

Introduction for Teachers

In a time of increasing political division, confusion about truth, and growing challenges to religious freedom and moral agency, it is important to help students understand the inspired principles upon which the United States Constitution was established. This workshop is based on President Dallin H. Oaks's April 2021 general conference address, "[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)." Throughout this workshop, students will explore the five inspired constitutional principles outlined by President Oaks and consider practical ways they can uphold and defend these principles in their communities.

Note: Due to the nature of this workshop, students may bring up sensitive and politically charged issues. Help your class focus on the truths being discussed rather than delving into controversial issues.

Additionally, the state of religious freedom varies widely throughout the world. As you discuss the principles in these lessons, be sensitive to the unique circumstances where you live. Encourage students to speak respectfully of governments and other religious traditions.

The course contains the following lessons and outcomes. Flexibility and adaptation are expected as you use the workshop to meet the needs of your students.

- **Lesson 1:** The Divinely Inspired Constitution
 - **Outcome:** Help students understand the significance of the United States Constitution.
- **Lesson 2:** Inspired Principles of the Constitution
 - **Outcome:** Help students deepen their understanding of the inspired principles of the Constitution.
- **Lesson 3:** The Importance of Religious Freedom
 - **Outcome:** Help students protect and defend religious freedom.
- 1. **Lesson 4:** Religious Freedom and the Restoration
 - **Outcome:** Help students feel the significance of Lord's efforts to prepare the world for the Restoration, including through the creation of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.
- **Lesson 5:** Upholding and Defending the Inspired Constitution
 - **Outcome:** Help students uphold and defend the inspired principles of the Constitution in Christlike ways.

Lesson 1



The Divinely Inspired Constitution

President Dallin H. Oaks declared: "I testify of the divinely inspired Constitution of the United States and pray that we who recognize the Divine Being who inspired it will always uphold and defend its great principles." This lesson is intended to help students understand the significance of the United States Constitution.

Encouraging Personal Study

Before class, consider sending students links to these key messages for this lesson and inviting students to study them in preparation for class:

- Dallin H. Oaks, "[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)," *Liahona*, May 2021, 105–8
- Dallin H. Oaks, "[Perspective: Our Inspired Constitution](#)," *Deseret Magazine*, June 2021

Learning Activity

Consider beginning by sharing the following statement by President Dallin H. Oaks:



"Our belief in divine inspiration gives Latter-day Saints a unique responsibility to uphold and defend the United States Constitution and principles of constitutionalism wherever we live. We should trust in the Lord and be positive about this nation's future. ...

"We should learn and advocate the inspired *principles* of the Constitution. We should seek out and support wise and good persons who will support those principles in their public actions. We should be knowledgeable citizens who are active in making our influence felt in civic affairs" ("[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)," *Liahona*, May 2021, 107–8).

Invite students to share what stands out to them from this statement. Then display the following questions and ask students to silently reflect on their answers, using a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much so):

- How well do I understand the United States Constitution and its principles?
- How much do I value the principles upon which the United States was founded?
- How confident am I that the Constitution and its principles are worth preserving and defending?

Explain that the purpose of this lesson is to help students better understand the United States Constitution and its importance. Encourage them as they study to seek inspiration from the Holy Ghost about how they can better understand and uphold its principles.

Study

Explain that President Oaks's statement from the beginning of the lesson comes from his April 2021 general conference address titled, "[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)." Give students time to locate this talk in the Gospel Library. As needed, you could also provide them with printed copies that they could use throughout the workshop.

Invite students to study the [first portion of President Oaks's talk](#) (from the beginning through the first paragraph of section II.). As they read, have them look for answers to the following questions:

- What was the Lord's purpose for establishing the Constitution of the United States?
- Why is the Constitution "of special concern" for the Church and its members throughout the world?

After sufficient time, invite students to share their insights from this portion of President Oaks's talk, along with answers they found to the two questions above. As part of this discussion, you could help them identify a truth like the following: **The Constitution was inspired by God and was established to protect the rights and moral agency of all people.** Consider writing this truth on the board.

Then consider discussing the following questions:

- Why is moral agency ("the power to decide and to act") an essential part of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation?
- How do our freedoms and rights as members of society relate to our ability to exercise our agency? (As part of your discussion of this question, consider showing the video "[Religious Freedom and America's Founding: A Discussion with President D. Todd Christofferson and Elder Quentin L. Cook](#)" from time code 1:40 to 2:52. You could also share the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales.)



