



Come to Zion!

Foundations for a Millennial Society

Lawrence (Larry) Walters

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.



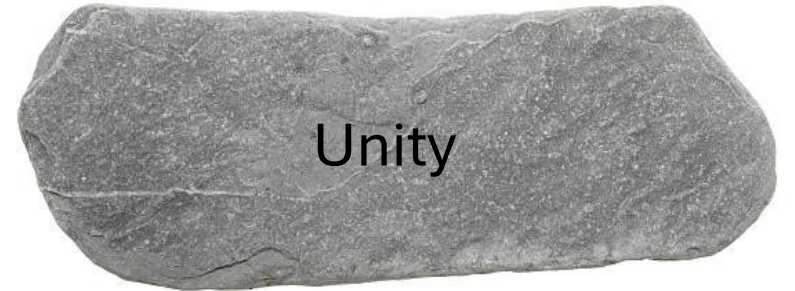
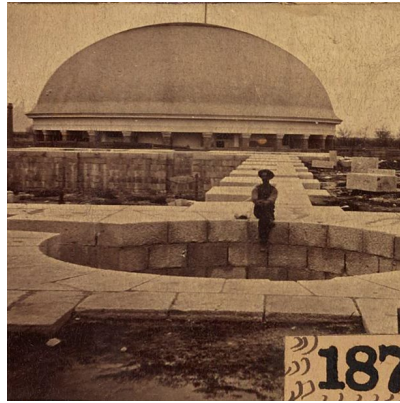
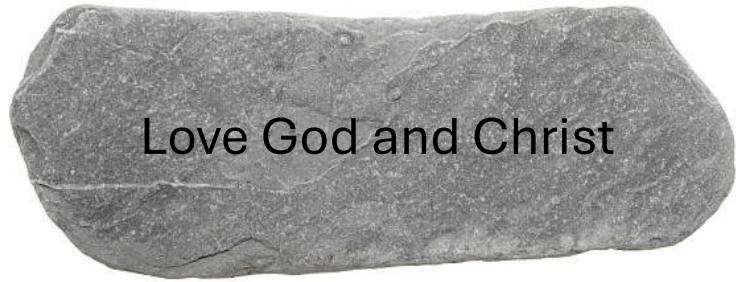
2. Zion is a spiritual **relationship** with God and among God's people in a particular place.



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

Challenges facing families

More than half of the U.S. adult population is single

Nearly 44% of the adult population in Utah is single
(Up from 36% in 1980)



Esther Hi'ilani Candari

“Family life is changing. Two-parent households are on the decline in the United States as divorce, remarriage and cohabitation are on the rise. And families are smaller now, both due to the growth of single-parent households and the drop in fertility.

“As a result of these changes, there is no longer one dominant family form in the U.S. Parents today are raising their children against a backdrop of increasingly diverse and, for many, constantly evolving family forms.” (Pew Research Center)

The Family: Fundamental unit in Zion

THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES
OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

- We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.
- Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

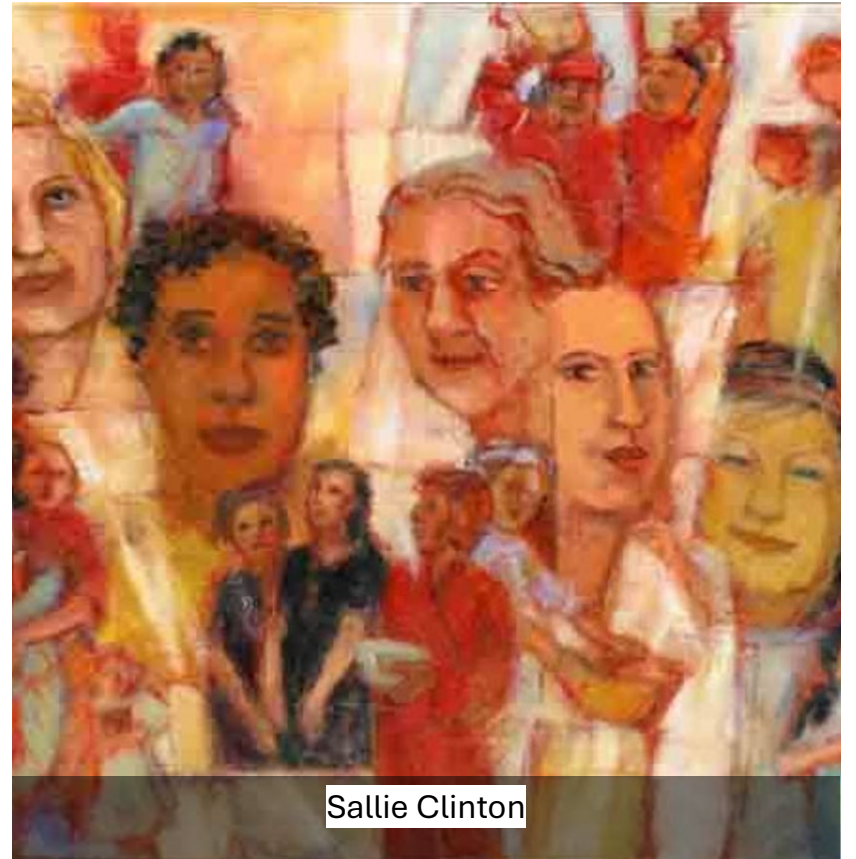
Family: The fundamental unit in Zion

- Families are the fundamental **social** unit
- Families are the fundamental **productive** unit in society
- The family is a fundamental unit for **social action and self-reliance**
- Families are the fundamental **historians**
- The family is the most fundamental **schoolhouse**
- The family is the fundamental **citizenship** unit in Zion.



