

A Testimony of Our Experience on the Governing Principles (GP) meeting 7.2.2017

It was in the early morning hours of this beautiful Sunday when we left our home (our gift from God named 'Matt') parked in Tooele at Kelly's parent's house. The preparation for and the conversations that lead up to this new meeting (what became known as the 'Third Knock') left us filled with wonder and great anticipation. We don't say any of this for dramatic effect, but out of a desire to express fully our experience. We were filled with wonder. The hopes for this meeting were not small. Many of the participants had asked for a revelation from God and for His hand to be shown forth. As we came around the point of the mountain by the Great Salt Lake the sun was just beginning to rise. The sight was awe-inspiring to us as the effect upon the clouds the Lord had placed there caused a brilliant 'bow [that was] in the cloud' (LE JST Gen 9:20). It was on the right hand of the Sun as if a pillar from the presence of God. The sign was unmistakable and the significance not lost on us. Though we do not often share the signs given to us, this sign pointed to the whole of God's work thus far with this people, this generation, even the coming covenant. Eventually we saw also a faint echo of this sign an equal distance to the left and thought of LE D&C 84:88, *"there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."*

We gave thanks and watched as the sign remained with us for the duration of our travels to the site where at 7 in the morning, 20 brothers and sisters gathered to recommit themselves to The Lord and to cleanse themselves in preparation for a work that needed our deepest humility. The site, which befitted the occasion, was in a Godly grove tucked gently away though amidst the world of Babylon. Though the water was brisk and hardly knee deep, every baptism was a glory to behold. One thing that surprised me (Troy) most was some of the almost involuntary actions of being moved with alacrity into the waters where I was baptized and the immediate warmth that permeated me upon rising out of the water. I then was blessed to baptize again my dear wife Kelly.

As we reconnected at the meeting place (8:30), we took whatever time we could to fellowship and get to know better those with whom we had had mostly email conversations or brief in-person interactions. We began shortly after 9 in the morning with 36 of our brothers and sisters and started with what turned out to be much like a prayer meeting as many poured out their hearts in the group pleading for heavens help in this undertaking where all knew that we were inadequate to the task. After taking much time in prayer we all left our chairs in the conference room where we were gathered and met one room over in a large open area where all could kneel together in one great circle to receive the Sacrament. All things were done in this meeting according to the dictates of the spirit; no one directing and no one controlling any aspect. After the invitation was made, Rob Adolpho felt to bless that all might partake. We sat and we shared more of the impressions received by the group; scriptures were opened, some visions and dreams were shared (including a few who felt and saw the presence of heavenly beings nearby) and all (as we believed) enjoyed a level of unity and fellowship that was, in our view, equal to the unity we had as we left the last meeting. It was the perfect place to start.

During this portion, we sat next to Lori & Galen Fletcher (on one side). Lori shared with Kelly the inspiration that she received that we should do some labor today in small groups. Kelly's heart rejoiced for this was a second witness of what she received at around 3:00 that very morning! She had previously felt she received an invitation of the Lord to offer to help facilitate the meeting which was supported by Jeff and accepted by all at the beginning of the meeting. She didn't know what else the Lord wanted from her (and she was still deep in this struggle) but she believed that there should be small-group work and that others would help in the process (as we learned to govern ourselves!).

We then regrouped in the conference room, the group began by addressing the idea that we were here to do something more, something new, and to figure out what that was. The labor was beginning for us, and at first it seemed difficult to orient ourselves to obtain what The Lord had for us. We eventually settled on uniting in smaller groups to see if the discussion would be more effective (for all to have a voice and to encourage the conversation). All determined that the goal was to discover what the core principles or concepts were that The Lord desired to have in this document for governing ourselves as believers in Christ and in our fellowships together. In this round, participants gathered in four groups based on who was sitting nearest to them in the room. They discussed and labored over these core concepts and at the end of almost an hour the body came together again to see what was given and learned. What the group discovered was that all four groups had almost identical core concepts that each felt needed to be addressed in the way The Lord would have them addressed. It was interesting to us that each of the four groups also had something unique to add and was valuable in beginning to come to the mind and will of The Lord (which we all hoped for and were concerned that at the worst we might not get).

At this point (around 2pm, right after lunch) unity and hope were high, even though we all recognized we were perhaps not very far into the process. We felt a great peace about how things in this body of believers was proceeding. Then the real work began. Many contrasting views were shared and the group seemed to really struggle coming to unity on how to proceed. The group could only see that The Lord may want some kind of 'preamble' (and we took note of the ideas that arose on this topic) and then there was the body of the content, but we did not come to understanding together as to how to go about achieving the mind and will of God on it. There was much discussion and some debate over varying approaches and understandings of topics, concepts, and principles. Though no one expressed any animosity, many strong views were expressed and much prayer and humility was required for us to get through to some agreement on how to proceed. Our personal view in retrospect is that much of the discussion revolved around a juxtaposition of 'principles' and 'rules/commandments/prescriptions.' We recognized in ourselves a difficulty with approaching a clear understanding of the underlying 'principles' behind each concept, topic, or area of guidance each felt The Lord would want in the document. The disputes we saw, and were a part of, seemed to arise out of speaking these two vastly different languages. It seemed to us that one of the things The Lord wanted was for us to begin to understand the underlying principles for the commandments and that that understanding is more godly than this telestial, rule-based, world. He was trying to lift us to a more terrestrial understanding.

