

**To:** The Board of Acts29 Network

**From:** Ron Wheeler, on behalf of the Elders and Advisory Council of The Gathering.

**Date:** March 17, 2005

**Re:** Continuing membership in Acts 29

Dear Board Members,

Though we desire to stay within Acts 29 as an organization, and though we are already in the process of correcting our leadership structure as outlined in the terms of continuing membership, our continuation in Acts 29 has to do with an entirely different matter: the character and conduct of Pastor Mark Driscoll.

In the terms of our continuing involvement in Acts 29, it was the statement that "it is important that unity among our men remain" that was of particular significance to us. Mark Driscoll's recent involvement in our church's disciplinary procedure was uninformed, irresponsible, and had a divisive effect on a once unified Elder board.

Mark wrote a seven page letter of recommendation to our Elders, dealing with all four people involved, the church, and the church plant, after having only talked with me on the phone in terms of information or investigation. After having agreed to meet with my wife and I, as well as Peter and Janna Donovan before giving any kind of advice, the letter was sent irregardless of that assurance. This letter was followed up the next day, with a phone call from Mark where he used the most obscene vulgar language that I can remember someone using with me. The next day, he sent a two page email to the other elders, that I had no knowledge about until recently, that can only be defined as wildly inaccurate and slanderous. The current leadership of The Gathering considers much of where things currently stand in leadership to be directly related to Mark's influence and conduct in the process. For the sake of clarity, we would make these documents available upon request.

Over the past many years, I have identified and struggled with issues in Mark such as: pride, speech (lack of self-control, sexually vulgar and slanderous, exaggeration that bordered on deception, gossip about others and confidential issues (*either about others to me, or about myself with others. Confidentiality issues carry legal implications for the church*), and an impulsive/reactive spirit. It is because of the breach of confidentiality and distortion of communicated facts, that I distrust individual communication with Mark, and request the involvement of the Board in these issues.

My frustration is that I have never been silent with Mark or with anyone else about where I stand. It is no secret to the past Acts29 leadership board that there is widespread frustration in many of these areas, and it ought to be noted by the existing board members that the two former board members have pulled out of leadership; one out of frustration with the conflict between Mark and David, one largely through dealing with conflict brought on by some of these same issues. This is now the *second time* that issues have gone on record with Mark regarding areas of character in speech and conduct. The fact that Mark is an incredibly talented leader and charismatic personality, cannot in any way substitute for the simple Biblical requirements of being Christ-like, much less the qualifications of being an Elder. I can make a Biblical case from Titus regarding being overbearing, quick-tempered, self-controlled, upright, and holy, as well as 1 Timothy regarding above reproach, self-controlled, respectable, not quarrelsome, and reputation with outsiders.

I appealed to the existing board of Acts 29 to intervene and adjudicate in this process, and all were made available except for Mark. I understood that there were existing tensions between Mark and David, and tried very hard not to use that to an advantage, as I knew David knew my heart for my wife (all of you do, if you'll consider every conference we've had, and how my wife

and kids are everything I talk about). I know Darrin knows this. I know Chan knows this. I know Steve knows this. In fact, I was used to getting teased by guys like Chris Swan because I was always passing pictures of my family around and talking incessantly about them. Please, guys... I'm simply asking you to take what you personally have seen of me to be true, and believe that. Bill and Jeanne Clem, as an initial counselor approved by our Elders, spent time with my wife and I, (which Mark NEVER did) and was convinced of an entirely different assessment than Mark's. Our current counselor's assessment concurs with Bill's, and is available as a resource as well. Everything that I have stated here as an issue, has either been said personally to Mark, has been talked about with Mark and others present, or can be cited for the record with existing facts/emails/communication, etc.

My great frustration is that I have always spoken the truth in love to Mark. Those of you who know me, know this. I was deeply wounded and offended to discover (only recently) the kinds of things Mark had said regarding me. Things that he had never, ever brought to me personally, and in fact, were completely opposed to the very affirming and complimentary things Mark usually said in these very same areas. The fact that he spoke differently to others, and the way he said them to others, simply lacked the integrity of going to your brother first. Also, after the phone conversation in which Mark lost his temper and was swearing at me, I let others on the Board know that I would not interact with him without others present. Why, if these issues were so apparent to Mark, was I a part of the Leadership team of Acts 29? What did you guys not see in my character that you should have? Why was it assumed that because something like this happened, that I must have been at fault, simply because that is often the case. Is that a possible explanation? Yes. Is it the only explanation? No. Why one option was simply assumed without any kind of due process or investigation, was truly tragic and destructive.

Please understand, for someone who deeply values grace and mercy, it is extremely difficult to write these things, but I now recognize that by not having drawn clearer lines of expectation and integrity, in many regards, I only have myself to blame. In this entire process, I have been very careful to preserve the integrity of the network and not to tell other people the truth of what Mark has actually said and done, but I believe the truth must be known. Significantly, much of that is in written form and can be examined against the facts. Because of the weight and authority Mark carries, it is incredibly irresponsible to have carried himself in the manner he did. I know Mark very, very well, and I expect the full wrath of heaven to be unleashed as a result of this. I expect my reputation to be maligned and my words here discredited. It makes me grieve over all the people I cut off because Mark did. If you can discredit the source, then it doesn't have to be taken seriously, right? Wrong. We are elders of a church in the network that are bringing grievances to the board over this matter, and regardless of the fact that we don't want to be in the leadership situation we are, much of why we stand where we do, is directly related to Mark's involvement. This is not about seeking agreement. We can "agree to disagree". This has to do with proper conduct and speech; with character.

Our request is simply this:

- a) an effort by the current board to investigate these events and provide an opportunity for me to speak to the board with Mark Driscoll present, and come to an agreeable resolution.

OR

- b) a personal written apology from Mark Driscoll to the churches, acknowledging the irresponsible manner in which he spoke, communicated confidential information with certain people, and distorted important facts that affected many lives.

Outside of either of these scenarios, it is difficult for us to see how our continuing involvement could continue in Acts29 with integrity. If we are to work with Mark and Acts29 in a trusting relationship, it needs to depend on his character, speech, trustworthiness, self-control, confidences, etc.

Since we are willing to meet the other terms of continuation, we also request a reply to these issues raised within one month from March 18, 2005.