"As we walk the path of spiritual liberty in these last days, we must understand that the faithful use of our agency depends upon our having religious freedom. We already know that Satan does not want this freedom to be ours. He attempted to destroy moral agency in heaven, and now on earth he is fiercely undermining, opposing, and spreading confusion about religious freedom—what it is and why it is essential to our spiritual life and our very salvation" ("[Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom](#),"

Ensign or Liahona, May 2015, 111–12).

Deepen understanding

To help students better understand the significance of the Constitution, consider using one or more of the following learning activities:

1. Distribute the handout titled "Prophetic Teachings about the Constitution," located at the end of this lesson. Give students time to study the statements on the handout, and to consider why it matters to

know that the Constitution was inspired by God. Then invite them to share with a partner or small group what stood out to them and why.

2. Invite students to read the first portion of President Oaks's July 30, 2021, *Deseret Magazine* article titled, "[Perspective: Our inspired Constitution](#)." (They could read from the beginning of the article through the paragraph that begins with the phrase, "The nation struggled to live up ...".) Have them look for evidence of the Lord's involvement in the creation of the Constitution. They could then share their insights with a partner or small group.
3. Invite students to study the [Preamble of the United States Constitution](#). (It may be helpful to point out that the Preamble is the Constitution's opening statement, which explains the document's purpose.) Have them list the ideals or principles mentioned in the Preamble. If needed, they could use a dictionary or other online resources to help them better understand unfamiliar words or phrases. Then have students write down a few reasons why they feel the ideals they listed would matter to the Lord. After sufficient time, they could discuss what they learned with other students.

Reflect on learning

Consider displaying the following questions and inviting students to record their responses:

- What have you learned or felt about the Lord that you want to remember?
- What insights have you gained about the Constitution today? How might these insights influence your thoughts, choices, or actions?

Testify of the truths you have discussed today.

Handout: Prophetic Teachings about the Constitution

Joseph Smith:



“The Constitution of the United States is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God. It is a heavenly banner” (Letter to Edward Partridge and the Church, around Mar. 22, 1839, josephsmithpapers.org).

“It is one of the first principles of my life, and one that I have cultivated from my childhood, having been taught it by my father, to allow everyone the liberty of conscience. I am the greatest advocate of the Constitution of the United States there is on the earth” (History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], 1754, josephsmithpapers.org).

Ezra Taft Benson:



“[The framers of the Constitution were] not perfect men, but men raised up by the Perfect Man to perform a great work. Foreordained were they to lay the foundation of this republic. ... Blessed by the Almighty in their struggle for liberty and independence, the power of heaven rested on these founders as they drafted that great document for governing men, the Constitution of the United States” (in Conference Report, April 1967, 59).

“I reverence the Constitution of the United States as a sacred document. To me its words are akin to the revelations of God, for God has placed his stamp of approval on the Constitution of this land. I testify that the God of heaven sent some of his choicest spirits to lay the foundation of this government, and he has sent other choice spirits—even you who hear my words this day—to preserve it” (“[The Constitution—A Heavenly Banner](#)” [BYU Devotional, Sept. 16, 1986], 6, speeches.byu.edu.)

Dallin H. Oaks:



“Our belief that the United States Constitution was divinely inspired does not mean that divine revelation dictated every word and phrase, such as the provisions allocating the number of representatives from each state or the minimum age of each. The Constitution was not ‘a fully grown document,’ said President J. Reuben Clark. ‘On the contrary,’ he explained, ‘we believe it must grow and develop to meet the changing needs of an advancing world.’ For example, inspired *amendments* abolished slavery and gave women the right to vote. ...

“Our belief in divine inspiration gives Latter-day Saints a unique responsibility to uphold and defend the United States Constitution and principles of constitutionalism wherever we live. We should trust in the Lord and be positive about this nation’s future. ...

“I testify of the divinely inspired Constitution of the United States and pray that we who recognize the Divine Being who inspired it will always uphold and defend its great principles” (“[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#),” *Liahona*, May 2021, 106, 107–8).

Lesson 2



Inspired Principles of the Constitution

In his April 2021 general conference address, President Dallin H. Oaks discussed five inspired principles of the United States Constitution: popular sovereignty, federalism, separation of powers, the Bill of Rights, and rule of law. This lesson will help students deepen their understanding of these principles.

Encouraging Personal Study

Before class, consider sending students a message like the one below:

- President Dallin H. Oaks identified five inspired principles of the United States Constitution. Read about these principles in [section II](#) of his April 2021 general conference address, “Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution.” As you study, consider what these principles reveal about the Lord and His wisdom in inspiring them.

Learning Activity

You could begin by displaying the following incomplete statements and inviting students to share ideas about how they could complete them:

- Having power is good when
- Having power is dangerous when ...

Invite students to read the following scripture passages, looking for truths about how power should be used and why it can become dangerous when misused.

Mosiah 29:12–13, 16–17

Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–40

Invite students to share their insights with a partner or the class.

Study

Explain that in his [April 2021 general conference address](#), President Dallin H. Oaks identified five principles of the United States Constitution that were inspired by the Lord. These principles help prevent the misuse of government power and ensure that people's rights and freedoms are protected.

Introduce these principles by displaying the following list:

1. **Popular sovereignty**—"the source of government power is the people."
2. **Federalism**—"the division of delegated power between the nation and its subsidiary states."
3. **Separation of powers**—delegating "*independent* executive, legislative, and judicial powers so these three branches could exercise checks upon one another."
4. **Bill of Rights**—"the cluster of vital guarantees of individual rights and specific limits on government authority."
5. **Rule of law**—"We are to be governed by *law* and not by *individuals*."

This lesson is intended to help students learn more about these principles. You could do this by assigning each student one principle to study. Provide copies of the handouts found at the end of this lesson and give students time to learn about their assigned principle.

After sufficient time, organize students into groups of five, with each member having studied a different principle. Invite group members to take turns sharing their answers to the three questions included on the handout. If your class size is too small to form multiple groups of five, invite five willing students who studied different principles to share what they learned with the class.

If time permits, consider showing the video "[Religious Freedom and America's Founding: A Discussion with President D. Todd Christofferson and Elder Quentin L. Cook](#)" (watch from time code 9:17 to 13:56). Afterward, invite students to discuss any additional insights they gained from President Christofferson and Elder Cook about the five inspired constitutional principles they have studied today.

Demonstrate understanding

Consider giving students an opportunity to connect what they have learned about constitutional principles to different real-world situations. One way you could do this is by displaying the following scenarios. Students could discuss, in pairs or as a class, which of the five principles best applies to each scenario and explain their reasoning:

1. A president directs executive agencies to implement a new national policy. Members of Congress argue that the policy exceeds executive authority, while the administration maintains that it is solely an executive decision.
2. A federal agency enforces a regulation strictly in some cases but gives exceptions in others without clearly explaining the difference. Over time, similar situations receive different outcomes depending on who is involved.
3. A proposed law would move decision-making authority from state governments to the federal government in an area where states have historically exercised significant responsibility.
4. A job applicant is denied employment after the employer learns about their religious beliefs, even though the applicant is qualified for the position.

5. A long-serving member of Congress represents a district where voter turnout has steadily declined. Over time, the representative begins relying more on a small group of advisors and donors when making decisions, rarely seeking input from voters and holding fewer public meetings.

Answers: 1: Separation of powers; 2: Rule of law; 3: Federalism; 4: Bill of rights; 5: Popular sovereignty.

Popular Sovereignty

Study the resources below, then consider how you would answer the following questions based on what you learn. Be prepared to share your answers.

- What is popular sovereignty?
- How do you see the Lord's wisdom reflected in this inspired principle of the Constitution?
- How can we safeguard or protect this principle?

Resources to study

President Dallin H. Oaks:



"First is the principle that the source of government power is the people. In a time when sovereign power was universally assumed to come from the divine right of kings or from military power, attributing sovereign power to the people was revolutionary. Philosophers had advocated this, but the United States Constitution was the first to apply it. Sovereign power in the people



does *not* mean that mobs or other groups of people can intervene to intimidate or force government action. The Constitution established a constitutional democratic republic, where the people exercise their power through their elected representatives" ("[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)," *Liahona*, May 2021, 106).

Brother Steven P. Brown (Auburn University professor):

"President Abraham Lincoln offered a concise description of popular sovereignty when he referred to government in his Gettysburg Address as being 'of the people, by the people, [and] for the people.' The power to govern does not come from military might, a divine mandate, political parties, or because a group simply sets itself up to rule. Popular sovereignty means that government gets its authority from the people it serves, and both the government and the people must recognize this principle in order to safeguard it.



"Governments acknowledge popular sovereignty by conducting regular elections where individuals are free to vote for any candidate of their choice. Elected leaders likewise remember that popular sovereignty is vested in all of the people and not in just those who may have voted for them. They actively seek compromises that will benefit the greatest number.

"Citizens sustain popular sovereignty by participating in government through voting and by supporting candidates for office who are responsive to their constituents. They also support popular sovereignty by striving to find common ground on important public policy issues with as many different people as possible (since those with contrasting views also possess sovereign authority)" ("[Understanding and Defending Constitutional Principles](#)," *Liahona*, Sept. 2022, Gospel Library).

Federalism

Study the resources below, then consider how you would answer the following questions based on what you learn. Be prepared to share your answers.

