The Inside Story of a Former Third Generation Jehovah's Witness

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To the average person, the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" brings to mind a group of neatly dressed people going from door to door in the neighborhood, leaving the Watchtower magazine, or perhaps a book. However, when I think of Jehovah's Witnesses, I recall a lifetime of bondage to a cult which I served for the first 28 years of my life. My grandfather, son of a Baptist minister, became a part of the Watchtower Society in the early 1900s.

I was taught that Jehovah's Witnesses were the only true religion. It is a religion governed from Watchtower headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. The controlling council or "Governing body" is comprised of a handful of elderly men who control the lives of over eight million people. Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that everything written by Watchtower leaders is from God Himself and is never to be questioned. They believe that the Governing body receives what they call, "new light" from angelic beings which explain their unique Bible teachings. This angelic information is passed on to the rank and file in printed form through Watchtower printed materials. They believe the Watchtower organization is the sole agency on the earth God is using. So, according to them, apart from the Watchtower organization, people have no hope. Jehovah's Witnesses believe they alone have what they call "the truth." They also believe they alone are the only true Christians, which means, they alone will be saved. All others are considered part of "Babylon the Great-the world empire of false religion." All church members and others will be slaughtered by Jehovah God at the battle of Armageddon.

I began full-time Watchtower service in 1971 after dropping out of High School with the encouragement of Watchtower leaders. They had predicted the end of the world to occur in 1975. During this era, thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses cashed in insurance policies, abandoned careers, and sold their possessions to spend the "short time remaining" in the ministry work before the end of the world. As a missionary worker or "Pioneer," I went from door to door trying to convince people that they must become Jehovah's Witnesses to please God and perhaps receive salvation.

I use the word "perhaps" because all Jehovah's Witnesses are not sure of their salvation. The Watchtower's way of salvation is based upon works, rather than the saving grace of Jesus Christ, which through faith we freely receive.

Each Jehovah's Witness must fill out monthly reports recording time spent in their proselytizing work to the elders. Elders put the information into a personal file. There are files kept on each member of the congregation. Secret files are also kept which also contain sensitive information regarding any major sins or infractions of rules and personal habits of individuals. These secret files related to a Witness' private life are transferred to master files at the New York City headquarters. These files are never destroyed.

Since I had been living in this system all my life, I knew what was expected of me. I had to follow the rules and laws to gain salvation. I had been going from door to door since I was a small child, so I adapted to full-time service easily.

I continued such service for a number of years, but with little satisfaction. The burden of keeping up with the monthly quotas of 100 hours of time, as well as sales of a minimum of 100 magazines and 40 books, started to discourage me. All of this work is voluntary and there are no salaries paid. Witnesses must find employment that will support this work. (Quotas vary from year to year).

In 1973, I was invited to go to the World Headquarters in Brooklyn to be part of the vast staff of workers who produce the literature. In a personal letter from the president of The Watchtower Society, Nathan H. Knorr, he stated: "Additionally, you are going to get a wonderful four-year advanced theocratic training which is far better than any secular education you can get."

With much anticipation I boarded a plane for New York City. While on the plane I recalled all my friends' envy, in that I was going to be living with the Governing body members, and how grand it would be to be at the hub of all the activity of the work around the world. My friends gave me going-away parties and gifts, commending my proud parents on raising me in the organization so well that they could see their son go to such a place.

Soon after arriving in New York, the illusion wore off as I was assigned to work in the factory. Hard labor and learning the ways of the organization from the inside out was the "education" I obtained at Watchtower headquarters. Space does not permit details of what I experienced while spending long hours working in the book bindery. There I operated equipment for "God's organization." I recall the mental stress of a profusion of rules and regulations. The master plan of the Watchtower leaders controlled where we went, what we did, and how we did it.

