

Good Afternoon,

I'm writing to answer some of the questions we've received since the Christianity Today (CT) article was released last week. First, let me say that the article was painful and hard for us to read about in Acts 29 but generally seems true. We receive it as from the Lord for our correction and our learning. Like any article, even the best of them, some questions remained and I am writing to address some of those.

Second, we know that it is hard to have these conversations in public, but we had to respond in public because the accusations were in public. Yes, we would have preferred that Steve received our actions and grow toward change, but we had to respond when asked to do so.

On to the main questions:

The difference between the video statement and the CT statement was due to some legality involved both for Acts 29 and Steve Timmis. We do our best to be as transparent as we can, and always be honest. As you know, sometimes you can't say everything. You act with integrity and say what you can say in such personnel issues. In the first announcement, we were hoping that Steve would accept a guided 4-month sabbatical to work through the allegations we had received about him; the situation changed when there were public accusations. A public accusation requires a more public response. That public accusation was on abusive leadership, and we responded to that question.

The CT article mentions a letter I received in 2015 from the five US employees of Acts 29 with some concerns about Steve Timmis. I have linked the letter here for transparency's sake, and because the letter is already on the internet.. It isn't pretty. In 2015 I didn't have the leadership tools to process these allegations, and Acts 29 didn't have any process to handle it. I met with the staff, reviewed the letter, and asked some clarifying questions. At the end of that meeting, I believed that only one of those concerns would fit into the category of "abuse/bullying," but I was unable to substantiate that accusation (though I tried) for reasons that are private concerning the employee who made the accusation.

When I became President, not long before these events, there were no job descriptions, budgets, or structures that weren't embedded into Mars Hill. We brought one staff member, Tyler Powell, down from Seattle and hired what we thought we would need to move forward. We made Steve the Executive Director not long after that. The conversation to let go of the US staff began before the letter was received by the board and had far more to do with whether an Executive Director in England could lead staff in Dallas. As rough as the past week has been for us as a Global Family I have been proud of the strides we've made these past five years. This time there was a process, and the process worked.

Transitions are always hard, but I don't want you to think that five employees complained about abuse, and we fired them because of it. That's not what we did, and we believed we had communicated that clearly to them until the article was published last week.

In retrospect, I could (and should) have dug more deeply into the concerns. We had already made a decision to remove the Dallas staff and believed at the time that the frustrations were linked to the reorganization and not Steve. It was painful for me to reread that letter last week. I didn't see this clearly at the time and am deeply sorry. I have already begun to reach out to the former staff personally.

I hope this helps bring greater clarity. I know your trust is a gift, and we want to speak when and where we can. If you need more clarity than this, reach out to your Network Directors, and they will help you with all the information they have.

We are currently working on a plan to carefully examine how Acts 29 functions and how the organization is structured at every level. Our desire is to be a healthy and God-honoring organization. We will look to learn from this in every way that we can and make appropriate changes.

Of course, I am eager to get back to the mission of planting church-planting churches, but also want us to lament and find our way back to trust.

Matt Chandler
President
Acts 29
Sent from my iPhone