

A Different Idea from One of the Lot Group - 11/28/17

Hello everyone. My name is Doug Larson, and I was the 4th “lot” selected who later had to withdraw.

In writing this, I want everyone to know that it is not for the purpose to discredit anything that has been said or received by revelation. I stated before that I stand with the other seven, and that is the truth. I think they faithfully did what they were asked to do by the Proposal Committees, and that the answer they received was inspired.

When I excused myself because of a pressing health concern, I asked the Lord if that meant I was excused from participating in the process of determining the “final” guide and standard. The unequivocal answer I received was that I was not. But what then, I wondered, could I do to help out? The other seven were working hard (and checking in with me from time to time), but I was no longer privy to their conversations.

From the beginning of being selected by lots, I was conflicted, because I wasn’t quite sure which path to take with the guide and standard. On the one hand, we were given stacks of content which represented hours and hours of work. We were encouraged to use their material and continue this labor, even though it would mean some sacrifice of time and sleep. On the other hand, the Lord said that it should be a “light thing.” The moment it became otherwise, in my mind, meant that we were deviating from that foundational commission.

Secondly, I knew that there were various approaches—all which had merit—as to what the content should look like. Should it include only the words of Christ spoken in the Sermons? Should Denver’s words be in there? What about the “proper” way to perform ordinances, work in fellowships and instructions for other such things? Were they to be a part of this? Would it be possible that the Lord would speak according to the language and understanding of men, meaning that the “guiding principle” could be a statement which was based on His doctrine and actually guided one to do “good,” but was not verbatim from the scriptures or Denver’s words?

I was also concerned with who might be coming upon this statement down the road. Should it be written in a way which would appeal to those who have different cultures and traditions, or whose methods of performing rites was not the same as what was stated? Not only that, would it draw their hearts towards Christ and immerse them in the kind of love that He represents? Would it appeal to those who have become disillusioned with religion and might be triggered by using “holier than thou” language; thus, repelling them from this movement?

On Wednesday, November 22nd, not knowing what else to do, I knelt down and asked these questions to the Father. I also asked about those who had submitted different versions of the Guiding Principles statement. How could we forget about them? After all, hadn’t this process, as chaotic as it had been, caused everyone to really look into Christ’s doctrine and ponder it? That had to be a good thing, right? How could we discount their good intentions, even if the language varied in each proposal?

Finally, while praying, I just put it out there, and said, “I know that it might be out of my charge to do this, but I would like to present ALL of the proposals to you.” No sooner had the words left my lips, when I distinctively heard,

I, the Lord, accept each proposed guide and standard presented to me, and will hold every individual to the standard which they agree to follow.

Now, I say unto all: cease your contending and unite in the spirit of my law. Live my words. Go and produce fruit so the world may see it and be drawn towards your light, that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven. And the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one. Amen.

In The Answer and the Covenant, the Lord said this:

But I require a statement of principles to be adopted by the mutual agreement of my people, for if you cannot do so you will be unable to accomplish other works that I will require at your hands. When you have an agreed statement of principles I require it to also be added as a guide and standard for my people to follow. Remember there are others who know nothing, as yet, of my work now underway, and therefore the guide and standard is to bless, benefit and inform them—so I command you to be wise in word and kind in deed as you write what I require of you.

If it is impossible, as seems the case, for a large group of people to agree on a body of text which represents their principles, then perhaps the Lord is offering a different opportunity than we think. An unyielding statement of beliefs has the potential to become oppressive dogma (ever read Animal Farm?) or something which divides, as we have seen with this exercise. It can appear to undervalue and cast away those who might have a different approach than the collective at large.

So maybe the “statement” is really about how those who differ in language, culture, ideas and knowledge come together. My principles may be a list which is 10 pages long, while another person can look to one succinct sentence to be guided. Is either of us “wrong” or do both invite to do “good?” Is it that majority rules in Heaven, or do we still have our own individuality there, and the more important thing is to respect another person’s approach using patience, longsuffering, kindness and gentle persuasion in our actions? Isn’t it better that we consider the perspective of our brothers and sisters and acknowledge the Voice which has spoken to them, than that we are “right” about what we think God is saying?

*For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which **inviteth to do good**, and to **persuade** to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.*

Christ is in every person. And we are told to follow that which makes us believe in Christ, so it only makes sense that there are a variety of ways to live righteously. Some do it by strictly obeying commandments, others by following the Spirit in the moment. Some love serving others, some worship through traditions of their fathers. For some it is cultural or familial. They are all "good" if they **invite** you to believe in Christ, who is the embodiment of unconditional love, mercy and acceptance, and sends rain on the just and unjust.

When I think about the “statement,” (whatever it ends up being), I envision the different people “who know nothing, as yet” of the work underway, and ask the question, “will it bless, benefit and inform them? Moreover, will it guide US in our actions to do good?” As I ponder, these are some of the faces I see in my mind’s eye:



Couldn't the statement be about how we accept each other in our varying belief systems and **invite** one another to share the "good" things? In other words, rather than simply repeating the Lord's law verbatim, could the statement be an example of His words in action? Surely, everyone can coalesce around the idea that we respect each other's approach to the Lord, whether it is an individual or collective thing. Surely, "mutual agreement" can be something like "If you give me the benefit of the doubt with what I believe and follow, then I will do the same for you." Or even better, "We believe that there is truth in all traditions and methods if the ultimate purpose is to love and accept each other. Let all who have truth bring it and join it with ours, that we may learn together."

