

## So No Injustice Results

I have been thinking carefully and listening thoughtfully to the ongoing conversation about past women's councils. I want to begin by saying that we had a conference last November that considered how to help women's councils go more smoothly. Some guidelines were provisionally accepted that should make some of these questions clearer in the future. I have a few thoughts to share about the upcoming vote over the legitimacy of past women's councils

I would like to address the charge that these councils were unjust. These charges seem to be based primarily on the idea that the women's council was not composed of women who knew the accused man's daily walk and women who were so biased that they did not fairly consider the man's defense. First, I will address the daily walk question, "The women who knows the accused daily walk" was the instruction given by the Lord to the women's council. This guidance was followed with care. We sought women who knew the man well. It seems that no longer matters because the Lord's admonition to "know a man's daily walk" has been narrowly redefined in the Zoom meeting last night, without discussion. The new definition is now: *prioritize the woman the man would personally choose to sit on the council*. I think this new definition deserves some discussion before we accept it. Letting a man select his council is an opportunity for corruption. For sinners always have friends in iniquity. However you feel about this framing of the Lord's command, I would like to participate in a discussion about it. Please let us discuss this new definition before it becomes binding on judgments of past women's councils.

The next charge is very serious, it is a charge that the outcome was predetermined. This charge seems to be made based on spurious evidence. Still, I have carefully considered it. I fully appreciate the impact of bias and the importance of mitigating it. We addressed this as a council the first time, and I understand that it was addressed by the second council because it held such high importance to the woman asked to serve. The outcome should be based on evidence. The council disputes the unfounded charge of

predetermined intent and testifies to how diligently they considered all the evidence and were ready and willing to acquit the man if the evidence was not sufficient. This is a hard charge to defend against because we cannot see all these women's hearts from afar. To answer that accusation, I urge all who are evaluating the council to go to the [14unanimous](#) page and learn about the woman on the council. Some of them you probably know, and you may know of their character, integrity, and faith. Read the statements and decide for yourselves. I was part of the first council, and I know how seriously and conscientiously the woman took the responsibility not to punish an innocent man nor shield a guilty one. We were not perfect; I made some short-sighted decisions. Knowing what I know now, I would do things differently. I know we were not always perfectly wise. But we earnestly strove to follow the Lord's counsel. The first council did not come to a unanimous decision. I had agreed with the Lord to accept the outcome, whatever it may be. I honored that vote. That is where the matter rested until new charges were brought and a second woman's council was warranted. This is an example of this process working as designed. The second council also strove to follow the Lord's directions. There were probably missteps, struggles, prayers, debate, tears, and intercession just as there was in the council I know... but I believe the women when they testify that the council was just and earnest and the decision was merited based on the evidence and testimony. I pray all who read this will prayerfully consider what a just council would look like. I believe a just council holds truth in the highest regard.

Of course, the accused is unhappy with the outcome of the council's unanimous decision. Cain was judged in the presence of God himself and still felt justice was too hard. "more than he could bear." Lori Vallow sits in her cell every day complaining about her "unjust" trial and talking about her righteousness. There needs to be a higher standard than what the accused and his enabling friends think about the trial. That is what you are being asked to do in this conference. The women's council is accountable before God. You, as women in the movement, are also being asked to judge this council. The accusations are serious. You are asked to judge without being given very much information at all about it. You are not even permitted to know the charges. I think it is time to ask questions. Ask what is being redacted. Ask why you are asked to make such an important decision in a

conference that has been described again and again as “confusing” and seems intentionally so. Ask why so many women are being disallowed to vote by rules that seem arbitrary. Ask how the MiQ and those harmed by his actions feel about this process. Keep asking questions. You deserve answers before you cast such an important vote.

We have been cautioned again and again not to be like the other churches that the Lord called “abominations”. The churches of the world have a very well-worn playbook for dealing with accusations of the type the women of the councils in question had to address. In every case, all the hierarchies of all the churches use various mechanisms to come to the same outcome. Which is to silence those injured or harmed by others and protect the abuser. The Catholic church has a long record of moving abusers all the while paying lip service to repentance, while the bad actor in question is free to prey upon the flock. Various Evangelical and Protestant megachurches all do the same. The LDS church has an atrocious record of this behavior for abusers of all stripes. Unless there is the bright light of publicity or the secular courts step in, churches and congregations, and faithful God fearing people of so many denominations all act in the same ways. No succor for the victim and sheltering of the abuser. This allows abuse to continue. All this is always done in the name of God. We need to decide what we want to be. Could a Zion People do better? My warning is this: Other congregations had already discovered that when bad handling of bad behavior is brought to light, the faithful begin withdrawing from the churches. If we protect abusers in their sin, we will lose faithful and dear friends who have taken the covenant and strive for Zion with us. When you vote on whether to overturn these two women's councils, please, prayerfully consider the long-term spiritual consequences. Please avoid doing as all the other churches have done. Let us all take care that “no injustice results.”

Thank you

Jennifer Bowler

relevant teaching of Denver Snuffer

There is absolutely no reason "to gather in Zion" in order to fail again. We do not need another Jerusalem, Rome, or Antioch. We do not need another Kirtland, Jackson County, or Nauvoo. We certainly don't need another Salt Lake. We need Zion. And there's no reason to gather if the gathering is going to fail again.

Denver Snuffer

Teaching and commandments 157:57

Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity and come unto me, and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore, if you regard one another with charity, then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. I lead to all truth. I will lead all who come to me to the truth of all things. The fullness is to receive the truth of all things, and this too from me, in power, by my word, and in very deed. For I will come unto you if you will come unto me.

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Men who crave office, and desire to direct others, are the "wolves" we are warned against. They occupy the offices of all the churches, and the adversary knows that a corrupt man who occupies church office will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Moreover he will prevent those who might otherwise have entered from entering.