However powerful the teachings of parents, children make their own choices. Repentance is possible and effective.

- “Behold, our father Adam taught these things, and many have believed and become the sons of God, and many have believed not, and have perished in their sins” (Moses 7:1)
- Laman and Lemuel, the sons of Lehi and Sariah, were also “born of goodly parents”
- “The sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers; and also one of the sons of Alma was numbered among them, he being called Alma, after his father; nevertheless, he became a very wicked and an idolatrous man”
- Alma the Younger also had a son who went astray



Sallie Clinton

Foundation stones applied to the family

- Cultivate our personal devotion and service to the Father and His Son and teach our family to do likewise.
- Seek the spiritual gift of charity. We must strive to love each member of our family as the Savior loves them, and treat their interests and concerns as equal with our own.
- Act always with a profound respect for the agency of others including our family members in making their own life choices.
- Take responsibility for the choices we make and the resulting consequences, and seek righteous ways to help our family be accountable.
- Counsel together within the family and strive for unity in decision-making, then act cooperatively to implement the decisions reached.



Susana Elcira Bustos Martinez



Organizations and Institutions

Organizations and Purpose of mortality

- “This is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39)
- My starting point: the purpose of mortality is to maximize human development and the achievement of human potential.
- A central purpose in Zion is to assist God in bringing to pass the eternal life and happiness of His children.
- The way our organizations and institutions function can either help or hinder the achievement of that potential.



Why do we have organizations?

“People are by nature social beings whose lives and feelings are eternally connected and intertwined with those of others. Almost invariably, individuals reach their full potential only in association and in community with others.” (A. Morrison)



Why do we have organizations?

- Human capacities and possibilities are enhanced and greatly extended by cooperation and collaboration through organizations.
- Cooperation both supports and enhances individual agency and self-reliance, and therefore human learning and development, by expanding the range of choices and possible actions available to the individual and the family





Why do we have organizations in Zion?

- In Zion, every enterprise and organization will be in the human development business at least as much as anything else.

The challenge of organizations

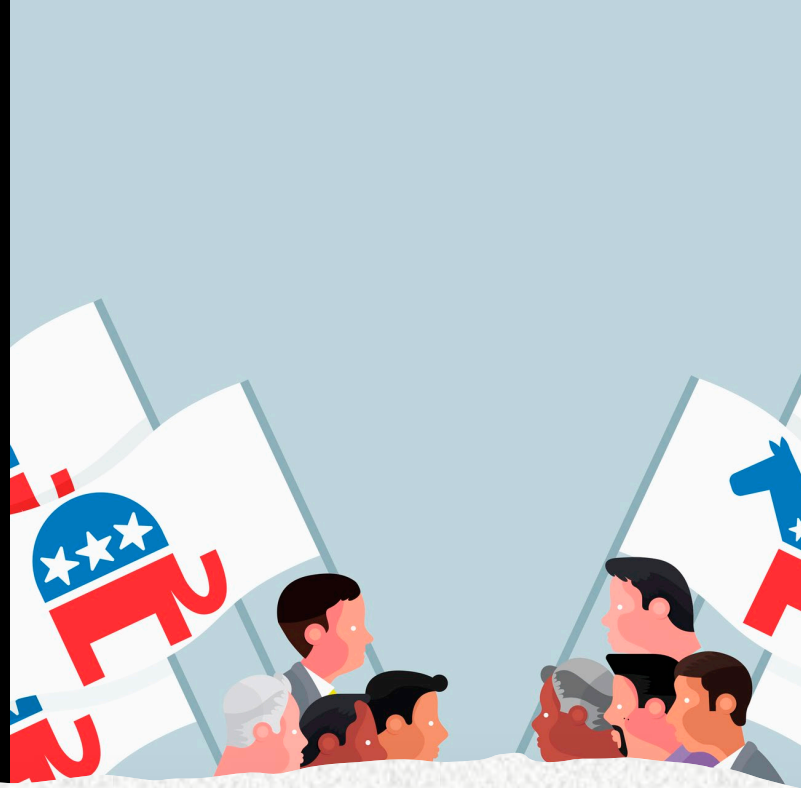
- We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion (D&C 121:39)





The challenge of organizations

- “We live most of our lives in institutions: from the family to the school, to the army, to the business enterprise. These institutions to some considerable degree shape our expectations, our personalities, and our routines.” (James Scott)



The challenge of membership

- Organizational constraints become problematic when they limit individual agency or influence choices in ways that are inconsistent with the eternal goal of human development.
- When we join an organization, we assume some degree of responsibility and accountability for its success, and therefore for the results of the organization's actions, positive and negative.

