A fence around our freedoms

Though we touched on the first Ten Amendments in a prior chapter, we will explore it more in depth in this chapter. These Ten Amendments are called the Bill of Rights. Once our Constitution was completed there were some Founding Fathers who were still concerned that the government under the Constitution could still become a danger to the liberties of the American people.

FOR THE PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

This chapter is the doorway to the ten amendment chapters that follow. If the child can say where our rights come from and what the Bill of Rights does to protect them, every chapter after this one has somewhere to land.

A Clear List of Freedoms

Many people believed the Constitution needed a clear list of freedoms that the government could never take away. These people became known as the Anti-Federalists. Others believed the Constitution already limited the government's powers. They were called the Federalists. Although they disagreed about whether a Bill of Rights was necessary, they all to a certain extent wanted to protect liberty.

President James Madison listened carefully to the concerns of those who wanted additional protections. He promised that if the Constitution was ratified, he would propose amendments to better safeguard the people's freedoms. He kept that promise. In 1789, Madison introduced a series of amendments in Congress. By December 15, 1791, ten of those amendments had been approved by the states. Together, they became known as the Bill of Rights.



Like a Fence Around a Garden

Young people, think of the Bill of Rights like a fence. Imagine your parents planting a beautiful garden. To protect the flowers, they build a fence around them. The fence didn't create the flowers. The flowers were already there. The fence helps protect them. The Bill of Rights is like that fence. It helps protect many of the freedoms Americans already possessed.

Another way to think about it is to imagine your parents giving you a very special gift. Then they said, "We want to make sure no one ever takes this gift away from you." That is what the Bill of Rights does. The first ten amendments protect many of the freedoms Americans enjoy every day. These freedoms do not come from the President. They do not come from Congress. They do not come from the Supreme Court.

America's Founders believed our basic rights come from God, and the Constitution was written to help protect those rights. The Declaration of Independence says that our Creator has given us certain unalienable Rights—rights that cannot rightly be taken away simply because a government wishes to do so. The Bill of Rights helps protect many of those freedoms.



Who wrote the Bill of Rights?

Most of the Bill of Rights was written by James Madison. That is one reason why he is called the Father of the Constitution. Madison believed government should have enough power to do its job—but never so much power that it could take away the people’s liberty.

What Does the Bill of Rights Protect?

The Bill of Rights protects many important freedoms.

These include:

- ◆ Worshiping God
- ◆ A free press
- ◆ Asking the government to correct problems
- ◆ Fair trials
- ◆ Protection from cruel punishment
- ◆ Speaking freely
- ◆ Meeting peacefully
- ◆ Privacy in your home
- ◆ Trial by jury
- ◆ Limited government



Rights Come with Responsibilities

Every right you have as young Americans, however, comes with personal responsibilities. For too many today shout their rights but avoid their responsibilities. America does not work well that way. For example, you have the freedom to speak. Yet, you cannot yell fire in a crowded public building since doing so could harm people who could be trampled by such speech. Besides that, God commands us to use our words wisely.

You have the freedom to worship, but it is important to worship the One, true and living God. The triune God of the Bible, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The First Commandment out of the Ten Commandments is, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). Why is this so important? Remember the memory verse in Psalms 33:12,

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.”

Psalms 33:12

Foreign gods and man-made idols cannot bless nations.



To Assemble and to Petition

You have the freedom to assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. Redress means to correct, fix, or make something right. A grievance is a problem, complaint, or unjust situation.

This can be a good thing since God calls us to establish justice, seek peace and love our neighbors as ourselves. Freedom, however, is never permission to do wrong. True liberty is the freedom to choose what is right. The power to do as we ought.

Galatians 5:13 reminds us,

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Galatians 5:13



The Bill of Rights at a Glance

AMENDMENT

PROTECTS

First

Religion, Speech, Press, Assembly, Petition

Second

Keeping and Bearing Arms

Third

Homes Protected from Forced Quartering

Fourth

Privacy from Unreasonable Searches

Fifth

Fair Treatment and Due Process

Sixth

Fair and Speedy Trials

Seventh

Jury Trials in Civil Cases

Eighth

Fair Punishments

Ninth

Other Rights Belong to the People

Tenth

Powers Reserved to the States and the People



Why Do These Rights Matter?

Imagine if...

- ◆ The government told you which church you had to attend or told you not to attend a church.
- ◆ You could be arrested without a reason.
- ◆ Soldiers could move into your home.
- ◆ You were never allowed to disagree with government leaders.
- ◆ You had no fair trial.

Many people throughout history have lived under governments where these things happened. The Bill of Rights helps protect Americans from those kinds of abuses.



Justice, Truth and Human Dignity

Throughout the Bible, God values justice, truth, and human dignity and so should we as His human creatures made in His image. In God's Word, there are principles that support justice, honesty, and respect for others.

Isaiah 1:17 teaches,

“Learn to do good; Seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

Isaiah 1:17

The Bill of Rights reflects many principles that encourage justice, accountability, and the protection of human dignity.



Constitution Fun Facts

1

The Bill of Rights was ratified on December 15, 1791.

2

James Madison originally proposed 12 amendments.

3

Only 10 were approved right away.

4

One of the two not immediately approved eventually became the 27th Amendment—over 200 years later!

