

Dear Pastor -----,

Greetings to you. I am grateful to God for the relationship He's given us over the many years. I appreciate your heart to reach the lost world with us, and this is why I am writing to you today.

For the past several days, I have been ministering to around 15,000 believers who have been savagely persecuted and ostracized for their faith in Christ. These meetings were arranged well over a year ago and some believers traveled for days just to get to the conference location. Even with much happening in the US office at this time, I couldn't cancel this trip and let them down.

Most of you are now aware that ECFA recently terminated our 36-year membership with them. I know, reasonably so, that this has caused great concern and raised questions about the integrity of Gospel for Asia and the handling of our financial matters. ECFA affirmed the funds given to the ministry were accounted for. We have honored our sponsors and donors designations. There were some processes and standards for ministry where we fell short of their standards. During the review process, which we are very grateful for, each time ECFA pointed out something that they felt we could improve on, we took it seriously and began to implement changes without delay.

In retrospect, we realize that we should have sought experienced outside counsel at times to help us in dealing with the complexities that come with a ministry of our size. To strengthen our ministry and further improve our processes, we are working hard toward becoming eligible to re-apply for ECFA. GFA's eight board members are standing strong and aiding the ministry in these matters.

One question which raised concerns is in regard to the kind of church structure on the mission field. The structure (which is explained here: [gfa.org/bc/about](http://gfa.org/bc/about) <<http://links.mkt561.com/ctt?kn=5&ms=ODE5Nzc3MAS2&r=MTEzNTAyODU4MTQzSO&b=0&j=NzgzNDk4NDkySO&mt=1&rt=0>>), is the result of God's leading in the lives over 100 of our senior leaders in Asia, including myself. About ten years ago, after much prayer and fasting, the decision was made to register Believers Church with the Asian governments in order to gain the protection offered over the assets and work that many of you invested in, and that our missionaries and pastors here have given sacrificially to establish. For the sake of the Lord's work and by His leading, our leaders on the field chose a form of church structure that is accepted by the government known as "constitutional episcopacy" (this is not the same as an Episcopal church, instead it is the governance of the church), which means the church is led by episkopos (bishops) (1 Timothy 3:1-2) and presbyteros (elders) (Acts 14:23 <x-apple-data-detectors://4>). In order for any pastor to legally conduct weddings and other legal matters for the church, each one must be licensed by the Magistrate from the judicial system, or be ordained by a bishop of a church within constitutional episcopacy.

Also, just so you know, the practice of ring kissing has not been taught or encouraged in Believers Church. The video of the pastor's ordination being circulated about me does not show people kissing my ring, but rather them kneeling down to be prayed for and then touching my hand to their forehead, which is a very common cultural gesture of respect in India. I myself have done this many times.

The expression and practice of worship in Believers Church are liturgical in form. This is culturally understood and accepted in South Asia, though it is a less common form of worship for evangelical

denominations in the West. A typical church service in a Believers Church consists of 30 minutes of congregational worship, 40 minutes of systematic teaching through the Word of God with practical application, intercessory prayer and confession of the faith. While the expression is different, the substance remains the same. Our statement of faith, commitment to historical Biblical Christianity and philosophy of ministry remains unchanged. It is the governance of the church that has changed.

Believers Church is in the unique position of having over 2.5 million believers, who speak nearly 300 languages, and of whom as many as 80% are illiterate. The interactive portion of the liturgy allows all to participate in the service, while reading through major portions of Scripture once every few years. It is the desire of Believers Church to keep these believers unified in the faith while growing in the Word and knowledge of the Lord.

We thought we were communicating effectively to you regarding these changes made to Believers Church and the reasons for it. We put up numerous pages on our GFA website. We hosted many, many Calvary pastors on the field and never hid our church from anyone. With some pastors we spent hours explaining the reasons for these changes; and we thought it was understood. However, we now realize, by comments made to us, that we did not communicate as effectively as we thought we had. We are truly sorry for this. Please know that it was not intentional. In the future we will work harder to communicate better.

There are some former staff who have been quite vocal in expressing complaints they have against my leaders and I. We have taken this seriously and actively sought, according to Matthew 18, to reach out individually to these former staff members to ask for forgiveness. As leaders, we would agree that we have not always represented Christ in the right way. But our conscience is clear before God that we have always tried to. And we continue to try. We have not disclosed the "other side of the story"; the personal lives of many of those whose testimonies have been shared. Some of them we spent hours counseling out of addiction and sin. Some of them we fasted with, prayed with and wept with during times of personal struggles and family tragedies. We have protected them and their reputations. God knows, and in fear of Him and of judgment we will continue to pray for them.

Some people have asked if my lifestyle is different in reality than what I have written in my books. I've even heard people saying I live in a mansion and drive around in a classic European sports car! In reality, my "European sports car" is a restored 1962 VW bug which I bought 19 years ago for \$1800. My wife drives a Honda HRV. In my life I have taken a total of 4 family vacations. I currently have one house in the Dallas area that I am trying to sell. It's in a nice neighborhood hardly two minutes from the previous location of our ministry. It's about 3,000 square feet, has 4 bedrooms, my office and my wife's office. In Asia, the only house I live in is owned by the church. It's about 1,400 square feet. Some pastors have seen it during their visits to India. My salary is set by the Board of Directors of Gospel for Asia. It is about \$100,000 per year, including housing allowance. My wife and I don't need that much to live on, but this is what the Board decided to give us. We give a significant portion of it back to the ministry. I have never taken any royalties from the 250 books I have written. Although I have been called foolish for not taking them, writing books has never been about the money, but about reaching the lost world and encouraging the saints. This is the way I have chosen to live my life. Like you, I try to hear from the Lord and do what He asks of me.

I have attempted to live before God and man humbly and faithfully. There have been many times that I

have fallen short and failed. But I ask God for forgiveness and make things right with those who allow me to. And I look forward to the day I will see my Lord face to face.

If you have any specific questions for me, I would be happy to talk with you. You can also direct your questions to my leaders, Daniel Punnose, John Beers or David Carroll. I have included all our email addresses below.

Your brother,  
K.P. Yohannan