

Church of God, The Eternal

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Announcement Letter December 1990

Dear Brethren:

Greetings to all of you as we head into this Winter season. The Feast tapes should be available sometime in December; and with these the Winter season will be a marvellous time to review these tapes in order to bolster our determination, overcome, and endure to the end. It is our fond hope that all of us can be together again soon, meeting in the various locations for the Spring feast days. Now to the Spiritual Principle in this issue of the *Announcement Letter*.

Spiritual Principle: How do we administer divorce/remarriage and separation cases?

Because cases in the church today are comparable to what the Apostle Paul experienced in his day, the ministry is often asked to perform duties which they would rather not have to face. Because decisions have to be made, and those involved are required to make their own decisions, some members attempt to second-guess both the ministry and the various parties involved. As a result questions are generated and proliferated in the church. Usually these questions come about as a result of insufficient information. Occasionally, however, questions are generated because of bad, contentious spirits. If we allow the questioning actions of another party to affect us adversely, we can be assured that such an attitude does not proceed from the Spirit of God. For anger, resentment, contention, or involving ourselves in the affairs of another individual do not proceed from the Spirit of God. They are the direct manifestations of the carnality of human nature.

In this explanation we want to speak directly to those who want to be taught and thereby live the peaceable lives which God has promised to those who love and obey the truth. Some questions warrant explanations. For those who want to understand, we want to give the necessary information—not for the purposes of judgment, but for the spiritual purpose of acceptance of circumstances over which we do not have any control nor can we understand fully because we do not read hearts and minds. The ministry, along with those who love the truth of God and do understand the spiritual purposes of God, are willing to leave the duty of judgment up to Christ at the time Appointed.

The duty of the ministry: As the called and chosen of God, the ministry is responsible for teaching and preaching the truth. The ministry is not accountable for judgment. The obvious they must deal with in a positive and direct manner. What is not known they do not assume to know. In the time appointed for judgment all information will be revealed, a fact which makes obvious the further certainty all information is not

known at the present time. In patience we will wait for the intervention of God and Jesus Christ.

Just for the record: *This ministry does not believe in divorce and remarriage.* We have never taught that there is any justification for divorce and remarriage. On the other hand, it was Jesus Christ, on the basis of the Old Testament concept of "ervah," who stated: ". . . Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication (*porneia*) and shall marry another committeth adultery . . ." (Matt. 19:9). From Christ's statement, it is obvious that some marriages were never marriages. Under such circumstances, the offended party could put the other one away. It is in these "hidden" areas—secrets of hearts and minds—of the people involved that *porneia* becomes applicable. Since, in most cases, the application is not and cannot be judged by the ministry, the parties involved are required to make their own decisions. This means that the party or parties involved have made the decisions. Their decisions are neither approved nor disapproved by the ministry. As in all cases of responsibility, those involved must stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

The second duty of the ministry is counselling. This responsibility is little more than reemphasizing the teaching of God. The general concept of counselling, as used today, is not a function of the ministry. Our counsel is the whole counsel of God—the teaching of the truths regarding any subject or circumstance. The ministry is not and cannot be the decision-making entity for the members of the church. All human beings, including those called to know the truth, must make their own decisions regarding issues with which they are concerned, unless those decisions are obviously incorrect or are mandated because of the creation of confusion and contention within the body of believers. These areas of concern do fall on the combined responsibility of the ministry.

There is much concern regarding the seventh commandment. One would get the impression, based on the attention given by some to divorce and remarriage, that God gave one command only. There are, however, nine others. Yet, so little is ever said about them in this context of personal, or ministerial, judgment.

Please understand: If we *knew* anyone was sinning deliberately, that is, practicing sin, we would not allow such to continue to attend. That would be absolute mockery of every spiritual principle known. Yet on the other hand, we, ministry and laity alike, must not presume and thereby through our own self-righteousness condemn those who are merely weak and are trying to master known faults. God requires that the spiritually strong must bear the burdens of those who are weaker in the faith.

One other factor needs to be mentioned before we give you an outline of the decision-making process as employed by the ministry. Information which we want you to possess. That point is this: Many members bring to us much very personal information which they do not want distributed to everyone in the church. That trust and responsibility must never be abridged. It is the duty of everyone, not only the ministry, to cover sins, not to expose them. For this reason alone, we will never reveal the facts in any marital situation. Those facts will be known by God and the ministry only. The laity will have to trust the integrity and honesty of the ministry. If we have not proven ourselves worthy by now, then proof is impossible. Consider what happened to Christ. Here was the epitome of perfection, yet He was never trusted or accepted. To the contentious and bad-spirited, proof of honesty and integrity is never possible.

Basis of ministerial decisions—not to decide in many cases.

1. All people who come seeking help in resolving difficulties in their lives do not fit into the same mold. Some are members, some are outsiders who have not heard of many of the truths of God, some are children who have grown up in the church, and finally others are involved in mixed relationship—one converted and the other manifesting little, if any, interest in the truth. Circumstances applicable in each of the above categories are often quite divergent from that of any of the others. Therefore, there is no cut-and-dried, precise information which is applicable to all.

