

[Greg Casteel](#)

[July 27 at 1:12 PM](#) ·

Let's talk about the audio of the "Special Fellowship at the July 2019 Semiannual Training." The letter referenced in the audio is Jo Casteel's letter she posted to Facebook on June 9th. You can see the original post here ( <http://bit.ly/JoFBPostLeavingRecovery> ). I'm sharing it to my page as the people who manage the [Living to Him](#) page the audio is uploaded to have deleted multiple comments that don't fit the narrative they would like to portray. I'll post some of the screenshots. My post does not cover everything that could be said or even should be said.

First off, the sharing of David Gedeon and [Simeon Chow](#) were cut out. I imagine that David's was cut out since he said that he wouldn't tell others not to read the letter. I imagine Simeon's was cut since he mentioned Jo by name and stated which city we live in. I believe both of these were cut out to tell others not to read Jo's letter, and make it more difficult to identify who wrote the letter.

There are several statements throughout the speaking that are love-bombing. A few are: what a beautiful sight, we love you, you are most beautiful in my eyes, we are fighting for you. At the beginning of a lot of the speaking there are statements to make the audience feel good and to warm you up to accept what the speakers have to say. There is a phrase that is repeated through the audio many times, "we are your fathers." This is an emotional appeal for you to rise up and defend your "family" and the church life. This is to invoke a emotion of love for your father and to rise up and defend them. Minoru Chen (MC) getting choked up at the very end was also an appeal to your emotions.

Another statement that is repeated over and over is "this is a test of your faith." It depends on what you mean by a test of your faith. It is a rather ambiguous statement. Faith in what? MC left this statement up to interpretation. Much of the letter was her experience. Some of the letter was to shine light on hidden abuses in the local churches and how they were handled. To test your near absolute faith in "the brothers" yes. To test the near absolute trust in the ministry, yes. This is a Biblical principle after all- 1 Thessalonians 5:21- "But prove all things. Hold fast to what is good." This is a test for your trust in the brothers, the practices of the Lord's recovery (especially with handling of abuses), trust in the near infallibility of the ministry. It was not intended to test your faith in the Bible or God.

Jo's letter pointed out that the members of the local churches have not been given the other side of the story. We are discouraged to seek the information for ourselves. We are told instead "don't believe everything you read on the internet." MC later goes on to say "don't believe whatever you read on Facebook." Again, these are completely obvious statements. No one should believe everything they read on the internet. Instead, we are encouraged to buy more ministry books and read more ministry. We are told this is the truth. We should believe it because Witness Lee was the minister of the age. MC then goes on to say "today, people care more about feeling than fact." In these statements, MC implies that you can't believe what is on the internet, don't believe what you read on Facebook, and that Jo cares more about feeling than fact. MC obfuscates many statements here. Jo and I care about facts. We don't live by our feelings. We don't believe everything that is on the internet or Facebook. To suggest that we or others do is gaslighting. Those among the local churches care so much about feelings and senses. How many times do you hear "I feel this way, brother" "how do you feel about this, brother" or

“what sense do you have?” This is all just asking how you feel about something. So, so much of the experience of the local churches is based on subjective experience, feelings, and senses. There is not near as much emphasis on fact as revealed by the Bible as an inner sense of life. This is a feeling.

MC: “Dredging up some things we have addressed from the past.” You might feel that you have addressed them from the past, but so many have messaged us and were shocked to read John Ingalls account of Speaking the Truth in Love. MC was one of the elders in the Church in Anaheim during the time that these things were transpiring. Why did MC not address anything in the meeting regarding Phillip Lee and the handling of his improprieties? Throughout the years I heard John Ingalls was a rebellious, ambitious one. If you read his side of the story, it is vastly different than the LSM narrative. <http://bit.ly/JohnIngallsAccount>

MC said that the letter accuses the co-workers taking the lead in North America and the leading ones of the churches of committing or tolerating grievous sins and bad, immoral things. That is simply not true. That is a blatant mischaracterization of what Jo said. She never accused all the co-workers in North America of covering sins. If you had said that she had stated that some of the co-workers and leading ones of covering these things that would be true. To imply that she accused all of the co-workers and leading ones is simply not the truth. Here is a direct quote from Jo’s letter near the end of page 18, “We learned that many of the top ones at LSM have been covering up more than we could possibly imagine for my entire lifetime.” Jo also says at the top of page 19- “multiple top leading ones had been covering up these things for decades.” It is clear according to these two quotes that she did not state all the co-workers and leading ones of tolerating grievous sins and bad, immoral things as MC stated. Should it really be a surprise that some leading ones have covered things up?

MC also says that “the Lord’s recovery is not a perfect place and if you have a romanticized notion you are wrong. Every house has a garbage bin and I don’t stick my head in the garbage.” That’s a strange analogy to compare Jo’s letter to sticking your head in the garbage. I would think as a responsible one MC would want to deal with the “garbage” to make sure the ones under his care could be better off. To care for the people who have been immeasurably hurt in the local churches through the years. It is callous to simply place all misdeeds in the realm of offense and the victim is offended and to call real, valid concerns in Jo’s letter as “garbage” simply because its not something that’s easy to hear.

MC: “Some even consider him to be infallible.” About this comment, I don’t think anyone on Jo’s main thread implied or stated that Witness Lee (WL) the person was infallible. One person posted a quote on the main thread from WL that he said he made mistakes. It was never implied or stated that WL never made mistakes. Again, to be clear, I don’t think anyone thinks WL was infallible as a person. That was clearly not the case. The point is that the ministry of WL is looked at as “the proper interpretation that opens up the word.” I can think of so many among the local churches that know more of Witness Lee’s words than the Bible’s words. Many know some verses well. The Recovery Version after all is filled with footnotes almost exclusively authored by Witness Lee. Witness Lee is indeed painted as being infallible in his interpretations. I have never heard anyone openly question his views and be able to remain meeting. Ones are excommunicated for going against Witness Lee’s teachings. This points to the infallibility of his interpretations, not him as a person.

Albert Lim says that he called sister Lee who reminded him that this is the Lord's recovery. Sister Lee: "Why are you so worried? If it's not the Lords recovery, it would not stand." There are countless groups that those in the local churches view as groups with aberrant beliefs that are still around. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses come to mind. Mormons and JW's are not the "Lord's recovery" and yet those groups still remain. The point falls flat that since the local churches are part of the Lord's recovery they will stand. There are all sorts of groups that are still out there perpetuating all kinds of terrible practices and teachings. Also, it's strange to ask the wife of the leader who has passed away her opinion on the matter. It's in her best interest to say it's the Lord's recovery as she was taken care of by the saints for the rest of her life. What does her opinion even matter? Shouldn't the Bible be consulted if it's the Lord's recovery?

[David Bates](#) (1:13 mark) uses the words hyper generalize and says we can't use Jo's experience across everything. He then goes on to say that we shouldn't take one persons outward action and hyper generalize it against the church. He then goes on to generalize what he feels those in attendance should do. The goal was not to divide by generations. That is not true. As he stated this is an opportunity to be purified. That is true. The local churches need to be purified. There are many dark corners the need light shined on. The hope in the letter was to accomplish this.

Travis Grant Tatum- (1:32 mark) He says that "he received this death and felt horrible." It's not a great feeling to feel horrible. I get that. Keep in mind that "death" as defined by the LCs is feeling bad. Plain and simple. No one likes to feel bad, but with new information many times there is a chance for "death." He completely misses the mark here and leaves all those who have serious issues with the local churches and their practices. There are thousand who have left meeting with the local churches in the US for various reasons. I find his statement of "I'm not gonna be deterred from this purpose because someone got offended" quite surprising. Considering that TT said he didn't even read the letter and went on to categorize why Jo and I left as simply an offense is incredibly oversimplified.

TT has contributed to a handful of scholarly articles. They take a lot of research to write properly. It is also surprising that someone who has written articles would be willing to stand in front of a group of 900 or so former FTTA grads and say that "I'm not gonna be deterred from this purpose because someone got offended." Travis comes across as unfeeling, and clearly lacks an understanding of Jo's letter with an apparent indignation in his voice. I sat next to Travis in one of the classes in the FTTA for a term. We prayed every morning in class together for 20 weeks. If he had written the letter, I would have read through it and contacted him.

According to his LinkedIn profile, TT is working on his "Doctor of Philosophy- PhD, Social Network Analysis Complex Systems and Computational Social Science." It sounds like he would have some interest in the social media post since it seems to fall directly into his field of study. Instead, he chooses to ignore what the letter and Facebook post actually says and states, "I'm not gonna be deterred from this purpose because someone got offended." This is simply not a well thought out response. In the same way he would not write or be involved in a scholarly article without researching the subject, why would he levy an opinion about a letter he hasn't even read?

Marvin Jean Jacques- (1:38) Marvin says, “this illusion that church life won’t be perfect, its not Disney, its not a fairytale.” No one thinks that the church life is perfect, Disney, or a fairytale. I find it quite puzzling that he uses Disney and a fairytale to describe what you think Jo, I, or others think it should be. I know the church life is full of imperfect people. No one is asking for or expects perfection, a fairytale, or an illusion. We do expect accountability for action or inaction. There are cases that the proper action of reporting abuse to authorities has happened. There have also been many, many cases where this has not been the case.

