

An Open Letter Regarding Lyndol Butler's Accusation on "A Faithful Word"

April 24, 2010

Dear Lyndol,

John and I sent you a certified letter last summer asking to talk with you about a letter of accusation against me that you wrote to those responsible for "A Faithful Word" (AFW) website. Your letter, along with some additional commentary, has been posted on that website since May 2009 with the title, "A Statement by Lyndol Butler: 'A False Witness... and One Who Injects Discord Among Brothers—Proverbs 6:19'" (<http://www.afaithfulword.org/reports/LyndolButler.html>).

We did not receive a reply to our request for dialogue with you, so I am assuming that you not only wrote the letter in question and sent it to AFW, but also that you agree with the unsigned commentary which appears with it on the AFW website. That commentary includes an AFW pronouncement that "Jane Anderson should not be considered to be a credible source by any objective observer." I am holding Bill Buntain, Dan Sady, and Dan Towle responsible for the commentary, since their names are on the "Introduction" to the AFW website. Because you ignored our request, this letter to you is, of necessity, an open letter.

Introduction

Your letter, dated September 1, 2008, contains accusations about me regarding part of an Internet post that I wrote in July of 2008 on the Local Church Discussion Forum. Here is the part of my post that you quoted:

I still remember being surprised to learn in the late 80s about the struggle between Benson and Titus over the Local Church in Cedar Rapids. Benson placed an elder there from OKC (an LC in his region containing a lot of Texans) and was maneuvering to bring that LC under the control of his region. There were some in Cedar Rapids who were being helped by Titus.

The brother who was sent there by Benson later told my husband and me about the struggle he witnessed and the things he heard behind the scenes that were said about Titus. He was totally repulsed by this and by the competition for control over that LC. He left the LC shortly after this.

The following sentences, which you omitted, immediately followed the two paragraphs you quoted:

Others might have some awareness of this and know more details. I just heard about this in one conversation many years ago.

(<http://www.localchurchdiscussions.com/vBulletin/showthread.php?p=1007#post1007>)

The Local Church Discussion Forum is a place where people can freely discuss the beliefs and practices of the Local Church, share personal experiences and historical knowledge about the Local Church and its leaders, and find help for recovering after leaving. The forum's informal environment allows a lot of give and take and provides a place for presentations of possible scenarios about how things could have happened as they did in the Local Church. What a surprise it was to me to learn that almost seven months after this post of mine, seemingly out of the blue, your letter was posted on the AFW website as part of a "Statement," charging that my post was a "fabrication" and judging me as not being a credible source.

Lyndol, why did you decide to write to these brothers instead of posting a reply to my post on the forum or at least contacting me personally to address your concerns (per Matt. 18:15-17)? You know us well. You had easy access to us. At the very least, you could have given me a phone call.

In this letter, you will find what I would have said to you in person if you had responded to our request to talk with you. I intended to write to you much sooner, and I am sorry I was not able to do so.

My Premise

My post was a contribution to a discussion about power struggles among leaders in the Local Churches. When Titus Chu and Benson Phillips became a topic, I added to the discussion by posting what I remembered from a conversation many years ago with you and your wife about your experience in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City area. After reading your now public letter, I can see that I made some errors regarding the logistics of your being there. I can also see that I misrepresented you in the way I wrote about what I remembered. I can and will apologize for these unintentional errors, but I will not retract my basic premise, because it still stands. Actually, what you wrote in your letter to these brothers verifies that Benson Phillips and Titus Chu were involved behind the scenes when you were meeting with the Local Church in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City area.

Our Relationship with You and Your Family

John and I have known you and Karen since the early 80s. To our knowledge, we always had a warm and pleasant relationship with you both. Two of your daughters lived with us at one time or another. One of your daughters and I have maintained contact over the years. I simply cannot understand how you could come out publicly against me as you did. I hope that you will be able to see that this was wrong. If you cannot see that your way of accusing me lacked the most basic Christian integrity, please consider seriously the possibility that your loyalty to men has clouded your view and dulled your conscience.

Maybe you are aware that I have written a book (*The Thread of Gold: God's Purpose, the Cross, and Me* [<http://www.TheThreadOfGold.com>]) containing my personal testimony and the story of my walk with Jesus, a story that includes my 20 years in the Local Church. John and I took pains to verify the accuracy of the information we published. We stated that we were willing to address any concerns anyone had about the accuracy of the information in the book, and we have done so. In like manner, I would have been more than willing to address your concerns about my post. Since you did not avail yourself of the normal way of questioning forum posts (by posting yourself) and you did not respond to my request for dialogue, you are receiving an open letter which is posted on the Internet at <http://www.localchurchdiscussions.com/vBulletin/showthread.php?t=619>.

Context for My Post and Memories

In case you did not see them, the following posts on the Local Church Discussion Forum are the ones that caused me to write the post you are contesting. These two posts were on a thread named, "New Light From Old." A poster named Hope (Don Rutledge), who had been an elder in the Local Church in Dallas and had been associated with Benson Phillips from the earliest days in Texas, wrote:

It is interesting that Benson P. a West Texan has been able to exercise control and influence over the LCS to the point of quarantining Titus Chu....
(<http://www.localchurchdiscussions.com/vBulletin/showthread.php?p=981#post981>)

Another poster known as "Ohio," then responded to part of Don's post as follows:

Hope, thanks for confirming **Aron's** view that the "West Texan" had the patience and strategy to out maneuver TC. It might have taken him 30 years, but he did it. Knowing TC, this is just incredible. Part of his strategy was to make this a confrontation between "one man" and "all the blendeds." As a friend of mine once naively said, "all the brothers are one except that TC."
(<http://www.localchurchdiscussions.com/vBulletin/showthread.php?p=986#post986>)

Ohio's post brought to mind a conversation I had had with you and your wife many years ago about your experience in Cedar Rapids/Iowa City. I posted and referenced our conversation in order to relate that Benson Phillips and Titus Chu indeed did have a history that went back many years. The conversation was the only serious one I remember having with you and Karen together about the Local Church. I had only one or two such talks with just Karen. You rarely talked about anything serious when we were around you after you left the Local Church. You joked most of the time and used what we fondly called your "Lyndolisms" (your constant plays on words).

It is possible that I learned some of what I wrote in my post in one of my conversations with only Karen; but, nonetheless, the fact remains that my knowledge of Benson Phillips and Titus Chu being in the background when you were involved in the Iowa City church came from the Lyndol Butlers.

Which Church?

In response to your public statement about my Internet posting, I will cover in some detail the specifics of what you quoted from my post and give you some explanations, information, and specific apologies. In my post, I wrote this:

I still remember being surprised to learn in the late 80s about the struggle between Benson and Titus over the Local Church in Cedar Rapids.

You called out my reference to the "Church in Cedar Rapids" as being false. That mistake is easy to explain. I assumed that you met with the "Church in Cedar Rapids," since you lived in Cedar Rapids and were still in the Local Church. It was a logical assumption that you were practicing the "ground of locality" as espoused by Witness Lee.

Your letter has reminded me that proponents of the local ground doctrine sometimes bypass it if circumstances do not fit the model. I did not know that you actually met with people in Iowa City. I only remember hearing about what I thought was an account of a meeting in your home. Your public letter has clarified for me that you lived in one place and "churched" in another.

I do not remember you literally saying that there was a "struggle between Benson and Titus" over the Local Church in that area. This was not your wording, but mine. What I do remember is that I learned from you and/or Karen that Titus Chu seemed to feel that the church there was in his region and that there seemed to be some kind of conflict about this with Benson Phillips. I am positive that I got this idea from either one or both of you, because it was such a surprise to me. I had never heard or considered before the idea of Local Churches belonging to regions under the leadership of certain brothers.

Oklahoma City → Kansas City → Cedar Rapids

In my post, I also wrote:

Benson placed an elder there from OKC (an LC in his region containing a lot of Texans) and was maneuvering to bring that LC under the control of his region.

