

Establishing Zion

Foundations for a Millennial Society

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BYU Education Week

2025

Agenda for the week

Principles

- What is Zion?
- Changing role of the Church
- Cornerstone of Zion
- Foundation stones of Zion

Practices

- “All things common”
- Stewardship & Land in Zion
- Eliminating Poverty

Governance

- Non-Church organizations
- Governance in Zion
- Organizing a Zion society

Today!



What is Zion?

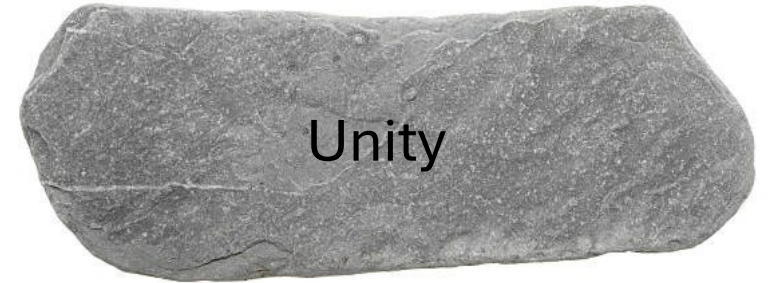
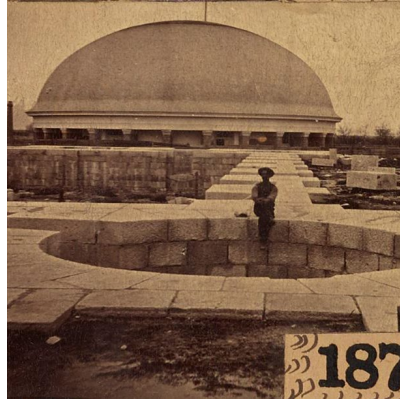


1. Zion is not an individual accomplishment.

2. Zion is a spiritual **relationship** with God and among God's people in a particular place.

3. To qualify to live in Zion, we must individually learn to live righteously and be willing to impart of our substance.

4. As a people, we must learn to be united according to celestial law.



Foundation Stones of Zion

Early Christians: “all things common”

- And all that believed were together, and had all things common; (Acts 2:44)
- And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. (Acts 4:32)



“All things common”??

Elder Bruce R. McConkie:

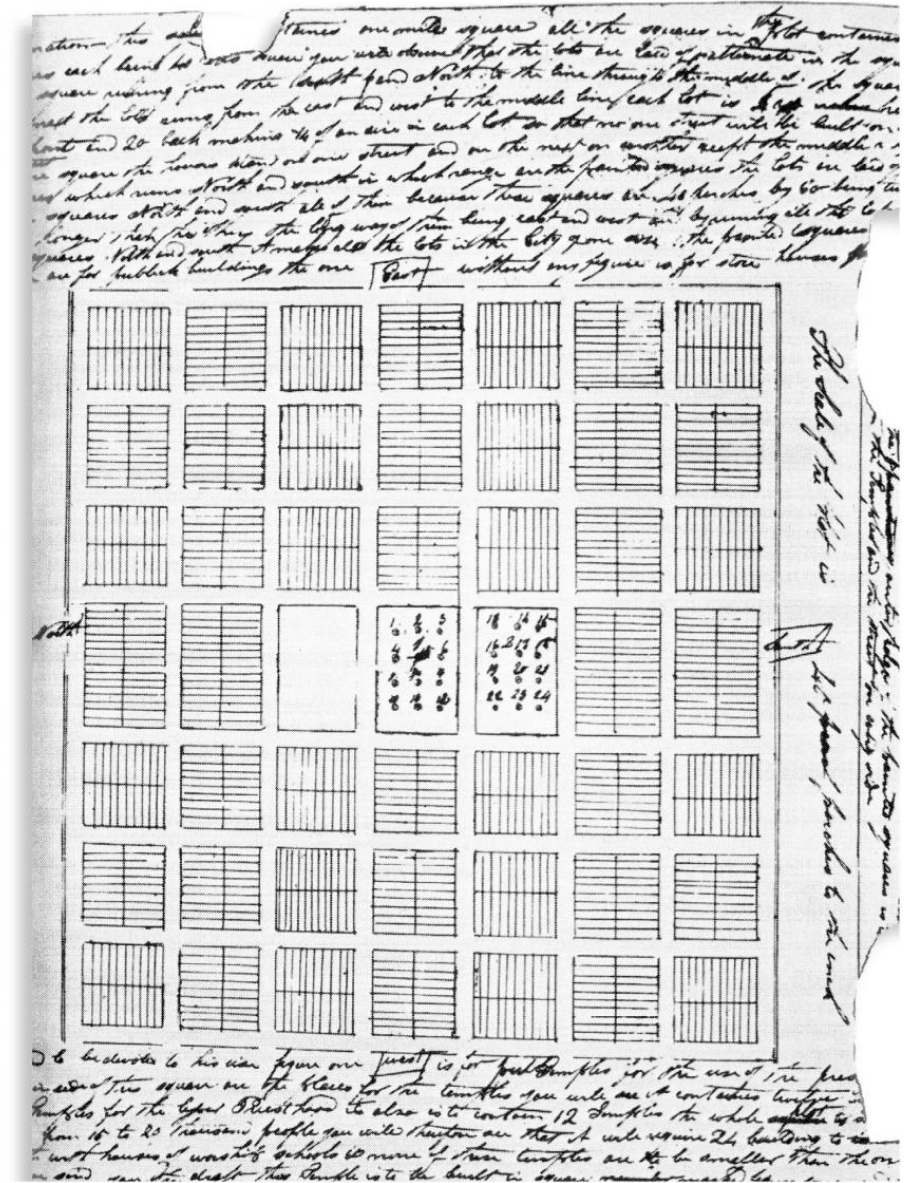
- “In the meridian dispensation, the Saints attempted to live the full law of consecration. ... The New Testament contains only passing allusions of how the system operated in that day.”