- What is federalism?
- How do you see the Lord's wisdom reflected in this inspired principle of the Constitution?
- How can we safeguard or protect this principle?

Resources to study

President Dallin H. Oaks:



"A second inspired principle is the division of delegated power between the nation and its subsidiary states. In our federal system, this unprecedented principle has sometimes been altered by inspired amendments, such as those abolishing slavery and extending voting rights to women, mentioned earlier.



Significantly, the United States Constitution limits the national government to the exercise of powers granted expressly or by implication, and it reserves all other government powers 'to the States respectively, or to the people'" ("[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)," *Liahona*, May 2021, 106).

Brother Steven P. Brown (Auburn University professor):

"Based on their study of governments throughout history, the [framers of the Constitution] knew that governing power tended to become increasingly concentrated. The best protection for the rights and liberties of the people, then, was to divide and separate that power as much as possible. Federalism recognizes that both the national and state governments have certain powers, some unique and others concurrent, and that not all states need to govern in the same way.



"National and state governments safeguard the principle of federalism by recognizing the authority of the other and working with each other to craft public policy solutions that may vary from region to region. Individuals can sustain federalism by supporting political candidates and public policies that respect the authority of both the national and state governments and the people they represent.

"This principle is weakened when citizens, political parties, lobbying influences, or government leaders seek to further centralize power or offer only one-size-fits-all national solutions for every problem. However, federalism is also undermined by those who insist that a state is independent of any connection to or responsibility for the larger union" ("[Understanding and Defending Constitutional Principles](#)," *Liahona*, Sept. 2022, Gospel Library).

Separation of Powers

Study the resources below, then consider how you would answer the following questions based on what you learn. Be prepared to share your answers.

- What does “separation of powers” refer to?
- How do you see the Lord's wisdom reflected in this inspired principle of the Constitution?
- How can we safeguard or protect this principle?

Resources to study

President Dallin H. Oaks:



“Another inspired principle is the separation of powers. Well over a century before our 1787 Constitutional Convention, the English Parliament pioneered the separation of legislative and executive authority when they wrested certain powers from the king. The inspiration in the American convention was to delegate *independent* executive, legislative, and judicial powers so these three



branches could exercise checks upon one another” (“[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#),” *Liahona*, May 2021, 106).

Brother Steven P. Brown (Auburn University professor):

“Separation of powers is the principle of further dividing power, already separated through federalism, between the different branches of government to prevent an accumulation of influence in any one of them. In addition to specific duties given to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, the Constitution of the United States also empowers each branch with the means to check the other. ...



“Individuals support the separation of powers by voting for leaders who respect the boundaries and the reasons for the divisions between the branches of government. They realize that policy change can take time and that short-circuiting the often-tedious lawmaking process in the legislative branch for a faster resolution by the executive or judicial branches only shifts more power to the latter two. That redirected power, incidentally, is not surrendered back” (“[Understanding and Defending Constitutional Principles](#),” *Liahona*, Sept. 2022, Gospel Library).

Bill of Rights

Study the resources below, then consider how you would answer the following questions based on what you learn. Be prepared to share your answers.

- What is the Bill of Rights?
- How do you see the Lord's wisdom reflected in this inspired principle of the Constitution?
- How can we safeguard or protect this principle?

Resources to study

President Dallin H. Oaks:



"A fourth inspired principle is in the cluster of vital guarantees of individual rights and specific limits on government authority in the Bill of Rights, adopted by amendment just three years after the Constitution went into force ...



"Without a Bill of Rights, America could not have served as the host nation for the Restoration of the gospel, which began just three decades later. There was divine inspiration in the original provision that there should be no religious test for public office, but the addition of the religious freedom and antiestablishment guarantees in the First Amendment was vital. We also see divine inspiration in the First Amendment's freedoms of speech and press and in the personal protections in other amendments, such as for criminal prosecutions" ("[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)," *Liahona*, May 2021, 106).

Brother Steven P. Brown (Auburn University professor):

"As a condition for ratifying the [Constitution], the first Congress under the new government agreed to consider several amendments. The first 10 of these were ratified in 1791 and became known as the Bill of Rights. ...



"The first rights listed in the first of these amendments pertain to religion. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as well as those of other religions naturally invoke the importance of the First Amendment's protection for the free exercise of religion. Religious freedom is a precondition for political freedom. ...

"Individuals can safeguard their rights and liberties in three ways:

1. They recognize that no right is absolute and without limits. That is why there is no free-speech right to yell 'Bomb!' at an airport or a freedom-to-travel right to exceed the speed limit by 40 miles an hour or a religious-freedom right to practice human sacrifice as part of one's religion. ...
2. They make every effort to defend the rights of others just as they would their own. ...
3. Relatedly, individuals must seek protection for more than just their favored right or liberty."