5

December 15 is celebrated each year as Bill of Rights Day.



Words to Know

Bill of Rights

The first ten amendments to the Constitution.

Liberty

Freedom under the protection of law.

Rights

Freedoms every person possesses and that the Constitution helps protect.

Due Process

Fair treatment according to the law.

Petition

To respectfully ask the government to correct a problem.

MEMORY VERSE

**“For where the Spirit of
the Lord is, there is liberty”**

2 Corinthians 3:17

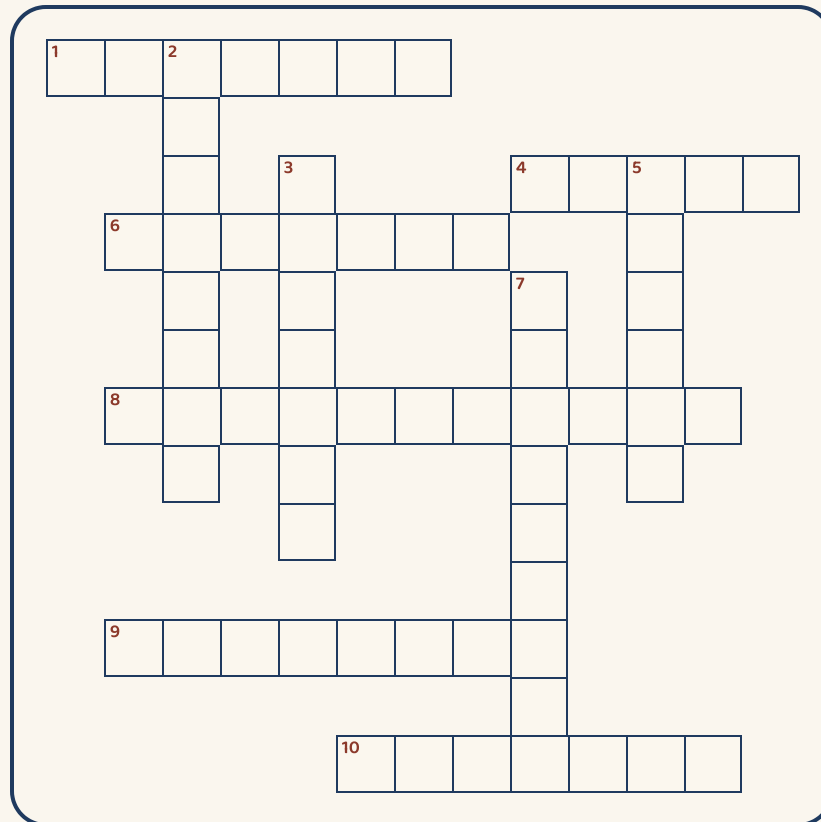


Chapter Review

- 1 The first ten amendments to the Constitution are called the Bill of _____.
- 2 Freedom under the protection of law is _____.
- 3 Fair treatment according to the law is called due _____.
- 4 To respectfully ask the government to correct a problem is to _____.
- 5 Most of the Bill of Rights was written by James _____.
- 6 People who believed the Constitution already limited the government's powers were called _____.
- 7 The Bill of Rights was ratified on _____ 15, 1791.
- 8 To correct, fix, or make something right is to _____.
- 9 A problem, complaint, or unjust situation is a _____.
- 10 The _____ Amendment protects religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition.

Bill of Rights Crossword

Every answer comes from this chapter. Write one letter in each white square.



ACROSS

- 1 James _____ wrote most of the Bill of Rights.
- 4 The _____ Amendment protects religion, speech, press, assembly and petition.
- 6 To correct, fix, or make something right.
- 8 They believed the Constitution already limited the government's powers.
- 9 To respectfully ask the government to correct a problem.
- 10 Freedom under the protection of law.

DOWN

- 2 The Bill of Rights was ratified on _____ 15, 1791.
- 3 Due _____ means fair treatment according to the law.
- 5 The first ten amendments are called the Bill of _____.
- 7 A problem, complaint, or unjust situation.

Family Discussion

Think Together

1 • Why do you think people wanted a Bill of Rights?

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2 • Why do rights need protection?

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3 • Which freedom are you most thankful for?

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4 • What responsibility comes with freedom?

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5 • Why should Christians use their freedoms to serve others instead of themselves?

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FOR THE PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

The last question is the one to linger on. Let the child answer it first, then name one way your own family uses its freedoms to serve someone else.

Build Your Own “Bill of Rights”

Imagine your family is starting a brand-new town.

What five freedoms would you promise to protect?

Write them down.

1

2

3

4

5

Then ask:

- ◆ Why are these freedoms important?
- ◆ What responsibilities come with each one?
- ◆ Which Bible verse teaches us how to use that freedom wisely?



Looking Ahead

In the next ten chapters, we'll discover each amendment one at a time.

You'll learn:

- ◆ what each amendment says,
- ◆ why the Founders believed it was important,
- ◆ what the Bible teaches about the principles behind it,
- ◆ and how you can use your freedoms wisely to honor God and serve others.



A GRANDPARENT'S THOUGHT

Freedom is one of God's precious gifts to children. It is not to be squandered. It should never be taken for granted, never used selfishly, and God forbid that it should stop with us. We are called to preserve it, cherish it, and faithfully pass it on to generations yet to come.
