



# WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

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TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

We were very pleased to hear the many positive comments regarding the Kingdom Ministry School held in the Britain branch territory during the months of November and December 2005. The travelling overseers commented on the strong faith and devotion you manifest, and you are to be commended for that. In addition to the responsibility of secular work, many of you are raising children, caring for the congregation, and have other personal challenges. It is obvious that all of you are working hard in Jehovah's service, and this is greatly appreciated.—1 Thess. 5:12.

The key to benefiting from the Kingdom Ministry School is to keep applying what you have learned. As needed, please review your notes and concentrate on those points that are especially in need of attention in your area. You will be richly blessed for doing so.—Phil. 3:12-15.

In this letter, we also wish to provide you with further information on certain matters that were considered at the school. Please arrange a special meeting of the body of elders to give consideration to the direction in this letter.

**Use discernment when dealing with cases of wrongdoing:** The purpose of this presentation that was given at the Kingdom Ministry School was to assist elders to understand the judicial charge of “gross uncleanness.” The March 15, 1983, *Watchtower* states on page 31: “Galatians 5:19-21 lists many vices that are not classed as *porneia*, and which could lead to one's being disqualified from God's Kingdom. Among them are uncleanness (Greek *akatharsia* . . .) and ‘loose conduct’ (Greek, *aselgeia*, signifying licentiousness, wantonness, shameless conduct.) . . . [These] vices, when they become gross, can be grounds for disfellowshipping from the Christian congregation.” As indicated by *The Watchtower*, then, not only is loose conduct grounds for judicial action but uncleanness when it becomes gross is also grounds for disfellowshipping. In addition, at 2 Corinthians 12:21, “uncleanness” is listed along with fornication and loose conduct. Thus, some forms of uncleanness warrant judicial action.

Two examples were given at the Kingdom Ministry School to illustrate conduct that could be considered to be gross uncleanness. (1) A publisher has numerous sexually explicit telephone conversations with a paid “professional,” using a 0900 telephone number. He does everything in his power to conceal what he is doing. (2) A brother has for many years secretly viewed abhorrent pornography that is sexually degrading. It includes sadistic torture, bondage, gang rape, the brutalizing of women, and child pornography. He has done everything in his power to conceal what he has been doing. Why might these examples be viewed as gross uncleanness?

At Ephesians 4:19 we read: "Having come to be past all moral sense, they *gave themselves over* to loose conduct to work uncleanness of *every sort with greediness.*" Although the attitude of these individuals may not be brazen (hence, not loose conduct), the elders may determine that they have '*given themselves over*' to a filthy habit, and have begun practicing "*uncleanness with greediness,*" that is, gross uncleanness. A judicial committee should be formed in such cases because of the gross uncleanness involved. However, not every case of viewing pornography requires judicial action.

There are varying degrees of uncleanness. Elders must look carefully at what has *actually* been done and *the extent* to which it has been done when making a determination as to whether judicial action is warranted. It is not a matter of charging anyone who does not accept our counsel with "loose conduct," nor is it just a matter of deciding mathematically how many times or how long an individual can commit a certain act before judicial action is required. (ks91 p. 96 par. 5; w06 7/15 pp. 29-31) Determining whether someone has gone so far as to be guilty of gross uncleanness is a serious responsibility. Those judging such cases should approach the responsibility prayerfully, asking Jehovah for discernment, understanding, and holy spirit. If a case is not clear, elders should write the branch office for direction, providing complete details.

**Upholding the sanctity of marriage:** Jehovah intended from the very beginning that the marriage union be permanent. (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5, 6) The only grounds for a Scriptural divorce is adultery. (Matt. 19:9) Also, separation is warranted only under extreme circumstances and as a last resort. (1 Cor. 7:10, 11; w88 11/1 pp. 22-3 pars. 9-13) What can elders do to uphold the sanctity of marriage?

First of all, elders must set the proper example as family heads. Paul stated that Christian husbands should love their wives 'just as the Christ loved the congregation.' In fact, Jesus gave his life for the congregation. (Eph. 5: 25) We encourage you to continue manifesting such self-sacrificing love for your wives and your families. As the congregation takes note of your example, they are encouraged to strengthen the bonds of love in their own families.—Heb. 13:7.

