



CHAPTER TEN

The Sixth Amendment

Justice delayed is justice denied

Why Did the Founders Write the Sixth Amendment?

Imagine one morning someone breaks in your front door with guns drawn. They arrest your father. No one tells your family why. No one tells him what he is accused of doing. Months pass. Then a year. Still no trial. No lawyer. No chance to defend himself. No opportunity to question the people accusing him. Would that be justice?

FOR THE PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

Six protections this time, and the John Adams story is the heart of the chapter. A child who understands why he defended men he disagreed with has understood something most adults have not.

The actual Sixth Amendment

RATIFIED 1791

"In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed... and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence."

The American colonists knew of stories just like this. Before the Revolution, British officials sometimes arrested people, delayed trials, transported them far from home, or denied them many of the protections we now take for granted.



The Founders believed government should never have that much power. If someone is accused of a crime, they deserve an opportunity to defend themselves.

REMEMBER THIS

That is exactly what the Sixth Amendment protects: **an opportunity to defend yourself.**

Six Great Protections

The Sixth Amendment gives every person accused of a crime six important protections. These protections help make sure justice is based on truth, facts, and evidence — not rumors, fear, or politics.

1

A Speedy Trial

2

A Public Trial

3

An Impartial Jury

4

Knowing the Charges

5

Questioning Witnesses

6

The Right to a Lawyer



1

A Speedy Trial

Justice should not take forever. If an innocent person is waiting in jail, every day matters. If a guilty person is waiting for trial, victims also deserve justice without unnecessary delay.

Young people, justice should happen **promptly and fairly**.

2

A Public Trial

Trials are usually open for people to observe. Why? Because justice should not be hidden.

When courts operate openly, people can see whether the law is being followed or not.



REMEMBER THIS

Justice should happen in the light, not behind closed doors and in the dark.

Instead of allowing one government official to decide everything, ordinary citizens help determine criminal cases. Jurors promise to listen carefully to the facts of the case.

They cannot decide a case based on popularity, race, money, politics or personal views. They must decide only on the evidence. **Everyone deserves judges and jurors who are just.**

JURY NULLIFICATION

In our history, there was also the concept of jury nullification. This was yet another check and balance to protect Americans' liberties. Jurors not only had the authority to determine guilt or innocence in a case, but also whether the law was applicable to a case.

Most courts today typically do not like those who still believe in jury nullification. Most courts just want jurors to listen to the evidence, follow the judge's instructions about the law, and decide whether the government has proved its case beyond a reasonable doubt.



4

Knowing the Charges

No one should be forced to defend themselves without knowing what they are accused of. The government must clearly explain the charges. You deserve to know what people say you did wrong.

5

Questioning Witnesses

People who testify in court must usually do so openly. The accused has the opportunity, through the legal process, to challenge their testimony and present witnesses on their own behalf.

Both sides get a chance to tell their side.



The Right to a Lawyer

The law can be complicated. A lawyer helps explain the law and protects the rights of the accused. Today, if someone facing serious criminal charges cannot afford a lawyer, the court generally appoints one. Everyone to a certain degree needs help understanding the law.



Why is this so important?

ONE OF AMERICA'S GREATEST PRINCIPLES

It is better to **protect the innocent** than to rush to punish someone without a fair hearing.

The Bible teaches the same principle. God never judges unjustly. He knows every fact before rendering judgment. Human beings should seek the truth with the same care.

Bible connection

The Bible repeatedly commands judges to be just.

DEUTERONOMY 1:17

"You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it."



There are always two sides to a story. Wise people listen before deciding who is right or wrong.

REMEMBER THIS

God never judges unjustly. He knows **every fact** before rendering judgment.

The Virtues Behind the Sixth Amendment

CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLE

CHRISTIAN VIRTUE

Fair trial

Justice

Honest testimony

Truth

Listening carefully

Wisdom

Equal treatment

Impartiality

Public accountability

Integrity

Respect for every person

Compassion



John Adams: A Lesson in Courage



One of the greatest examples of the Sixth Amendment happened before the Constitution was even written.

In 1770, British soldiers fired into a crowd during the Boston Massacre. The colonists were furious. Most people wanted the soldiers punished immediately. But one lawyer believed in something more important than popularity.

His name was **John Adams**, who became our Second President.

Although Adams strongly opposed British rule, he agreed to defend the soldiers in court because he believed every person deserved a fair trial. Many criticized and hated him for defending the accused. Some even threatened his reputation and life.