2. In the case of two young people who have grown up in the church, where parents are responsible for their spiritual education, the chances of any legitimate separation after marriage are virtually nil. If these young adults do not exercise every option or right which they possess prior to marriage, they cannot come back later claiming any form of fraud. It is their duty to ascertain such matters before marriage. Rarely would there be an exception to the above rule.

A couple in the church, living together for years, possibly having children from the union, are without recourse. They are married. Whatever existed in the background was unimportant to them at the time of the marriage. And whatever was unimportant at the time of the marriage cannot be brought up at a later date.

One problem area is that of a couple married in the world and later come to the knowledge of the truth. Years earlier a divorce and remarriage took place. It is generally impossible to determine the facts relative to the marriage. In such cases, we do allow the involved couple to make their own decision once they have read the literature and understand the significance of the laws of God. Once these people have made a decision, we in the ministry will not treat them as second-class members. They will be accepted and treated no differently from anyone else in the body. Only God will be able to judge some of those unions. We are willing to leave that judgment to God. It is obvious that there were such marriages in the New Testament Church during the times of the apostles.

The other problem area is that of a member, or a child brought up in the truth, who marries a mate outside of the faith. Even though the marriage in itself is a mistake, there remains a possibility that the unconverted one may use deceptive means to gain the affection of the other party. If such fraud is the basis for the separation, and such separation occurs immediately upon learning of the deception, then there may be a basis for the separation. However, this is an area of the heart and mind of those involved. Therefore, the parties involved must make their own decision. We will accept the decision; but that does not mean that we either approve or disapprove. We have merely accepted their decision. The judgment of God must come later.

One other area needs to be covered. Oftentimes you will hear that the ministry approves of a marriage or a particular separation. In no way does the ministry approve of any separation or remarriage. Neither do they disapprove. What we have generally told those involved is that they may make their own decisions without condemnation. Being neutral does not make us responsible for their actions. We are neutral because we cannot know all the facts about the situations. God has not revealed all pertinent factors and will not reveal them until the time Christ is sent back to this earth for the purpose of judgment. Then, and then alone, will everything be known.

We trust the above will help you to understand why we take certain actions in the fulfillment of our ministerial responsibility. What is not known cannot be known. In judgment, one must not guess. People's lives are at stake.

We will preach loudly and clearly about the matter of divorce and remarriage. We will not attempt to judge matters about which we have insufficient detail, if any at all which can be trusted. We do not allow known divorce and remarriage. For in the first place, one must be sure that the first marriage was valid in the sight of God. Therein lies the many problems. If there were no exceptions, the matter would be a simple one. Is it possible that God included the exception clause because He did not intend that we should be involved in the matters of judgment? It is a serious question to ponder.

In conclusion, do not attempt to compare your situation with any other in the church. To do so makes you very unwise, according to the Bible. There are too many variables to make direct comparisons possible. Just remember, we are not practicing any form of partiality. After all, our own future hope is at stake.

May I thank you for your kind understanding in administering most difficult situations? Your understanding will make a very difficult job much easier to bear.

Articles

The article on marriage and separation has been completed. It is awaiting editing after Mr. Cole returns from his present trip.

New Interest

A number of letters from interested new parties have recently come in. Pray that true spiritual fruit will be borne in their lives.

Blessings of Brethren

[Omitted for confidentiality]

Births

Mr. and Mrs. Kent Clark: Daughter born November 11 at 3:32 A.M. The baby, named Kollina Amber, weighed in at 7 lb., 11 oz. The mother and baby are doing fine.

Mr. and Mrs. Jon Brisby: A son was born on November 14, weighing in at 7 lb., 8 oz., and named Samuel Chance Brisby. The mother and baby are doing fine also.

Trips

December 1	Raymond Cole, Lakeland, Florida
December 8	Raymond Cole, Central Pennsylvania
December 15	Raymond Cole, Vancouver, B.C.

Tape Schedule

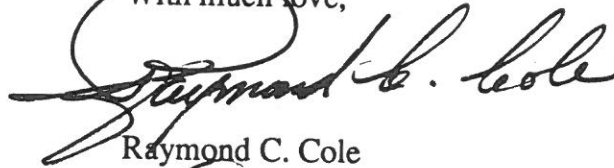
Tape series:	Mailed on:	For:	Title/tape #:
WSE-GL 8	10/31	12/1	How to have faith toward God #1
WSE-RC 47	11/14	12/8	Is the ministry today correctly administering their responsibility?
WSE-BC 122	11/14	12/15	Great men of the Old Testament #37
WSE-RC 48	11/28	12/22	Man shall live by all of God's word
WSE-BC 127	11/28	12/29	What should the ministerial decision making process be?
WSE-RC 49	12/12	1/5	How to resolve problems
WSE-RS 6	12/12	1/12	The ancient satanic beliefs are with us today
WSE-BC 128	12/26	1/19	What is true Biblical love?
WSE-RC 50	12/26	1/28	A guide by which to navigate troubled waters

Office

In order to take advantage of the tax deduction, the books for 1990 tithes will be held open until January 10, 1991.

Also, those who have received various blessings, answers to prayers, etc.: The office would appreciate hearing about them so they can be reported in the *Announcement Letter*.

With much love,



Raymond C. Cole



Bryce G. Clark