

Curing America through Virtue in Communities

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*Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This is the first and great commandment.
And the second is like unto it: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*

Matthew 22:37-40

John Adams wrote, "Virtue is to liberty what the soul is to the body." Today, our country's virtue is seeping away, and with it, the freedom and life of our civilization.

There is hope for America. But not in the short term. There is no "quick fix" for the illness plaguing our nation. Healing is possible, but we must be willing to continue the treatment for the long haul. We must have the virtue – the moral courage – to cast forth and carry out a constitutional vision, with solutions that look toward the span of years and perhaps even decades.

The nature of the disease is straightforward: widespread apathy, ignorance, and deceit have allowed the Federal government, along with the majority of state and local governments, to increasingly impose on the liberties of the people. Education, healthcare, the economy, and even national defense have become places where government overreach has stripped us of our rights and intruded upon our responsibilities before God. America has largely rejected our Founding principles.

The cure is found in having the virtue to adhere to our fundamental laws. The foundation of these laws is the Holy Scriptures. God's Word must rest at the foundation of our lives as individuals. We must acknowledge the supremacy of Christ over every area of life. As Thomas Jefferson stated in his First Inaugural Address, "Acknowledging and adoring an overruling Providence ...is necessary to make us a happy and prosperous people." George Washington earlier in our history stressed this same fact when he told us, "Religion..., virtue, and morality are a necessary spring of popular government."

Upon this personal moral foundation, we must then renew our country's understanding of and respect for our Declaration of Independence and Constitution. Specifically, the states must take responsibility to enforce the Tenth Amendment and refuse to assist in the exercise of any Federal powers not delegated in Article I, Section 8 (and the few other places in the Constitution which grant authority).

The record of history proclaims that the states created the Federal government, not the other way around. Thus, it is the states' duty to resist unconstitutional Federal actions. Thomas Jefferson explained that when Congress violates the Constitution, a state-level "nullification of the act is the rightful remedy."

Abiding by our fundamental laws will create prosperity, peace, and progress. It will provide a stable environment in which Americans can plan, grow, and build.

Restoring our Constitution and putting government back within its lawful boundaries will expand the choices you can make for yourself. It will unleash a free market; not a place for big corporations to

control and oppress us, but a place where everyone has the chance to create their own job and their own destiny. It will provide a strong defense system for our nation, by requiring that every war be fought only against a legitimate enemy, by Congressional declaration. It will allow the next generation of Americans to be educated in the principles which make a society strong, without the oversight of a faraway bureaucracy, and free them to think for themselves to build an even greater future.

Virtue is the basis of this cure. It takes virtue to uphold Scripture and fashion one's life according to it. And it takes virtue to uphold the Constitution and refuse to enforce an act that does not comply with it. When "We the People" are willing to stand together on our fundamental laws, liberty will again flourish, and no power will be strong enough to overcome us.

But simply understanding the cure and how it will produce healing is only half of the solution. What is also required is that a treatment be developed which will provide the cure.

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus Christ told us that all the law and the prophets are based on the twin principles of loving God and loving one's neighbor. It follows that we can restore adherence to His law, as well as to all just human laws such as our Constitution, when we implement these principles. Our focus should be on personally loving God wholeheartedly, and also on showing love to those around us for His sake – being a good neighbor to those within our community.

The way to reclaim the Federal government is through the states. The way to reclaim states is through counties. The way to reclaim counties is through communities. The way to reclaim communities is through churches and families. And the way to reclaim churches and families is through individuals.

It's been said that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. In the liberty movement, it is almost certain that the "weak link" – and thus the place where a treatment must be administered – is local communities. We can no longer let the liberals have a monopoly on this area. After all, the liberal perspective isn't one of caring for one's community, but of managing it via faraway government, and indeed of taking things away from one's neighbors. Our churches and our families must reach out and care for our neighborhoods, build trust, and grow the understanding of liberty, person by person.

This kind of society is what our Founders envisioned. Indeed, the Founders placed in the Bill of Rights, and specifically in the first four amendments, a plan for protecting liberty which requires participation on a neighborhood level. The freedoms they guaranteed in the Bill of Rights were themselves the tools by which America would be preserved. But our rights cannot be ensured unless they are exercised. And we must reach out within our local neighborhoods to do so.

The basic meaning of the First, Second, Third, and Fourth amendments – as stated in terms of a plan for our country – could perhaps be condensed as follows: "A moral and religious people should speak, publish, and take action in their government, as well-educated and armed neighborhood groups assembling in local homes, free of outside surveillance."

The neighborhood is the key to the nation. To follow this plan and implement the treatment for the disease in our nation, we need to first have a heart to "love our neighbors as ourselves." Out of this love, we should build groups like home Bible studies, history and book clubs, community bartering and "currency" partnerships, medical-sharing and nutritional care groups, gardening clubs, and more, introducing true principle by both word and example. These actions will then build virtue: the cure.

We should carefully consider developing the liberty movement toward the mindset of taking responsibility on the community, church, and family level, and find bold ways to do so.