

# Gospel Doctrine Lesson 14: The Law of Consecration

(Doctrine and Covenants 42:30–42; 51; 78; 82; 104:11–18)

**LESSON GOAL:** To help us understand the law of consecration and its eternal purposes and desire to consecrate our lives more fully to the service of God.

**CONSECRATE:** To set apart or dedicate something to the service of the Lord.

**THE LAW OF CONSECRATION:** An organized way in which individuals consecrate their time, talents, and possessions to the Church to build the Lord's kingdom and serve His children.

**THE LAW OF CONSECRATION IS A LAW OF LOVE.** With obedience to that law, the powers of heaven are invoked, not only to those who consecrate, but also to those for whom the consecration is intended. **It is a law meant to bless both the giver and the recipient.** It is a perfect law intended to deal with the inequities in society. It dispenses necessities to those in need. It assists those who cannot assist themselves.

- The Doctrine and Covenants is the Lord's handbook on key principles of heavenly governance, including the law of consecration. **The law of consecration is one of the pillars of a Zion society,** which must of necessity operate according to the will of the Lord. When we consecrate our lives, **we dedicate and set apart our time, talents, and material goods for the Lord's purposes.**
- Consecration is uniquely related to the depth of our conversion to our Savior Jesus Christ. Through consecration, we begin the process of purification of our own lives and are better able to bless our brothers and sisters and all those we associate with.
- Consecration is an attitude as well as an observable act of goodness" (*Teachings/Commentaries on D&C*, 166).

## 1. The Lord revealed the law of consecration to the Saints.

### THE ELEMENTS OF THE LAW OF CONSECRATION

#### a. Consecrate possessions.

Under the law of consecration one voluntarily consecrates one's property to the Church by legal deed.

**D&C 42:30:** . . . and consecrate of thy properties . . . with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.

#### b. Receive a stewardship.

The bishop grants stewardships or portions from all properties received.

**D&C 42:32:** . . . every man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property, or that which he has received by consecration, as much as is sufficient for himself and family.

The stewardship comes with a deed of ownership for which the steward is responsible and accountable. The stewardship is treated as private property rather than communal property, though the consecration ultimately belongs to God.

**D&C 51:4:** . . . give unto him a writing that shall secure unto him his portion, that he shall hold it, even this right and this inheritance in the church, until he transgresses and is not accounted worthy by the voice of the church.

#### c. Disposition of surpluses.

Any surplus at the end of the year, in excess of the needs of the family, are to be given to the bishop for placement in the bishop's storehouse to be used to care for the poor, to build houses of worship, and for other worthy purposes.

**D&C 51:13:** And again, let the bishop appoint a storehouse unto this church; and let all things both in money and in meat, which are more than is needful for the wants of this people, be kept in the hands of the bishop.

#### d. United Order.

In March 1832, the Lord revealed that there must be an organization to regulate and administer the law of consecration among His people.

**D&C 78:3:** . . . it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people.

**Stephen E. Robinson, H. Dean Garrett:** "Although the term *united order* is often used as an equivalent for 'the law of consecration,' this usage is technically incorrect, since the *united firm* was specifically the consecrated business partnership between Joseph Smith and other church leaders in Kirtland and Missouri between March 1832 and April 1834. **The law of consecration is the broader term and the eternal principle; the united order was merely one example of how the law of consecration was implemented in the business affairs of the Church during the Kirtland period.**" (*A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, [Deseret Book Co., 2001] 2:350-352).

The principles of the law of consecration have not changed since they were revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith. However, the application of those principles changes from time to time.

- The **law of consecration** is dedicating something to the Lord by each **individual**
- The **united order** is **the organized way** in which the law of consecration is administered among members.

Since 1832, there have been a variety of united orders established within the Church. **All ceased to operate by the beginning of the 20th Century.**

**104:47, 50-53:** And now, a commandment I give unto you concerning Zion, that **you shall no longer be bound as a united order** to your brethren of Zion, only on this wise—And you shall do your business in your own name, and in your own names. And this I have commanded to be done for your salvation . . . The covenants [were] being broken through transgression, by covetousness and feigned words—**Therefore, you are dissolved as a united order with your brethren.**

## **THE PURPOSES OF THE LAW OF CONSECRATION AND WHY THE LORD HAS GIVEN US THIS LAW**

### **1. To care for the poor and needy.**

The Law of Consecration is a perfect law intended to deal with the inequities in society. It dispenses necessities to those in need. **It assists those who cannot assist themselves.**

**D&C 42:30:** . . . thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them.

### **2. To purchase lands, build houses of worship, and build the New Jerusalem.**

When we donate our tithes to the Lord, we are consecrating a portion of our possessions.

