

# Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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September 2, 2013

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Appointed men who live away from home for an extended period

Dear Brothers:

Jehovah holds each married man accountable for the spiritual health of his wife and family. (1 Tim. 5:8; Heb. 13:17) Thus, those who take the lead in the congregation are expected to set a proper example in caring for the spiritual needs of their family members. This standard is clearly explained as a requirement for overseers in the Bible and our publications.—1 Tim. 3:4, 5; Eph. 6:4; see also *ks10* 3:5.

At times, however, an appointed man may spend an extended period away from his wife and family. There are various reasons for this, and some may be unavoidable. However, two situations that often arise are: when one partner travels away for secular work or schooling and when a newly married partner is awaiting a job transfer and the process takes many months. How may such situations affect the brother's qualifications to serve as an appointed man?

It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, for a man to fully care for the spiritual needs of the family when absent from his family for extended periods of time. Important spiritual activities such as: praying together, sharing in the field ministry together, attending meetings together, and enjoying family worship together would surely be neglected. However, these are all an important part of what it means for a man to be "presiding over his household in a fine manner." (1 Tim. 3:4) When an appointed man fails to take the lead in these important aspects of Christian family life it harms the family, undermines their respect for him, and sets a poor example for the congregation. This should be of concern both to the brother and the body of elders.

Therefore, when a brother is away from his family for employment or schooling for an extended period, this should be a basis for questioning his qualifications to serve as an elder or a ministerial servant. Similarly, a brother's qualifications might be questioned if he arranged for (or agreed to) his wife's being away from home for an extended period of time for the same reasons. Of course, situations differ and the unique circumstances of each case would have to be considered in the light of Scriptural principles and what has been written in our publications.—Phil. 3:16, 17; 1 Pet. 5:3; Heb. 10:24; *w13* 1/15 p. 13; *w96* 10/15 p. 22; *w79* 3/15 p. 10.

All elders should personally read and meditate on a copy of this letter so that if any find themselves in such a situation, they will be aware of the above direction. Circuit overseers will follow through when they visit congregations and will review the qualifications of any appointed men who fail to set a good example by living away from home for an extended period for the sake of employment or education. If there are any situations which are not clear or special circumstances which need to be considered, the elders are encouraged to write to the branch office in harmony with chapter 2, paragraph 4 of the *Shepherding* textbook.

Re: Appointed men who live away from home for an extended period  
September 2, 2013  
Page 2

We take this opportunity to convey our warm Christian love and greetings to you hard working elders.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation  
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

c: Travelling Overseers

PS to secretary:

This letter should be retained in the congregation permanent file of policy letters. You may wish to update the congregation copy of *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders (S-22)* at this time as well.