

This is a letter (position paper) from John Lynn.

Posted with permission.

Cover letter:

Dear Brethren.

God bless you in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am sending this email, with its attachment, to only a relatively few people at this time, each of whom I consider a committed stakeholder in our unique ministry.

It is going to the Spirit & Truth Fellowship Board of Directors, the STF Staff, and others who have inquired of me, or who I have spoken with, or who I think should now be aware of what has been going on for the past 7 months in STF.

I realize that as you read it, you may want to know if you have my permission to send it on to other people you think should be informed about this matter, and the answer is yes. I trust that you will seek the Lord's guidance about that.

Thank you for your love and prayers.

In his service,
John Lynn

From: John A. Lynn
December 26, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

As I begin this letter, my heart is weeping about the current state of affairs among the members of the Spirit and Truth Fellowship International Board of Directors, each of whom is one of my closest friends. What you will read is my best assessment of many conversations with the principals involved and/or reading more than 100 pages of their own words in correspondence back and forth among them.

My fervent prayer is that in a godly way I will bring into the light, and express my perspective of, this heart-rending situation. I pray also that God will preserve this unique ministry and dynamically increase its influence, which for 20 years now has been overwhelmingly positive for people all around the world. What I say herein is what might be called "small 't' truth," that is, what is true for me as I perceive this situation, about which my conscience compels me to speak out. If, as things play out, I find that I am wrong in my viewpoint, I will gladly account and repent.

Since late September (when I first heard of this situation), in accordance with scriptures like Proverbs 18:13 and 17; 25:8, I have been listening to and/or reading the words of everyone on the Board as well as most of those on staff, especially those directly involved in what has transpired. I have taken notes, pondered and prayed, and have now come to the place that I am completely convinced about what I will share in this letter.

I am assuming that many believers who read this are either very good friends of mine or people who know quite a bit about me and my involvement in this wonderful ministry, for which I was the original "point man" from its inception in 1987 until June, 2000, when my dear brother Mark Graeser succeeded me as president. I say that in order to give you some idea of how excruciating it is for me to see what is now going on, and how it is even more painful to write what I am compelled by my conscience and by my great love for each person I mention to write. If you are in pain, or incredulous, as you read, I completely understand how you feel, for I feel the same way.

It was about September 21 when I was first informed that there was a division among the members of the STF Board of Directors (and spouses), with Mark and Karen Anne Graeser and Tom and Susan Resner having a disagreement with John and Jenivee Schoenheit, Gary and Karen Theisen, and Dan and Lori Gallagher. I initially heard that the main point of contention was that four of the other five Board members (John, Gary, Karen, and Dan) had asked Mark to step down from his presidential

responsibilities for six months, move his office to his home, and, while still being paid the same salary, work on some very serious personal matters that, in their opinion, had, and still were, greatly hampering his ability to perform the required duties of president. He was asked to focus on writing the administrations book and the clergy ordination education curriculum. Mark declined to step down, however, and Tom stood with him in that decision.

I know all ten of these people very well, and though it was immediately obvious that either four (Graesers, Resners) or six (Schoenheits, Theisens, Gallaghers) of them are now "off track" to some degree, it was very hard for me to believe that it could have come to this. Each is a mature, committed Christian with an excellent track record of service to God's people. And yet I know that no matter how far one has walked with God, our very personal adversary knows exactly how to work on our weaknesses, and our spiritual equilibrium is only as good as our renewed mind faith today.

As I began to listen to most of those involved, I carefully noted two things: (1) who did I feel was trying to persuade me or enroll me in their perspective, and (2) who spoke with what I perceived as any personal animosity or bitterness or innuendo about someone in the opposing camp. As I read many pertinent documents such as Dan's letter of late September to Mark asking him specific questions pertinent to the situation, Mark's reply to Dan firing him as CEO, Dan's reply to Mark, Mark's reply to that letter, Tom's letter to the rest of the Board, etc., etc., I noted what I thought was godly, gracious, factual, and Word-based as compared to what I thought was personally attacking, acerbic, condescending, short on facts, and without biblical basis.

For me, I never experienced the Schoenheits, Gallaghers, or Theisens trying to enroll me on their side, but I did with Mark. Nor did I hear anything from the former three couples but sadness and heartbreak about what they perceived as Mark and Karen Anne's emotional instability, and a passion to restore them to wholeness and ministry work. But from Mark (and from Tom in his letter to the Board), I did experience a significant amount of personal innuendo.

1 Timothy 5:19 (NIV) says: "Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses." As I do my best to summarily chronicle why I have arrived at the perspective I have, space and prudence compel me to omit many incidents and details about how Mark and Karen Anne have showed up since last April, which I have heard corroborated by 12 credible, firsthand witnesses who I personally know to be faithful believers. As the reality of the situation became clear to me, I have prayed fervently that Mark and Karen Anne would wake up and humbly submit to the "multitude of counselors" lovingly imploring them

to do so. That way there would likely be no more division, and none of God's precious people would be forced to choose sides. Instead, they have entrenched themselves more and more deeply into their mindset, and have done all they can to substantiate it. Thus, I have made the decision to send out this letter.

For years there has been a fairly widespread perception among quite a few people involved with STF that Karen Anne has been exerting an undue and negative influence on Mark, and others. Some have felt she is "running the ministry" via her prophecies. Many times I have vehemently (and, I firmly believe, rightly) defended her. Having been integrally involved in every major ministry decision from 1987-2000 and somewhat involved in many others from 2000-2005, I know that she has not "run the ministry." That being said, I have of late been surprised to learn that the perception of her negative influence is far more pervasive than I realized, and, having been made aware of numerous incidents in which she has exerted undue and harmful influence, I no longer believe that this perception is groundless.

In my opinion, a key factor in all of this is that while God wants to make our weaknesses into strengths, the enemy wants to make our strengths into weaknesses. Karen Anne Graeser has often spoken prophetically into my life and been right on the money, to my great benefit. And I have seen her do the same things for scores of other saints, as they too would testify. In that sense, her voice has been a strength. But I honestly believe that, in large part, it has now become a weakness, as many will testify that she has been meddling in things she shouldn't, inordinately influencing Mark, relentlessly pushing her own agendas, and sowing seeds of division among the brethren. I believe that is coming out of her deep woundedness, and, given the depth of my love for her, my sadness for her is inexpressible.

In that vein, I should say that I have heard that there are many prophetic words about this situation that have come in from various people during the past seven months, one group of which is obviously false, or at least off track, because they are pretty much the opposite of the words in the other group. I will say that it seems to me that the Graesers and Resners appear to be relying much more heavily than are the others on the words that support their position. I think, however, that we can make a rational judgment from looking at the facts of the matter. As the Word says, "by their fruits you shall know them." And by the consistent testimony of about a dozen witnesses, and in my own opinion based upon Mark and Karen Anne's written words, the fruit in their lives has badly deteriorated in the past seven months.

During that time, several faithful and competent STF staff members have been adversely affected by the Graesers, the first being Jeff Blackburn,

who for six years has been an invaluable asset to STF in many ways, not the least of which are his awesome administrative ability and his heart for God's people. Does he have shortcomings? Of course, but from where I stand, it seems he was set up by Karen Anne and Mark, and, in retrospect, that is how Jeff feels. There are many details as to how it unfolded, but at the bottom line, as I see it, Jeff would not countenance Karen Anne's inappropriate involvement in certain ministry affairs, and Mark, under pressure from Karen Anne, put pressure on him to resign, which he did, when it was not what he really wanted to do. Jeff finally asked Mark if he thought it was best for him to resign, and Mark said yes, so Jeff did. According to Dan Gallagher, the STF CEO at that time, Mark had agreed with him to take the matter to the whole Board, but instead went ahead and personally dealt with Jeff anyway.

As the CEO, Dan did not like how Jeff was handled, and told that to Mark, citing the need for due process of any grievances, etc. Shortly thereafter, following a series of events surrounding their disagreement on this matter, Dan wrote Mark, asking him to answer a number of pertinent and vital questions. Mark responded to that on October 24 with a five-page letter to Dan in which he fired him as the STF CEO. After critically and objectively reading it, I would describe it as: authentic (that is, showing the true posture of Mark's heart), generally factless, condescending, unkind, adamantly accusing, almost paranoid, and, in biblical terms, someone with a beam in his eye trying to point out a splinter in another's eye.

I then pored over Dan's October 30 six-page reply and found it to be: gracious, loving, filled with facts and specifics, honest, imploring, and pleading for Mark to specify anything Dan had done wrong other than disagree with him and Karen Anne. I believe that had Mark received it with meekness, it could have been even soothing to him as he recognized Dan validating his love and support for him. I also read Mark's lengthy rebuttal of what Dan wrote to him, and though it contained many more factual statements than his first letter, I was not convinced that his take on them was accurate. Nor did he specifically answer all the questions Dan had originally asked him.

I then read Tom's October 29 letter addressed to the Board, in which he set forth a number of alleged prophetic words from the Lord that were very derogatory to John and Jenivee, Dan, and Gary and Karen T., and which did not line up with the facts as I see them. I could write a lot about it, but suffice it to say that I was very disappointed by its immediate declaration that what would follow was what "the Lord spoke" to Tom, its dearth of facts, its caustic and accusatory verbiage, its feeling of imposing guilt, and its inordinate allegiance to the Graesers. Honestly, there were a few statements so outlandish that I never would have

attributed them to my longtime friend Tom Resner had they not had his name on them.

About mid-October, Rachel Collum Darr told me that Mark had fired her that morning. Mark had given me his version of the incident, but when I later asked Rachel to lay out the whole thing for me, I was very saddened to see how Karen Anne had factored in (even as she had with Jeff B.) by her insistence for several months that Rachel be fired, based upon her perspective of how Rachel had shown up at the Women's Conference in April. I read the "History of Rachel Collum Darr's Employment at STF" and also Dan and Lori Gallagher's additions and corrections to that document (Lori factored in via her direct involvement in Rachel's situation at the Women's Conference). I was surprised to see how many key facts the original report contained that the Gallaghers then said were either not true or somewhat distorted.

Very shortly after Rachel's firing, Matthew Johnson, another loyal employee for six years, resigned after Karen Anne came to an office staff meeting and spoke for about 30 minutes about never having wanted Rachel to be fired. Matthew found this so dishonest that, as a matter of conscience, he decided he could not stay in the office for the remainder of his two-weeks-notice, and told Mark the next day that it would be his last. Knowing Matthew as I do, I called him and asked him to share his heart with me, which he did. Once again I heard a sad account of frustration with what he perceived as dishonesty on the part of Mark and Karen Anne in dealing with both Jeff and Rachel, as well as their handling of a pivotal staff meeting which Matthew felt was primarily an attempt by the Graesers to get testimony about how Jeff had hurt other staff members and thereby justify their position that he should resign.

Bob Maffit has been a dear friend of mine for more than 30 years, and in recent years has been an invaluable asset to the STF staff, a "full time volunteer," if you will. He has worked very closely with Mark, and, in an attempt to get all the information I could, I sought his perspective. Bob's burning love for Mark was evident as he sadly recounted to me numerous incidents in recent months where, in his view, Mark showed up as incapacitated, dishonest, distorting reality, enrolling Bob against Dan and John, speaking evil of others, and asking Bob to give him information about what he (Mark) perceived as others' disloyalty to him. Bob shared that he has often confronted Mark during these past months and, while generally experiencing him to listen, he has seen no positive change.

I have pages and pages of notes from my conversations with many of the principals in this situation, and they are replete with incidents corroborating the emotional instability and resulting behavior of Mark and Karen Anne since last Spring, their great distrust of those who love them and are fighting for them, their distorting of many pertinent facts

and conversations, and Mark's refusal to accept the recommendation of four of his five peers on the Board.

The annual STF Board of Directors meeting will be held the third week of January, at which time the annual election of officers will be held. Given the current state of affairs, there is little question that a new president will be elected. I pray that Mark and Karen Anne (and Tom and Susan) will not then leave STF and try to take others with them (I do not know to what extent they or others close to them have already tried to enroll STF people around the country). If they will see the light and change their attitudes, I know that all who love them will come around them and do everything we can to support their healing and restoration.

Although Mark and Karen Anne have made it clear that they believe the Schoenheits, Theisens, and Gallaghers have been collaborating against them, and that Jeff Blackburn, Rachel Collum Darr, Matthew Johnson, and Bob Maffit are equally in error in their perspectives of what has been going on, particularly in the STF office, that is not how I see it. Rather, I perceive a lengthy litany of incidents during the past seven months that plainly involve the Graesers desperately posturing and maneuvering, distorting the facts, manipulating people, name calling/attacking other persons involved, refusing to be accountable for so doing, and exemplifying the pot calling the kettle black.