(Doctrinal New Testament Commentary: Acts–Philippians)

- “It is difficult to know exactly how the early Saints practiced the law of consecration.”
- If all property was sold and the proceeds consecrated, “such a landless community would have little hope of long-term **survival.**” (Richard M. Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, *Making Sense of the New Testament*)

Latter-day efforts

- Three attempts
 - 1830s
 - 1854
 - 1874-1878
- Cooperative movement



Plat Map of Zion, 1833

The Lord's assessment as of 1834



Behold, I say unto you, were it not for **the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals**, they might have been redeemed even now. But behold, they have **not learned to be obedient** to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and **do not impart of their substance**, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them; And **are not united** according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; And **Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom**; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. (D&C 105:2-5)

Utah, 1854

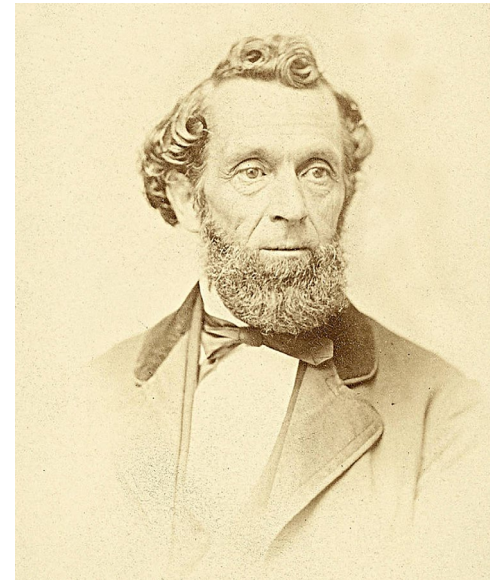
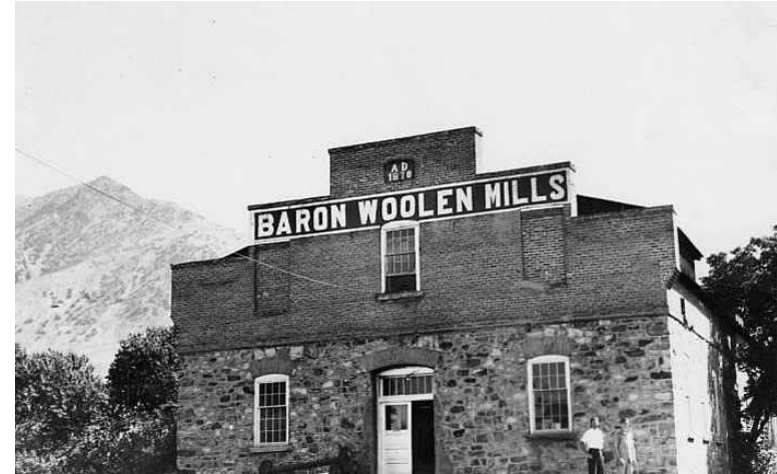
- Orson Pratt, 1854:

“There is one subject that . . . gave me great joy when I learned that it was being established in our midst. What is it? It is the consecration of the properties of the whole Church...”

- Less than 40% of the families living in the Utah Territory at the time recorded deeds of consecration
- No property was ever actually transferred to the Church
- No program for using consecrated property in adjusting and assigning stewardships was set up by the Church

Utah Cooperative Movement

- 1853: Lorenzo Snow sent to Brigham City
- 1863: Brigham City Cooperative started
 - Stock: \$5/share
- Mercantile store that eventually grew to include mills and manufacturing
- By 1870's, involved almost every resident of Brigham City
- ZCMI followed



Brigham start United Order in 1874

- Brigham Young
“Brother Snow has led the people along and got them into the United Order without their knowing it.”



Difference between Co-op and United Order

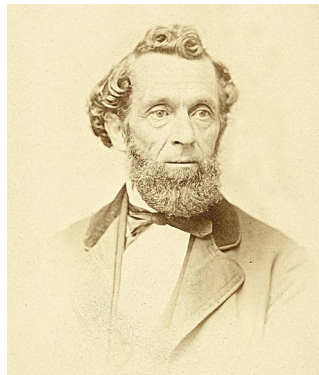
Co-op: People pooled their capital, and received a return on their investment

United Order: People deeded their property, and received assigned “stewardships” in return

Utah, 1874-1878

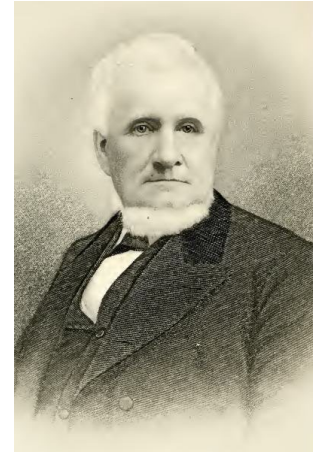
Lorenzo Snow, 1877

“Is there not danger of getting an elephant on our hands ... that our wisdom and ability cannot manage or support? In other words, may we not drift into responsibilities that would be difficult or even impossible to discharge?”



John Taylor, 1874

“I am sometimes asked— ‘Do you understand it?’ Yes, I do, no, I do not, yes, I do, no, I don’t, and both are true; we know that such an order must be introduced, but are not informed in relation to the details, ... The greatest embarrassment that we have to contend with at the present time is not knowing what to do, but knowing how to do it.”



Steve Walton

- The believers' unity does not issue in people pooling all their possessions when they join the community, but rather portrays **a transformed attitude to possessions**. Instead of regarding their goods as their own . . . , they held them loosely and were ready to give to others as need required (Acts 4:32, 34–35). This attitude reflects biblical passages which understand **everything as belonging to God**, and humans as functioning as **stewards or trustees** of God's good gifts (e.g. Ps 24:1; Gen 1:26–28).



Walton, cont'd.

- In sum, Luke's portrait of the earliest believers is of a sharing of possessions which put others' needs at the centre of their life together. The principles at work were to regard 'possessions' as belonging not to oneself, but to God, and thus to place them at the disposal of God's people as needed (4:32, 34)
- Luke's concern, then, may be summed up as regarding **material goods and property as held in stewardship** by believers; they are to be generous to those in need because and as God in Christ has been generous to them (cf. 2 Cor 8:9). The form of this generosity will vary from place to place and time to time, of course, but Luke wants believers' commitment to it to be steadfast.
- Does this sound like Jacob?
 - Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. (Jacob 2:17)

Land Ho!

- “Land is the only thing in the world that amounts to anything, for ’tis the only thing in this world that lasts, and don’t you be forgetting it! ’Tis the only thing worth working for, worth fighting for—worth dying for.” (Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*)
- Pahom: If he just owned more land, his life would be secure and he would not fear even the devil himself. (Tolstoy, *How Much Land Does a Man Need?*)



King Ahab and Naboth

(1 Kings 21:2-4)

- King Ahab: “Give me your vineyard, ... I will trade you for a better vineyard; or, if you prefer, I will pay you its market value.”
- Naboth: “The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.”
- “And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased ... And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.”



Land and the Abrahamic covenant

- God's covenant with Abraham
 - “A strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice” (Abr 2:6).
 - “I will make of thee a great nation” (Abr 2:9).
 - “Thy seed after thee . . . shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” (Abr 2:9).





Greg Olsen

The land covenant still in force

- The Savior's reaffirmation of the land covenant

“I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time, that I would give unto them again the land of their fathers for their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them forever, saith the Father” (3 Nephi 20:29)

Land and the Nephites

Four times the Savior restated the land covenant for the Nephites:

- And behold, this is the land of your inheritance; and the Father hath given it unto you. (3 Nephi 15:13)
- Verily, verily, I say unto you, thus hath the Father commanded me— that I should give unto this people this land for their inheritance. (3 Nephi 16:16)
- And the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance. (3 Nephi 20:14)
- And behold, this people will I establish in this land, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob; and it shall be a New Jerusalem. (3 Nephi 20:22)



Jorge Cocco

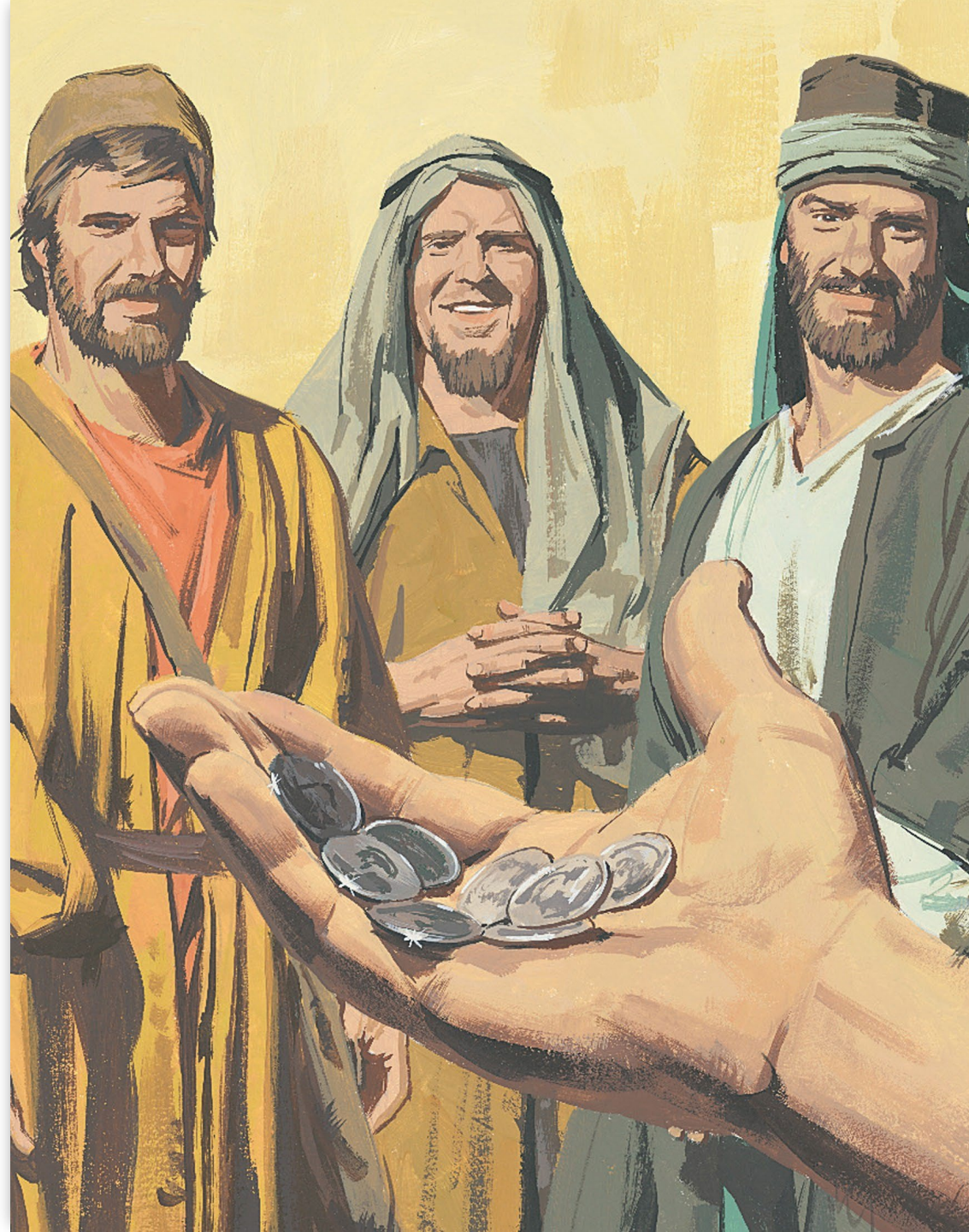
Ownership vs. Stewardship

- An **ownership** view of land tends to foster pride, greed, and individual focus on possessions: a self-image as a self-conscious and protective landowner.
 - Gerald O'Hara and Pahom are the archetypes.
- A **stewardship** view of land tends to foster a focus on determining how the Master would have the land managed, and on how the excess returns can best be used to help those in need and the community at large.



