

The Bible's Influence on Speeches and Declarations

The Bible has had a great influence on documents and speeches that speak of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of every human being and of the vision of a society and world built upon the biblical message of justice.

The First Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations (1948) states:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

The Declaration of Independence (1776) states:

. . . that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Dr Martin Luther King Jr, in his well-known and often-repeated 'I have a dream' speech of 1963, proclaimed:

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

Group work/discussion

Each of the core ideas expressed in the above quotations are rooted in passages from the scriptures. Find and read the passages that serve as the foundation of each of the quotations.

Research other extracts from famous speeches or declarations that were influenced by the Bible.

Imagine that you are a citizen of the United States and have been asked to write a speech for the President, a member of Congress, or another public figure, that addresses an important issue facing the country, your state, or town or city. Name the issue you will address and find a passage in the scriptures that you would use for the inspiration and foundation of your speech.