You were from Oklahoma City (OKC), but your move to Cedar Rapids was via Kansas City. First, you moved to Kansas City for the "church life" and then you moved to Cedar Rapids for a job. I clearly remember this now, because when you suddenly moved from OKC to Kansas City, your oldest daughter stayed behind and ended up living with us.

As you remember, she disliked the Local Church immensely. To be able to finish her high school senior year in Oklahoma City, she moved in with her aunt, a member of the Local Church, who often got in her face about the church. After an upset with her aunt, she came to our house in tears saying she had nowhere else to go. We took her into our home, and she lived with us for well over a year. We grew to love her as if she was our own daughter. You may remember that an outcome of her living with us was that she began going to Local Church meetings. (John and I were still attending Local Church meetings at that time even though I was under a permanent gag order by Benson

Phillips, who had unjustly labeled me as the leader of a sisters' rebellion in Houston some years before this. I think this is what you rather glibly referred to as my "perceived mistreatment.")

So, yes, you lived in Oklahoma City, then Kansas City, and then Cedar Rapids, from where you commuted to the Local Church in Iowa City. I admit this mistake in what I posted, and I apologize for it.

Lyndol "Placed" by Benson as an Elder in Cedar Rapids?

No, you were not placed there as an elder by Benson Phillips. I stand corrected on this also and am sorry for my mistake. After moving from Oklahoma City, you became an elder in Kansas City, albeit reluctantly, as John and I recall hearing from you when we visited Kansas City. Years later, after you had left the Local Church and had moved to Plano (where we live), I remember Karen telling me that you were glad to move to Cedar Rapids for your job, because you did not like being an elder in Kansas City. I do not know for sure if it was James Barber or Benson Phillips who approved your move to Kansas City, but I seriously doubt that you became an elder there without Benson's awareness. As for your being an official elder in Cedar Rapids, you were not; but, just because you were not an official elder in your new locality, this doesn't mean you weren't viewed as "elder material" there.

As to whether Benson Phillips was "maneuvering," of course, I cannot know that for a fact. To be clear, you did not say this to me, so I apologize if my post led anyone to believe that you did. My characterization of his past behavior was influenced by what I knew of his behavior at the time of my posting in 2008. I had seen his involvement in the quarantining of Titus Chu in 2006 and I had heard several accounts about his involvement in the resultant conflicts over control of Local Churches in Titus Chu's region. Over the years, I had also heard from others about the two of them behaving territorially.

A Power Struggle with Titus?

In my post, I also wrote:

There were some in Cedar Rapids who were being helped by Titus.

I got this thought from your wife, who was bothered by what happened while you were in Cedar Rapids. I have a memory of Karen telling me a long story about offensive behavior by a brother in a meeting (a leader of sorts, I believe). From what she shared, I understood that he had ties to Titus Chu.

I also wrote that there was a brother (I was referring to you) who told me

about the struggle he witnessed and the things he heard behind the scenes that were said about Titus.

I do not have a clear memory of you saying that you witnessed such a struggle. I stand corrected on this point. I *do* remember, however, hearing information that gave me this impression. I understood that Benson Phillips was in communication with you, that Titus Chu was involved, that another brother there was closely linked with Titus Chu, and that there was some kind of trouble because Cedar Rapids/Iowa City was on the border between Benson Phillips' and Titus Chu's regions. What I heard sounded like political-type activities to me, and it was evident to me that you and Karen were not happy about them. I had never heard anything before this time about regional boundaries in the Local Churches, so this memory stuck. Also, in my post, I wrote concerning you:

He was totally repulsed by this and by the competition for control over that LC.

I have no specific memory of you saying you were "totally repulsed by this and by the competition for control over that LC." Those are my words, not yours. I am sorry for writing in a way that attributed them to you. Again, they describe the impression I received after one or both of you told me the story about what had gone on there. Overall, I remember that neither of you was happy about how

things developed in your Cedar Rapids/Iowa City experience. If you wish to try to characterize your past description of the situation differently now, I would find that hard to accept as true.

Why You Left the Local Church

Finally, I wrote:

He left the LC shortly after this.

This is true. You and Karen moved from Cedar Rapids to Plano and stopped meeting with the Local Church for what turned out to be many years. We collected your mail for you for a short time during your relocation to our city. Please note that I did not write that you left the Local Church *because* you were offended by what happened in Cedar Rapids. I simply said that you left shortly after this; *however*, I was led to believe that whatever had happened in Cedar Rapids/Iowa City was the reason for your leaving the Local Church, as you wrote in your letter to the Brothers:

I left because of an offense related to the distorted report Titus had given to Benson concerning me.

To be fully clear, I do not remember you ever saying anything bad about Benson Phillips or that you thought that he was at fault in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City matter. In re-reading my post, I can see that it sounds that way, so I apologize for this. Your letter makes it clear that your problem was with Titus Chu.

I am sorry for the statements I made, which I have enumerated, that were inaccurate. I think this covers my errors and brings them into perspective. Please don't forget that this was part of an informal discussion on an Internet forum. I only referenced you as a brother (I did not name you) to point out what I remembered having learned from a third party about Benson Phillips' and Titus Chu's involvement in regional matters many years ago.

So, Benson Really Was in the Background?

Having mistakes in my post does not make all of it a "fabrication," as you claimed. The word, "fabricate," means to write fiction or to make up something that never happened. As I have stated already, your letter to the Brothers actually provides support for the premise of my post because it shows there was something going on behind the scenes between Titus Chu and Benson Phillips. You wrote as follows:

Benson called me with concerns that Titus had expressed to him about me while I was in Cedar Rapids.... Rather, I left because of an offense related to the distorted report Titus had given to Benson concerning me.

Do you believe that Titus Chu just happened to express his concerns to Benson Phillips about you because he could not find anyone else to talk to that day? Isn't it more likely that he talked to Benson Phillips because he believed that Benson had some authority or influence over you? Did Titus ever talk to you directly? These two statements of yours lend credence to my assertion about that time period. They show:

1. Benson Phillips was in contact with you while you were in Cedar Rapids.
2. Titus Chu gave a report to Benson Phillips about you.
3. Benson Phillips apparently did not tell Titus Chu to handle his problem with you directly, which would have been biblical, but called you himself.
4. You left because of an offense related to what Benson Phillips told you about the report Titus Chu had given him, a report that you found to be distorted.

You said, "I left because of an offense related to the distorted report Titus had given to Benson concerning me." Was the purpose of Benson's call to facilitate reconciliation between you and Titus?

If not, why did he tell you what Titus said? I wonder if you have considered that your offense with Titus Chu seems to have resulted from a secondhand account given to you by Benson Phillips about what Titus purportedly said to him. After hearing Benson's version of Titus' report, shouldn't you have contacted Titus personally, as scripture admonishes? If you did not, and you still have not done so, then you are also wrong to publish information on the Internet about your offense with Titus Chu.

I find it interesting, (almost humorous, if the topic was not so serious), that AFW, while obviously desiring to discredit me on Benson Phillips' behalf, has actually published *evidence* of his presence and questionable involvement in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City matter. Neither Titus nor Benson lived in or near Cedar Rapids or Iowa City and were not in the Local Church there; however, it is clear that they both had some kind of interest in the situation.

Another Supporting Witness

There is also a witness who offered independent verification of my assertion in my post about Benson Phillips and Titus Chu. The poster named "Ohio," who was in Titus Chu's region at the time you were in Cedar Rapids, quoted my post about the struggle between them and then he posted:

TC told that story a few times, he was really upset.... 😡
(<http://www.localchurchdiscussions.com/vBulletin/showthread.php?p=1033#post1033>)

I find it compelling that this poster heard from an upset Titus Chu, more than once, the information that I purportedly "fabricated."

It is correct that my post contained my own bias and conclusions about Benson Phillips and Titus Chu with regards to the Local Church in your area at that time. I still hold the same educated bias and general conclusions. One time, Benson told my husband and me that it takes time to know what is true about a person or situation. He said that just like fruit, things have to mature over a period of years. Interestingly, it was what I saw to be Benson's long-term fruit (the Titus Chu quarantine) that pointed me back to the seeds I heard about from you many years ago.

Near the end of your September 2008 letter, you wrote this statement:

Even though she did not directly name me, I do not want my silence to lend any credence to her fabrication.

By the same token, I do not want my silence to lend credence to your claim that my post was a fabrication.

Your Memories and Judgments

You also wrote:

During my few visits with those associated with Jane Anderson, I witnessed gatherings that were full of profitless, negative talk.

You state that you were in gatherings with "those associated with Jane Anderson" but do not unequivocally state that I was even present in the gatherings. Since I do not know what gatherings or what people you refer to, I cannot respond specifically. Since I think that you probably intended to refer to gatherings that I was in, I will write a little in the way of a response.

If by "gatherings" you mean Christian meetings, I do not remember being in such with you and Karen. You may have come to our home for a meeting one time when Bill Mallon was passing through; I'm not sure. John and I have been in many different kinds of gatherings with many different people during the years since we left the Local Church. Those present in some of the meetings back then could have talked of their bad experiences in the Local Church, so maybe that is what you were referring to by profitless and negative talk. Former members would often help one another understand the Local Church experience in the light of the Bible. From our viewpoint, any such talk was profitable.

But, again, you were not in those kinds of meetings with us. You expressed no interest in Christian meetings at that time. After your time in the Local Church, you seemed to be rather “burned out” on Christian get-togethers. Because of this, I think that your judgments about the efficacy of things spoken in a Christian gathering at that time would be rather suspect.

Maybe you were referring to coming to our house for a meal with us and a few others when you first moved to Plano or to the times that you and Karen invited us to your home when your daughters came to Plano to visit you. If so, are you referring to your friends or family being engaged in what you term “profitless, negative talk”?

Regardless, I find your claim about this to be meritless. Because you have returned to the Local Church and re-adopted its world-view, it is easy to see why you would offer this perspective now. John and I still remember the Lyndol who seemed to be quite happy to be out of the Local Church and who was disinterested in gathering with us around Jesus Christ. If you found any conversation with us to be profitless or negative, you certainly hid your opinion well. But then, again, your joking did make it difficult to tell where you really were. You *may* have found it profitless or negative then; but, for you to wait until now to proclaim this as you have done, causes me to question your integrity and motives.

Benson Behind the Scenes Again?

The following statement causes me to wonder if others besides you were involved in composing the September 1, 2008, letter.

It is clear to me that Jane’s deep personal bitterness over her perceived mistreatment may have caused her to invent this false “history” and to falsely ascribe ulterior motives to Benson Phillips.

If you are the sole author, then I would say you are no longer the person you used to be (or the person we thought you were). I write this because the above statement reminds me of the kind of language Benson Phillips has used concerning me. Lyndol, have you allowed yourself to be used by others who were attempting to find a way to call my credibility into question? The fact that you were willing to offer up publicly our past relationship on the altar of Local Church leaders is more than sad, but it demonstrates a well-worn pattern of behavior by loyal Local Churchers.

You closed your letter with this:

I have since returned to the church life, for which I am deeply thankful to the Lord. The brothers received me without reservation.

When you returned to the Local Church, I assume that you began to meet with the Church in Plano because that is where you lived; so, by “brothers,” it would logically follow that you meant the brothers in that locality. However, the words “without reservation” tell me that you are referring to brothers who knew your history and might have had reservations. Such brothers were most likely not in the Church in Plano. I would expect nothing less from the brothers who received you, as long as you were embracing their viewpoint and not asking questions.

As you might be aware, Benson Phillips and others in Living Stream Ministry quarantined Titus Chu in 2006. There was a huge split in the Local Churches, because those in Titus’ region did not accept the dictate to quarantine him. Many of the Local Churches involved in the split no longer submit to Living Stream Ministry and are no longer recognized as valid Local Churches. (Maybe Titus Chu’s quarantine was convenient for you because it enabled you to avoid addressing your old offense with Titus upon your return to the Local Church, that is, if it has remained unaddressed.)

Here is my suggestion for what you could have written that would more accurately describe your return to the Local Church: “I have since begun to meet with the Living Stream Ministry’s version of the Local Church, for which I am deeply thankful. Benson and the rest of the brothers who are properly aligned politically with ‘The Ministry’ received me without reservation.” You might have

added, “They received me without even asking me what my position was on the quarantining of Titus Chu and the cutting off of the Local Churches in his region, churches which refused to reject him as they were directed.”

Some Questions Which Deserve an Answer from You

1. How did you become aware of my post?
2. Why didn't you correct me by posting on the forum, which would be the normal way to reply to a post?
3. Why didn't you contact me before writing a letter about me to some brothers who live in California who are part of the Defense and Confirmation Project (DCP) and who are clearly involved with the Living Stream Ministry headquarters in Anaheim, California?
4. Why didn't you provide, in your letter to AFW, a proper reference to my post along with the thread context?
5. Did you approve of the additional commentary and the AFW judgment of me being a part of your statement? Did you help compose it?
6. When did you first decide that I had “deep personal bitterness”?
7. How did you decide that the mistreatment I received in the Local Church was only “perceived” as such by me?

My Appeal to You

Please consider what you have done, in the light of the Word, not in the perception of the Local Church brothers. You were wrong to bypass me and accuse me to others in writing and to allow them to make your accusation public. In the interest of fairness and Christian integrity, please ask AFW to post a copy of this letter on their website next to “A Statement by Lyndol Butler....”

Conclusion

I regret that my post contained errors. I will try to be more careful in the future when I put forth information I have learned from third parties like you and your wife. I make no claim to perfection and am always willing to acknowledge errors brought to my attention. I wish that you had behaved in a righteous manner towards me and given me opportunity to correct my mistakes before writing a letter to AFW. I have tried to answer your public statement as honestly and clearly as I can. Ultimately, what matters the most to me is the Lord's judgment of me, not man's.

I am sure that there are some in the Local Church who would like to discredit me because of my book, which is my personal testimony, or because of my Internet posts. That's okay with me. If I can be discredited, I need to be. I am sure I have made other errors in that 400-plus page book and in over 1500 Internet posts on two forums (as “Thankful” and “Thankful Jane”). At this point, if this is all that the AFW researchers can find to use against me, then I would say I am not doing too badly in the truthfulness department.

The way you chose to address your concerns has brought about some results that you might not have expected:

1. It has convinced me that all I have written on the forums has been read by people in the Living Stream Ministry Local Church leadership, because they are clearly involved addressing this one post of mine. Over a year ago, I made a decision to stop posting on forums. Your statement has brought to my attention that the forums really are a way to penetrate decades-old walls of information obstruction built up by Local Church leadership—walls that have prevented truth from reaching members and have protected leaders from having to answer hard questions. It is apparent that the Local Church leadership cannot

ignore posts on these forums. People from the Christian community are reading them and current members are finding them. Your statement's appearance has caused me to reconsider my decision to quit posting.

2. Your statement also let me know some encouraging information: You, a Local Church member, and probably others like you, are reading on the forums and are considering what former members have to say, and are doing so in spite of the fact that this is greatly discouraged by Local Church leaders. (Of course, if it was Local Church leaders who brought my post to your attention and initiated your action, that would not be encouraging. That would be business as usual.)
3. The AFW involvement has also shown me that my posting must have affected people in ways that the Local Church leadership did not like; so, from my perspective, this means I helped some people. This is probably the best reason for me to begin again to communicate on the Internet.

I hope what I have written in this letter will jog your memory, stir your conscience, and cause you to reconsider things, as I have done. I also hope that it will help you realize your way of addressing me was wrong and that you will acknowledge this. I also hope that you will admit your mistakes and inaccurate judgments and apologize for them publicly, as I have done.

Continuing to walk in the light,

Jane Carole Anderson