Everything belongs to God, we are only stewards

- Stewards are given charge of their master's assets.
- Stewards have discretion to act as they see fit.
- Stewards are expected to pursue their master's interests, not their own.
- Stewards will be called to give an account of their choices in managing their master's possessions.
- Righteous stewards return a surplus to their master.



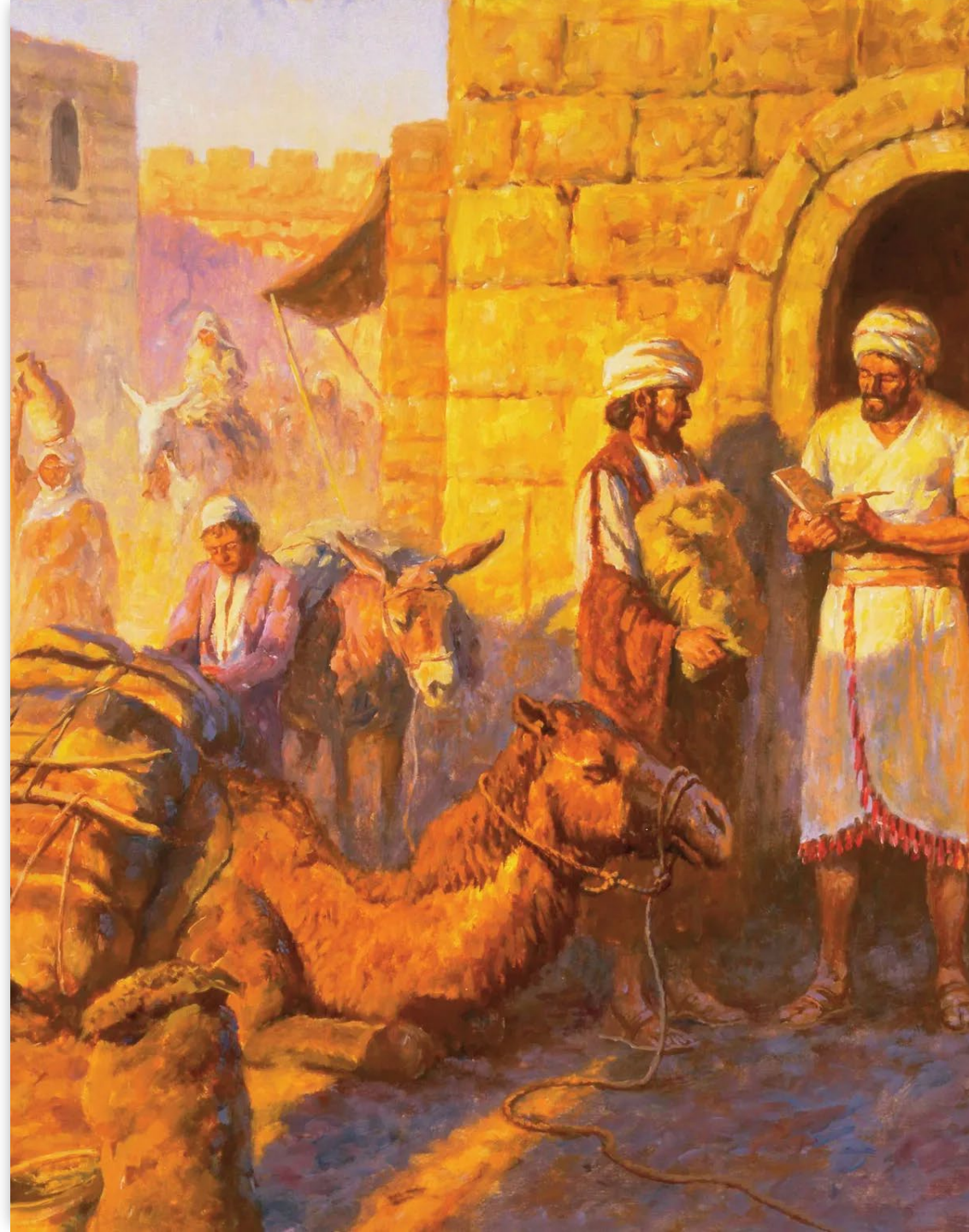
Land and identity

- Naboth viewed his land as an essential element in the inheritance he had received from his fathers.
- They had received the land as part of their covenant with God.
- As such, that parcel of land was critical as an element in Naboth's personal identity and as a symbol of his covenant with God.
- For Naboth the connection to place is based on relationships rather than possessiveness.
 - Pahom defined himself in terms of his possessions.
- For Naboth, his vineyard was a tangible representation of his heritage, his connection to God, and the legacy of both for his descendants.



