

United For Zion

Principles For Uniting The Saints
To Eliminate Poverty



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Preface: The Power of One

And it is my purpose to provide for my [poor] saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in mine own way... —D&C 104:15-16

The Lord's promises in the scriptures are clear. He will care for His poor. But, He will do it His way. "His way" of doing things made it possible to feed 5000 with only enough fish and bread for a family picnic. If we work in His way, He makes the astounding promise that we will do "greater works than these..."¹ As we do His work in His way, He promises to extend our small abilities.

A message we can take from seeing His way of doing things is that one person—even one with the equivalent of a few fishes or crumbs of bread—can make a difference. Sometimes our little offering is as simple as spreading the word and drawing attention to needs and concerns. The Lord can take these efforts and add to them. As we spread the word, what was one person becomes a few who are one in purpose. He tells us that where just a few are gathered who are unified in His purposes, He will be with us.²

For example, let us introduce you to Elisa, Jed, Josh, a high school student council, and a bunch of their neighbors and friends.

In October, 1998, Hurricane Mitch pounded the Central American nation of Honduras leaving hundreds of thousands homeless and devastated. A couple of weeks later, 16-year-old Elisa was kicking back at home after a tough day at high school when her college age brother, Jed, and his buddy Josh came bouncing in. They were buzzing about how they had just joined a group that was trying to figure out what could be done to help Hondurans get back on their feet.

Jed and Josh rattled on about setting up little banks, making loans, providing small business advice and other interesting things they had heard about in this group.³ As

¹John 14:12.

²Matthew 18:10.

³For a more complete description of microcredit, see Chapter Three.

she listened, Elisa moved quickly from curiosity to fascination. She began to wonder if there was really something a couple of poor and busy college punks could do to make a lasting difference in a faraway place.

That afternoon, while Jed and Josh moved on to other topics, Elisa continued to think. She wasn't a college student. She had no money. She had a full time academic commitment. What could she do?

Since she didn't know what to do, she did what Jed and Josh had done: she talked.

First she talked to girlfriends at school. Then they talked to some student body officers, who talked to school administrators, who talked to all of the Senior Class officers. After a while, the talk piled up high enough to reach a decision: to change the school's tradition of choosing a Senior Class project that would benefit the school. This year, they would choose a project that would benefit poor Hondurans.

And benefit them it did. Elisa's talking started a chain of events that raised \$5,500. That money was enough to start two small banks that would make loans of \$100 to about 55 struggling Hondurans. These loans were used by them to start small businesses. Those businesses generated money that rebuilt houses, fed families and repaid loans. The repaid loans made other loans possible which continued the virtuous cycle.

Then Elisa went further. She told a large group of family and friends that she wanted to go to Honduras to help set up the banks. Each contributed a little; and, the following summer, she, Jed and Josh headed for Central America to serve for a couple of months.

Look at where all this started. And look how many people became involved just because one person took a small and simple step. The good work that was done in Honduras required hundreds of conversations, dozens of small donors and a handful of energetic leaders. The result was a oneness of heart and mind that helped erase a little bit of poverty. What action started the chain of events that unified those hearts and rolled back poverty? Talking.

The message of this book is that when millions of Latter-day Saints start taking small steps like these, the result will be increased oneness among the saints. As this oneness prevails, the Lord will extend our efforts. Our solutions joined with His blessings, will have effects far beyond our abilities—so much so that when our unity is sufficient, there will finally be no poor among us.

As you read this book, we hope you will find one or two things you can do to become part of the process starting now.

This book is organized around four goals that inspired us to write it.

First, in Chapter One we will suggest that the first step to eliminating poverty in the church is for all of us to gain a greater understanding of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Oneness with the Father and likewise amongst the family of Christ, is the purpose of the Atonement. Christ was referring to this oneness when He said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."⁴ As we'll see, oneness of heart and mind is also a condition for eliminating poverty. We believe that when our understanding of this truth deepens, spiritual and temporal progress will accelerate hand in hand.

Second, in Chapter Two, we will take a lesson from former day saints on how to eliminate poverty. If the Lord says that work with the poor must be done "in mine own way," we would do well to find out what His way is. In recent decades billions in international aid has been spent in Africa alone with no appreciable improvement. On the other hand, saints in the past have ascended rapidly from poverty on at least ten separate occasions. From our study of latter- and former-day saints' economic development strategies, we will put forward the set of United Order Principles we saw reflected in these efforts. We believe it was through the practice of these principles that they were able to make such extraordinary progress. Furthermore, we suggest that these principles are what the Lord means by "His way" of aiding the poor. Our progress can also be miraculous as we, through both inspiration and perspiration, find ways to apply these principles in aiding the poor among us.

Third, in Chapters Three through Five we will describe efforts underway in various parts of the world—both inside and outside the church—to eliminate poverty. After describing these strategies we will lay them alongside United Order Principles as a way of demonstrating how Latter-day Saints can help make good works even better.

Finally, in Chapters Six and Seven we will offer options for even the most harried of Latter-day Saints to help in the work of unifying the saints and eliminating poverty.

As you begin this book, we commend you for the commitment you've already demonstrated by reading these pages. We hope that as you read you'll find something to talk about. We are confident that as you talk, you will be inspired about how you can become part of this exciting and rewarding 21st Century equivalent to the pioneering of 150 years ago. What they began is ours to finish—the building of Zion.

⁴John 17:3.

About The Authors

Warner Woodworth is a professor of organizational behavior at Brigham Young University, where he teaches Third World Development, Microcredit, and Social Entrepreneurship. He is married to Kaye Colvin Woodworth and they have ten children. Author of 7 books and over 150 articles, he has been engaged in empowering the poor for two decades. He has helped found and/or served on the boards of numerous nongovernmental organizations including Enterprise Mentors International, Ouelessebougou-Utah Alliance, Chasquis Humanitarian Foundation of the Andes, and H.E.L.P. Honduras, among others. He is co-author of *Small Really is Beautiful* (1997) and *Working Toward Zion* (1999).

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