("Understanding and Defending Constitutional Principles," *Liahona*, Sept. 2022, Gospel Library)

Rule of Law

Study the resources below, then consider how you would answer the following questions based on what you learn. Be prepared to share your answers.

- What does it mean to be equal before the law?
- How do you see the Lord's wisdom reflected in this inspired principle of the Constitution?
- How can we safeguard or protect this principle?

Resources to study

President Dallin H. Oaks:



"Fifth and finally, I see divine inspiration in the vital purpose of the entire Constitution. We are to be governed by *law* and not by *individuals*, and our loyalty is to *the Constitution* and its principles and processes, not to any *office holder*. In this way, all persons are to be equal before the law. These principles block the autocratic ambitions that have corrupted democracy in some



countries. They also mean that none of the three branches of government should be dominant over the others or prevent the others from performing their proper constitutional functions to check one another" ("[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)," *Liahona*, May 2021, 106).

Brother Steven P. Brown (Auburn University professor):

The rule of law principle "declares that our legal standing as individuals, our influence under popular sovereignty, and our voice in our government should not turn on such characteristics as race or gender, wealth or educational status, or support of a particular political party or candidate. We are all equal in the eyes of the law.



"Some will rightly question whether this principle is really safeguarded by either government or individuals in our day, but that is one of the key points of President Oaks's conference message. This as well as the four other constitutional principles discussed need to be understood and can and should be safeguarded. But they will endure only so long as people learn about them and commit to uphold them regardless of governing policies, party preferences, and election outcomes" ("[Understanding and Defending Constitutional Principles](#)," *Liahona*, Sept. 2022, Gospel Library).

Lesson 3



The Importance of Religious Freedom

President Dallin H. Oaks testified that divine inspiration contributed to the Bill of Rights, which includes protections for religious freedom. Religious freedom protects the moral agency of all people. This lesson is intended to help students protect and defend religious freedom.

Encouraging Personal Study

Before class, consider sending students a message like the one below:

- How important is religious freedom to you? Learn more about this topic by looking through the [“Religious Freedom”](#) collection in the Gospel Library (Books and Lessons > Religious Freedom > Religious Freedom). You could also watch [“Voices of Faith: In Defense of Religious Freedom”](#) (27:49), on byutv.org.

Learning Activity

You could begin this learning activity by showing the first half of the video [“What is Religious Freedom?”](#) (watch from time code 0:00 to 2:00). Then display the following statement by Elder Patrick Kearon and discuss the questions below it.



“Most of us drink from the waters of religious freedom without even knowing it. We think of it as a river that will always flow. But we might not recognize the risks to the tributaries that feed that river.

“The perpetuation of religious liberty requires that it be understood and valued by the rising generations.

There is a need for them to comprehend what religious freedom brings to society and what is lost when this liberty is eroded. When young people come to understand why this freedom is crucial to their own aspirations, welfare and happiness, they will feel inspired to act to strengthen and preserve religious freedom” ([“Of Rights and Responsibilities: The Social Ecosystem of Religious Freedom”](#) [Religious Freedom Annual Review at Brigham Young University, June 19, 2019], newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

- Why might it be easy to take religious freedom for granted?
- What do you think could be lost if religious freedom were no longer protected? (As part of this discussion, you could show the video [“You Can’t Close My Heart: Ghanaian Saints and the Freeze”](#) from time code 0:00 to 2:39.)

Invite students to ponder the importance of religious freedom in their own lives. Encourage them as they study today to be open to the influence of the Holy Ghost, who can help them better understand the significance of religious freedom and recognize ways they can protect it.

Study

Remind students that in his April 2021 general conference address titled [“Defending Our Inspired Constitution,”](#) President Dallin H. Oaks identified five inspired principles of the United States Constitution. One of these principles is the Bill of Rights. Explain that the First Amendment, which is part of the Bill of Rights, protects religious freedom and other fundamental freedoms.

Display the text of the First Amendment, along with the following statement by Elder David A. Bednar. Invite a student to read them aloud:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” (First Amendment, the Bill of Rights).



“No freedom is more important than religious freedom. The freedom of religion properly has been called our first freedom. It is first not only because of its placement as the first right in the First Amendment, but also because of the paramount importance of respecting the moral agency of each person. ...

“Freedom of religion stands as a bulwark against unlimited government power. It safeguards the right to think for oneself, to believe what one feels to be true, and to exercise moral agency accordingly. It secures the space necessary to live with faith, integrity, and devotion. It nurtures strong families. It protects communities of faith and the rich and sacred relationships they make possible.

