

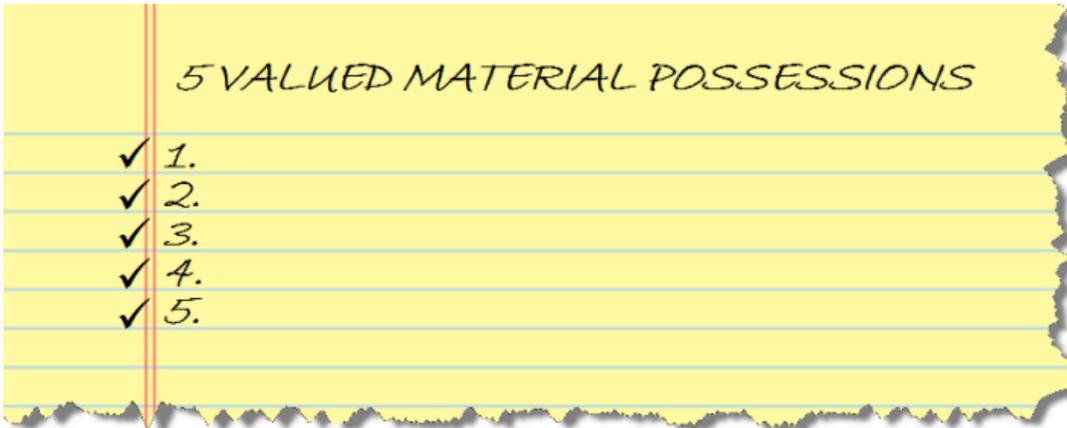
# DOCTRINE & COVENANTS & CHURCH HISTORY GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

\* GREEN MOUNTAIN 1<sup>ST</sup> WARD \* LAKEWOOD, COLORADO \* 04/19/09 \* PAGE 1 \*

## Lesson 14: “The Law of Consecration,” (D&C 42:30–42; 51; 78; 82; 104:11–18; *Our Heritage*, p. 26)

### Introduction

List five of your valued possessions.



**D&C 104:13–14** reminds us that the Lord “*built the earth . . . and all things therein are [His].*” Consider how you feel about the use of your possessions when you realize that all things on the earth are the Lord’s. The principles taught in these verses are fundamental to living the law of consecration. This lesson focuses on this law and the ways in which we can more fully consecrate our lives to the Lord.

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

**D&C 42:30** In February 1831, soon after the Saints began to gather in Kirtland, Ohio, the Lord revealed that they should begin to live the law of consecration.

- **Consecration:** The setting apart or dedication of something to the Lord’s service.
- **Law of Consecration:** The Lord’s way of having individuals consecrate their time, talents, and possessions to the building up of the kingdom and the service of His children.

While this law was observed incompletely and unsuccessfully at various times in Ohio, Missouri, and Utah, it is now in suspension, awaiting a future time when it will be restored.

The Church as an entity failed in the effort to live in harmony with the doctrine, so the Lord suspended the practice for now.

Purposes of the law include:

- **D&C 42:30.** To care for the poor and needy.
- **D&C 42:35.** To purchase lands, build houses of worship, and build the New Jerusalem.
- **D&C 42:40.** To help the Lord’s people overcome pride.
- **D&C 42:42.** To help the Lord’s people be industrious and avoid idleness.
- **D&C 51:9.** To help the Lord’s people be one.
- **D&C 78:3–7.** To make the Lord’s people equal in earthly things and help them receive a place in the celestial kingdom.
- **D&C 78:14.** To help the Church “*stand independent above all other creatures.*”
- **D&C 82:17–19.** 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.

### Lesson Highlights

- The Lord revealed the law of consecration to the Saints.
- The law of consecration is an eternal law.
- We can consecrate our lives to the Lord now.

**A study of this lesson will help us understand the law of consecration and its eternal purposes and desire to consecrate our lives more fully to the service of God.**

### Next Week

#15 “*Seek Ye Earnestly the Best Gifts*” (D&C 46; Articles of Faith 1:7; 1 Corinthians 12–13; Moroni 10:8–18; *Our Heritage*, pp. 42–43, 47–48, 63)



From these purposes, it is clear that 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).

The principles of the law of consecration have not changed since it was revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith. However, the application of those principles changes from time to time. The current prophet helps us understand how to apply these principles in our day.

### **Following are highlights of how the law of consecration was administered during the early days of the Church:**

#### **Consecrating possessions**

Under the law of consecration, Church members voluntarily consecrated their possessions to the Church by legal deed (D&C 42:30).

#### **Receiving a stewardship**

After Church members consecrated their possessions, the bishop granted them stewardships, or portions, from all the properties received. The size of the stewardship depended on the circumstances and needs of the family, as determined by the bishop in consultation with the member who received it (D&C 42:32; 51:3).

The stewardship was given with a deed of ownership so each member would be fully responsible and accountable for managing it (D&C 51:4; 72:3–4; 104:11–13). The stewardship, then, was treated as private property, not common or communal property, even though all property ultimately belongs to God.

### **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.

### **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.

#### **Surpluses**

If members produced a surplus from their stewardships beyond what was necessary for their families, at the end of the year they gave it to the bishop to put in the bishop's storehouse (D&C 42:33; 51:13). The bishop used the surplus to care for the poor, to build houses of worship, and for other worthy purposes (D&C 42:34–35).

#### **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). He called this organization the "united order" (D&C 92:1). In subsequent revelations the Lord gave further instructions concerning the united order (see, for example, D&C 104).