It has been prophesied that books will come forth which will confirm the teachings of the Lamb of God. If we state to the world, "We have the truth, and you must conform to our version of it," then how will that ever attract those who safeguard their own records? The Lord visited other nations and taught them too. Shouldn't we be saying, "Please bring what you have, we would like to learn from your wisdom."? Furthermore, outside groups need to see from our own example that this "covenant" group, who obviously have different ideas about "principles," came together without compulsory means, in spite of our differences. Our "statement of principles to be adopted by the mutual agreement" could simply be that each person has principles and values they hold dear, and it is up to them to determine what they are. We mutually agree to hear the other person's perspective, try to learn from it, and to teach them our own guiding principles if asked. Persuasion to not only each other in this movement, but the entire world would come in the form of viewing our fellow man the way God views them, and then behaving according to that view. This approach would not negate all the proposed standards put out there, but only give an individual the opportunity to live their stated truth.

That seems like a "light thing" to me, anyway.

No one reading this is under any obligation to believe what was received or expressed. But I felt that He desired that I share my questions to Him, His reply and the accompanying thoughts.

With love and peace,

Doug Larson

PS – As an aside, if there was ever to be a "vote" on anything like this, the only vote that would matter would be those who oppose it. For if even a single covenanted individual didn't agree (just one out of a hundred), then the whole thing would fall to pieces. But I would love to hear the reasons for disagreement, because to me, this approach gives everyone exactly what they want, in the language and understanding which works for them, without imposing a majority "rule."

PPS - Below is a conversation between the G&S blog custodians and Doug.

G&S blog custodian:

Hey Doug,

I hadn't actually read your post until a few minutes ago and after reading it, a couple things came to mind.

In the answer we are told that "there are others who know nothing, as yet, of my work now underway, and therefore the guide and standard is to bless, benefit and inform them."

If I am understanding you correctly, your statement would simply be that "If you have truth, bring it to us." because this would allow everyone to worship as their conscience directs. While this is something we ought to be telling people, it doesn't inform them of the work underway. Does that make sense?

We are still 100% willing to post your document, but wanted to point those couple of things out.

Let us know what you decide!

Doug:

Please feel free to include our conversation as a post-script, as I'm sure many will have the same question.

I agree that the informing part seems elusive with this approach. But we can inform people in more ways than just words on paper (or stainless steel, for that matter). In fact, words can actually be deceitful or damaging when "this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men."

So the informing, along with the blessing and benefitting comes through the works instead of the words: "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them."

Someone recently said, "If you want the greatest challenge in life, try loving your fellow man unconditionally and viewing them as God would view them, and then behaving according to that view. And out of that you will learn a great deal more about Christ than you can simply by studying. Walking in His path is a greater revelation of who He is than anything else that is provided. Joseph Smith once remarked that if you could gaze into Heaven for five minutes you would know more about it than if you read every book that has been written on the subject. Likewise, if you live charitably for five minutes in the presence of what you would normally condemn, what you would normally find repugnant; if you can deal with that charitably, you will understand Christ better than if you spend a lifetime reading books written about Him."

In other words, we inform others by our actions. Those who know nothing yet of the work underway will see a people living their principles and the bounteous fruit which comes from it, and be informed about the hearts of this people, which has a far greater ability to inform than mere words. A great example of this is Ammon's service to King Lamoni. The king was informed by Ammon's faithfulness in serving. Later, Lamoni's own curiosity and inquiry made it possible that Ammon could teach about Christ, but that was after the "fruit" of Ammon's works had been offered and received.

I get that this is a new and different approach than what has been proposed. But it enables us to not only worship according to the dictates of our own conscience, but inform the world that Christ-centered principles put to actions will bring about the gifts He has promised, and isn't THAT His (marvelous) "work underway?"

Thanks for the chance to explain myself. Please post at your convenience.

---Doug

G&S blog custodian:

That's a fabulous idea actually. If you don't mind, I have another question below about the proposal that we could include in a post-script so that some of the big questions are already out of the way. If you just would like us to post things as they are so far that is fine too -

I think you are absolutely correct in your reasoning. I also want to bring up the Lord's comments that, "You are not excused from writing a statement of principles that I have required at your hands."

So while you are absolutely right about our actions making a statement, we are not excused from putting some of those down on paper.

Doug:

I think we have some wiggle room in language given with the mandate of “writing a statement of principles.” After all, He doesn’t say that we need to make a list of all the commandments which we feel are most important and include directions for various rites, even though some who have covenanted may not agree.” (In other words, this doesn’t need to be a Handbook of Instruction). It is natural that our gentile minds would go this direction, because it is how we know how to do things.

Here are some synonyms for the word “statement:”

Account

Announcement

Comment

Presentation

Testimony

Affirmation

So I think it is worth seeing if the Lord would allow us to hold to the “testimony” meaning of the word, in which case, the written statement would be more about how we testify or witness the principles we hold dear. Why couldn’t the written statement be as simple as something which allows each individual (without perceived compulsion) to seek the Spirit (the best “gifts,” some of which are listed in Moroni 10) to learn principles which are important to them, and then invites everyone to share those principles (the fruit) with each other in word and especially deed? Of course, it would need to be described in a manner and language which encourages people—no matter their culture or current beliefs—to bring what they have to the table for all to “feast” upon.

Kind of brings a whole new meaning to what a tithe or offering might actually be, and could help bring understanding as to why the Lord wanted these words of Malachi included in the Book of Mormon:

Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts. But ye say: Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say: Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; **and prove me now herewith**, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy **the fruits** of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the fields, saith the Lord of Hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

.....

*Then **they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written** before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*

I don't want to posit what that statement actually is, but my experience is that the Lord is open to creativity. I hope that makes sense.

--Doug