

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440
www.cogeternal.org

The late Raymond C. Cole
Founding Pastor
Jon W. Brisby
Pastor, Director

Offices in: United States
Philippines
Switzerland
Kenya

Announcement Letter July 2009

Dear Brethren:

Another month has sped by, providing the chance to greet you again and to confirm our love and appreciation for all of you who share that love of God's revealed Truth. Thank you again for your stalwart conviction to hold fast to that which so many of God's people in this age have abandoned.

Those events culminating in the formation of the New Testament Church occurred in the thirty-first year of the first century (AD 31). In our day, God established the last-day church around that same time frame within the twentieth century, about 1933. Within forty years (by the 70s AD), the first-century church had embraced many doctrinal perversions, and by the beginning of the second century, a faithful remnant was virtually hidden from view, eclipsed by the organized apostates who carried the outward trappings of that name. In our time, the same thing has occurred. By the 1970s, apostasy set in to the organized church, and those holding to the original Truth were forced out. Now nearing the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, those holding to the original Truth are very few indeed, eclipsed in size and image by those groups who have embraced the perverted doctrines of men. According to the express will of God, history has indeed repeated itself.

The oldest members of the church from seventy years ago—including its ministers—are dying off, more of them each year. There are fewer and fewer eyewitnesses to the beginnings of that work. But unlike the first-century church, we have the blessing of written documentation of the teachings and administrative actions over all those years. Even so, the more that time marches forward, the more difficult it becomes for a faithful remnant to endure. Satan is a past master at obscuring true history and perverting modern accounts of what really happened. How long do we yet have until the return of Jesus Christ, when all will be revealed and confirmed? We simply do not know. But without His miraculous intervention to protect and to defend us, there is no way we could hope to survive. Yet according to His promise, we have absolute confidence in the plan He is bringing to pass. Dear brethren, hold fast and keep your hope alive through the power of His Spirit.

Spiritual Principle—Avoid the Appearance of Evil

This is another installment to help all of you prepare for the upcoming Feast of Tabernacles, although the principle is one which applies at all times to the people of God.

There are certain godly principles which used to be accepted likewise in our modern societies, up until recent decades. Regardless of whether one knew God's truth or not, in the Western world he was raised being taught that there are certain things moral people just do not do. There were standards of behavior in polite society to encourage restraint of carnal behaviors. It does not mean that people were necessarily more "moral" fifty years ago, but at least more of them attempted to abide by certain standards in public, even if they were violating them with impunity in private. Today, all pretense of morality is being relegated to the trash bin, and society is accepting just about anything human beings choose to do. It is no longer considered bad to be divorced. It is no longer considered a scandal to live with a man or woman who is not your spouse. Homosexuality is accepted and encouraged. Foul language is just a normal part of speaking, even in the presence of women and children.

Our children are being raised in a world telling them to do whatever they want without fear of condemnation, as long as it does not hurt anyone else. They are not being raised in a world which dictates *common* standards of morality, so unless you teach them, your children will have no such anchor. The world is telling them to do what they want as brazenly as they want to do it in public. We are now an "enlightened" society, showing "tolerance" and acceptance for every abominable behavior we desire to commit. Dear brethren, this is the very spirit which defined Sodom and Gomorrah. And even though we do not mean to do it, God's people can easily become tainted with this thinking. Because we are constantly bombarded with Babylon's influence, former abominations cease to shock us as they once did, and gradually we begin to accept things that would have been scandalous to *everyone* fifty years ago.

The ministry deals with this more often today, as we are required to teach certain principles to younger members coming into the church who were never raised with any moral foundation whatsoever. It is not their fault. A man was no more taught that it is wrong to live with a woman who is not his wife than he was taught it is wrong to break the Sabbath. Both were foreign concepts before conversion. New converts today have even more to learn and to absorb than converts in the early twentieth century did, who were at least taught common decency by their former churches in a "Christian" society. This is why the teenagers at last year's summer camp heard a sermon about the appearance of evil and the rules about *chaperones*. Yet because of the questions we continually receive from adults as well, we hope this clarification will be of assistance.

Why is this an issue for the Feast of Tabernacles? Regardless what you might do in your home areas—many of you being without opportunity to fellowship with others during the year—when you come together at the Feast, much of what we all do becomes public

knowledge. We all have the obligation to obey God at all times, not just in public but in private as well. Anyone violating God's laws "in secret" is not fooling God, who is the Judge—the One who really matters. But we also have an obligation not to create division in the church through blatant acts of sin. If someone is still grappling with an addiction to cigarettes for example, and in private has still been stumbling, at least if he acknowledges it is sin and is not justifying it, he can ask for God's mercy and receive help and patience toward beating that problem. But even if you have not yet licked that problem in your life, whatever you do, do not bring your sin publically into the church! Please do not light up a cigarette outside the meeting hall door at Sabbath services! This is only a simple example to get to the heart of the issue.

We were always taught that we have an obligation to weigh the *appearance of our actions* and avoid causing others to stumble. It is simply a part of showing love for your dear brethren. "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Even if something we are doing is technically allowable by God's laws, we still have an obligation to go above and beyond and avoid any potentially scandalous appearance. Paul confirmed this principle by saying, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Corinthians 10:23). His example was eating meats offered to idols, but in our day, a better example might be drinking alcohol with a brother who has a drinking problem. If you know about his weakness, be courteous and do not insist upon your "right" at that particular time.

If as Christians we are obligated to avoid putting stumbling blocks before our brethren—even when what we are proposing is not wrong in itself—then we need to consider the *appearance* of our actions as a principle of love toward others. What is the point?

Some of you might be surprised how often we are asked what is considered appropriate as far as sleeping arrangements at the Feast. Is it OK for a man and woman who are not married (or who are not close family members, like brother/sister, parent/child) to share a house or apartment alone together at the Feast? No! But if there is "nothing going on" and we are innocent of sin, and if we each need someone to help share the expense of a place to stay, why is it wrong? Because it gives the appearance of evil! It matters not whether fornication/adultery is being committed or not. It is morally wrong to do such a thing. Such was common protocol years ago. But today, we find ourselves having to teach this basic principle which the world has abandoned. It appears we cannot assume anything anymore.

The law of *chaperones* requires that a lady be properly protected from any hint of scandal. Her virtue and reputation are kept intact if she avoids being in a situation where she can be compromised. It matters not if she is actually compromised or not. If she permits herself to be in an environment without a proper chaperone, there is no witness to vouch for her innocence. A chaperone does not just prevent bad behavior, but acts as a *witness* to certify one's good behavior. The world today laughs at and mocks such protocols as outdated and prudish. But again, that is Babylon mocking, not God. Although historically the use of

chaperones was for women, the same principle really applies to men as well. Men are equally obligated to avoid the appearance of evil. So a single man should never have a single woman as a roommate, even if they have "separate bedrooms." The situation puts two people in a compromising position by appearances, whether any "hanky-panky" is going on or not.

There are certain special exceptions to the rule of chaperones which the ministry has approved on a case by case basis. One involves gathering for a Sabbath meeting when only one single man and one single woman live in a particular area. Is it wrong for them to meet in his house or her's to have a Sabbath service? Technically, without a chaperone, it can give the appearance of evil. But in given circumstances, we have approved such to fellowship on the Sabbath so they are not totally isolated during the year. But we make such approvals with great reservation and admonitions for those involved to be very circumspect.

Another exception has been in the case of a couple coming into the church who have a divorce and remarriage history. We have several members in this fellowship who have set a wonderful example by making the very difficult decision to separate from a relationship which God considers to be adultery. Is there any more traumatic circumstance than to find out that the one you thought was your legal spouse is really not, because a former marriage took place and that true spouse is still living? How heartbreaking. It is especially bad if small children are involved from the adulterous relationship. Those children still have to be raised by their real mother and father. In such cases, Mr. Armstrong permitted that couple to live in the same house for the sake of the children, but they had to live as brother and sister, not husband and wife. Once there are no children left to support at home anymore, then those two should separate their households. They are not eligible to live together, and there is no justification for that living arrangement to continue. Just because they may have lived together for years in the past and remained celibate, they still should not be together alone, anymore than any other single man and woman. It gives an appearance of evil; therefore, it is wrong. But what if such a couple desires to separate households to honor God's law, but finds it difficult because of financial considerations? They may own a house together, and they may be "making ends meet" only by being together, but without a means to do so separately. In this case, we have counseled that if they can abstain from temptation, they can live under the same roof long enough to reshuffle their financial arrangements, but they must be working *diligently* toward that necessary separation. This is only a short-term accommodation to help provide for the future needs of each of them. So in that instance, a man and woman might be living together with ministerial approval, but it is only a *temporary accommodation* for the sake of completing their difficult separation. It is then up to them to be diligent to do that as quickly as possible.

If any couple is in such a situation at the moment, what about Feast accommodations? Just because they have not completed extracting themselves from financial ties back home does not mean they have justification to continue that same living arrangement when away

from home. They should get separate rooms. Again, they are not man and wife. They have no more right to share a house at the Feast than do any other single man or woman in the church. But what if second tithe is limited? Then do what other single men and women do; share a place with someone else who needs a roommate. If the two of them do not have small children together with them, why would there be any exception? There is not. They should be making all of those decisions with objectivity, taking into account the appearance to others in the body.

Hopefully, each of us will reevaluate our situations and take these principles into consideration from now on. It is understandable why these principles may not have been understood or acted upon in the past. But once we are reminded of them, God will certainly hold us accountable. May we manifest collectively the kind of moral deportment which sets a real example in this deteriorating world.

New Moon

The new moon, Ab (fifth month), will begin on the evening of July 21. The new moon day is July 22.

Camp Tejas

This year Camp Tejas for the teenagers is July 9–20 in North Bend, Washington, and we are asking you to keep it in your prayers so that it may be an enjoyable, successful experience for everyone involved, and that all have safe travel to, from, and during their time at camp.

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 September 1. Any who need assistance should notify us in ample time.

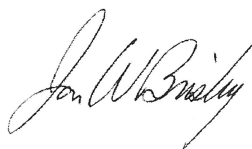
Trip Schedule

July 11 JWB North Bend, Washington

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-JB 115	06-11-09	06-27-09	Avoiding False Love
WSP-JB 114	06-11-09	07-04-09	Passive Resistance
WSE-CL2 74	06-11-09	07-11-09	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #7
WSE-JB 116	07-02-09	07-18-09	Is There Truly an Organized Remnant?
WSE-RC 76-1	07-02-09	07-25-09	Turmoil in the Church in the Last Days #1
WSE-RC 76-2	07-02-09	08-01-09	Turmoil in the Church in the Last Days #2
WSE-JB 22-108-24U	07-23-09	08-08-09	Arguments Against Divine Revelation
WSE-RC 76-3	07-23-09	08-15-09	Turmoil in the Church in the Last Days #3

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby