

GUIDE AND STANDARD

Written as a requirement from the Lord, and adopted by the mutual agreement of the body of believers on 13 August 2017, to be added to the scriptures as a guide and standard to follow, and to bless, benefit and inform the Lord's people. All fellowships were invited to send representatives to a special meeting on 5 August 2017, which was called for the purpose of editing and accepting this statement of principles. Most of the fellowships sent representatives to the meeting, which ended with a unanimous vote to approve and submit it to the body for consideration.

A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES, PRESENTED TO THOSE WHO AGREE TO FOLLOW THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST AS SET FORTH IN THE BOOK OF MORMON AND TO JOIN TOGETHER IN FELLOWSHIP. THESE ARE GIVEN BY WISDOM, AS A STANDARD BY WHICH WE GOVERN OURSELVES AND NOT ONE ANOTHER.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has declared that today is once again a day of salvation. As salvation requires a personal relationship with Christ, He has set His hand to gather His sheep from the four corners of the earth, to free them from the bonds of Babylon and chains of false religion, to re-enthroned the agency of man, and to reestablish the New and Everlasting Covenant with a people who will have Him to be their God. His invitation to His sheep is to awake and arise, to repent and return, and to organize themselves, accepting His invitation to come to Him and ascend back into the presence of the Father. Fellowships are a means the Lord has given to prepare a people for this great undertaking. We seek to govern ourselves by following correct principles taught in scripture. Unlike rules that only preoccupy, principles ennoble, inviting people to learn higher truths, develop wisdom, and govern themselves after the pattern of Heaven and according to the dictates of their own conscience. Those who labor in this work with all their heart, might, mind, and strength will become glorious in the eyes of the Lord.

Concerning the Doctrine of Christ

Faith is the assurance we have of unseen things which are true. It is the principle of action and power in mortals and in God. Acting upon correct belief is the essence of faith. We are all commanded to believe in Jesus Christ and act upon that belief by obeying Him.

Repentance is recognizing error, turning away from it, and turning to face God instead. God forgives sin when we forsake it and seek forgiveness. Believers in Jesus Christ repent by gaining knowledge of His ways and doing as He did.

Baptism is required of all who believe in Jesus Christ and repent of their sins. Baptism must be performed by immersion, by one holding proper authority, and when possible, in living water such as a river, lake, or sea. Our Lord gave the following instructions:

Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them. And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying: "Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water.

The Holy Ghost is the promised gift of the Father to those who have faith in His Son, repent of their sins, and receive baptism. This connection to God will give you access to truth, which speaks to your mind and heart. Seek to hear, understand, and obey God's will through this connection.

Meeting in Fellowship

Call your solemn assembly as I have commanded you, and as all have not faith, seek diligently, and teach one another words of wisdom, yea, seek out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning, even by study and also by faith.

The principles required to elevate a body of believers into the body of Christ are found within the scriptures. In preparation to produce fruit meet for the Father's kingdom, God invites us to gather as family and friends in independently governed fellowships. A fullness of charity, the greatest of all virtues, can only be gained as we reach outside ourselves and our families to become one through the love of God and sacrifice for our fellow men. It is the nature of almost all men to stand as sentinels, looking outward to see what another may sacrifice, but the focus should be within our own hearts, asking God what more we can do. In fellowships we have the opportunity to practice these principles, which include alleviating the poor among us, bearing each other's burdens, and seeking to elevate all in our sphere.

Fellowships of saints should be patterned after the order of heaven. There should be no compulsion, envy, or strife in our meetings, but they should be full of long-suffering, meekness, gentleness, love unfeigned, kindness, and pure knowledge. All are free to organize as best suits the needs of the group. It is not necessary to set up a lasting supervisory structure among believers when all are animated by the Mind of God. Rather than a hierarchy, decisions are made in councils, guided by the scriptures, and governed by common consent. When people cooperate with one another and willingly agree, they are free and are acting according to their own agency to bring to pass great things without constraint. That is required if we are to become equal and remain free. It is ever thus with the Lord.

Decisions made within fellowships are made openly, with each standing as a witness of what he or she believes. All should exercise self-restraint and humility, and refrain from dominating the discussion; members should share their opinions to the best of their ability, then trust the Lord with the final outcome. Decisions need not be made in haste, but must be built upon righteous principles for God to carry out His work with this people. It is better to defer for a time than to reach a hasty decision, because the Lord condemns haste, which brings pestilence and confusion.

Every man and every woman is given gifts born of the Spirit, and all are called to build up the kingdom of God upon the earth without envy or covetousness, for each gift is needed. Talents and gifts are given to allow us to emulate the Lord, to serve and lift our neighbor, and to forward the cause of Zion. However, the earth is full of lying spirits. The Lord has said, *“To avoid deception, study the thoughts and impressions you receive: if they fill with pride, vainglory, laziness, an ambition to control and lead, or suggest that you alone are faithful while all around you are in error, they are not of me, but are of the Devil. I, the Lord, tell you truly that the humility and meekness required for those who would be my servants is hardly found on the Earth. Repent, therefore, and adopt the ways of your Lord.”*

The Lord's name must not be invoked in vain. This means that unless He has explicitly directed to preface a message as coming from His directive, we are obliged to persuade only by pure knowledge, through the medium of scripture. Grounded on the bedrock of scripture, personal revelations may lift and inspire the body, resulting in further light and truth. Man's thoughts and ways are lower than God's. Therefore, if led by the Spirit, one may be led to share an experience, but it should not be used as leverage to compel agreement; rather, inspiration by way of dream, vision, messenger, or His Spirit should be shared and judged by what is found in scripture, that we may remember not only to say, but also to do what was given us by God.

When beginning an endeavor that is intended to impact many fellowships, consider casting a wide net to allow all who feel so inspired to join. After bringing in all those who desire to labor, take time to reach unity in heart and mind about the endeavor, make a commitment to see the project through, and then plead for Heaven's guidance and support. If that group will work with an eye single to His glory and the welfare of Zion, rather than their own name and reputation, the Lord will take their weak effort and give it His strength. Just as it is wise to refrain from quickly adding in others to the group who were not originally called to labor (as much labor is required to bring individuals to a unity of heart and mind without compulsory means), it is equally important to remember that the Lord is Master of the vineyard, and He will call servants throughout the day to labor. Do not turn those away who feel called to labor; the laborer is worthy of his hire. While it is a righteous principle to not seek credit or glory of men, accountability is also a true principle. Therefore, let there be both a spokesman and a witness of the endeavor for the body of believers. If a vote is needed for the body to accept the product, then time must be given to the body to deliberate before a vote can be requested. Labor in the Lord's vineyard is not confined to completing the product, project, or endeavor at hand; in the Lord's eyes, the

labor is inextricably tied to working together in unity. A small group, in unity with each other and the Lord, is more terrible than an army with banners.

Tithing and Sacrifice

Tithes and offerings follow the principle of sacrifice. Balance and equality can be achieved within a fellowship when individuals willingly share with those around them out of their God-given abundance, as directed by the Holy Ghost. Tithes are gathered within the fellowship and administered by the common consent of the fellowship. It is recommended that women facilitate the process so that decisions are made in wisdom and needs are considered which women alone may recognize. Tithing is for the poor and should be collected to help those in need within a fellowship, including food, clothing, housing, medical and educational costs, and for such purposes as the fellowship determines to be appropriate, on a case by case basis. While tithes should not be used to support the idle, it is better to give freely than to judge the efforts of your fellow man. We should also willingly give offerings to those who ask of us and not turn the beggar away from our door.

The Lord has stated, *“The purpose of tithing was never to establish a wealthy general fund nor to invite the wrongful accumulation of wealth that has resulted from the long abuse of this law. The law was to be a light thing, easily borne by the faithful. Tithing was always to be taken from surplus (meaning unnecessary excess property), and increase (meaning what remains after all costs of the household have been paid). It was to be drawn out of the abundance in the possession of the giver, so that there may be enough and to spare, not from property required for their necessities. The tithes of this people are to be used for the poor among this people, if they want to become Mine.”*

If there is an excess of funds gathered, the fellowship can donate them towards a temple or by common consent decide to contribute to the needs of another fellowship. Stretching outward from one's group binds together hearts and minds with cords of love and sacrifice. It is necessary for these bonds to form within and between fellowships, so that the Lord may transform individual members into a unified body.

