

# Church of God, The Eternal

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## Announcement Letter July 2003

Dear Brethren:

It is a real pleasure once again to address the faithful children of God in this edition of the *Announcement Letter*. We pray that you have continued to experience God's loving mercy in your lives, in spite of the heartaches and sorrows that are so much a part of this world. Is there any doubt we are living in days of desperation and futility? But not for those God has called out of this miserable world, and those who have held fast to His marvelous Truth. No matter what trials and difficulties we may experience, what joy there is to know we are being led by a loving Father who is working with us in developing true godly character. That process is often very painful, but for those who keep their eyes focused on that ultimate goal of sonship in the God Family, how much easier it is to put life's sufferings and challenges into proper perspective. There is always so much hope in understanding that master plan God is working out step by step. And what an honor it is to serve those children of God who value that gospel message in these dark days, and to participate in your spiritual growth toward that ultimate glory.

### Spiritual Principle

Because one of the greatest weaknesses we all share as human beings is talking inappropriately, it is a good idea for us to be reminded frequently about our responsibility to bridle our tongues. "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2). Yes, since none of us is perfect yet, that means we all still fall short when it comes to controlling what comes out of our mouths. And what we say inappropriately can be very damaging to others. That is why Satan seeks every opportunity to divide God's people through offenses and hard feelings resulting from foolish talking. We can so easily fall into that trap, and it can be so devastating when we do. For that reason, we want to reaffirm some cardinal principles which should help each of us spot certain traps and be able to avoid hurting others.

First, it is never appropriate for us to talk negatively about any other person. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:16). We all know this in principle, but we still like to make exceptions. One way we rationalize it is to profess our deep love and concern for that person, and therefore, discussing his/her shortcomings is not being negative, but only reflective, for his/her benefit. Brethren, please get this false concept out of your minds completely! It is *never* appropriate for you or I to discuss someone else's failings with another person. It matters not how close we both may feel to that other person, or how much we are rooting for his/her success. That does not give us any license to talk about another's problems. Especially since we probably know a lot less than we think we do about him/her this talking is never constructive, but always destructive. So let us stop it.

Next, what should you do if someone begins to try and discuss someone else with you? Most of us either participate eagerly, or, even if we have a pang of conscience about it, allow ourselves to be roped into the conversation anyway for fear of offending the one speaking. Brethren, we have to come to realize that even if we do not initiate inappropriate talk, if we participate we become just as guilty in God's eyes. It is sin. We must become acutely aware that God is evaluating all our communications. We cannot just float down stream and allow ourselves to be entangled in inappropriate talk. God will hold us accountable. This does not mean that we have to be caustic toward the one who opens the inappropriate discussion. No, rather than a self-righteous retort of indignation, simply and meekly state, "I'm not really comfortable with this, and would prefer to talk about something else." Or perhaps, "Suzie Q is one of God's called ones and I know she is working like all of us to overcome." These are only a couple of examples of more diplomatic statements which can be used to redirect the conversation away from inappropriate areas without blasting the one who opened it. It is advisable that we take the time to pray and ask God for His wisdom in knowing how to turn away such discussions. Practice some replies in your mind so that when you are next faced with this situation (and you will be), you will not be caught off guard. If more of us would politely and diplomatically cut off inappropriate discussions, we would help each other learn to control that natural urge God calls talebearing. How much more peace and harmony would prevail if most of us were able to apply these principles? "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Proverbs 26:20).

Next, if someone makes a statement of accusation about another person to you, what should you do? We have already seen above we should cut it off right then, and refuse to participate. But if you *did* listen enough to hear the accusation, what do you do with that information? If Blue engages Red in a discussion about Green, does Green have a right to know he/she was being talked about? This unfortunately is what most people believe. It all

seems like childishness, does it not, but the fact is children only manifest the same traits they carry with them into adulthood. The same gossiping and backbiting occurs at all ages, because it is ingrained in the carnal mind from birth. So does Green have a right to know someone was talking about him/her? Is Red justified—obligated—to run to Green and tell him/her what Blue said? Not at all! In fact, if Red does that, he/she has just become as guilty or more so than Blue was in the first place. *Spreading* slander is as bad or worse than the initial sin. Have we been guilty of this in the past? Have we been operating under the false notion that someone has a right to know when someone talked about them, and that we have an obligation to give him/her that information? If that is what we have thought, let us get rid of that idea right now. "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Proverbs 11:13). A talebearer is not just one who initially talks. God calls one who *spreads* that secret sin a talebearer as well.

What should Green do when Red comes to him/her, claiming to have information about what Blue said? If Green is going to follow godly principles, he/she will not want to hear what was said, and will cut Red off before it goes any further. And guess what? If Green does otherwise, and listens to the report of slander—even against himself/herself—Green now becomes equally guilty in the whole mess. The real Christian is one crucifying the self, not trying to defend it. Why do we need to know everything that might be said about us? So we can defend ourselves, or set the record straight? Is that what Christ told us to do?

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven . . . (Matthew 5:38–45).

