



When Outrage Sells, Disciples Choose Peace

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POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE

December 2, 2025

How should disciples confront a culture of outrage? They reject contention, wield meekness, and pursue covenant peace.

The world feels unsettled. Each day, the news reminds us how quickly suspicion, anger, and hatred can erupt into violence. The American public square, once envisioned as a marketplace of ideas, now often resembles a gladiator arena where shouting replaces persuasion and outrage buys more attention than reason. The Savior's counsel is unambiguous: "He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another" (3 Nephi 11:29). That warning could have been written for our very day.

Contention has become an industry. Politicians fundraise on it, [as congressional scholars note](#) that fundraising has become central to power and influence in

Washington, rewarding those who stir the loudest reactions. Commentators monetize outrage culture, and platforms profit from it. [Research on social media use has shown](#) that when users are rewarded with likes and shares for outrage, they are more likely to increase their expressions of outrage in future posts. [Another audit of Twitter's ranking system](#) concluded that engagement-based algorithms "amplify emotionally charged and out-group hostile content" far more than neutral material. The result is a culture that demands instant reaction and punishes reflection. Yet disciples of Jesus Christ are not licensed to live that way.

The scriptures describe another source of power altogether, the power of God that flows through covenant (D&C 84:20). The late [President Russell M. Nelson, the 17th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, emphasized](#) that priesthood power is not confined to men who are ordained but is available to all who make and keep covenants with God. Whether in a quorum, a presidency, a family, or a council, priesthood authority operates when exercised in righteousness.

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The Lord revealed the manner of that power: "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41). By the world's definition, those are fragile words. But in God's economy, they are disciplined strength. They mark the difference between true influence and the counterfeit of domination.

American history offers its own reminder of this truth. At the height of the Civil War, [Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address](#) could have been a moment for triumphalism or recrimination. Instead, he spoke with a spirit of restraint and humility, describing the conflict as judgment upon both North and South and closing with the plea to act "with malice toward none, with charity for all." Lincoln understood that real power would not come through vengeance but through a disciplined appeal to mercy. His words remain one of the clearest civic echoes of Christ's way.

Other moments of civic restraint echo this pattern. [George Washington's decision to surrender command](#) rather than cling to power set a precedent of humility that defined the nation's character. Decades later, [Dwight Eisenhower's calm leadership](#) through the

Little Rock civil rights crisis modeled steadiness when passion ran high. In Europe, [Margaret Thatcher's early dialogue with Mikhail Gorbachev](#) showed that firmness and civility could coexist. [Pope John Paul II's public forgiveness of his attacker](#) revealed that moral clarity and mercy can walk hand in hand. Such examples remind us that peacemaking is not a sign of weakness, but rather a disciplined strength exercised in public life.

Latter-day Saint history supplies another example. In March 1839, from Liberty Jail, [the Prophet Joseph Smith urged](#) the Saints to respond differently from the world around them. "We ought always to be aware of those prejudices which sometimes so strangely present themselves, and are so congenial to human nature, against our friends, neighbors, and brethren of the world who choose to differ from us in opinion and in matters of faith." At a time when mob violence was common, Joseph called his followers to extend generosity and peace, not retaliation.

The Book of Mormon adds an instructive contrast. Captain Moroni, believing himself betrayed, wrote Pahoran in anger (Alma 60). Pahoran answered without offense: "I do not joy in your afflictions, yea, it grieves my soul" (Alma 61:2). His meek reply preserved unity that anger might have destroyed. Abigail's quiet intervention with David in the Old Testament did the same (1 Samuel 25:23–35). Across scripture, God's chosen people learn that restraint saves lives.

The contrast could hardly be sharper. America's politics rewards spectacle. The kingdom of God rewards persuasion and meekness. While anger drives the news cycle, Christ calls His disciples to patience. The culture insists that peace is weakness. The gospel insists that peace is power.

Jesus Himself showed us how to live in a fractured public square. He was surrounded by Roman occupation, religious factions, and constant agitation for revolt. Yet His pattern never shifted. He taught truth (John 8:31–32), extended compassion (Mark 1:40–41), and invited repentance (Luke 5:32). When He called out hypocrisy, it was never to score a point or win a debate but always to redeem (Matthew 23:23–24). His power was never reduced to noise.

[Nelson counseled](#) that "the gospel of Jesus Christ has never been needed more than it is

today.” He later emphasized that followers of Jesus Christ should be examples of civility, teaching that we are to “interact with others in a higher, holier way.” He added, “One of the easiest ways to identify a *true follower* of Jesus Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people.” These words echo the Savior’s pattern and give modern texture to this call. In every ward, family, and quorum, we can find Saints who quietly live it: parents who choose gentleness in correction, teachers who lower their voices when classrooms grow tense, or bishops who listen longer than they speak. These small refusals to escalate are the marrow of discipleship.

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This is the model for our own civic and spiritual engagement in an age of outrage culture. The influence of Latter-day Saints will not be measured by [how cleverly we spar online](#) or how [fiercely we denounce our political opponents](#). It will be measured by how faithfully we embody Christ’s way of peace. When Relief Societies practice love unfeigned, when quorums cultivate meekness instead of rivalry, when our families learn persuasion instead of shouting, then we are exercising priesthood power in the way the Lord intends.

That also means disciples must resist the temptation to [baptize outrage in religious language](#). Too often, the tones of the culture bleed into our pulpits, our classrooms, and even our family conversations. If our words add heat without light, we should choose silence or seek a holier way of speaking. If our online presence looks indistinguishable from the cycle of grievance and anger that dominates American discourse, then we are not offering the world an alternative worth choosing.

The Lord has promised that Zion will be “a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God” (D&C 45:66). That safety does not come by withdrawing from public life. Nor by pretending the world is less divided than it is. It comes when covenant disciples carry the Spirit of Christ into their conversations, their councils, their neighborhoods, and their politics.

Outrage comes cheap in today’s America. Peace feels costly. Yet the disciples of Christ are called to pay that cost. It may mean pausing before we respond, remembering who we represent, and speaking only when the Spirit can remain. It may mean choosing to

see the person rather than the position. It may be as ordinary as keeping a thought unspoken or giving another person space to finish theirs. The quieter word often carries the greater power. Such habits of restraint are not weakness but power, the kind that builds Zion in a fractured world. The steadiness of our hearts, the discipline of our words, and the meekness of our influence are what set us apart.

About the author

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