Ordinances and Blessings

Gospel ordinances, including baptism and the Lord's Supper, require priesthood authority in the man performing them. The following explains how ordinances can be performed with authority given by Jesus Christ, rather than by our attempting to take the authority upon ourselves. It points to how we can have men called of God in our day.

To receive authority, a man must first be ordained by another man who has authority, and second, ask for and receive power directly from God. A man need not be re-ordained if he was ordained to the priesthood before April of 2014 and can trace his line of authority back to Christ through Joseph Smith. If ordained after that date, he should be ordained by a man with authority in a fellowship, and a proper record should be kept of his line of authority stemming from the fellowship's proceedings. When ordaining a man to the priesthood, ordain him to “the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God,” by the laying on of hands. In all cases, the ordination is not the end, but the means to which the end may be received, which end is to receive an errand from the Lord. Power in the Priesthood can only come from Christ. Therefore, a man should follow the pattern laid out in the *Book of Mormon* and get authority from Christ's word, spoken to him by the power of the Spirit, to ratify the ordination before acting.

If the man wishes to perform priesthood ordinances outside his own family, he must also be approved or sustained by at least seven women who are acquainted with his daily walk. If married, his wife must be one of the seven. As soon as an ordinance is needed, women are qualified to vote. If a young man lives at home with his mother, she must be the first of those to sustain him; she shall be his advocate with the women. If she will not sustain her son, her view should be considered as better informed than the view of any other seven women, even if they would consent, as a young man should first have his mother's confidence before performing priestly functions outside his family.

When it is proposed that a man be sustained by at least seven women, before that sustaining vote is taken, there should be a discussion as to whether there are any opposed to the man being sustained. If there are, those

opposing should be allowed to first express any concerns about the man, and the women should hear the reasons before they decide whether to proceed with sustaining him. After the vote, all of the women who vote to sustain the man should sign a certificate, so the man can demonstrate that he has been sustained. They should also write about their sustaining vote in their personal records so that there may be an abundance of witnesses.

Removing the authority to perform public ordinances is likewise to be done by the vote of women acquainted with the man's daily walk. If a man's worthiness to perform ordinances outside his family is called into question, then a conference of twelve women in his home fellowship, or in private at a general conference, can be convened to deal with the question. In removing authority, at least two witnesses should speak against the accused, and he should be allowed to speak on his behalf and call such witnesses as he chooses. Men can be witnesses, but only women are allowed to vote. Removal must be by unanimous vote of all twelve of the women present to end the man's authority to perform ordinances outside his family. Reinstatement of the man's authority must be considered by the same council of twelve women when the man petitions for the decision to be rescinded and requires seven of the twelve to agree upon his reinstatement, which can occur at any time.

Blessings of healing and of relief may be given by men and women according to their faith. Blessings are given meekly, not to support a craft, or for money, or to receive the praise of men, and should freely be given when solicited by the beneficiary or the beneficiary's family. The administration of these blessings should follow the dictates of prudence, skill, and the Spirit.

The Lord's Supper

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper consists of bread and wine, is the means by which He may fill us with His Spirit, and is offered to all who have been baptized. The bread is broken, and all kneel while the man says the following prayer, exactly as written:

O God the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

The man who is officiating also blesses the wine (or an alternative, such as grape juice, which symbolizes the blood of our Lord). He takes the cup and says the following prayer, exactly as written:

O God the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them, that they may witness unto thee, O God the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

Marriage and Sealing

Marriage is to be between one man and one woman, as originally established by God between Adam and Eve. The woman and the man are to be equally yoked, working together as one in the Lord to follow Him and to fulfill the duty devolving upon them to teach their children the principles of the gospel. The ceremony for contracting marriage follows the guidance of the Spirit. Marriages sealed by the Lord's oath in a sacred place will endure beyond death and into the Father's kingdom. We anticipate a more fulsome understanding of marriage, sealing, and other ordinances to be revealed with the acceptance of a temple by the Lord.