

“Living Water”

The phrase “living water” is a timeless term, dating all the way back to the Bible. It’s often attributed to the Bible itself, used by Christians to describe the fluid, ever-changing quality of the ancient texts. Many of the old customs, rules, and traditions from the Old Testament days are no longer used by practicing Christians today, but the most important cornerstones of the faith—loving others above oneself, turning the other cheek, and forgiving no matter what—still apply just as much as ever. The preamble to the Constitution has the same quality; promises the Founding Fathers made when the Constitution was written are applicable to our society today. To me, the most significant promise from the preamble is “forming a more perfect union,” because this means always making strides towards improvement in our country.

Part of this “living water” promise manifests itself in the Bill of Rights and the other seventeen constitutional amendments. The Bill of Rights gave us the first ten amendments to secure our individual rights, and U.S. citizens exercise those rights each day. Everyday actions for many people like posting something on social media or owning a gun are kept safe because of this Bill of Rights. Citizens are also granted rights that might go unnoticed on a day-to-day basis, such as with the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth amendments. They shield the rights of those who have been accused of crimes, giving them access to privacy, fair trials, and peer juries, as well as protecting them from cruel and unusual punishments. These amendments are the foundation of individual rights in this country, and while people exercise them in different ways today, their effect is no less significant.

The amendments added after the Bill of Rights are fluid and changing as well. The Declaration of Independence begins with the words, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, 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.” The ability to vote is one of the most powerful ways to exercise first-amendment rights, giving citizens a voice in their government—but at the time the Constitution was written, the requirement to vote was to be a white land-owning male. Women were unable to vote and African Americans, regardless of gender, were often stripped of all their human rights and enslaved. The fourteenth amendment granted citizenship to all formerly enslaved people, the fifteenth amendment granted them the right to vote, and the nineteenth amendment gave women the right to vote as well. The only way a society becomes truly equal is having a law that protects *everyone*, no matter their gender, race, or creed. Great progress has been made since the Constitution was written, and none of it would have been possible without the amendments. Those amendments exercise a promise made to us in the preamble by “forming a more perfect union,” and that’s done by utilizing another covenant we’ve been vowed as citizens—establishing justice.

The Constitution is a living document that breathes and grows with the times. The United States was founded because the original colonists were unsatisfied with living under British rule, so they found it within themselves to change the system. Citizens have the power to change the system under which we are governed, and personally, there’s no clearer definition of the concept of freedom. I have a great responsibility to wield this power. To me, freedom is power, and power is the ability for my voice to be heard and make a difference. Matthew 17:20 says, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.” My faith lies in the system of government we have established. It’s not perfect, but it embodies a certain spirit and attitude that is inherently American, and ultimately, inherently human; we may stumble, but we will pick ourselves up and try again.

My mother once told me that practice doesn't make perfect; it makes progress. The preamble does not promise us a perfect society, but it promises one that will constantly improve and make strides towards perfection. "Forming a more perfect union" is the foundation that the rest of the preamble's principles stand on: establishing justice, insuring domestic tranquility, providing for the common defense, promoting the general welfare, and securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. By executing these principles, the preamble upholds its promise to suit our needs by adapting with the times. Because of the Constitution's ever-changing nature, our society's future is whatever we want it to be. Above all, the preamble promises us limitlessness. Nothing gives me a better sense of freedom *or* security than knowing that we are in control of our own destiny—and that is why "forming a more perfect union" is the promise of the preamble that means the most to me.