**Newel K. Whitney (1795–1850).** In 1832, Whitney at the age of thirty-seven became the chief financial agent of the United Firm at Kirtland, after having been appointed bishop the previous year.

**D&C 29:34–35.** Clearly, this law is not just a worthy economic program or demanding temporal commandment—it is designed to prepare a people for living celestial laws and growing spiritually.

- a) **Moses 7:18.** The people of Enoch.
- b) **Acts 4:32, 34–35.** The Saints after the Savior's Resurrection.
- c) **4 Nephi 1:1–3, 12–13, 15.** The Nephites after the Savior's visit to them.

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.

*“No revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants rescind, suspend, or revoke the law of consecration. . . . The law, in other words, was revealed to Joseph Smith in February 1831, but the law itself simply has been, is, and ever will be. Consecration is the law of the celestial kingdom, and section 78 teaches that no one will receive an inheritance there who has not obeyed the law (see D&C 78:7).”*

(H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill, eds., *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context*, 213.)



We can choose to:

**Realize that everything we have belongs to the Lord**

**D&C 104:13-14; D&C 51:19; 78:22** teach ownership, responsibility, and reward.

**Bishop Victor L. Brown**, former Presiding Bishop of the Church, said that 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* [1977], 439).

**D&C 19:26.** The Lord warned Martin Harris not to covet his own property, but to impart it freely. We must overcome covetousness if we are to consecrate our lives to the Lord.

**President Brigham Young** said: *“I am more afraid of covetousness in our Elders than I am of the hordes of hell. ... All our enemies ... in the world, and all hell with them marshalled against us, could not do us the injury that covetousness in the hearts of this people could do us; for it is idolatry”* (in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:353).

**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. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve give us direction regarding how we implement the principles of the law of consecration in our day.

We can consecrate our time, talents, and possessions to help build the kingdom of God today by:

a) **Paying tithing and fast offerings and giving generously in other ways to those in need.** By doing these things, we can help the Church care for the poor and carry on the important activities necessary to build the kingdom of God on earth. **Elder Marion G. Romney** asked: *“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”* (in Conference Report, Apr. 1966, 100; or *Improvement Era*, June 1966, 537).

b) **Serve willingly in the Church.** The Lord has admonished each person to “learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence” (D&C 107:99). We should fulfill the callings we receive to the best of our ability. In addition to specific Church callings, we can share the gospel with others, do temple work, and seek to strengthen the testimonies of those who are new or weak in the faith.

c) **Serve as a full-time missionary.** **Elder Robert D. Hales** of the Quorum of the Twelve taught: *“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”* (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 50; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 36).

**Develop Christlike love for others**

**D&C 82:19** and **Jacob 2:17** teach how we are to show our love for others. Developing that love for others is essential to living the law of consecration—it is the foundation of that law.

**Elder Thomas S. Monson** tells a story of his youth when his mother would have him deliver Sunday dinner to an elderly neighbor—old Bob. *“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”* (“The Long Line of the Lonely,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1992, 4).

**President Gordon B. Hinckley:**

*“Without the spirit of dedication, without the spirit of sacrifice, without the spirit of consecration, temples could not function. That goes without saying. The work in the temple is essential, it is a work of personal sacrifice and individual consecration. . . . the law of sacrifice and the law of consecration were not done away with and are still in effect.”*

*(Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 639.)*



## Strive to consecrate all aspects of our lives to the Lord

**Elder Neal A. Maxwell** said: "*We tend to think of consecration only in terms of property and money. But there are so many ways of keeping back part*" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 90; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 66).

**D&C 64:34** and these examples give us an idea of how we might fall short of the goal:

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

**Elder Maxwell** said: "*The submission of one's will is the really the only uniquely personal thing that 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 really give something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!*" (Ensign, Nov 1995, 24)

## Conclusion

The Church today is still living the law of tithing, and yet, there are subtle indications that the Lord's prophets would like to move us from a strict tithe to a more liberal attitude of giving that would be in harmony with the principles of consecration.

- **President Spencer W. Kimball** challenged us to "*give, instead of the amount saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much much more--ten times more where we are in a position to do it.*"
- **President Thomas S. Monson** also asked us to increase our fast offerings so that the needs of the poor might be totally satisfied from them. If we cloaked his words in the vernacular spoken about consecration in the 1830s, he would have said bring your surplus to the storehouse or treasury and take care of the poor and receive your inheritance from the Lord. With this is accomplished then all the tithes in the sacred treasury can be used for sacred things--meaning missionary work, publishing the scriptures, organizing missions, building temples, and extracting names for temple work.

As we change from donating what we are required to give to giving all we can, then we will find ourselves living the law of consecration, which we have promised to live when we are "*endowed with power from on high*" in the temple. Then members of our family, our ward, our stake, and finally, the Church will have all things common among them; therefore there are no rich and poor, bond and free, but all are free, and partakers of eternal life. (See 4 Nephi 1:3.) We should examine our lives carefully to see how we can consecrate ourselves more fully.

- **An unwillingness to give up selfish things**—our roles, our preeminence, our possessions.
- **Letting hobbies or other diversions become too consuming**
- **Giving commendable civic service but becoming strangers to the temple and the scriptures**
- **Being dutiful in family responsibilities, but not being gentle and Christlike with some family members**
- **Building up ourselves first before the kingdom of God**
- **Being privately prideful while sharing talents publicly**
- **Accepting a church calling while our hearts are more set on things of the world**

## Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How has the understanding that everything belongs to the Lord effected you?
- What are some ways in which you might be "keeping back part" when you could achieve greater consecration in the service of God and His children?
- How are you blessed as you strive for more complete consecration?