What the Lord expects from us as stewards

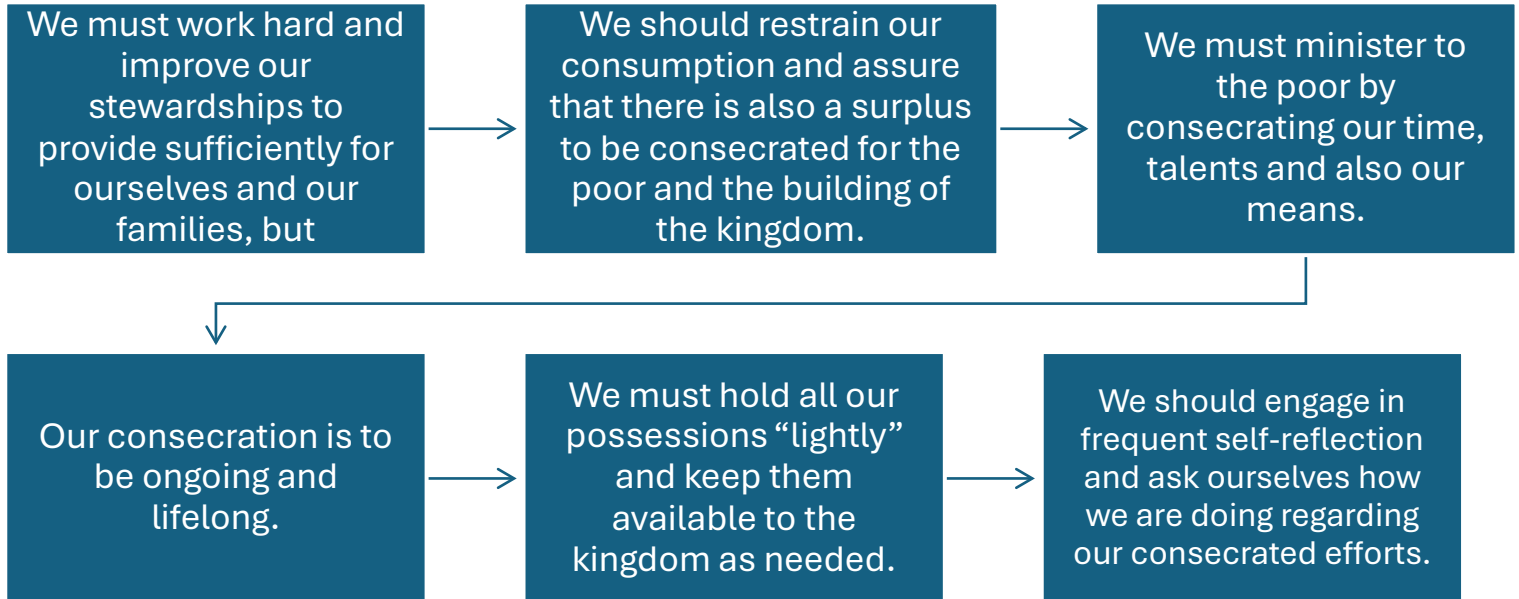
Nevertheless, inasmuch as they receive **more than is needful** for their necessities and their wants, it shall be given into my storehouse; And the benefits shall be consecrated unto the inhabitants of Zion, ...Behold, **this is what the Lord requires of every man in his stewardship**, even as I, the Lord, have appointed ... And behold, **none are exempt from this law** who belong to the church of the living God. (D&C 70:7-10)





What about the Law of Consecration?

Consecration is a covenant and follows naturally from the five foundation stones. No deeds are required. It involves embracing the five foundation stones and our role as stewards.



Self-Reliance

We teach the importance of self-reliance



But what about these doctrines?

We cannot be saved without our dead, nor they without us (D&C 128:15).

We must be married to receive the highest blessings (D&C 131:2–3).

The Saints must gather together (D&C 29:8)

It is not good for man to be alone (Moses 3:18)

Elder David Bednar: Agency as action



- **Moral agency, becoming an agent, and righteous action are interrelated and bound together** in truly powerful ways. Consider, for example, the definition of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the Lectures on Faith: “Faith [in Christ is] the first principle in revealed religion, . . . the foundation of all righteousness, . . . and the principle of action in all intelligent beings.”
- I underscore that very significant statement: “**the principle of action in all intelligent beings.**”
- We are to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only,” “that **every man may act** in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, **according to the moral agency** which [God has] given unto him.” (Consider the Wondrous Works of God, BYU Speeches, Jan 23, 2024)



Why foster self-reliance?

- We cannot be free to act if we are not self-reliant. Put another way, self-reliance is a prerequisite for freedom, and dependence is the enemy of freedom.
- Although self-reliance and freedom are tied together, there is nothing spiritual, in and of itself, in being self-reliant. (A. Morrison)

Marion G. Romney: Self-reliance and service

- The key to making self-reliance spiritual is in using the freedom to comply with God's commandments.
- Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made.
- Can we see how critical self-reliance becomes when looked upon as the prerequisite to service, when we also know service is what godhood is all about?





Eliminating Poverty

What does it mean to be poor?

“Poverty is ...

- Having all the same dreams for the future that everyone else has, but no way on earth to make them come true.
- Being just one crisis away from collapsing—every day.
- Being treated like nothing, less than nothing, and accepting it.
- Having no hope left in me at all.”

(Ruth Lister, *Poverty*)





Acts 6: “Daily ministrations”

- “Daily ministrations” described in Acts did not mean that true poverty was eliminated
- Short-term assistance is essential, but long-term solutions must address the causes of poverty

Why are people poor?

- Some are poor because they **lack economic opportunities**.
- Some are poor because they **lack the skills or social skills** needed to take advantage of available opportunities.
- Some may see opportunities and may have the requisite skills, but they **lack access to the resources** (social connections, land, capital, and/or infrastructure) or **generational wealth** needed to take advantage of opportunities.
- Some households may be pushed into poverty because of **unforeseen shocks** such as natural disasters, health crises, etc.
- **Unstable governments and dysfunctional public policies** have contributed to the poverty of millions.