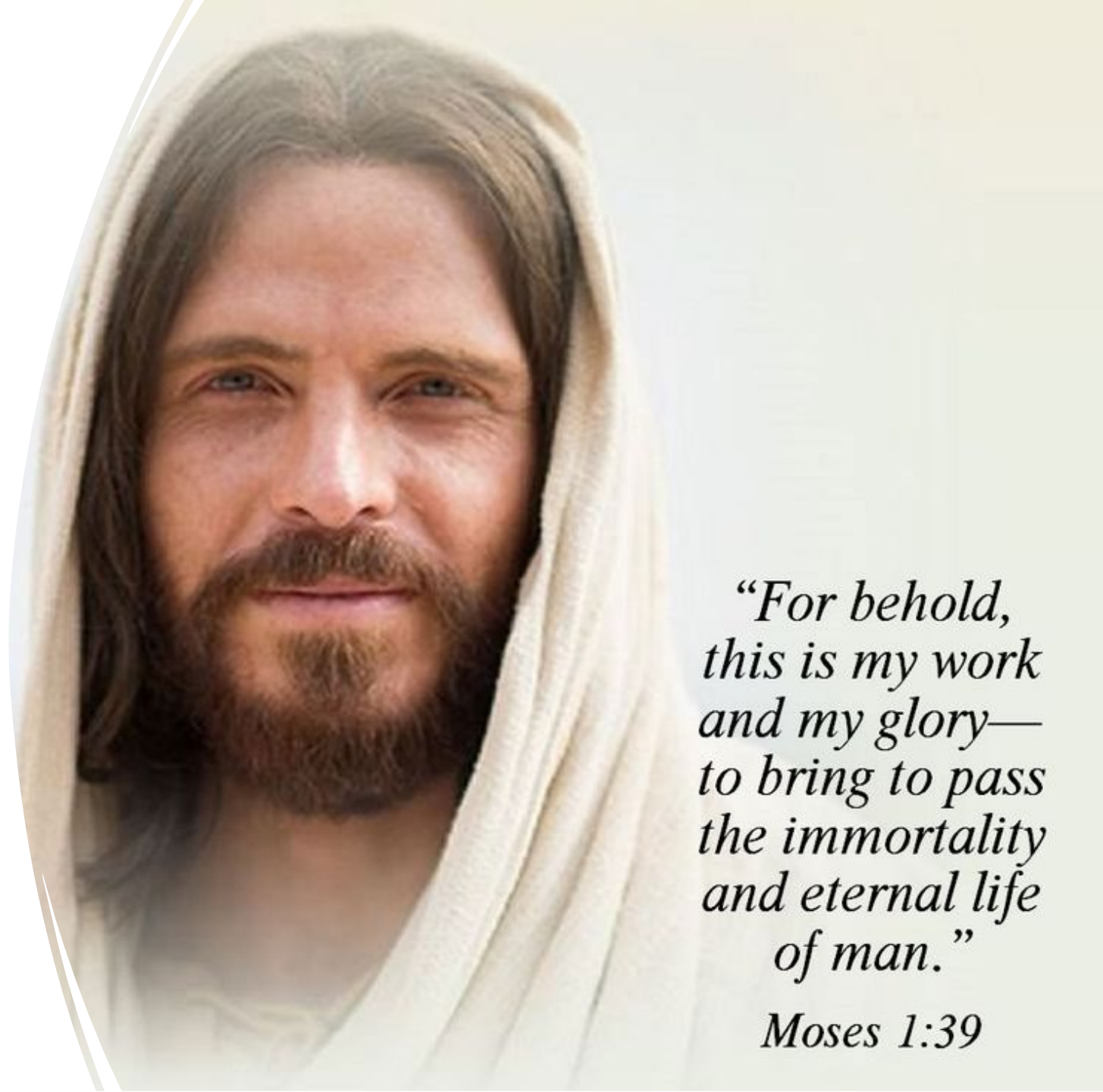


Organization mission and vision

- Every organization makes at least one attempt to clarify and specify its purpose.
 - Tesla: To accelerate the advent of sustainable transport by bringing compelling mass market electric cars to market as soon as possible.
 - TED: To discover and spread ideas that spark imagination, embrace possibility and catalyze impact.
 - LinkedIn: To connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful.
- Effective mission and vision statements are simple and memorable, and they drive planning and decision-making.

Comparing the Lord's mission statement

- What is missing from most mission statements is any reference to the growth and development of the people inside the organization or, in many cases, even the customers, clients, or society in general
- What if we ask what kind of people does a given activity or institution foster?



“For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”

Moses 1:39

Promoting development

- In a Zion society, organizations will pay at least as much attention to human development and “the kind of people” an activity will “foster” as to the quality and efficiency of their goods and services.
- Development in this sense includes
 - Encouraging the exercise of personal agency,
 - Encouraging the love of others,
 - Requiring accountability, and
 - Building and supporting unity in the organization and the community.






Neil Blakemore

Foundation stones applied: Agency

- Organizations don't love, only people love.
- Respecting and protecting individual agency.
 - “Free agency, the power to choose, is a gift of God, conferred on his children and exercised by them in the premortal existence. It is an essential precondition of the further progression we seek in mortality.” (Dallin Oaks)
- Agency is based on law, not unbridled liberty.
- The challenge facing all organizations is to recognize when constraints on individual agency help realize development in a broad sense, and when limiting autonomy also limits development.

Foundation stones applied: Accountability



BUILDING CREDIBILITY
AUTONOMY->ACCOUNTABILITY
INTEGRITY

- Individual choices and actions are inextricably connected to responsibility for the consequences of those actions.
- The second organizational cornerstone must be individual accountability.
- Individual accountability extends to responsibility for both the actions and the success of the organization.