**D&C 42:35:** . . . for the purpose of purchasing lands for the public benefit of the church, and building houses of worship, and building up of the New Jerusalem.

### **3. To help the Lord's people overcome pride.**

With pride, people concentrate on themselves, not on anyone else or the Lord.

**D&C 42:40:** And again, thou shalt not be proud in thy heart

### **4. To help the Lord's people be industrious and avoid idleness.**

There is a need for laborers in the field. The building of Zion cannot be done by a few; it helps the individual spiritually.

**D&C 42:42:** Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer.

### **5. To help the Lord's people be one.**

When we consecrate our time and efforts to our ward, we feel more at one with the ward and **come to more fully love the members.**

**D&C 51:9:** And let every man deal honestly, and be alike among this people, and receive alike, that ye may be one.

### **6. To make the Lord's people equal in earthly things and help them receive a place in the celestial kingdom.**

**D&C 78:5-7:** That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things. For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things; **For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.**

### **7. To help the Church "stand independent above all other creatures."**

**D&C 78:14:** . . . that the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world.

**Heber C. Kimball:** "Let us take that course which will make us independent of all other people upon the earth; I know that this is the course for us to take all the time. Then we should put our minds together, and our mites also, to build up the kingdom of God; and if we will do this, being of one spirit, we shall prosper in all things. I know of no other way for us to become of one heart and one mind in regard to the things of the kingdom of God. **By pursuing this course, we shall increase in the knowledge of the truth . . .** Let us endeavor to attain these blessings, for they are ours through faithfulness and diligence in well-doing." (JD, 10:78)

**Hyrum M. Smith & Janne M. Sjodahl:** "The purpose of revealing the celestial order of society was to enable the Church to pass through all trials safely. God knew that persecutions and sufferings would come. He also knew that **obedience to the law revealed would make the Church independent of enemies**" (*D&C Commentary*, 482).

### **8. To help the Lord's people improve their talents for the good of all, seek the interest of their neighbor, and do all things with an eye single to God's glory.**

**D&C 82:18-19:** . . . that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold. Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.

## **2. The law of consecration is an eternal law.**

The law of consecration is an eternal law that the Lord revealed again in our dispensation. Accounts of the Lord's people living this law are included in the **Pearl of Great Price, New Testament, and Book of Mormon.**

**Moses 7:18-19:** And the Lord called his people Zion, because **they were of one heart and one mind**, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was **no poor among them**. And **Enoch** continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God.

**Joseph Fielding Smith:** "We read in the Pearl of Great Price how **Enoch was called to cry repentance**, and through his diligent labors, he gathered together those who were willing to make covenant to serve the Lord and to obey the celestial law or the law of consecration. **This same law was given in its fullness to the saints in early days** and they also were commanded to have all things in common, or, to practice the "**United Order**," which had been given to **Enoch**, and to the Nephites after the Savior visited them. But the Saints at that time were **weak spiritually** and failed to keep this commandment. **Due to this failure, they were caused to suffer persecution and failed to redeem Zion.**" (*The Way to Perfection*, 1949, 274).

**Acts 4:32, 34-35:** 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**. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and **distribution was made unto every man according as he had need**.

**4 Nephi 1:2-3:** . . .the people were **all converted unto the Lord**, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were **no contentions** and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had **all things common among them**; therefore, **there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift**.

The law of consecration is not just a temporal or economic program. It is also a spiritual law that helps members grow spiritually and prepare for eternal life.

**D&C 29:34-35:** . . .**all things unto me are spiritual**, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal; . . .Behold, I gave unto him [Adam] that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him, for **my commandments are spiritual**;

### 3. We can consecrate our lives to the Lord now.

"As Saints of God, we must be prepared and willing to live the law of consecration in its fulness. But we do not need to wait for a future day to consecrate our lives to the Lord. **As we do all we can to live the law of consecration today, we will be better prepared to live the fulness of the law when the Lord asks us to do so**" (Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual)

#### A. Realize that everything we have belongs to the Lord

##### **An Allegory**

God is sitting in Heaven when a scientist says to Him,

"Lord, we don't need you anymore. Science has finally figured out a way to create life from nothing.