After spending three years at headquarters, with no money to start out in the world (our pay was $14.00 (U.S.) per month), I learned the harsh reality of trying to make a living with no training or skills. Jehovah's Witnesses are strongly discouraged from attending college. I married a good Jehovah's Witness girl, and we set out together trying to please God the best way we knew how. That is, we were good Jehovah's Witnesses and followed all the rules and laws. My wife had been a missionary for eight years. Pat had been sent to different parts of the United States in her work, under the direction of the Watchtower Society.

After I returned home with a fairly "clean file" from the New York office, the local elders were using me quite extensively in teaching from the platform. Most Jehovah's Witnesses agree that anyone who has spent any time at headquarters is special and worthy of greater responsibilities in the local congregation.

As I gained status in the congregation, I was being exposed to and trained in some of the undercover work of the local elders. It was exciting slinking around in the darkness, spying on members of the congregation who were suspected of wrongdoing. I also was given access to the congregation files, which revealed the inside information of all in the congregation. I was being used in the same kind of covert operations I had seen control the workers at headquarters.

Through all this I could not receive any satisfaction and peace. The pressure of trying to serve a God who is vengeful and full of wrath is more than I can describe. The organization always painted a picture of Jehovah as a God ready to "pour out vengeance." All I knew of God was what I read in the Watchtower. Yes, we did read the Bible, but were told that if we did so apart from the Watchtower books to interpret it, we were destined to fall into apostasy and ultimately be destroyed by God.

A friend introduced me to a book that was written by a former Jehovah's Witness called "Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave." I knew that my duty as a good Witness was to turn in my friend to the elders, for we were forbidden to read any anti-Witness material.

But in defiance, I read the book. It disturbed me greatly, for the author was a former worker at headquarters, and I could relate to many of the things he was saying. Many things that I had tried to erase from my memory were surfacing again, and questions of the Watchtower's authority left me very unsettled. The author mentioned that he had found the truth by studying the Bible apart from Watchtower publications.

All this time I believe God was leading us to study His Word alone apart from books. Even though we had our own New World Translation of the Bible (translated by the Watchtower Society and refuted by Hebrew and Greek scholars as being a biased, twisted version of the Bible), we bought a New American Standard Bible.

My wife and I secretly studied our new Bible long hours into the night, discovering that many of the major doctrines that we had been willing to die for were false. I shared with my father some of the things I had discovered. Being an elder, my father saw that I was questioning some of their main teachings, and he reported my wife and me to the elders, to stand trial for apostasy.

After a lengthy, tearful hearing, we repented of doubting the Watchtower Society and were allowed to remain as Jehovah's Witnesses, but I was stripped of all my responsibilities in the congregation. I was to be watched for a period of time before serving in any capacity in the congregation again. All this information was noted on our files.

A job transfer to another town was a welcome relief. We looked forward to entering another congregation and getting a fresh start. But soon the disappointment came when we remembered that the details of our trial were in our files and would follow us wherever we went for the rest of our lives!

They warned us they would excommunicate us if we tried to share such ideas with anyone in the congregation. We vowed loyalty to the organization, and said we would not read or speak about anything that would be different from the Watchtower's position on Scripture.

Two years passed. Being under the elders' scrutiny left us very empty. Nothing, not even our children who had brought us so much joy, made our lives fulfilling. We had a need for something, but what it was we did not know. We would drink to excess often, searching for some kind of joy, but only emptiness resulted.

Having two boys, we longed for a girl to be born and hoped that having a little girl would complete the happiness missing from our family. On Aug. 10, 1980, Jenny Leigh Blizard was born. We were so excited but tragedy struck. At five weeks old, Jenny received a small cut on a finger which would not stop bleeding. Local doctors found that Jenny's blood simply would not clot.

They sent us to San Antonio, Texas, for treatment of Jenny's condition. She was admitted to Santa Rosa Medical Center's special care nursery, looking for the treatment that would make Jenny well. Doctors worked feverishly trying to reach a diagnosis.