Given our intimate relationship in this ministry these past 20 years (and another ten prior to that), I believe I am qualified to say that Mark and Karen Anne are not coming from the degree of wholeness that I have experienced from them during the many years when we have shared countless heart-to-heart moments. It is my carefully considered opinion that in order to most glorify God and love His people, Mark should embrace whatever the Board thinks is best for him in order to see the Lord's healing in his own heart and in his precious wife. Their value to our ministry is inestimable, and, were they whole, no one I know can fill the gap that would be caused by their absence. The thought of going on in this ministry without them puts a knot in my stomach.

Personally, I want my best friend back—the formerly self-described “balding window cleaner from no place theologically important in Florida.” I want the man who, until recently, has for me modeled much meekness, humility, godly introspection, a passion for spiritual growth, a pastoral heart for God's people, a willingness to account and take responsibility, and who has loved me immensely. And I want the woman with whom I have been closer than a brother for 30+ years, with whom I often have stood side by side in the trenches of spiritual battle.

Having myself been in a somewhat similar situation several years ago, and having felt it best for the ministry and my personal life to first resign

from the Board and later to resign as an STF employee, I can painfully identify with Mark in this matter. Through the past 20 years, and among so many godly people with whom I consider myself to be intimate, Mark and Karen Anne have been my closest friends of all. As "iron sharpening iron," they have often spoken into my life with great love and wisdom, and their example of so doing is one I call to mind as I now do my best to do the same for them.

With the goal of reaching out to Mark as he has so often done for me, I went to him on December 9 and read to him what I have written above (slightly edited since then). He listened, but did not agree at all with what you have read, asking that if I send it to anyone that I would make that clear. He believes that I am deceived, just like John S., Dan, the Theisens, et al.

On December 20, after reading Mark's just-released 14 page paper titled, "Why I Cannot in Good Conscience Take a 'Leave of Absence' or Resign as President at This Time and Under These Circumstances," I wrote the following (in brackets pp. 6-8, and now slightly edited) to him and Karen Anne, which I think you should see:

[Dear Mark and Karen Anne,

God bless you and yours. I've read your 14-page paper, Mark, and your reply to my birthday note to you, Karen. Were I able to hit the rewind button and go back in time to December 9 when I sat with you and read my letter to you, Mark, here is what I would have said first instead. As much as you can, please step back and hear my heart, which is imploring you as my dear friend of 30 years and brother in Christ and fellow laborer in this unique ministry.

You, John S., and I made a whole, a good balance where none of us could get too out of bounds. Adding Dan to that gives us even more wholeness, and balance, like the four legs on a table. The enemy took me out of the loop, at least temporarily, and clearly, you are his next target. Satan has used an incident in your life and your subsequent emotional turmoil to skew your perspective, with the goal of taking you out.

Mark, I've been there, and maybe I can help you see this, as I have come to terms with how the enemy has hurt STF via my failures. My part of the balance was taken out, and the thought of you also being taken out is terrible, for then half of us four are gone. Taking some time off in your duties to allow God to heal your heart and make things right in your family, would have been, and maybe still can be, a good thing. Humbling yourself before your peers is the way to stop the Devil from blowing up one incident to the end of removing your invaluable influence from STF.

You are a strong person on the inside, and you are wise. You are smarter than this. Just own up and let God be God. God is simply saying to take care of your heart and your house, so please don't be threatened. God is God, gracious and merciful. He doesn't want you out of the picture, but you are almost surely going to be if you don't see the big picture of what is really happening here.

What does it mean that I have been temporarily taken out? What did I bring to the table, and whom have we found to fill my shoes? No one else is me, and no one else is you. If you are taken out, who will then fill your shoes? It is not that someone else cannot be president, just as you took over for me, but it is that no one else is you, the Mark whom God has called to greatness.

All of us together are what makes STF what it is. Sure, we can rebuild without you, but how much better to do it with you? We can have the balance of the truth of the Word as the basis for healthy relationships. It's not either/or. Everyone is feeling pushed and attacked—if you could just step back, you could see that together we can take this ministry in the right direction. We all need one another.