“Nothing government does is more important than fostering the conditions wherein religion can flourish.” (David A. Bednar, [“And When He Came to Himself \(Luke 15:17\)”](#) [Religious Freedom Annual Review at Brigham Young University, June 17, 2020], [newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#)).

Consider discussing the following questions:

- What did you learn about the importance of religious freedom from Elder Bednar’s statement? (Students may identify a truth like the following: **Religious freedom protects and honors the moral agency of all people.**)
- What connections do you see between religious freedom and moral agency? (As part of your discussion of this question, you could have students read 2 Nephi 2:27; Doctrine and Covenants 134:4; and Articles of Faith 1:11 and then share additional insights they gain from these verses.)
- In addition to protecting our agency, what are some other reasons why you think the Lord values religious freedom?

It may be helpful to point out that our freedom to choose—including our choices related to worship—is a God-given right. To help students better understand this, you could show the video [“Religious Freedom and](#)

[America's Founding: A Discussion with President D. Todd Christofferson and Elder Quentin L. Cook](#)” from time code 3:20 to 4:55. You could also share and discuss the following statement by Elder Patrick Kearon:



“Every person, regardless of religion, race, gender, orientation or nationality, possesses fundamental rights simply by being human. They include the right to life, liberty, security, equal protection of the law and the freedom of thought, speech, and religion, as well as protection from political extremism. But we all must remember, be taught and pass on the responsibilities that come with these rights. ...

“Though these inalienable rights come from above, they still have to be cultivated by human beings below. It is up to us — it is the responsibility associated with these rights — to implement, protect and anchor them in our daily life.” (“[Of Rights and Responsibilities: The Social Ecosystem of Religious Freedom](#),” newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Deepen understanding

Explain that in our day, the Lord has inspired His prophets and other Church leaders to speak frequently about the importance of religious freedom. Additionally, the Church has provided many resources to help us better understand this important principle.

Consider displaying the following resources and inviting students to select one or more of them to study.

1. The “[Religious Freedom](#)” collection in the Gospel Library (Books and Lessons > Religious Freedom > Religious Freedom)
2. Dallin H. Oaks, “[Religious freedom undergirds the very existence of America](#),” *Deseret Magazine*, July 4, 2026
3. Topics and Questions, “[Religious Freedom](#),” Gospel Library.
4. Resources from [religiousfreedomlibrary.org](#).

Give students about 10 minutes to study their chosen materials. Invite them to be prepared to share a few things they learned.

After sufficient time, organize the class into partnerships or small groups. Display the following questions for the students to discuss:

- What did you learn about religious freedom that stood out to you? Why did it stand out?
- What are some of the threats to religious freedom in our day?
- What are some ways disciples of Jesus Christ can help promote and protect religious freedom?

When the group discussions have finished, consider inviting a few students to share insights with the class. You could write some of their answers to the third discussion question on the board.

Apply

Consider showing the second half of the video “[What is Religious Freedom?](#)” (from time code 2:01 to 4:06). Invite the students as they watch the video to think about specific ways they can help protect and defend religious freedom. Then give students time to record what they feel inspired to do based on what they have learned and felt today. Conclude by sharing your testimony of the principles you have discussed.

Lesson 4



Religious Freedom and the Restoration

President Dallin H. Oaks taught: “Without a Bill of Rights, America could not have served as the host nation for the Restoration of the gospel.” This lesson can help students feel the significance of Lord’s efforts to prepare the world for the Restoration, including through the creation of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Encouraging Personal Study

Before class, consider sending students a message like the one below:

- How did the Lord prepare the world for the Restoration of the gospel? Ponder this question as you study one of the following messages: M. Russell Ballard, “[How the Lord Prepared the World for the Restoration](#)” (*Ensign*, Jan. 2020, 15–21) or Robert D. Hales, “[Preparations for the Restoration and the Second Coming: “My Hand Shall Be over Thee”](#)” (*Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 88–92).

Learning Activity

Consider displaying the following question:

- How would your life be different if the Savior had not restored His gospel and Church to the earth?

Invite students to ponder this question and then share their responses. Consider summarizing their responses on the board.

Explain that this lesson will focus on some of the ways the Lord prepared the world for both the Restoration of the gospel and the establishment of America, where the gospel could be restored. Encourage them to be receptive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost to help them more fully appreciate the significance of the Lord’s involvement in these events.

Study

Remind students that the previous lesson focused on the Bill of Rights and its protection of religious freedom. Invite them to briefly review what they learned by sharing key insights or ideas they remember. (As needed, explain that the Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution. It protects fundamental rights, such as freedom of religion and speech.)