The larger group ended up consolidating themselves around the core concepts (whether they be principles or commandments or other areas for governing ourselves) and that each according to the dictates of their own conscience could self-select into a smaller group that would work on determining the mind and will of God on that concept (including the general idea that we would all return with governing principles for the topic). This came about because of recommendations from a couple voices, suggesting they felt called to specifically work on a particular portion. We recognized that it would have been good if the whole body could have decided the core principles and which pieces went together, but this alternative presented itself as a way to advance and allow for agency (and hopefully God's will) to move. At this time (4pm) the group agreed to meet back together in one hour to share the results of their petitions to The Lord. 5 pm came and went. Somewhere around 5:30ish, I (Troy) went to get a drink and decided to check in on the other groups. All were laboring away and it was expressed to me that all, like us, were desirous for more time. So we all continued in our small group labor. It was some time later that our small group had collected all our thoughts about the principles underlying the 'governing of fellowships' (the portion we [Troy and Kelly] felt to participate in) and we decided to take a few minutes alone to pray and seek for understanding. As we did so I (Kelly) expressed a deep emptiness over what we had done, that it was true perhaps and some beautiful concepts were in place to be fleshed out but that it did not represent the Mind and Will of God.

We regrouped and shared our thoughts and the group agreed that we had not obtained the Lord's will for us. The mood became desperate and dark. We were at a loss as to how to proceed. If it was not the Mind and Will of God then we wanted no part of it. We prayed and we discussed and it seemed as though all would be lost. We (Kelly and Troy) had many thoughts about this point being the end. What was the point of continuing if we could not obtain what God desired us to obtain!?

In this state of weakness and desperation, the discussions and prayers turned to setting aside all our thoughts about what we were in this group to work on, even to the point of letting go of all of the prior labor done over the GP. In those discussions, Jeff Savage expressed his concerns over letting go of what God had given to him but expressed his willingness to set it all aside with real intent. We had similar concerns about a couple specific portions of the GP that we had come to believe were direct quotes from God and we had no desire to set aside any of God's words. Jeff S later expressed to the group that God had given him assurances that, "so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please." He also got the answer that God would provide. This allowed Jeff to be comforted and to set his prior experiences aside in hopes of obtaining the word of The Lord in this group.

The group beseeched The Lord together in the depths of our despair. We were nearly crushed but refused to leave as we all trusted The Lord was mighty to save us. As we let go and prayed all holding hands in a united circle, one member of our group excused herself and went to the white board in the room and wrote a single phrase without prejudice or knowing beforehand where it would go. Then another followed and another. There was little, if any, discussion during this time. Then we prayed more and discussed things as these only seemed to be random thoughts disconnected from the task at hand and did not yet appear to be helping us progress in our task. One couple decided to excuse themselves expressing a concern and frustration with the situation. No one wanted them to leave but they said they would return. The group continued to pray and write as they felt impressed to do so. It was about 8:30 pm at this point and Troy volunteered to take our dog out for a break and so he excused himself from the group with great sadness and desires to return and labor.

While Troy was away, the couple returned to the room. They looked around at the disparate statements written on the board and asked someone to explain how things were going. We briefly explained and, although it was obvious that this brother was struggling with the concept and with feeling / receiving anything, the couple joined us in prayer. The brother prayed along with a couple others and again there was a pause while a few impressions were recorded. When we returned to pray, this brother expressed with some humor that he was just praying for the rest of us to change our minds (not about what we were doing now, but about the differing of opinions before they left, as they had very strong thoughts about a few things). We felt his love for us and his desire to participate, but he openly shared that he did not feel what we were feeling. Another brother in the group (who we later learned felt prompted to be in the same group as this other brother), shared with some energy, "Well I want to pray for my brother so he can be animated by God's Spirit too!" This statement of love and charity had an immediate and profound impact on the other brother. It seemed to me (Kelly) that the external 'shell' he wore when he returned was now cracked and open and falling away. There was a shift inside him and indeed in the whole group and this brother softened by the love and the desires of others for him joined again in heartfelt prayer. Many more received words / phrases, including the newly rejoined couple, and it indeed felt like we had united.

It wasn't long after this when Troy returned and joined the group as they were in a circle again praying. As I (Troy) returned I could see immediately some great experience had taken place. Our dear brother was crying and I could feel a great unity and love in the room. Kelly was trying to share with me of the great transformation that had taken place. I did not fully understand but looked about the room believing some

great understanding had made sense of all we were doing. To my surprise there was no 'new revelation' written but still a bunch of incoherent thoughts, though now greatly increased, written. The white board was no longer sufficient and the group had taken to writing on the windows. After the prayer the group was marveling at the changes taking place in us and the flow of inspiration received. More was written and as one brother wrote I (Troy) knew immediately what I was supposed to add and wrote it in connection with the other. We continued this for a little while longer and prayed and the spirit was greatly enlarged in the group. Hope had returned and the light and life of God was with us. Still none of us knew what any of it meant nor how it would make any sense. This fact didn't seem nearly as important as the belief that we had received something from the mind and will of God.