JOHN ADAMS

But Adams later wrote,

"Facts are stubborn things."

He believed justice should never depend on public anger. Instead, it should depend upon truth, facts, and evidence beyond a reasonable doubt. Years later, the Founders built that same principle into the Sixth Amendment.

Rights Come with Responsibilities

The Sixth Amendment gives us the right to a just court trial. That means we should also:

- ◆ Tell the truth.
- ◆ Refuse to spread rumors.
- ◆ Listen before making accusations.
- ◆ Keep our promises.
- ◆ Treat everyone with dignity.



REMEMBER THIS

Justice begins long before anyone enters a courtroom. It begins in our hearts.

Constitution Fun Facts

1

The Sixth Amendment protects people accused of criminal offenses.

2

Trial by jury goes back hundreds of years to the Magna Carta (1215).

3

The right to an attorney helps ensure that even people unfamiliar with the law can receive a fair defense.

4

The Sixth Amendment reminds us that government must prove guilt—it cannot simply assume it. Innocent until proven guilty is assumed before a trial begins.



Words to know

Accused A person charged with committing a crime.

Jury Citizens chosen to hear evidence, determine the facts, and render a verdict.

Impartial Fair and unbiased.

Counsel A lawyer.

Witness A person who gives testimony about what they know.

Public Trial A trial that is generally open for others to observe.

MEMORY VERSE

"He that is first in his own cause seems just; but his neighbor comes and searches him."

Proverbs 18:17





You finished Chapter Ten!

The Sixth Amendment — six down, four to go.

BILL OF RIGHTS



6 OF 10

- 1 A person charged with committing a crime is the
- 2 Citizens chosen to hear evidence and render a verdict are a
- 3 Fair and unbiased means
- 4 Another word for a lawyer is
- 5 A person who gives testimony about what they know is a
- 6 The accused has the right to a and public trial.
- 7 The accused has the right to a speedy and trial.
- 8 John defended the British soldiers because everyone deserves a fair trial.
- 9 He said, " are stubborn things."
- 10 Our memory verse says his comes and searches him.



Sixth Amendment Word Search

Words run across, down, and diagonally — forwards and backwards. Circle each one as you find it.

Z F B D I G N I T Y Q P K C
H X L B N E T L M N J V I O
F V N E I G H B O R L J L V
L E O C Y H O T M B E S A S
A H E G I J R L Y H S K I P
A V R O N L P C U S N K T E
C Q F W H N B H B B U P R E
C J T V I C R U J C O E A D
U S M S L T T E P U C D P Y
S Y M S Y D N O F Z R G M L
E N E A T N O E H V I Y I E
D T R Q D C F D S I O J F V
U F C Y F A A P Y S L K N H
A R Y W B K K F H C I O M S

WORD BANK

Accused

Jury

Impartial

Counsel

Witness

Speedy

Public

Adams

Facts

Neighbor

Mercy

Dignity



Two of these words are not answers to anything. They are what justice needs after the facts are in.

Family Questions

Talk these through together before you write. There is no hurry.

1 • Why should everyone receive a fair trial?

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2 • Why is it important to hear both sides of a story?

.....

.....

3 • What did John Adams teach us by defending the British soldiers?

.....

.....

4 • Why should jurors listen carefully before deciding?

.....

.....

5 • How can our family practice fairness at home?

.....

.....

FOR THE PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

Question three is the hard one and the good one. Ask whether the child would have defended those soldiers, and let the honest answer stand before you talk about why Adams did.

Two Sides to Every Story

A family activity. Tell a simple family story from two different points of view.

THEN DISCUSS

☐

Did you learn something new after hearing the second person?

☐

Why is listening important?

☐

How does this help us understand the Sixth Amendment?



PROVERBS 18:17

Read and discuss Proverbs 18:17 together,

"The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him."

A grandparent's thought

The Sixth Amendment reminds us that truth, facts, and evidence are important before judging a case.

In a free country, criminal cases are not measured by how quickly we punish someone but by how faithfully we seek justice.

The Founders knew that innocent people must be protected just as carefully as the guilty must be judged. That is why they established just trials, impartial juries, public proceedings, and the right to a defense.



God is the perfect Judge. He is never unjust, never hasty, and never mistaken. Men should strive to reflect His character by listening carefully, judging justly, speaking truthfully, and treating every person with dignity since each person is made in the image of God.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Justice is strongest when it is built upon truth, guided by wisdom, and tempered with mercy.