Share and discuss the following statements by Presidents Dallin H. Oaks and Ezra Taft Benson:



“Without a Bill of Rights, America could not have served as the host nation for the Restoration of the gospel, which began just three decades later. There was divine inspiration in the original provision that there should be no religious test for public office, but the addition of the religious freedom and antiestablishment guarantees in the First Amendment was vital” (Dallin H. Oaks, “[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#),” *Liahona*, May 2021, 106–107).



“Our Father in Heaven planned the coming forth of the Founding Fathers and their form of government as the necessary great prologue leading to the restoration of the gospel. Recall what our Savior Jesus Christ said nearly two thousand years ago when He visited this promised land: ‘For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth’ ([3 Ne. 21:4](#)). America, the land of liberty, was to be the Lord’s latter-day base of operations for His restored church. ...

“Only in this foreordained land, under its God-inspired Constitution and the resulting environment of freedom, was it possible to have established the restored church. It is our responsibility to see that this freedom is perpetuated so that the Church may more easily flourish in the future.” (Ezra Taft Benson, “[Our Divine Constitution](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 4, 6).

- Based on these statements, what is one reason why the Lord inspired the Constitution and Bill of Rights? (If needed, help students identify a truth like the following: **The Lord inspired the Constitution—including the Bill of Rights—to protect religious freedom and help prepare the way for the Restoration of His gospel.**)

To help students better understand why “America could not have served as the host nation for the Restoration of the gospel” without the Bill of Rights, consider watching “[Religious Freedom and America’s Founding: A Discussion with President D. Todd Christofferson and Elder Quentin L. Cook](#)” from time code 10:53 to 13:24.

Deepen understanding

Explain that the Lord's preparation for the Restoration and the establishment of America involved more than a single event. Throughout history, He helped prepare conditions that would allow the gospel to be restored and spread throughout the world.

Consider displaying the following resources:

1. 1 Nephi 13:10–19; 3 Nephi 21:2–4
2. Robert D. Hales, “[Preparations for the Restoration and the Second Coming: “My Hand Shall Be over Thee,”](#)” (*Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 88–92)
3. M. Russell Ballard, “[How the Lord Prepared the World for the Restoration](#)” (*Ensign*, Jan. 2020, 15–21)

Give students around 10–15 minutes to study two or more of the above resources. As they do, invite them to look for answers to the following questions:

- What evidence do you find that there was a great need for religious freedom prior to the Restoration of the gospel?

- What evidence do you see of the Lord's involvement in the events leading up to the establishment of America and the Restoration of the gospel?

Afterward, organize students into small groups to discuss their answers to the two questions above. Then bring the class back together and invite a few students to share some of their insights with the class. You might also discuss a few additional questions like the following:

- What did you learn or feel about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ from these accounts?
- How does recognizing the Lord's hand in preparing the way for the Restoration influence your feelings about Him?
- How can it impact the way you think and feel about America?

Reflect on learning

Invite students to reflect on what they learned and felt during today's lesson. You could give them a few minutes to write down impressions and insights in their notes. After sufficient time, you could invite a few willing students to share something they wrote with the class.

Lesson 5



Upholding and Defending the Constitution

President Dallin H. Oaks declared: “Our belief in divine inspiration gives Latter-day Saints a unique responsibility to uphold and defend the United States Constitution and principles of constitutionalism wherever we live” (“Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution,” Liahona, May 2021, 107). This lesson can help students uphold and defend the inspired principles of the Constitution in Christlike ways.

Encouraging Personal Study

Before class, consider sending students a message like the one below:

- How can you make a difference in the government or society where you live? Study [section IV](#) of President Dallin H. Oaks’s April 2021 general conference address, “Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution.” As you do, consider what you can do to make a positive impact.

Learning activity

Consider beginning this learning activity by showing the first portion of President Boyd K. Packer’s October 2008 general conference message titled “[The Test](#)” (watch from time code 0:29 to 6:28). After watching the video, consider asking:

- What stands out to you about the actions of these early Saints?
- What do you think they understood that allowed them to demonstrate such patriotism even after experiencing severe persecution?

As needed, point out that although the early Saints experienced injustice and persecution, they continued to value and support the inspired principles that protect freedom. Their example invites us to consider our own responsibility to honor, uphold, and defend those principles.

Encourage students as they study today to seek inspiration from the Holy Ghost to better understand how they can uphold and defend the inspired principles of the Constitution in Christlike ways.