King Benjamin

Three economic classes:

- “Those who are rich as pertaining to the things of this world”
- “The poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day”
- “Beggars”
- “Impart of your substance to the poor, ... both spiritually and temporally according to their wants” (Mosiah 4:26)



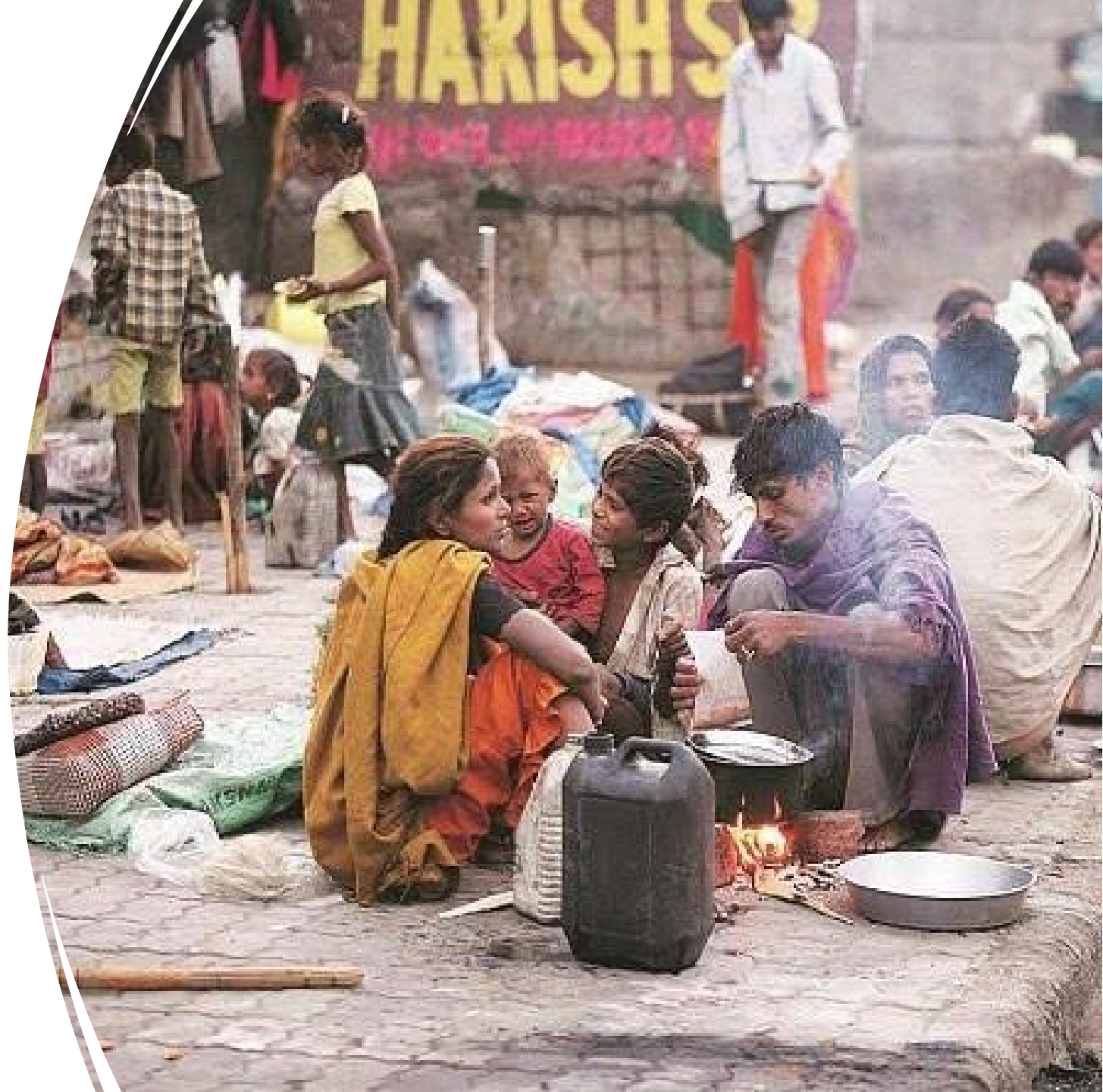
Zoramite poor

For behold, they were cast out of the synagogues because of the coarseness of their apparel—Therefore **they were not permitted to enter into their synagogues** to worship God, being esteemed as filthiness; therefore they were poor; yea, they were **esteemed by their brethren as dross**; therefore they were **poor as to things of the world**; and also **they were poor in heart**. (Alma 32:2–3)



Poverty has multiple dimensions

- Being poor is to be deficient either in terms of material means or “exclusion from cooperative activity; those in poverty are not ‘able to participate in the social life of a community at a minimally acceptable level.’”
- “There is a broad consensus among poverty researchers around the view that poverty is multidimensional.”



A scene from a religious production showing Alma, a man with a beard and long hair wearing a brown robe, standing in a lush green field. He is holding a yellow fruit and addressing a large group of people, including men, women, and children, who are sitting on the grass. The background is a dense field of tall green grass. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Alma and the Zoramite Poor

- Alma asked them to experiment with the “word” he was teaching and simply desire to believe.
 - He promised they would begin to see a change in themselves.
 - It would begin to enlarge their souls and enlighten their understanding.
- Alma urged the Zoramites to look forward with faith.
 - “Nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit”



The effect of Alma's teachings

- Alma gave them hope
- Alma gave them a vision of a better life
- Amulek taught them to pray always and serve others

Zoramite converts expelled from Antionum



Lamanite refugees in Jershon gave them

- Immediate aid
 - Food
 - Clothing
- Land
- The emotional and social support they needed

Lifting the poor takes more than money



- **Feed the hungry**, clothe the naked, and administer to their immediate needs.
- **Give them hope** for the future (including security and an expectation they will reap the rewards from their efforts to provide for themselves).
- **Provide opportunities** for education and personal development as needed.
- **Encourage those who have to provide access to resources** needed by the poor to become self-reliant and fully engaged with the community.
- **Encourage the poor**, as they become more self-reliant, to **choose to serve and lift** others in the same way they were lifted.

