



We the People, A Zion People: Healing the Divide with Covenant Community

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What would it take to form a more perfect union? Rejecting outrage, loving neighbors, and renewing civic and spiritual bonds.

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

This past school year, my daughter's second-grade class memorized the preamble to the Constitution of the United States. Hearing her recite those familiar words—"in order to form a more perfect union"—felt unexpectedly moving. I was struck by the boldness of that phrase: not just to create a functioning government, but to reach for something

better, something higher. The Founders didn't settle for pragmatism alone; they aimed for progress, for refinement, for unity rooted in principle.

Of course, "perfect" is not the word most of us would use to describe the current state of our union. [Grievance politics dominate](#) from both ends of the spectrum, our public discourse often plays out as [performative outrage](#), and once-rare acts of [political violence](#) have become disturbingly familiar. Even our national conversations, conducted through social media platforms like X, [feel more like cage matches](#) than civic dialogue.

President Russell M. Nelson has spent the last two years [warning](#) Latter-day Saints against this sort of contention. "The present hostility in public dialogue and on social media is alarming. Hateful words are deadly weapons. Contention prevents the Holy Ghost from being our constant companion."

So, how do we begin again? How do we recover that original aspiration—not as a slogan, but as a lived reality?

Love for our nation

On the political far left, activists and politicians have no problem openly scorning the country. As left-wing writer and activist Dylan Saba recently unironically [observed](#) on X, "It's hard to be a left-wing politician because as a politician you have to act like the US is fundamentally good when the correct left-wing position is that the US has been evil and destructive its entire existence." They disproportionately criticise Americans' wrongdoings, while often inexplicably praising [governments](#) far less free.

On the extreme of the political right, the disdain for the country is less obvious—they don't hate America, only its [multiculturalism](#), [religious pluralism](#), [education](#), [government](#), and [electoral process](#). They will wave their American flags proudly while telling you the country is going to hell in a handbasket. Conservative social media accounts like [Libs of TikTok](#) and many conservative [radio shows](#) primarily exist to tell their audience what to be outraged about next.

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Of course, these extremes don't represent the majority of Americans, but they are the voices we allow to be amplified in the media and online. They're the voices that we tune in to when we're feeling frustrated with the other side and want to be validated in our own "correct" opinions.

But this kind of partisanship and focus on the negative is **not good for us**, and it is not good for our relationship with our nation.

We created something rare and beautiful—a tiny outpost of Zion in a time of national fragmentation.

In the 1970s, relationship and marriage researchers Dr. John Gottman and Dr. Robert Levenson ran longitudinal studies to find out the difference between happy and unhappy couples. Through their studies, they became very adept at predicting the couples who would stay together and those who would divorce. The primary determining factor they found was a balance between positive and negative interactions during conflict. Couples who had five or more positive interactions for every negative one tended to be in stable, happy relationships, while those who had fewer positive interactions were often on the path to divorce. The "Gottman Ratio" of 5:1 is good guidance not only for our marriage and other interpersonal relationships, but also for our institutional relationships, such as those with our churches and country.

There is so much to love about our nation. From its vast and varied landscapes to its rich cultural contributions—Hollywood, Broadway, and world-class professional sports—America is a remarkable tapestry of traditions, languages, and perspectives. At the heart of it all are the freedoms enshrined in our Constitution, especially those guaranteed by the First Amendment. For Latter-day Saints, love of country takes on added meaning. We believe that God raised up this nation, in part, to make the restoration of the Gospel possible.

This divine purpose doesn't ask for passive admiration. It calls for active devotion. President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address remains one of the most stirring reminders of that duty: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." These words resonate even more today when we see "country" not as an institution far removed, but as the people and places closest to us—our communities, our neighbors, our shared covenant to build something better together.

Love for our neighbors

That kind of covenantal love is rarely abstract. It's grounded in everyday acts of service and solidarity. Shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic, we moved into a new ward, and I gave birth to our second child. My husband worked long hours, and I was home with two very small children—a stage of life that can feel deeply isolating. Although the ward was small and mostly older, we were fortunate to find two other young couples, each with toddlers in tow. We came from different backgrounds, held different political views, and lived very different lives. But we needed each other—and that was enough.

When the pandemic shut down our normal routines, we leaned on each other. We met for walks, traded babysitting for doctor's appointments, shared meals, and celebrated the arrival of new babies. We didn't talk much about the "big issues" of the day. We didn't have to. What we did was see and meet each other's needs. We created something rare and beautiful—a tiny outpost of Zion in a time of national fragmentation.

During that same period, many of my peers found themselves pulled into online activism. Isolated and overwhelmed by constant news updates, many turned to social media to make sense of the chaos. For some, digital activism became a kind of surrogate community—offering purpose, identity, and moral clarity. But the tradeoff was steep. According to data from the Manhattan Institute, mental health among young Americans—especially young women—declined precipitously during the "Great Awakening." As politics became a proxy for meaning, and tribalism replaced friendship, the promise of progress often came at the expense of peace.

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In contrast, loving our neighbor in real, tangible ways remains one of the most powerful forms of civic and spiritual service. "American cultural commentary is awash in anodyne phrases like 'love is love,'" as I wrote earlier, "but it seems like we have forgotten how to do the second greatest commandment." True love—Zion love—means bringing casseroles to the sick, watching a neighbor's kids, checking in on the elderly widow, and offering grace to those who see the world differently than we do. As Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson taught in her October 2017 General Conference address, *The Needs*

Before Us, “We do not need to agonize over every possible good thing we could do in the world. We should begin with a focus on one: one person who is right in front of us and who needs our help.”

Catholic scholar George Weigel recently [noted](#) that “a self-governing democracy can only be sustained by a widely shared sense of civic friendship and mutual responsibility.” He pointed to the outpouring of neighborly aid in the wake of Hurricane Helene, when Americans from across the political spectrum rushed to help one another. That’s the America I believe in—and the Zion I hope to build.

As Latter-day Saints, we believe this nation was divinely prepared for a sacred purpose. President Dallin H. Oaks has [taught](#), “The United States Constitution is unique because God revealed that He ‘established’ it ‘for the rights and protection of all flesh’” and that “only in this nation could the restored gospel of Jesus Christ come forth in its prophesied role to preach the gospel to every nation.”

That restoration didn’t just bring doctrines and ordinances. It brought a vision of a covenant people—what the scriptures call Zion. A society defined not by uniformity of thought, but unity of heart. Not by ideological purity, but mutual commitment. A people prepared to “bear one another’s burdens,” not just complain about one another’s politics.

So this Fourth of July, let us renew our faith in “We the People”—not just as a political phrase, but as a covenant. Let us be Zion people in a fractured land. Let us love our country, yes—but also love our neighbors, and thereby love God. In doing so, we’ll edge ever closer to that still-unfinished aspiration: a more perfect union.

About the author

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