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18th June, 1991

Dear Andrew and the National Executive,

This is a very sad letter that I feel I must write to you. Nine weeks have passed since I confessed my sin to you and Phil and resigned as a minister of the A.O.G. What have those nine weeks been like? The worst days of my life.

The initial weeks were the worst. My life was turned around from leaving God, Helen and my two girls and the ministry and living in deception to beginning the long hard road of restoration. The initial experiences left me devastated. I have totally confessed my sin to my Board of Trustees and also to you and Phil. There are no more secrets, nothing more to tell, you know everything. There are very few ministers that have wiped the slate **that** clean but I knew it was my only hope of change.

To have to tell Helen face to face of my deception and betrayal was demoralizing and then of course I had to tell my girls that their father was an adulterer knowing that they would also have to suffer the stigma of my sin.

Of course the worst of all was to stand before the congregation and confess to them. Words do not describe the emotions that proceed and follow an event like that. How do experiences like that effect you? Considering that I was already "burnt out" after 7 years "on the road" it's a miracle I still have my sanity.

I was in a state of shock for days as well as experiencing all the emotions of grief associated with the death of a loved one. For three weeks I cried. It would take me half an hour every morning to stop crying and pluck up enough courage to put my feet on the floor to walk out and face another day. I wept constantly through the day. A phone call, someone touching me, anything would trigger it off. How did I sleep at night? Well I cried myself to sleep.

For many weeks my christian experience was hanging on by a thread. There was no security in my salvation. It wouldn't haven taken much to push me over the edge, a phone call from the previous relationship, hearing of the gossip regarding my fall, knowing that the confidence I had given people by confessing to them was betrayed. By God's grace I am still a christian. He held onto me when I didn't have the strength.

But of course it still goes on. The devastation of losing 7 years of hard work with Every Believer Evangelism. God only knows the sacrifice Helen and I have put into that ministry in service for God and His church. For the last 7 years I have left my wife and family to serve God. Why? Not out of a sense of guilt, not trying to buy God's approval but because I loved Jesus and genuinely wanted to serve the church. To be obedient to what God has asked me to do over the years has meant great sacrifice for me but especially Helen and the girls. I didn't leave them because I wanted to, in fact I hated the lifestyle of flying out every Saturday and returning Wednesday morning to work in the office Thursday and Friday and fly out again Saturday. We have served God at great personal sacrifice.

After 15 years of serving God what have we got? Nothing. We lost the ministry, the car, our means of employment, we don't own our own home (we've had to rent), we have a little money in the bank and that's it.

I could go on and talk about the other experiences of having to front up at the C.E.S. and the Department of Social Security, discovering that at the age of 40 with no experience other than preaching you're unemployable, having to deal with the looks of

people at church twice every Sunday and so on and so on. But we're still there.

What's the point of all this?

I wanted to let you know some of the things we've been through in the last 9 weeks and ask what is the A.O.G. going to do to help us. I kept waiting for a letter or phone call. Nothing. We did receive a beautiful card from Frank and Hazel expressing their sorrow and extending unconditional love to us and that there home was always open. You'll never know what that card meant.

Your silence has spoken volumes to me. You said that you were committed to my restoration but but your actions say another thing. Tell me you hate me, you never want to see me again, tell me you love me but don't be silent.

When I confessed to you and Phil, I received a 3 point sermon on forsaking sin and the advice that my sin could be changed in a matter of days. That doesn't help. You see I know the three point sermon, I've preached it. To say I can change a habit in a few days that I have battled with for over 20 years is not very real. I know you love me and were trying to help but I'm sorry, it didn't.

Not only have I not heard a thing from you over the last 9 weeks but also nothing from any of the executive. I classed a number of you as friends and always enjoyed spending time with you. Doesn't that count any more?

People within the A.O.G. and other friends of mine have asked the embarrassing question, "What's the A.O.G. doing for you?" What could I say? The truth is, nothing!

I understand that you would be angry and hurt but so am I. Every feeling that you have about the situation I have also except for me it is magnified many times because it's all my fault. I'm responsible.

What about Helen? For the last 7 years she has live the life of a solo parent while I've been away preaching in A.O.G. churches. She has had little or no support in many cases. She's had to fight loneliness, and many pressures as well as run the family and office. What's been done for her? She's the innocent victim. Reject me if you want to but she doesn't deserve the way she has been ignored. She deserves canonising as a living saint. Couldn't someone have called? I know people have prayed but you need more than that in a crisis. You need to have Jesus in the flesh of a brother or sister reaching out to you.

Don't worry about us. We are survivors. That's how we've got this far. But you have missed some precious opportunities to bond Helen and I, and Rebekah and Hannah into the A.O.G. family. Those initial weeks of incredible vulnerability when we so desparately needed love and acceptance and not rejection and judgment are gone now. We are left with a feeling that you have failed us.

Please don't write this letter off as the ravings of a bitter ex-evangelist. That would be a very bad mistake. You must do something for people like us. What's your strategy? What support mechanisms are in place? Who should I communicate with? Should I go to a psychologist? If so, which one? Do you need help financially? Is your wife being cared for? Are the children coping? Do you need to move churches? These are the things that you guys could have helped us with. Maybe you have something organised but I'm unaware of it.

Is there a programme for restoration or is it left to chance?

In the future you will have more ministers in my situation that will need help from the executive. In fact whilst I was receiving phone calls in the first week, three ministers that rang me had committed adultery and have never confessed it. It's unresolved in their lives. One is a prominent preacher. How do I know? After confessing my sin and having guilt removed I had and uncanny ability to see things like that very clearly. I could tell by statements they made and responses. You see I had been there myself. It was very easy to read between the lines of what they were really saying.

So the A.O.G. needs to get its act together in this area. Other denominations have rehabiliatation programmes set up.

I really have tried to do everything the right way. I've confessed to you, I've confessed to the church, I've forsaken the relationship, I'm going to a christian psychologist. We haven't run away. We are regularly attending church. I pray and read my bible daily. I want to change.

We have a number of friends in the church who are helping us and being supportive. We have seen God's incredible grace in our marriage and home. I know that this is the result of the many people who have been and are praying for us. I'm sure that you have been as well. Thanks for that. God has done miracles.

Even though I said initially that this was a sad letter, I want to finish on a positive note.

We have been overwhelmed by the cards and letters of love, encouragement and support from churches and individuals all over Australia. The things they have said to us have given us hope and courage. I feel like I don't deserve it. In fact I know I don't but that expression of christian forgiveness has had a redemptive effect on my life and I thank God for people who have cared enough to do something. I really wish that the National Executive had been a part of it.

Sincerely in Christ,

Tony Vemn-Brown

Tony Vemn-Brown

P.S. Just in case you are wondering if I'm sorry for what I have done & the ramifications of it all I want you to know I am. You'll never know how sorry I am. I am sorry for what I have done to Helene the girls, sorry for the heartache I have caused so many people, especially my friends, sorry for the dishonour I have brought to the name of Christ, and sorry for what this could do to the already tainted name of the evangelist, sorry for any repercussions that my actions could bring on the A.O.G. and of course so sorry for what I have done to God.

I am so sorry that I truly wish I had never been born. Forgive me. please.