Julia Nompoti Mavimbela (1917-2000)

- Soweto, South Africa
- 1955: Husband killed in auto accident
- 1970's: Government ban on teaching English
- “What can I do to help this situation?”
- “Let us dig the soil of bitterness, throw in a seed of love, and see what fruits it can give us.”
- 783 gardens across South Africa

- Church video: **Break the Soil of bitterness: One woman's quest for healing**



Circles USA

- Scott Miller, Move the Mountain Leadership Center
- *Circles USA* gathers middle- and high-income volunteers to mentor families in poverty.
- With mentors, people experiencing poverty are more equipped to achieve long-term financial stability.
- Mentoring relationships continue for 18 months.
- Successes and challenges are shared with local community leaders. Barriers that keep people in poverty are identified, discussed, and often resolved.
- 78 Communities, 26 States and growing
- CirclesUSA.org



Switchpoint St George, UT



Carol Hollowell:

- “Driving to work on a cold early morning, I found Ray in his wheelchair, making his way to get a cup of coffee to warm up. Learning that he was homeless because a stolen wallet left him without ID was astounding to me. I vowed to fix it that day.”
- “Ray was my switch point—changing the trajectory of my life. I knew I could not turn a blind eye on the Rays in our world. I could and must do something about the broken system he had been trapped in for years. Ray was the catalyst that led to creating Switchpoint as a community resource center to establish a model where people could find direction, education, advocacy, and support”

THE SWITCHPOINT DIFFERENCE

WE SEE PEOPLE, NOT THEIR POVERTY

SAYING YES TO HELP IS AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP, BUT IT IS ONLY THE START. INADEQUATE HELP CAN LEAVE A PERSON FEELING MORE HOPELESS. OUR FOCUS ON EMPOWERING CLIENTS TO KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT CHANGES LIVES



PLEASE SUPPORT OUR BUSINESSES

SWITCHPOINT
COFFEE CO. ENTER - UP - SUPPORT

173 jobs created in Utah

38,690

bednights provided
in shelters



3,095,388

pounds of food
distributed via food
pantries & soup kitchen

2023 STATEWIDE IMPACT

139

previously
unemployed
adults re-entered
the workforce

574

families received housing
assistance support
through housing case
management

430

Utahns
permanently housed
in Switchpoint
housing

220

children served at
Stepping Stones 24/7
childcare

988

volunteers
served a total of
31,628
hours

1,426

people accessed
emergency
shelters

The Pattern

CARING INDIVIDUALS SAW A NEED IN THEIR COMMUNITY



IDENTIFIED ACTIONS THEY COULD TAKE TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS



JOINED WITH OTHERS TO EXPAND THEIR EFFORTS



What about disasters?

- Families can be pushed into poverty by personal or natural disasters
- Communities must establish support networks to overcome the effects of disasters, large and small, natural and man-made
- Preparation and mutual insurance



Government induced poverty

Government policies and actions have kept millions in poverty

Stable and reasonably efficient governments must assure

- Peace and security
- Equitable and effective administration
- Adequate Infrastructure

What should we do?

“Poverty is powerlessness. Poverty cannot be removed unless the poor have power to make decisions that affect their lives.” (Ela Bhatt)

“I would say that the basic needs and problems of the poor will not be solved by the government, any government. They will have to be solved by the people themselves.” (Ela Bhatt)

1. Individuals who see a need in their community and take action can make a meaningful difference.
2. As the effect of their efforts is recognized, others will be influenced to join them.
3. Collaboration and cooperation can extend and expand success.
4. “by small means the Lord can bring about great things.” (1 Nephi 16:29)

Eliminating poverty

1. The poor are children of God with the same aspirations, needs and rights as all other members of Zion.
 - Their poverty is rooted in causes specific to their unique situation.
 - Creating a pathway out of poverty requires adaptation to their specific needs.





Eliminating poverty

2. “The poor shall be exalted in that the rich are made low” (D&C 104:16).
- Those who have *more* must voluntarily and willingly share their knowledge, connections, and means to make available to the poor the full range of resources needed to escape all aspects of poverty.



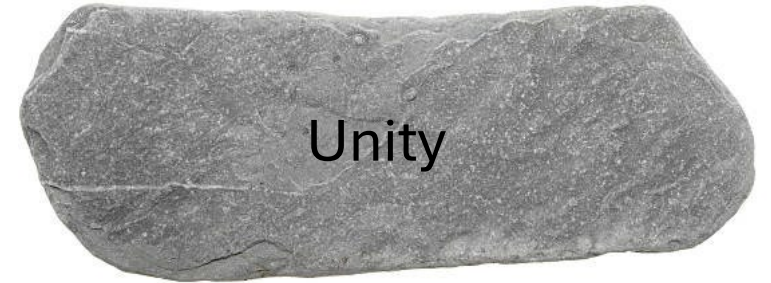
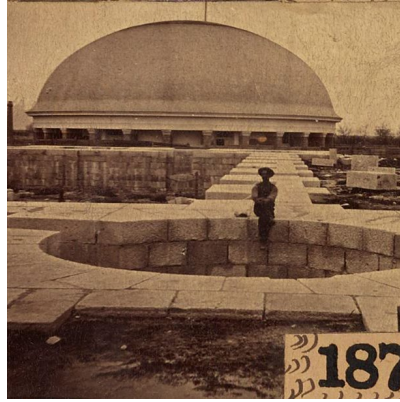
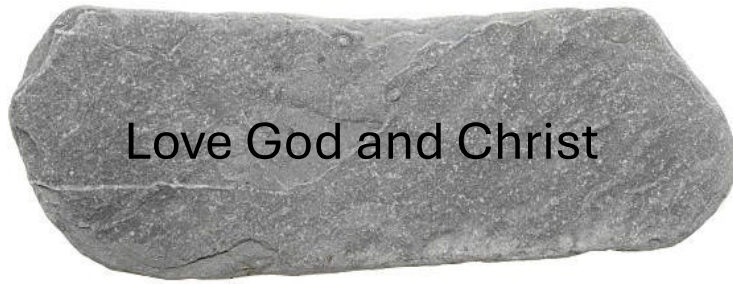
Eliminating poverty