If this is our Christian orientation of mind, where does the idea of having a right to know when someone talks about us fit in? It does not. In fact, a true Christian who is turning the other cheek will not want to lay bear the sins of his brother or sister who may have been guilty of talebearing. The true Christian will not seek his/her pound of flesh, but will seek to cover the sins of the weak. How many of us can say we have really come to the

point we are willing to cover, even when the sin was something hurtfully said or done toward us? If we are truly Christ's, that is what we should be doing.

Back to our hypothetical case: If Blue has the initial self-control to avoid blurting out something about Green, then the problem is averted at the source. But even if Blue sins in weakness, Red has a chance to stop it dead in its tracks by refusing to listen. But even if Red also sins by listening, and then compounds it further by telling Green, Green still has the chance to bury the whole thing, if he/she is operating with a correct Christian orientation. But what we find is God is evaluating each one of them to see whether they will do the right thing when faced with such temptations. Because we are all less than perfect, we are all subject to saying inappropriate things. When we do, we must be willing to admit it and repent. But those sins could be greatly mitigated if others would cut it off, refusing to listen.

When we truly learn to cover the weaknesses of our brethren, we begin to experience what real peace and harmony is like. It is this outgoing love and concern for others which is the hallmark of God's True Church. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). We will still make mistakes, but those mistakes do not have to create division if we are all focused on forgiveness and longsuffering. Learning to bridle the tongue is one of the best ways to fulfill this Christian responsibility.

## **Feast of Tabernacles**

We are now in the countdown prior to the Feast for 2003. To have a successful and rewarding Feast it is necessary to call upon God unitedly for such an occasion. By seeking the help of God, we can eliminate the active and disruptive presence of Satan and his demons. As a vicious adversary he can and will cause much trouble unless we earnestly seek the help of God. The fruits borne will reveal how diligent and effective our prayers were in this countdown time. We count on you.

## **Report From Europe and Australia**

It was incredibly rewarding to spend time with our brethren in Europe and Australia during the last ministerial trip. The brethren in the United Kingdom were warm and enthusiastic and enjoyed our time together for the Sabbath of May 31. Their hospitality and willingness to serve was an inspiration. It was a pleasure once again to see the brethren in Switzerland and France, and spend Pentecost in Grenoble, France, with that devoted congregation. Deepest thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. Jean Aviolat for continuing to serve God's



people so determinately over all these many years, and for their outgoing warmth and hospitality. It was also a marvelous opportunity to meet our new brethren in Australia and spend a few days with them, including the Sabbath of June 14. To find more who share that same Spirit and love for God's Truth is always thrilling. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to serve them now and welcome them to this faithful remnant. The excursion around the world on this aggressive three-week trip went very smoothly, and God was very kind to provide blessings of health and safety for the duration. For that, we are very thankful indeed. And the prayers of all of you were greatly appreciated along the way.

## **Excess Second Tithe**

This is just a yearly reminder of the need for second tithe to cover administrative and facility costs for the Feast. We want to reserve adequate for an enjoyable and meaningful Feast. At the same time, we all must remember, to keep the Feast requires the rental of halls, transportation, aid to those who are deserving, etc. If we all contribute, the burden for each is relatively small. A huge thanks to those whose hearts and minds are willing. May God richly and abundantly bless you in all ways.

## **Second Tithe Requests**

Please be reminded that requests for second tithe assistance for the Feast of Tabernacles need to be in by August 31. Any who need assistance should notify us in ample time.

## **Births**

Mr-s. Derrik Quenzer had Carly Jaqueline Renee Quenzer Thursday, June 5. She was 7 lbs, 12 oz., 20 inches long, and had a head full of brown hair.

Mr-s. Rick Walker also had a baby girl. Sierra Elizabeth Denise Walker arrived Tuesday, June 10, and was 6 lbs, 7oz., and 19 1/2 inches long. Our congratulations to both families.

## Trip Schedule

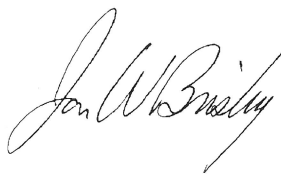
August 2      Baltimore, Maryland

August 9      Chesterton, Indiana

## Tape Schedule

| Tape #           | Mailed   | Played   | Title                                      |
|------------------|----------|----------|--|
| WSE-JB 22-57-21C | 06-05-03 | 07-05-03 | Results of the Pentecost Change            |
| WSP-RC 20-2      | 06-19-03 | 07-12-03 | How Does Your Conscience Guide You? #2     |
| WSP-RC 20-3      | 06-19-03 | 07-19-03 | How Does Your Conscience Guide You? #3     |
| WSE-RC 49        | 07-03-03 | 07-26-03 | How to Resolve Problems                    |
| WSE-JB 22-58-21D | 07-03-03 | 08-02-03 | The Basics of the Pentecost Count          |
| WSE-JB 22-59-21E | 07-17-03 | 08-09-03 | Assembling Elements of the Pentecost Count |
| WSE-JB 22-60-21F | 07-17-03 | 08-16-03 | More Technicalities of Pentecost           |

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby