

K.P. Yohannan Discusses GFA Lawsuit Settlement With Francis Chan: ‘I Was in Depression’

Gospel for Asia recently released a video of pastor and author Francis Chan interviewing GFA founder K.P. Yohannan about accusations that the ministry committed financial fraud.

After three years of legal battle that threatened the evangelistic ministry's survival, GFA settled with a \$37 million refund to donors.

“With the whole lawsuit and everything else, when I first heard about it, it was concerning, surprising,” Chan says. “And I know a lot of people walked away and wanted to distance themselves from you. And if I’m perfectly honest, that temptation was there for me.”

The two lawsuits against GFA claimed the organization only sent 13% of donations to the mission field instead of 100% as they promised.

In a statement, Yohannan says his ministry underwent an independent audit each year. But in 2015, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, of which GFA was a charter member at that time, sent the ministry a letter saying it needed to better conform its accounting practices to the council's requirements.

GFA hired a new auditing firm, Yohannan says, but not before the council's letter was leaked on social media, causing harm to the ministry's reputation.

“Around the same time, a former staff member sent negative

letters to many of our donors,” Yohannan writes. The lawsuit filed against GFA quickly turned into a class action suit that called on all GFA’s supporters as plaintiffs.

The lawsuit’s settlement concluded that both plaintiffs and defendants “mutually stipulate that all donations designated for use in the field were ultimately sent to the field,” according to GFA’s statement.

“Throughout GFA’s 40 years of existence, our hearts and passion have been to bring Christ’s love to a broken and hurting world,” Yohannan says. “We did not look for personal gain. Above all, we have sought to honor the Lord in our personal lives, in the ways we serve and by maintaining our integrity.”

Chan praises Yohannan’s integrity in the video interview and says Yohannan even allowed Chan to see his personal tax audits and those of his son for the sake of transparency.

“I needed to see that,” Chan says. “I needed to be sure. I needed to be able to speak with integrity to other people. I’ve been to your house, driven in that old VW bug of yours—I’ve seen what you eat. Some of it is kind of creepy, but it’s just simple. And I just go, ‘How could anyone accuse someone like this?’”

Chan is referring to personal accusations against Yohannan that he forced followers to kiss his ring in submission.

Yohannan says his denomination, Believers Eastern Church, is “hard-core evangelical,” not Catholic. He added that he has no more power than any of the other 30 bishops.

“We do not have a practice of people kissing my ring,” he says. “But when people come to me, or our bishops, they simply bow their heads and say, ‘Bishop, give me a blessing.’ So what do we do? We just touch their foreheads.”

Yohannan also opens up about the depression he went through in the throes of the legal battle. As he saw people abandoning GFA, he wondered why this was all happening.

“I was so in depression,” he tells Chan. “I just lost all hope. ... We had a lot to learn through all this. And I think I realized that without suffering, we cannot serve the Lord.”

Watch the video to see Chan’s interview with Yohannan in its entirety.