At length the group felt that we needed to compile these independent revelations and see what God was trying to say. Jeff typed up all the random written words and phrases and we gathered and prayed to know what to do with them. We all marveled at what God had worked in each of us and though it was a great revelation to receive from The Lord this flow of intelligence, the true miracle came when, by His guidance, He put the broken pieces of revelation together in a way that mirrored us all—as pieces of God broken off from His family being restored to the greater whole to create The Family of God (A New Revelation) worth more than the sum of its equal parts. The result of this wonderful experience was a one-page document in sentence and paragraph form that felt like words from God... a group revelation for a group!

At 11 pm the larger group gathered together again to review the whole work as one. We first saw the preamble that the group had earlier agreed needed to be written. It was intended that all would labor over this portion but due to the lateness of the hour and that our group was the last to receive and finish our work, the group had earlier asked us if they could start and we agreed they should. It ended up that they finished that portion as well before we came together again. So we began reading what had been revealed to the group and the preamble was read and received with much applause and great joy. We then proceeded portion by portion to go through the document and allowing conversations to resume and adjustments to be made as necessary by the voice of common consent. It was late and all were exhausted (which did not help our communication) there were several points of struggle and yet still everyone sought to exercise love and reconciliation striving to be united in the process. As the group was about to read our portion, a brief summary of our experience was shared (though it was not wanted it was unfortunately shared anyway. Again, it was late and people were ready to be done and did not want any stories). The experience shared did not seem to help with understanding what was done. There were many kind words said but it was pointed out that the portion we produced left out many important concepts that were addressed in the original GP section. None in our group could deny this was true. We (Kelly and Troy) saw this and freely admitted it but knew what was given and the experience we had that knit our hearts, but we did not understand what it all meant. It was thought at the time it best to leave the portion as it was but perhaps an additional section concerning the governing of fellowships could be added and it was suggested that Jeff Savage together with Whitney Horning, compose that portion and share it out with the larger group by email for a final review before submitting the whole to the body of believers, which was accepted. The group then (about 2:30 am) prayed together with several offering voice and praying for Gods acceptance, or His correction. Trusting in God we all gathered in for a full group hug and love was expressed by all as we parted to head for our homes (or surrogate homes) for the rest of the short sleep time available.

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This experience was overwhelming in so many ways but the post meeting response has been inundating. There have been, since that early Monday morning (through Thursday) 91 emails among the larger group that have born testimony and shared experiences spanning the spectrum all the way from great

manifestations from God to great condemnation imminent due to derailing and missing the mark. Our smaller group, it would seem, has taken several broadsides in the melee due to what we feel are misconceptions of what was presented.

In our desire for understanding we (Kelly and Troy) have petitioned The Lord and searched for meaning in all of this to which God has responded by showing us our misunderstanding of His will and His ways. He has shown us that the portion He produced at our hands called, by specific revelation received in the process, *A Standard to All Fellowships* is really *A Standard to THIS Fellowship*, meaning that it was a revelation intended first and foremost for this larger group.

It is also a 'Standard' in that it represents a breaking of the mold of former thinking as to how revelation is received and what it might look like. The revelation appears to us to be more 'non-linear' and 'non-chronological' (even a perfect type in the experience of each of us receiving pieces from Him that He brought together, like "God repairing the broken pieces" (there's more to share on this topic some time). Perhaps it is more like the mind of God as He attempts to communicate to us (*and as a GROUP, no less*) from eternity where His 'ways (are) higher than (our) ways, and (His) thoughts than (our) thoughts.' It is not a beautiful document. It is not flowery or eloquent. It is the first attempt by any in this movement (that we are aware of) to receive a revelation of the Mind and Will of God for the body of believers.

So in summary of all that we (Kelly and Troy) feel God is trying to explain to us about our unexpected experience is:

That the 'new revelation' that we received (as a small group) is first and foremost **a revelation given from God through his 'servants' (us, the smaller group) to this larger group!** It is quite possible that it is not necessarily intended to be IN any new, or revised, or improved "document" but is intended to be a revelation of His words given to a smaller group to testify as a 'STANDARD TO THIS FELLOWSHIP' (the larger group) and witness to the whole of what he's trying to do. And what is He trying to do? For one thing, He is trying TO GIVE A BROKEN GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS A **UNITED REVELATION** THAT WILL CAUSE ALL THE PEOPLE TO COME RUNNING TOGETHER UNDER A NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT OF FREEDOM IN HIM! (This is how He unites us, how these great things are done. He has shown our small group a pattern to accomplish this, and we believe we should share it)

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