Foundation stones applied: Unity

- Fostering organizational unity
 - Shared sense of purpose and commitment to organizational goals
 - Clear and open communication
 - Mutual respect and trust
 - Collaborative teamwork
 - Cross-training and mutual support

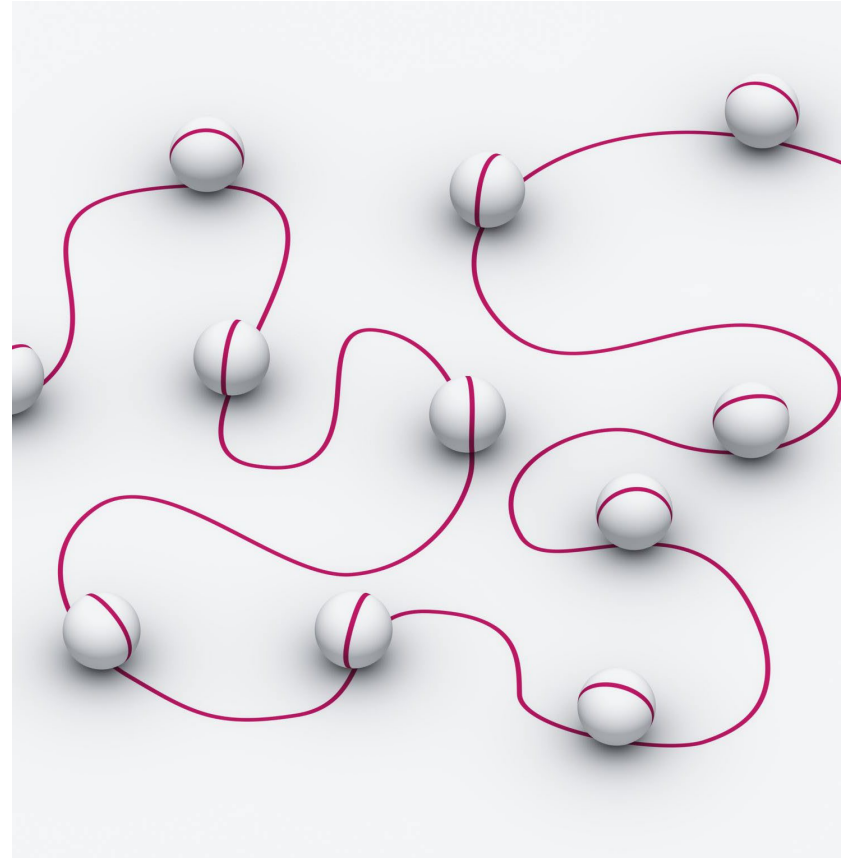


Pulling it all together

- In designing, creating, and managing organizations in Zion, the people involved will be motivated by love for those in the organization and those affected by the organization.
- Human development will be as important as any product or service provided. “Working FOR Zion rather than profit.”
- Respect for the agency of all involved will be a prime consideration.

Pulling it all together

- The accountability of organization members will include accepting responsibility for the success of the organization in achieving all its goals and the effect of organizational activities on society.
- Unity will follow from this shared sense of responsibility and vision, and from the mutual trust that is cultivated at all levels.



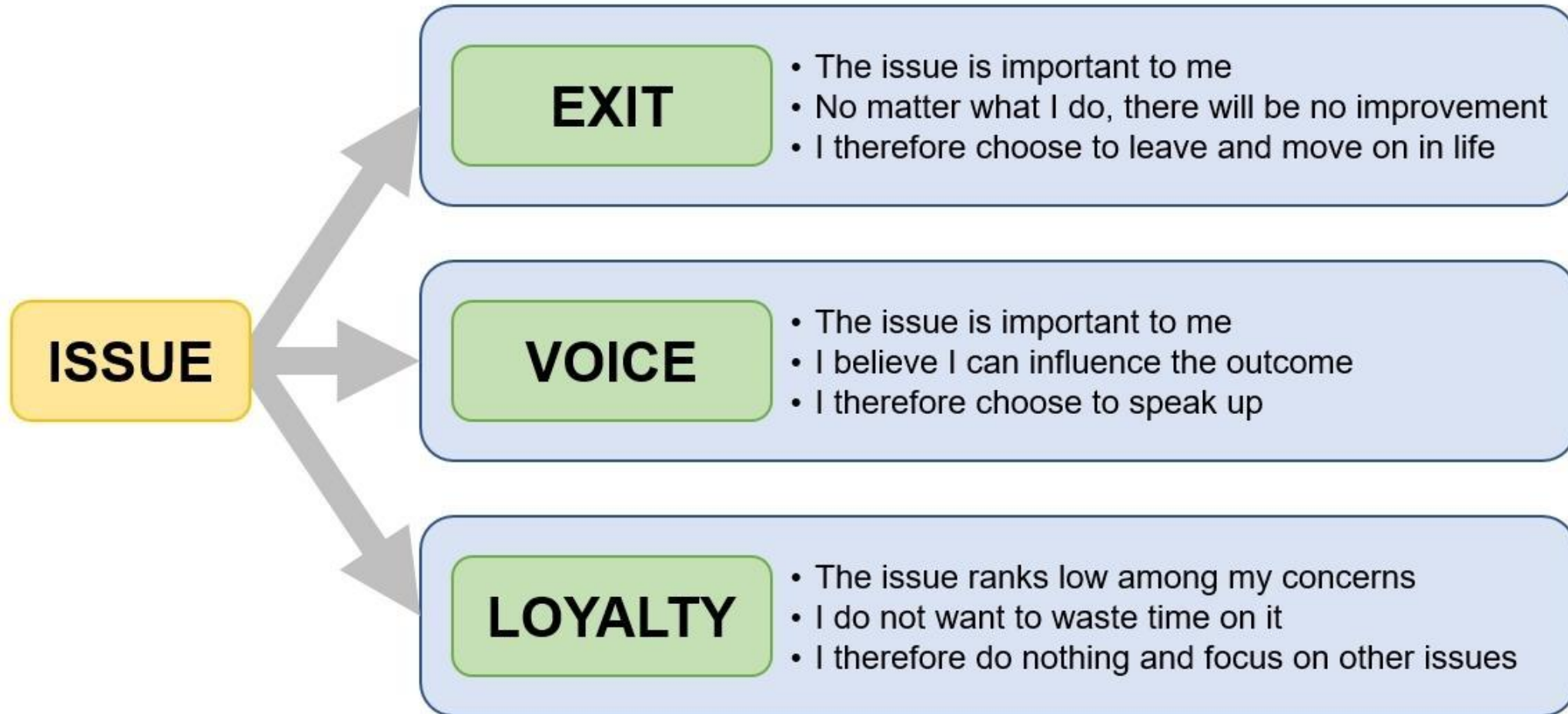
Changing an organization

Opportunity	Zion will include a broad range of organizations, all grounded in the five-fold foundation of Zion.
Need	Never doubt that the today's organizations need to change if we are to establish Zion.
Application	Those changes will happen only as all stakeholders recognize that the principles of Zion apply to all organizations.
Schools	Organizations represent a school yard and practice ground for us to develop celestial skills and relationships



What if we disagree?

3 possible responses



Adapted from Exit, Voice, and Loyalty by Albert O. Hirschman (1970)

When identity and membership intertwine

- Why am I in the organization?
- Can I achieve my purposes without the organization?
- Can I change the organization?
- How certain am I that I am right?
- Do I even know enough about what is going on to understand what needs to change?
- Do I care enough about the organization to try and change it?
- Is trying to change the organization worth the personal cost?
- How easy is it to exit the organization?
- How will exiting affect me?



Formal & informal

Governance



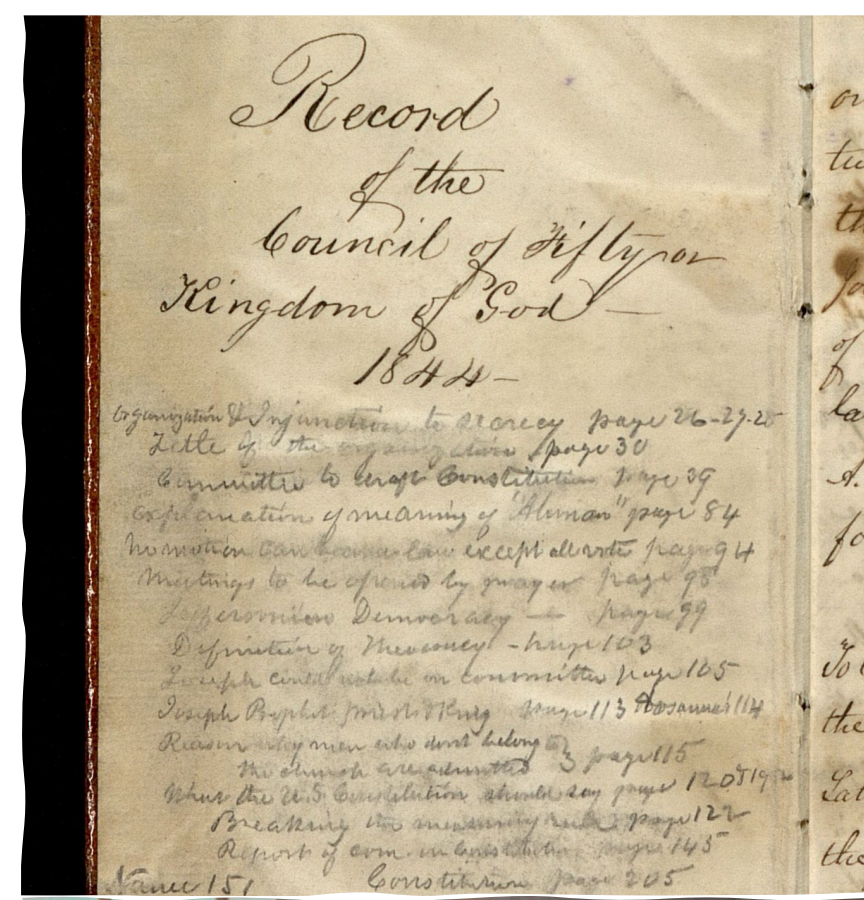


Do we need a civil government in Zion?

- But, verily I say unto you that in time ye shall have no king nor ruler, for I will be your king and watch over you. Wherefore, hear my voice and follow me, and you shall be a free people, and ye shall have no laws but my laws when I come, for I am your lawgiver, and what can stay my hand? (D&C 38:21–22)
- For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver. (D&C 45:59)

Joseph Smith, 1844

“The literal [civil] kingdom of God, and the church of God are two distinct things. The gifts of prophets, evangelists &c never were designed to govern men in civil matters. The [civil] kingdom of God has nothing to do with giving commandments to damn a man spiritually. It only has power to make a man amenable to his fellow man.”



President Dallin Oaks: Getting government right is hard

- The science of government is a consideration of the procedures by which and the extent to which the official representatives of one group of citizens can impose restrictions on the freedom of another group.
- Decisions on the extent to which government power should restrict the freedom of individuals are among the most difficult decisions we face in an organized society.



President Dallin Oaks: But necessary

- We have to accept some government limitations on freedom if we who live in communities are to have life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- A condition of uninhibited individual freedom would allow the strong to oppress the weak. It would allow the eccentric desires of one person to restrict the freedom of many



Inspired principles for government structure

President Dallin Oaks:

To summarize, I see divine inspiration in these four great fundamentals of the U.S. Constitution:

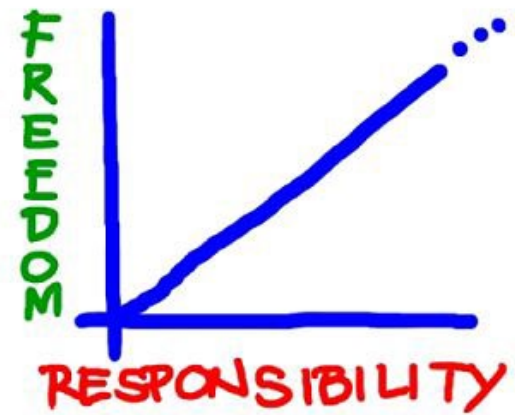
- The separation of powers in the three branches of government
- The Bill of Rights
- The division of powers between the states and the federal government
- The application of popular sovereignty

There is divine inspiration in the fundamental underlying premise of this whole constitutional order. The rule of law is the basis of liberty.



President Oaks on popular sovereignty

- This principle of sovereignty in the people explains the meaning of God’s revelation that He established the Constitution of the United States “that every man may act . . . according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment.”
- In other words, **the most desirable condition for the effective exercise of God-given moral agency is a condition of maximum freedom and responsibility**—the opposite of slavery or political oppression.



Governance: Formal and Informal

- **Good design is not enough**

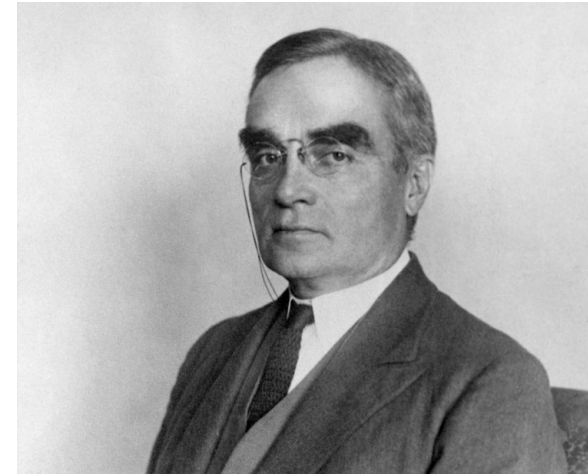
“I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.”

(Judge Learned Hand)



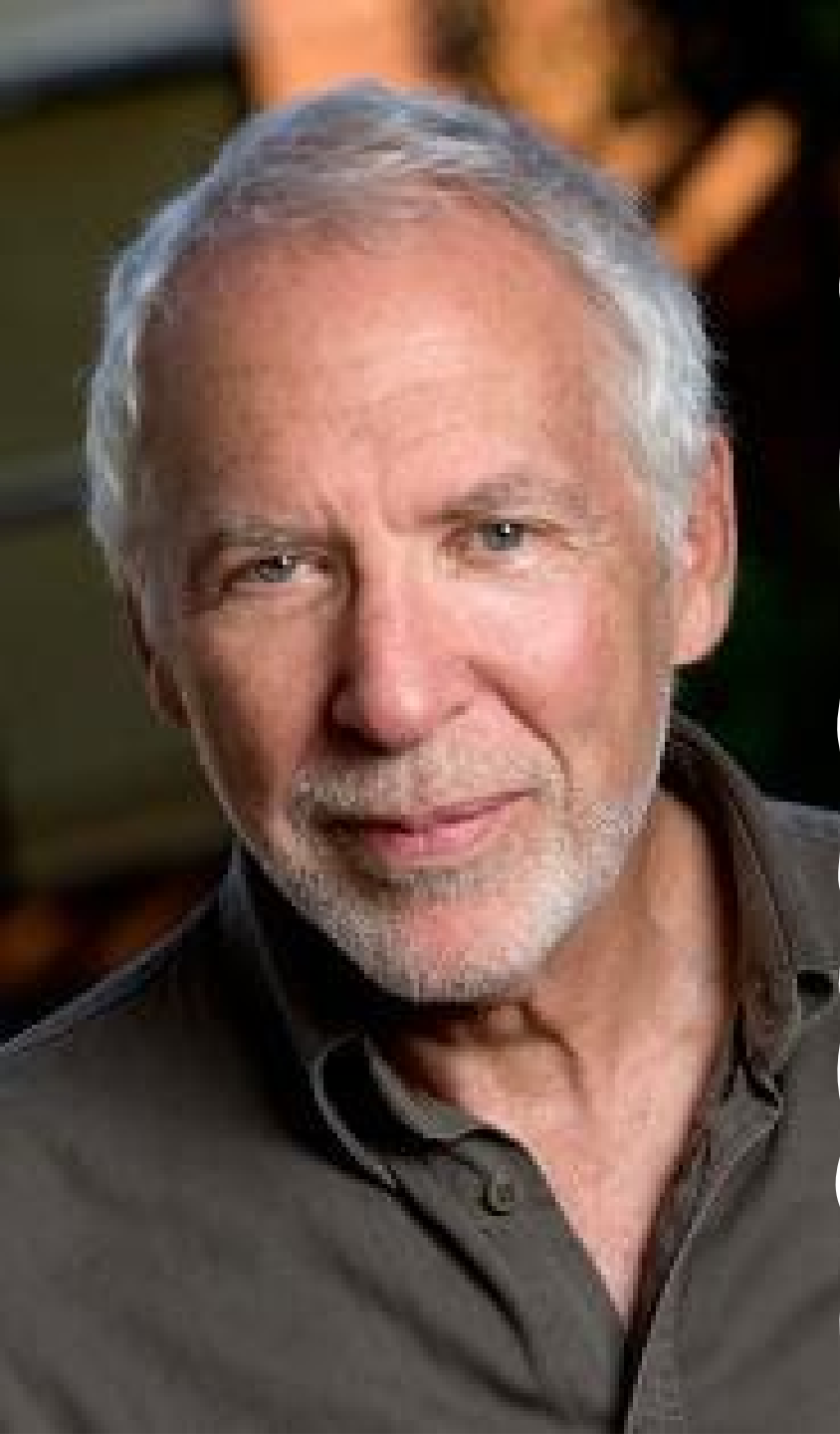


“... unless you can get the United Order in the hearts of the people, you can never plant it anywhere else; articles and constitutions amount to very little; we must have this law of God written in our hearts.” (John Taylor, 1879)



“Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.”
(Learned Hand, 1944)

What can we do?



Block on citizenship

A citizen is one who is willing to be accountable for and committed to the well-being of the whole. That whole can be a city block, a community, a nation, the earth. A citizen is one who produces the future, someone who does not wait, beg, or dream for the future. The antithesis of being a citizen is the choice to be a consumer or a client. (Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*)

Example of active citizenship

- Aurelia Spencer Rogers and the Primary
 - One person who understood and was committed to the foundations of the gospel saw a need and took action.
 - She did not wait for the institutional structure to present a response to the need.
 - She did not work alone but sought both counsel and cooperation from others.
 - A champion in Eliza R. Snow.
 - The success of the effort was the result of concerted, cooperative effort over many years.





My Hometown—West Valley: Beginnings

- Mark Rupp and his stake leaders developed a detailed inventory of needed changes
- They looked for partners and identified champions who could support and expand their efforts to bring change
- Overcoming public resistance and fears required building public support through the system of block captains and the inter-faith counsel
- They had to adapt and adjust as the initiative developed
- They changed the narrative of what it means to live in the Hillsdale/Stansbury area
- My Hometown is not a short-term solution

Governance in a Zion society

Love

- Ask: How do my actions manifest my love for others?

Agency

- Promote and defend freedom of conscience and other human rights
- Actively befriend constitutional principles and laws
- Learn, educate, inform and engage in constructive dialog
- Encourage broad based participation

Accountability

- Be and expect others to be transparent and accountable

Unity

- Take time to promote unity (persuasion, love unfeigned)
- Join with others and take united action to address needs.



Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; For the power is in them





Establishing Zion



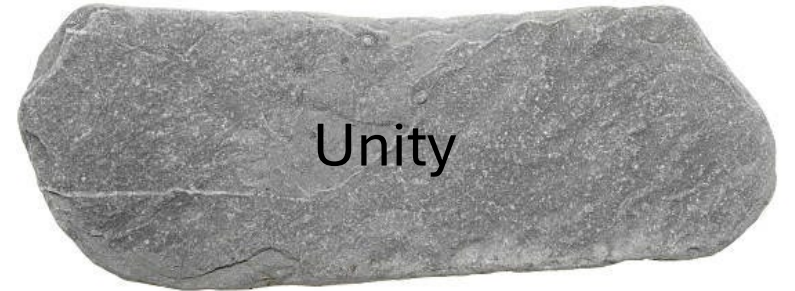
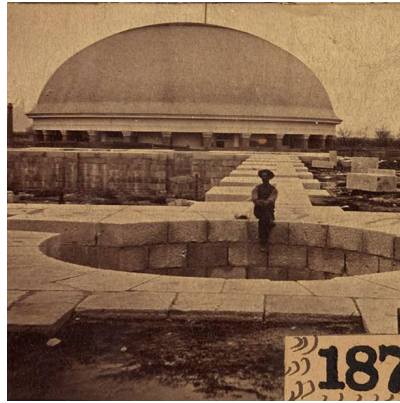
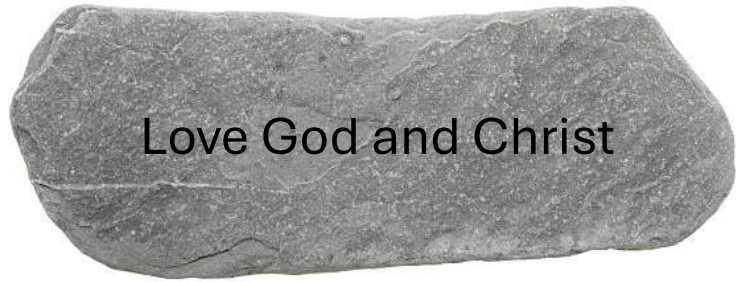
What have we learned?