It is all well and good to get the facts and see who is off base, but the bigger picture is the spiritual attack. The Adversary is trying to systematically destroy the well-rounded wholeness of STF. Rather than fighting my peers, I stepped down with the hope of being back in when I became more whole. I think some of your frustration is that you understand that without you there is going to be a big hole, and that is true. I think you are afraid of where Dan and John will go without your input, but clearly if you are whole you can provide your part of the balance we need. Just own up to your sinful actions in concealing something from the Board that that could have been a "molehill," rather than having exacerbated it into a mountain, as you have done. If you will own up, I believe you can have the future input you should have in STF. If you don't, that may not happen.

Mark, that is what I believe I should have said first, and I am sorry that I did not, for perhaps it would have been more entreating to you, and easier for you to receive. And yet I know that a heart of meekness will receive godly reproof no matter the timing, the tone, etc.

That being said, after reading your 14-page paper, I am more convinced than ever that what I wrote in the letter I read to you is the truth. Your paper was a smokescreen, a morass of posturing, shucking and jiving, shifting the blame, and, as I said in the letter I read to you, a gross example of someone with a beam talking about the splinters in others' eyes.

I love you with all my heart, Mark, and I pray that you will hear what I am saying, but I am now serving you notice that if you do not turn around, I will send this letter (edited somewhat) and the letter I read to you (edited somewhat) to those I think needs to hear it at this point. Perhaps I have taken too long to do this, but I am now completely in the ring fighting for the ministry that you, John, and I started by the grace of God. I will not stand by and let you do any more damage without asserting myself with the many people I know and love, and for whom we together have worked so hard these past 20 years.

I believe that you, Karen Anne, and the Resners have built a house of cards here, and if you persist in the direction you are going, I think you will see it collapse around and upon you. Because of how you have acted in the past seven months, Mark, you are almost certainly going to be voted out as president at the January Board meeting, and may even lose your job. I do not believe that you are in alignment with the will of God in all of this, and if that does not change, I fear you will suffer grievous consequences.

If you are planning to split off and take people with you, I am of the opinion that you do not have the support in the STF community you think you have. Time will tell whether or not John, Dan, the Theisens, and I have earned the love, respect, and trust of our precious constituents more so than have you and the Resners. But I am beseeching you, please do not force God's precious people, including your own dear children, to make such a choice. God will stand with those of us who stand for truth and honesty, and He will bring us through all of this because He is invested in His Word and in those of us who stand for it. PLEASE choose to be among us. I love you more than you know.]

On December 26, prior to sending out this letter to you, I spoke with Mark and asked him if my words had touched his heart and helped him change his overall stance. He was very gracious, said he thought I was misinformed on some things, and that I should do what I thought I needed to do before the Lord. I then told him I would be sending out this letter to him and to others I thought needed to see it at this time. Thank you for praying fervently for each person involved in this situation, and for our ministry as we reach out with God's wonderful Word around the world. The future is as bright as the promises of God. Amen.

Your brother in Christ,
John Lynn

A brief p.s. to critics of Spirit & Truth Fellowship:

Given the way that documents such as this somehow wind up on the Internet, let me say a few things to our detractors who will use this

current situation in STF to say "I told you so," take potshots at us, and magnify our flaws above the good we are doing for people. First, God bless you, I love you. Second, be sure you know enough truth about the issues to make a rational judgment. Third, get close enough to the nucleus of STF leadership to see their hearts before you impugn them. Fourth, take an honest look at what we teach from the Word about whatever subjects are pertinent to this matter, like prophecy. Prophecy is prophecy, and to criticize "personal prophecy" as unbiblical, in and of itself, is contrary to Scripture. We have a book on Prophecy that deals with this subject in depth from the Word, which you can get from www.stfonline.org.

In that vein, the reason I remain totally committed to Spirit and Truth Fellowship International is because I can find no one else with the "package" we have to offer, and I know the true heart with which we present it, as well as the liberating impact it has had on people around the world during the past 20 years. You will have to judge for yourself whether what we teach is sound doctrine, and whether we practice it in love. But you cannot do that from afar. I encourage you to dig into our work, and I exhort you to "stay tuned" and see if the hand of God is on us. Watch and see where He takes this ministry in the days ahead. I do hope that among the millions whose lives we hope to touch, we will be able to bless you, the only you God has.

As to what is flying around cyberspace about me and my personal life, my email is jalces@aol.com and my home phone is 317-849-5707. If you know me and care about me, I'll be glad to communicate with you. I will not, however, dialogue with anonymous people who lack the love and courage to identify themselves in interacting with me.