

TESTIGOS CRISTIANOS DE JEHOVÁ

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January 2, 2009

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Christian parents permitting unbelieving relatives to live in fornication in their home

Dear Brothers:

Fornication is one of “the works of the flesh,” and those who practice it “will not inherit God’s kingdom.” (Gal. 5:19-21) Hence, baptized Christians cannot rightly view such immoral conduct with approval. (1 Cor. 6:18) If Christian parents were to allow their unbelieving son or daughter to practice fornication in their home, they would thus be giving tacit approval to immoral conduct. This would also be true of Christians who allow a son or daughter or other relative to commit fornication while visiting their home. Such parents would surely not be exemplary Christians, for they would be permitting something to take place in their home that is completely contrary to the leading of God’s holy spirit.—Gal. 5:16-18, 22-25.

When congregation elders come to know of such a situation, they should patiently provide Scriptural counsel. The baptized parents may see that what they are allowing may be stumbling others. They may take action to change the situation, ‘making it their decision not to put before a brother a stumbling block or a cause for tripping.’ (Rom. 14:13) Jehovah would certainly bless them for displaying such a commendable spirit and making changes in this regard.

Perhaps the parents are genuinely concerned that what they have been allowing may be a cause for stumbling. For certain reasons, however, they may feel that they have no recourse at the present time. For example, elderly Witness parents may need the assistance of an unbelieving son or daughter. Under such circumstances, no judicial action would be taken, but the qualifications of the parent to serve in an exemplary position would be reviewed by the body of elders.

Suppose the parents, upon being approached by the elders, manifest a brazen attitude, not really caring if others are stumbled. Even though these parents do not encourage others to do what they themselves are doing, the elders may decide to arrange for a talk to be given that serves as a warning to the congregation. (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:14, 15; *od* pp. 150-151; *w99* 7/15 pp. 29-31) On the other hand, if the baptized parents *actively promote* the practice of allowing individuals who are living in fornication to move into a Christian home, then the matter could be handled judicially on the grounds of condoning fornication, causing divisions, and, in effect, speaking against “the teaching of the Christ.”—2 John 9-11; Gal. 5:19, 20; Rev. 2:20.

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We trust this information will be helpful to you as elders in caring for such matters if the situation arises within your congregation. Please accept an expression of our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,

Testigos Cristianos de Jehová

cc: Traveling overseers

PS TO SECRETARY: This letter should be retained in the congregation's permanent file of policy letters. You may wish to update the congregation's copy of *Index to Letters—For Bodies of Elders* at this time as well.