Foundation
stones

Changing focus
of church

Nature of
stewardship

Emphasis on
families and
individual action



Foundation Stones of Zion

Establishing Zion: What must we do?

- Building a Zion society begins with each of us
 - “As I have stated before, the gathering of Israel is the *most* important work taking place on earth today. One crucial element of this gathering is preparing a people who are able, ready, and worthy to receive the Lord when He comes again, a people who have already chosen Jesus Christ over this fallen world, a people who rejoice in their agency to live the higher, holier laws of Jesus Christ.” (President Russell M. Nelson, 2022)
- President Spencer W. Kimball
 - We must eliminate the individual tendency to selfishness.
 - We must cooperate completely and work in harmony with others.
 - We must lay on the altar and sacrifice whatever is required by the Lord.
 - “Let us unite and pray with all the energy of heart, that we may be sealed by this bond of charity; that we may build up this latter-day Zion.”

What lack I yet?



What must we do?

- Extend our own capabilities and energies,
 - Unite with others and co-create opportunities to cooperate and collaborate in establishing Zion.
 - Remember that relationships define Zion.
 - Focus on relationships grounded in love and devotion to Christ and in the celestial unity at the heart of the cause of Zion.
- We should consider and evaluate our organizational commitments carefully and work to build support for the principles of Zion in the organizations we choose to affiliate with.



What must we do?

We need to elevate and strengthen families by

- Embracing the changes made in the Church
- Focusing on the five foundation stones and doctrine of Christ
- Scaling back the size and role of government at all levels, and
- Encouraging the cooperative efforts of families.



What must we do?

We must work
for change in our
governments at
all levels

- Create a vision of governance consistent with the foundations of Zion
- Implement policies that will promote the vision and practices of Zion.





When the Savior returns

- He will indeed be our King and Lawgiver, but His laws will be designed for our eternal development and exaltation.
- There will always be a range of activities and social interactions where we can use our agency and practice the principles of Zion.
- One domain of practice will be how we organize and conduct our social interactions through organizations and institutions, including government.

Elder Bednar: “Move your feet”

D&C 80:3

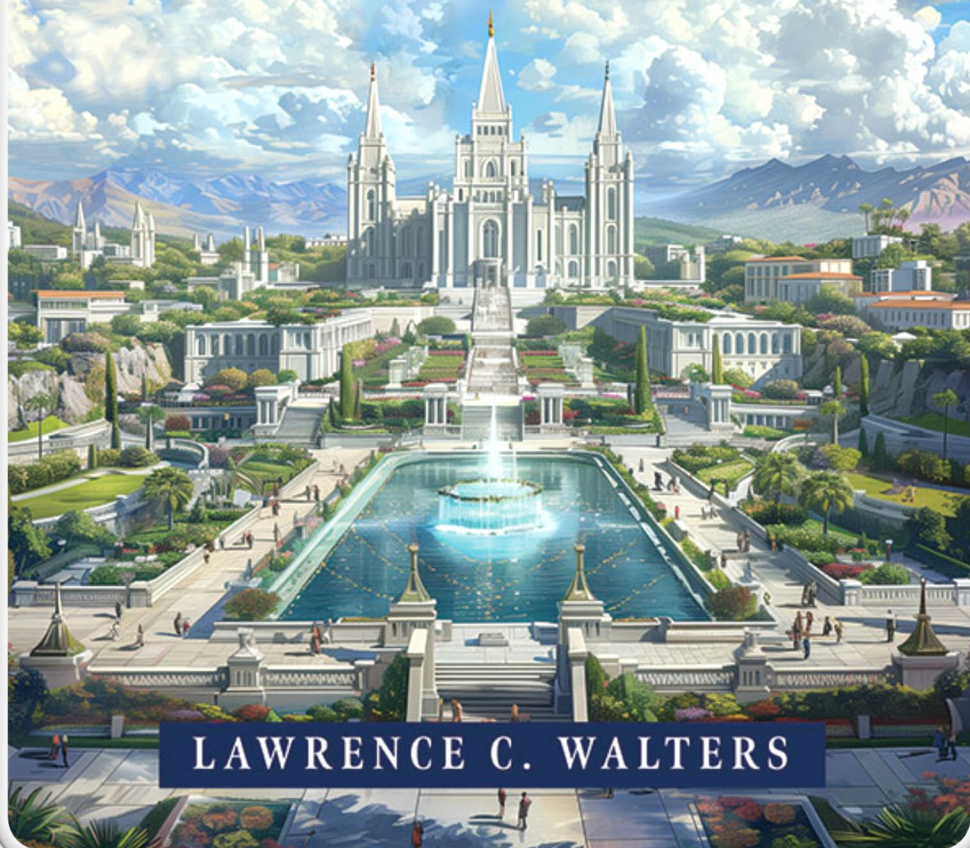
“Wherefore, go ye and preach my gospel, whether to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west, it mattereth not, for ye cannot go amiss.”



- The Lord is not saying, “I don’t care where you go.” He is saying, “Get going. Move your feet.” In essence, I think the Lord is suggesting, “I’m going to get you where you need to be without violating your agency. But you’ve got to be moving for that to happen.”

ESTABLISHING ZION

FOUNDATIONS FOR A
MILLENNIAL SOCIETY



LAWRENCE C. WALTERS

Thank you!