Study

It may be helpful to remind students of the five inspired principles of the Constitution taught by President Dallin H. Oaks that they have been studying throughout this course. Consider displaying this list:

1. **Popular sovereignty**—"the source of government power is the people."
2. **Federalism**—"the division of delegated power between the nation and its subsidiary states."
3. **Separation of powers**—delegating "*independent* executive, legislative, and judicial powers so these three branches could exercise checks upon one another."
4. **Bill of Rights**—"the cluster of vital guarantees of individual rights and specific limits on government authority."
5. **Rule of law**—"We are to be governed by *law* and not by *individuals*."

You could then share the following statement by President Dallin H. Oaks:



"Our belief in divine inspiration gives Latter-day Saints a unique responsibility to uphold and defend the United States Constitution and principles of constitutionalism wherever we live. We should trust in the Lord and be positive about this nation's future.

"What else are faithful Latter-day Saints to do?" ("[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)," *Liahona*, May 2021, 107)

Consider writing the following truth on the board: **Latter-day Saints have a responsibility to uphold and defend the United States Constitution.** Then you could discuss the following question:

- Why do you think it is important for us as followers of Jesus Christ to uphold and defend the Constitution?

Write the following incomplete phrase on the board:

We can uphold and defend the inspired principles of the Constitution by ...

Invite students to study the following resources with a partner or small group and create a list of ways they might complete the phrase:

1. Section IV of President Dallin H. Oaks's April 2021 general conference message, "[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)."
2. Ether 2:9, 12; Doctrine and Covenants 98:4–10; Articles of Faith 1:12.

Students might also consider what they have learned in other lessons in this course as well as their personal lives that could help them uphold and defend the inspired principles of the Constitution.

After sufficient time, you could invite each group or partnership to write one or two ways to complete the statement on the board. Students could share with the class how the action they wrote down could help to uphold and defend the inspired principles of the Constitution.

You could also show the video "[Religious Freedom and America's Founding: A Discussion with President D. Todd Christofferson and Elder Quentin L. Cook](#)" from time code 14:21 to 17:58. Invite students to add additional insights they gain from this video to their lists.

Defending the Constitution while being Christlike peacemakers

Point out that in recent years, the Lord's prophets have repeatedly emphasized the need to be peacemakers in our interactions with others, including in areas of political disagreement. If time permits, you could show them a few examples of such prophetic statements, such as those linked in the following addresses:

- Dallin H. Oaks, "[Alive in Christ](#)," April 2026 general conference
- Gary E. Stevenson, "[Blessed Are the Peacemakers](#)," October 2025 general conference
- Russell M. Nelson, "[Confidence in the Presence of God](#)," April 2025 general conference
- Russell M. Nelson, "[Peacemakers Needed](#)," April 2023 general conference
- Neil L. Andersen, "[Following Jesus: Being a Peacemaker](#)," April 2022 general conference

Share this statement by President Oaks and discuss the questions that follow:



"Being subject to presidents or rulers of course poses no obstacle to our opposing individual laws or policies. It does require that we exercise our influence civilly and peacefully within the framework of our constitutions and applicable laws. On contested issues, we should seek to moderate and unify. ("[Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution](#)," *Liahona*, May 2021, 107)

- What do you think is gained when we strive to be peacemakers like the Savior in our interactions with others?
- What might it look like to "exercise our influence civilly and peacefully" as we seek to uphold and defend the principles of the Constitution?

To help students better understand how they could apply the counsel in the above statement by President Oaks, consider sharing the following scenario:

You are part of a school study group that meets regularly. During one session, the conversation shifts to social issues that are often debated in your area. As the discussion continues, a member of the group expresses a viewpoint that you strongly disagree with.

Give students time to discuss with a partner some ideas for how they might follow the example of Jesus Christ as peacemakers in this situation. To help them do this, consider displaying the following questions for them to discuss:

- What would it look like to defend your perspective in this moment?
- What would it look like to be a peacemaker in this moment?
- How could someone do both at the same time?

Workshop reflection

Consider taking some time to review key teachings from this workshop. You could do this by inviting students to find and share a meaningful statement or teaching they remember from the messages studied during the workshop.

After reviewing key teachings from the course, consider displaying questions like the following. Invite students to record their responses to some or all of them in their personal notes:

- What have you learned from this course that you want to remember?

- How has this course influenced the way you think about your role as a citizen and disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What is one way you have already tried to apply what you have learned? What was the result?
- What is one thing you feel inspired to do differently moving forward?

Invite a few willing students to share some of their reflections with the class.

Share your testimony of Jesus Christ and His prophets, who invite us to uphold and defend the Constitution.

Invite students to seek the Lord's help in applying these principles in their daily conversations, decisions, and relationships.