When issues arise in the congregation involving separation and/or divorce, how should these matters be handled? Situations vary, so it is important to get the facts. (Prov. 18:13, 17) Helpful information on marriage and separation appeared in the November 1, 1988, *Watchtower* article "When Marital Peace Is Threatened." When assisting couples with such marital problems, help them understand how taking an unscriptural step to resolve difficulties could hinder their relationship with Jehovah. (1 Pet. 3:7) Of course, this decision is a personal one, and each mate will have to answer to Jehovah for his or her decision. Our responsibility is to share Bible principles that may be helpful.—Isa 32:1, 2.

At times you may deal with a situation in which a brother or sister is legally, but not Scripturally, divorced from his or her Witness mate and wants to regular pioneer. Or a Witness couple may be separated, and one or both of them wish to regular pioneer. What should elders have in mind when determining whether this brother or sister qualifies? Do not be quick in granting an appointed privilege of service to individuals in such a situation. Rather, consider carefully the following factors: Who initiated the divorce or separation? What is his or her attitude toward their marriage and the possibility of reconciliation? What effort is the individual putting forth toward reconciliation? Would the congregation feel that his or her marital situation reflects poorly on the individual? Would granting him or her the privilege of

pioneering add to an already existing unwholesome attitude regarding marriage in your congregation? (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 10:23) If his or her mate or ex-mate is in another congregation, are you aware of how their marital break-up is viewed there? Whom do they say is responsible for their marital problems? Is the individual in your congregation well reported on by the elders of the mate or ex-mate's congregation?

It is certainly beneficial when there is unity of thought between the two bodies of elders dealing with such marital problems. (1 Cor. 1:10) Good judgement and communication, along with balance, are needed when dealing with these delicate matters.

**The superiority of divine education:** Through a remarkable global programme of divine education taking place today, Jehovah is 'instructing many about his ways.' (Isa. 2:2, 3) Through congregation meetings, assemblies, conventions, and various theocratic schools, the faithful slave class has helped millions to benefit themselves in what really counts in life—doing God's will and finding delight in doing it. (Ps. 40:8) This is where secular education has greatly failed, and we see the tragic results today. (Eph. 4:17, 18) Because the focus of divine education is on the rich spiritual truths and counsel found in the Bible, it has produced positive results in the lives of Jehovah's people. (2 Tim. 3:15, 16) The instruction and training that Jehovah gives us is always practical and serves to care for Kingdom interests.

As elders, it is important that you set the proper example yourselves when it comes to education. No doubt you also want to help young ones and their parents to appreciate "the excellent value" of divine education and not to be swayed by worldly pressure to pursue higher education. University education is designed to promote a life engrossed in advancing self-interest in the present system, not Kingdom interests. (Matt. 6:33; Phil. 3:8) Through articles in our publications, such as the one in the October 1, 2005, *Watchtower* entitled "Parents—What Future Do You Want for Your Children?," help parents to encourage their children to pursue theocratic goals and the full-time ministry. By doing so, young ones will enrich their lives now and build their future with Jehovah's organization.—1 Tim. 4:7b, 8.

**Shepherd the flock of God in your care:** Following the examples of Jehovah and Jesus, all overseers should concern themselves with shepherding the brothers in the congregation. (John 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:25; *od* pp. 27-8) As strongly indicated by Jesus' words to Peter, overseers must do more than simply furnish spiritual food to the sheep. They must also "shepherd" by being vigilant in giving the sheep proper care, guidance, and protection. (John 21:15-17) This responsibility should be taken seriously, and the brothers should sense our concern and compassion for them in our facial expressions, tone of voice, and overall manner. (*w00* 2/15 p. 16) Newer and younger elders should not give up in developing the qualities of a good shepherd, as their efforts will be rewarded.

Be alert to the spiritual condition of the sheep. "You ought to know" and recognize symptoms that may indicate a weakening spiritual condition on their part. (Prov. 27:23) If someone tends to neglect the field ministry, miss meetings, or become unduly involved in non-theocratic pursuits, it is a sure sign that he needs a shepherding call. This requires that you prepare for the discussion, thinking ahead of time about the person's spiritual condition and selecting appropriate scriptures that enable the individual to use God's Word to 'exert power' and influence in their lives. (Heb. 4:12; 13:7) Whether these calls are made at the home, at the Kingdom Hall, while together in field service, over the telephone, or on other occasions, the objective is "to build up." (2 Cor. 13:10) After you leave or finish your

discussion, the person should better understand the benefits of applying God's Word to resolve their problems and strengthen their faith. Shepherding is a rewarding work because there is "an interchange of encouragement" that takes place. (Rom. 1:11, 12) How many of us have gone to the home of a publisher who was elderly, infirm, or in some way limited, and afterward we came away built up after learning of their faith and devotion to Jehovah! Through constant shepherding, the sheep will feel secure and tranquil in your care. Further, they will sense the love that Jehovah and Jesus have for them.

**Accomplish your ministry fully:** With 16,667,469 in attendance at the Memorial for the 2006 service year, it is evident that there is a great work yet to be done in the field. (Matt. 9:37, 38) It is vital that, as elders, you continue to set a fine example by faithfully discharging your responsibility to warn people of the impending destruction of this system of things. (Ezek. 33:8, 9) So make the needed sacrifices now to have a full share in the disciple-making work. (Col. 3:23, 24) Be *zealous* Kingdom proclaimers! Display an *earnestness* to engage in the house-to-house work and make return visits. The brothers should see your enthusiasm for this work! (Rom. 12:11) Also, as stated on page 99 of *Organized to Do Jehovah's Will*, "share in making disciples, and if at all possible, make it your aim to conduct at least one home Bible study regularly in addition to any study that you may conduct with your family."

You now have revised information to share with your families and those in your congregations that appears in chapters 9 and 10 of the book *Organized to Do Jehovah's Will* entitled, "Methods of Preaching the Good News" and "Ways to Expand Your Ministry." With the service overseer taking the lead, why not review as elders the different avenues of service that are available in your territory and discuss what can be done to promote enthusiasm among the brothers to share in these. This would include meeting the needs of people who speak other languages. Make a special effort to train others in this activity. Remind your ministerial servants of their privileges in this regard. Remember, while it is true that you are shepherds and teachers, first and foremost you are evangelizers. (Eph. 4:11) So continue to have a deep sense of urgency about our times, and do your utmost to "accomplish your ministry" fully.—2 Tim. 4:5.

**New appointments of elders and ministerial servants:** When the body of elders receives notice from the branch office that a brother has been appointed as an elder or a ministerial servant in the congregation, the presiding overseer should assign two elders to meet with the brother before the appointment is announced. The atmosphere during the discussion should emphasize the seriousness of the matter. It should not be handled in a hurried or casual manner.

In every case, the elders must ask the following questions: Is there anything from your past or in your personal or family life that disqualifies you or that would prevent you from accepting this appointment? Is there any reason why your appointment should not be announced to the congregation?

In addition, if a brother has not previously served as an elder or ministerial servant, it would be appropriate to ask him the following: Have you ever been involved at any time in the past with child sexual molestation? If the brother reveals that he has been involved with child sexual molestation, do not announce the appointment. Return the S-2 form or S-52 appointment letter to the branch office and provide a complete explanation of his circumstances. In your report to us, you should answer all the questions on page 3 of our April 15, 1997, letter. If the brother has not been involved with child molestation and he

accepts the appointment, the elders might direct his attention to information provided by the faithful and discreet slave class that will help him fulfil the responsibilities of his new privilege of service.—Matt. 24:45.

**Matter of concern:** There is a need for elders to follow up on those who have been judicially reprovved and those who have been reinstated and are under restrictions. It has been observed that those on restrictions have often been neglected and have not been given needed encouragement and counsel, which in time would lead to the restrictions being lifted. Help such ones along in their efforts to make a full spiritually recovery. When informing a repentant wrongdoer of restrictions, it may be helpful for the elders to inform him of the date for the next meeting when his progress will be reviewed so that further restrictions may be lifted in time.

**Conclusion:** On page 5, paragraph 2, the book *Organized to Do Jehovah's Will* states: "Happily as one of Jehovah's dedicated, baptized Witnesses, you are now associated with Jehovah's organization. Having proved to yourself what God's will is, you are now doing it. (Ps. 143:10; Rom. 12:2)" This responsibility falls on every servant of Jehovah, including those serving as elders. And now, through the valuable instruction you received at the Kingdom Ministry School for Elders, you are better "equipped" to help your families and those in your congregation to *continue proving* to themselves that Jehovah's will is in every way "good and acceptable and perfect." (2 Tim. 3:17) There is no other satisfying way of life! Whether you are newly appointed or have been serving as an elder for decades, we are confident that as the need arises, points covered in the school course will come to your mind, making you feel "fully competent" as spiritual men. How thankful all of us are that, by Jehovah's loving-kindness, we have been blessed "with every good thing to do *his will*," whatever that may prove to be in the days to come.—Heb. 13:20, 21.

Please be assured of our continual prayers in your behalf as you carry out your weighty responsibility to shepherd the flock of God entrusted to your care.

Your brothers,

*Watch Tower B. & J. Society*  
OF BRITAIN

cc: Travelling overseers