[Philip Bates](#)- (1:46) He has chosen to form an opinion of something he hasn't actually read. He wasn't the only one to say he didn't even read the letter. He still felt it was a good idea to stand in front of 900 or so former FTTA trainees and speak about it? He then goes on to say that “I don’t like trashcans and I don’t like death. As for the letter I’m not going to read it. I’m choosing to ignore the letter.” That is quite a statement. You can tell something someone says is a “trashcan” and “death” without having ever reading it? Really? PB can base a sense of “life or death” on something without knowing what it says?

Throughout his speaking there is an us vs. them mentality sprinkled with war imagery. He talks about the enemy firing the first few shots and the ones in attendance are comrades. He then says that we can’t let the enemy spread lies about the brothers and lies about the recovery. He speaks very generally here. The problem is this- do you choose to believe all the reports are lies or are they truths that you simply don’t want to believe?

[David Cuthbertson](#) (2:02 mark) spoke in what was the most unsettling parts of the whole audio. This person is an MD, speaking to a group of around 900 people who attended the FTTA. He mentions to not read Jo’s letter as it creates a false, misleading, and misguided narrative as to what the church life is. In stating this, he does exactly what he accuses Jo of doing- he creates a false, misleading, and misguided narrative of Jo’s letter. She did not create a misleading narrative of what the church life has been to her, me, and the many hundreds of people who have messaged us privately and shared the same experiences. The church life has some positive experiences, no doubt. The church life also has been a very cold place with very little meaningful connection to many as well. Many have left not because they were offended, but because all of the rules (spoken and unspoken), stress, social pressures to perform, anxiety, depression, abuse cases and their improper handling, and so many other reasons.

DC then goes on to say that there was much abuse in the church he grew up in. The young people abused those who were taking care of them. Broken bones and concussions. He then goes on to say another speaker earlier in the audio got a concussion and they made fun of him. He then later describes making rat tails and whipping others until they bled. He sounded like he was working material for this sad and ill timed attempt at stand up comedy. There is a time and place for laughter and joking. Talking about abuse and making light of it in a church gathering, especially of this size clearly does not qualify as an appropriate time. He is a person that bears some responsibility in the church life and in the community at large. He can’t just easily step out of being a MD and the responsibility that bears. Choosing to joke about abuse and make light of the word is damaging to the many actual cases of abuse that have been occurring in and among the local churches.

MC is also eliciting a “rally round the flag effect” of sorts. He is using guided imagery when he speaks of armies, warriors, bullets, attack, and warfare. This is to elicit a response for everyone to rise up and figuratively fight.

In the rally round the flag effect, the POTUS receives a boost in approval rating during times of international crisis or war. So in this analogy the POTUS would be “the leading brothers,” the approval rating is the attempt to boost morale among the FTTA grads and the younger ones in the LR at large, and the war is “the war that the enemy is waging.” He ends with a rallying call at the end for 300 warriors to migrate to 10 cities in the next 2 years. This is a call to action which is to often used at the end of messages, conferences, and trainings.

As for the page [Living to Him](#), where the audio is posted I and others have tried to leave comments only to be deleted quickly. I would remind those on the page to consider the following verse. 2 Timothy 1:7- “For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.” Jo did not write the letter in a spirit of cowardice. She wrote the letter with love for the many trapped in a system who have thus far had little to no voice. The commenters on Jo’s main post care for the people in the LCs, despite what you might think. Stepping out in a public way is a very difficult decision. We have received hundreds of messages from people who still meet with the LCs. So many have echoed what Jo said in her letter. So many are unhappy with the LCs and the system they are in. So many have expressed a sense of freedom in Jo putting to words what they had felt.

We are here and open to fellowship with anyone in the Lord’s recovery who has actually read the letter and is able to dialogue concerning it.

Greg Casteel

Source: [https://www.facebook.com/greg.casteel/posts/10103902810643421?\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=K-R&fbclid=IwAR2s8Ut03lZytqHQaBgvDx4j8wsYXFrDJMou5ej6Vl1GAgl2Jg8XKfRVn38](https://www.facebook.com/greg.casteel/posts/10103902810643421?__tn__=K-R&fbclid=IwAR2s8Ut03lZytqHQaBgvDx4j8wsYXFrDJMou5ej6Vl1GAgl2Jg8XKfRVn38)