In other words, we can now do what you did in the 'beginning'."

"Oh, is that so? Tell me..." replies God.

"Well", says the scientist, "we can take dirt and form it into the likeness of you and breathe life into it, thus, creating man."

"Well, that's interesting. Show Me. "

So, the scientist bends down to the earth and starts to mold the soil.

"Oh no, no, no..." interrupts God,

Get your own dirt."

(Author unknown. <http://www.gospelcom.net/ys/special/lists.html>)

**Gerald N. Lund:** God is responsible for our creation... not just the making of our own bodies, but the whole of creation--the heavens, the earth, and all that in them are. **That simple fact alone should be basis enough for our unending gratitude**. When a man creates something through his own labor--a work of art, a building, a piece of furniture, great music--we say that it is his. In other words, we recognize that he has claim upon it, that he has stewardship over it, that he has the right to do with it as he wishes.

By that same principle, **we should acknowledge that, because all that we see and know comes from the labor of God's hands, it is his. Therefore, whatever we have, or take, or use, or enjoy puts us automatically in his debt.** (*Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation*, 116-117).

**David Clark:** The message from the scriptures is clear: **Earth is the Lord's; man is only a steward.** And as a good steward, man is accountable and must be respectful of Earth and its inhabitants. (*Of Heaven and Earth: Reconciling Scientific Thought with LDS Theology*, 198).

**D&C 104:13-14:** For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine.

**Bishop Victor L. Brown:** "Until we "feel in total harmony" with the principle that **everything we have belongs to the Lord**, "it will be difficult, if not impossible, for us to accept the law of consecration. As we prepare to live this law, we will look forward with great anticipation to the day when the call will come. **If, on the other hand, we hope it can be delayed so we can have the pleasure of accumulating material things, we are on the wrong path**" ("The Law of Consecration," 1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year, 439).

## **B. Make the sacrifices the Lord requires now**

We must be willing to make the sacrifices that the Lord requires of us at the present time. **These include sacrifices of time, talents, and possessions.**

### **1. Pay tithing and fast offerings and give generously in other ways to those in need.**

**Marion G. Romney:** "What prohibits us from giving as much in fast offerings as we would have given in surpluses under the United Order? **Nothing but our own limitations**" (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1966, 100).

### **2. Serve willingly in the Church.**

**President W. Kimball:** "Consecration is the giving of one's time, talents, and means to care for those in need--whether spiritually or temporally--and in building the Lord's kingdom. In Welfare Services, members consecrate as they labor on production projects, donate materials to Deseret Industries, share their professional talents, give a generous fast offering, and respond to ward and quorum service projects. They consecrate their time in their home or visiting teaching. **We consecrate when we give of ourselves**" (*Ensign*, Aug 1984, 4).

### **3. Serve as a full-time missionary.**

**Robert D. Hales:** "Going on a mission teaches you to live the law of consecration. It may be the only time in your life when you can give to the Lord all your time, talents, and resources. In return, the Lord will bless you with His Spirit to be with you. He will be close to you and strengthen you" (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1996, 50).

## **C. Develop Christlike love for others**

"The ability to have **Christlike love for others** is the foundation of the law of consecration. **As we grow in love, our ability to live this law will also grow**" (*Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*).

**President Thomas S. Monson:** "I have many memories of my boyhood. Anticipating Sunday dinner was one of them. Just as we children ... sat anxiously at the table, with the aroma of roast beef filling the room, Mother would say to me, 'Tommy, before we eat, take this plate I've prepared down the street to Old Bob and hurry back.'

"**I could never understand why we couldn't first eat and later deliver his plate of food.** I never questioned aloud but would run down to his house and then wait anxiously as Bob's aged feet brought him eventually to the door. Then I would hand him the plate of food. He would present to me the clean plate from the previous Sunday and offer me a dime as pay for my services. My answer was always the same: 'I can't accept the money. My mother would tan my hide.' He would then run his wrinkled hand through my blond hair and say, 'My boy, you have a wonderful mother. Tell her thank you.' ... **Sunday dinner always seemed to taste a bit better after I had returned from my errand.**"

(*Ensign*, Feb 1992, 4).

## **D. Strive to consecrate all aspects of our lives to the Lord**

**Definition of Steward:** a person who manages another's [God's] property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another [God] or others.

**D&C 104:11-12:** It is wisdom in me; therefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall organize yourselves and appoint every man his **stewardship**;

**12** That every man may give an account unto me of the **stewardship** which is appointed unto him.

**D&C 104:13-14:** For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, **my very handiwork**; and **all things therein are mine.**

**Neal A. Maxwell:** "We tend to think of consecration only in terms of property and money. **But there are so many ways of keeping back part.**"

**READ THIS LIST CAREFULLY: (Ponder these ways of keeping back or withholding consecration.)**

1. An unwillingness to be completely submissive to the Lord's will.

**Neal A. Maxwell:** "The submission of one's will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God's altar. The many other things we 'give' ... are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God's will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!" (Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 30).

2. An unwillingness to give up selfish things, such as "our roles, our time, our preeminence, and our possessions"
  3. Letting hobbies and preoccupations with less important things become too consuming.
  4. Giving commendable civic service but remaining "a comparative stranger to Jesus' holy temples and His holy scriptures."
  5. Being dutiful in family responsibilities but not emulating Jesus' example of gentleness with some family members.
  6. Building up ourselves first rather than the kingdom of God.
  7. Sharing talents publicly while privately retaining a particular pride.
  8. Accepting a Church calling while having a heart more set on maintaining a certain role in the world.
- (Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 88-92; and Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 27-30)

**Neal A. Maxwell:** Increased consecration is not so much a demand for more hours of Church work as it is for more awareness of Whose work this really is! For now, consecration may not require giving up worldly possessions so much as being less possessed by them. ("Settle This in Your Hearts," *Ensign*, Nov 1992, 65).

**Jeffrey R. Holland:** I know that a talk in general conference is not going to cut through the centuries of temporal inequity that have plagued humankind, but I also know that the gospel of Jesus Christ holds the answer to every social and political and economic problem this world has ever faced. And I know we can each do or consecrate something, however small that act may seem to be. We can pay an honest tithe and give our fast and free-will offerings, according to our circumstances. And we can watch for other ways to help. To worthy causes and needy people, we can give time if we don't have money, and we can give love when our time runs out. We can share the loaves we have and trust God that the cruse of oil will not fail. ("A Handful of Meal and a Little Oil," *Ensign*, May 1996, 31)

**Spencer W. Kimball:** "May I suggest three fundamental things we must do if we are to 'bring again Zion,' three things for which we who labor for Zion must commit ourselves.  
"First, we must eliminate selfishness that snares the soul, shrinks the heart, and darkens the mind....  
"Second, we must cooperate completely and work in harmony one with the other. There must be unanimity in our decisions and unity in our actions....  
"Third, we must lay on the altar and sacrifice whatever is required by the Lord. We begin by offering a 'broken heart and a contrite spirit.' We follow this by giving our best effort in our assigned fields of labor and callings. We learn our duty and execute it fully.  
"Finally, we consecrate our time, talents, and means as called upon by our file leaders and as prompted by the whisperings of the Spirit" (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 363-364).

#### 4. Conclusion

**Marion G. Romney:** "When we reach the state of having the "pure love of Christ," our desire to serve one another will have grown to the point where we will be living fully the law of consecration" (*CR*, Oct. 1981, 132).

**Brigham Young:** "We cannot expect to receive real wealth until we receive the riches of eternity, which are eternal. Those riches will not be committed to us, until we shall have filled our measures here, having done all the Lord requires of us, towards perfecting ourselves, and assisting Him in the work of the salvation of the human family. Not until Jesus shall present all things to the Father, saying, I have completed the work thou gavest me to do; here are the results of my labors. Then, and not until then, can we possess real riches, true riches, eternal riches. How vain it is in man to allow himself to think that he can make himself happy with the pleasures of this world. There is no lasting pleasure here, unless it is in God" (*Journal of Discourses*, 18:213).

**Gordon B. Hinckley:** "And whoso is found a faithful, a just, and a wise steward shall enter into the joy of his Lord, and shall inherit eternal life" (D&C 51:19). Every man here has a stewardship for others--faithful, just, and wise. Faithful in all he is asked to do. Just, even-handed, considerate of all for whom he has responsibility. Wise, with that wisdom which comes from the Lord. I would like to suggest that one verse to you as something you could write out and put on the mirror so that every morning you will see it and think of it and ponder it in terms of your responsibility" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 1997], 613).

The law of consecration is designed to push us to spend more time thinking about the well-being of others than our own. It is intended to make people less selfish.