3. Success in eliminating poverty will require cooperative action from all inhabitants of Zion.



Eliminating poverty

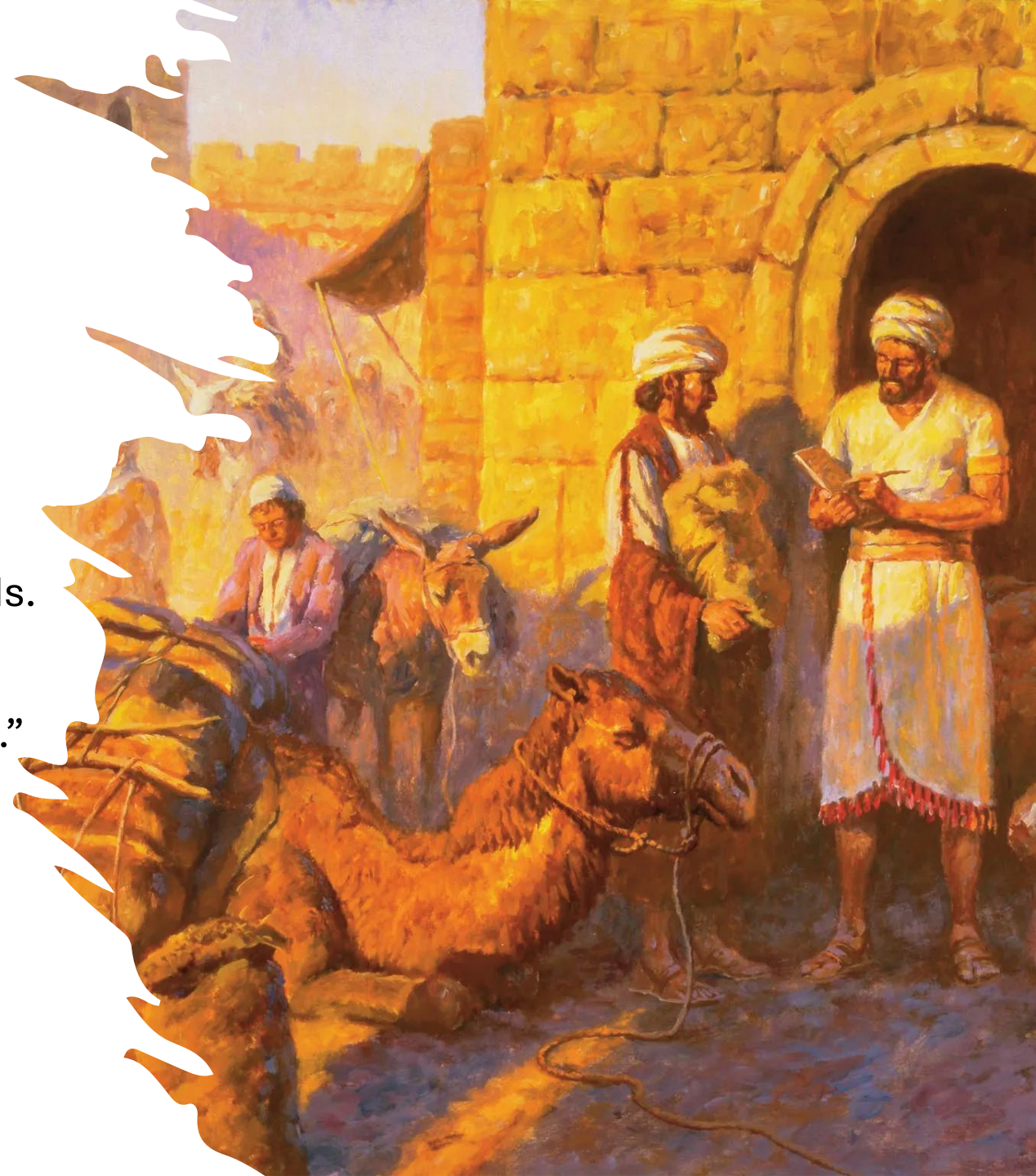
4. Universal government programs cannot eradicate poverty, but effective governance is essential to create a stable, enabling environment as the poor take the actions necessary to change their lives.



Foundation Stones of Zion

Main points summarized

- “All things common” as used in Acts and the Book of Mormon refers to a transformed attitude toward possessions.
- Everything belongs to God and we are stewards. “Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.”
- The Abrahamic covenant has three components: Posterity, Priesthood and Land
- The land covenants have yet to be fulfilled





Main points summarized

- As stewards, we are given charge of the master's assets, and He expects us to improve on our stewardship and return the surplus to Him
- Living the law of consecration involves embracing the five foundation stones and our role as stewards.
- Self-reliance is a prerequisite for the freedom to choose service to others, especially those in need
- Service is what godhood is all about
- Poverty will be eliminated as the saints recognize and act on opportunities to truly lift others

Agenda for the week

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- What is Zion?
- Changing role of the Church
- Cornerstone of Zion
- Foundation stones of Zion

Practices

- “All things common”
- Stewardship & Land in Zion
- Eliminating Poverty

Governance

- Non-Church organizations
- Governance in Zion
- Organizing a Zion society

Tomorrow!



Questions?

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