**Gordon B. Hinckley:** "We know that someday we must stand before our Master and give an accounting of our stewardship. I hope and pray that we may do so without embarrassment or excuse. And I hope that we shall not be found to have been wanting in our sincerity, in our devotion, in our effort to handle well and faithfully the responsibility given us by the Lord" (Phoenix Arizona North/West Regional Conference, January 13, 1991).

**Living the Law: Here are some ideas to help us understand and live the Law of Consecration:**

**1. Set some goals and make some plans to live a consecrated life.**

- **Plan for a full-time mission.** Such service provides a time when we have no other distractions and can concentrate on building up the kingdom of God.
- **Remember daily opportunities for consecration.** Family togetherness time and even taking the opportunity for wholesome recreation is part of living a consecrated life. Follow what the Spirit leads you to do.
- **Use wisdom and prudence.** Recognize where and how you can best serve and give. Reevaluate your opportunities, every once in a while, and recommit. Remember, don't run faster than you have strength.
- **Be organized.** Prioritize your life and "organize every needful thing" (D&C 88:19). As you are more organized in your resources, you will be better able to use them to help and lift others.

**2. Follow a pattern of consecration.**

- **Go to the temple.** Attend the temple often to serve those who have gone before. This will also refresh your mind concerning your covenants.
- **Cultivate a spiritual fast.** Fast and pray on a regular basis to better live a consecrated life—don't just go without food on fast Sunday. Not only can you bless others through fast offerings, but you can sacrifice by fasting and praying for others too.
- **Study the word of God.** Regularly search the scriptures to receive instructions from the Lord.
- **Foster a charitable attitude.** Remember to give willingly and not begrudgingly. Look for things to share and not simply to possess.
- **Live unselfishly and with gratitude.** Remember, everything is really the Lord's, for He is the creator of all.
- **Practice modesty and humility.** Concentrate on your needs more than your wants. (Pinegar/Allen, 179).

**How to live the Law of Consecration**

(Study this section later this afternoon, asking yourself how you are doing.)

- D&C 42:40: Don't be **PROUD**
- D&C 42:41: Stay **CLEAN**
- D&C 42:42: Don't be **IDLE**
- D&C 42:43: **CARE** for the sick
- D&C 42:45: Live in **LOVE**
- D&C 42:46: Call upon the Priesthood to **HEAL** the sick
- D&C 42:53: Carry out your individual **STEWARDSHIP**
- D&C 42:54: **PAY** for what you get
- D&C 42:55: **GIVE YOUR EXCESS** to the Church
- D&C 42:56: Seek for the **WORD OF GOD**

**Reasons Why the Saints Failed to Build Zion**

- D&C 101:2 "Transgressions"
- D&C 101:6 "Jarrings"
- D&C 101:6 "Contentions"
- D&C 101:6 "Envyng"
- D&C 101:6 "Strifes:
- D&C 101:6 "Lustful and covetous desires"
- D&C 101:7 "Slow to hearken"
- D&C 101:8 "Esteemed lightly my counsel"
- D&C 105:3 "Have not learned to be obedient"
- D&C 105:3 "Full of all manner of evil"
- D&C 105:3 "Do not impart of their substance"
- D&C 105:4 "Are not united according to . . . the law of the Celestial kingdom"

**Joseph B. Wirthlin:** "Each of you has an eternal calling from which no Church officer has authority to release you. This is a calling given you by our Heavenly Father Himself. In this eternal calling, as with all other callings, you have a stewardship, and "it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity." This most important stewardship is the glorious responsibility your Father in Heaven has given you **to watch over and care for your own soul!**" ("True to the Truth," *Ensign*, May 1997, 16).

**Bruce R. McConkie:** Now I think it is perfectly clear that **the Lord expects far more of us than we sometimes render in response.** We are not as other men. We are the saints of God and have the revelations of heaven. **Where much is given, much is expected.** We are to put first in our lives the things of his kingdom.

We are commanded to live in harmony with the Lord's laws, to **keep all his commandments, to sacrifice all things** if need be for his name's sake, **to conform to the terms and conditions of the law of consecration.**

**We have made covenants** so to do--solemn, sacred, holy covenants, pledging ourselves before gods and angels.

We are under covenant **to live the law of obedience.**

We are under covenant **to live the law of sacrifice.**

We are under covenant **to live the law of consecration.**

With this in mind, hear this word from the Lord: "If you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, **you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.**" (D&C 78:7.) (Bruce R. McConkie, "Obedience, Consecration, and Sacrifice," *Ensign*, May 1975, 51).