Finally, a team of doctors informed us that Jenny needed an emergency blood transfusion to save her life. This was a difficult problem for us because Watchtower law does not permit any Jehovah's Witness to take blood in any form. Jehovah's Witnesses carry cards stating that under no circumstances will they take a transfusion, even if it means death.

We sent the doctors out of the room and told them that we would give them our answer soon. My wife and I prayed and cried out to God for answers. I remember thinking; "Oh Jehovah, how can you ask me to make such a decision - a yes or no whether Jenny lives or dies! What kind of God are you!" Finally my wife and I called the doctors back into the room, and we informed them that we had to obey God's law and we would have to let Jenny die.

The hospital officials contacted the Texas Child Welfare Dept. and a suit was filed against us for child abuse and neglect. A court order was issued to ensure that Jenny would receive the blood she needed to save her life. The Sheriff's Department of Bexar County issued us citations and warned the hospital staff not to allow us to remove Jenny from the hospital. They knew full well that Jehovah's Witnesses have a long history of sneaking patients out of hospitals to avoid blood transfusions at all costs.

My wife and I were secretly relieved that Jenny would get the care she needed to save her life. We felt we had done all we could in trying to stop them from giving her the blood. We never thought the courts would intervene.

In the meantime, friends contacted the local elders, who promptly came to visit us. They were relieved to find out that there was still time to plan a way to kidnap Jenny out of the hospital before blood could be administered.

I explained to them that the matter was out of my hands and that I was under court order not to remove Jenny. That did not matter to them. Their main concern was to get her out.

I knew that Jenny would shortly die if I removed her from the machines that were keeping her alive, and I would be charged with murder. I explained this to the elders. They replied, "That's the chance you have to take! You cannot allow them to give your child blood!"

Without further discussion, I asked them to leave, stating that we could not allow our child to die in this way. "If this is the God I serve, I am through with Him."

The elders left the hospital angry that we would not submit to their demands "I hope," one elder even said, "She gets hepatitis from that blood, just to prove that it's bad!"

When we finally returned home with Jenny, the Witnesses had received word that even though we had protested the transfusion, we "allowed" her to take it. This made us outcasts in their eyes. They did not excommunicate us because their law calling for expulsion would have applied only if we had freely given permission for the transfusion.

This is when we feel God stepped in. Local Christians came to our home and helped us out with food and helpful aid. The living testimony of these people affected my wife and me so much that we decided to start again studying the Bible.

Those months of intense secret study of the Bible led us to conclude we had lived a lie. We had been in bondage to a system of interpretation of scripture which squelched any free thinking. On the issues and doctrinal points that I had so much trouble, the Bible was clear. I read the Bible in context, without the aid of books or magazines to instruct us.

The result of this study was that we found all we needed for Salvation was faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We also found that He is a God of love.

One night, my wife and I held hands and gave our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. Suddenly, we felt a release in our spirit, a release that brought freedom, liberty, and salvation. We were, as Jesus said: "born again." I had never had a feeling like it in all the thousands of hours I had spent striving to please God as a good Jehovah's Witness. We knew that we were changed. We were a "new creation." As the Apostle John said: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (I John 5:13)

Of course, we were promptly disfellowshipped from the Jehovah's Witness religion. Under the rules of our excommunication, we cannot have contact with any of our family and life long friends in the organization. Our own parents and family members will not be allowed to go to our funerals. According to the Watchtower law, we are to be regarded as dead. Any Witnesses caught talking to us is subject to judicial action, including disfellowshipping.

In conclusion, I must say that we are not dead, but very much alive. Yes, we are dead to a former way of life, but alive in Jesus Christ, full of the Holy Spirit and power, saved by the blood of the Lamb!

Jenny's condition was more serious than what a transfusion could permanently correct. The transfusions given to her as an infant did prolong her life, but on March 3, 1987, our six- year-old Jenny went home to be with the Lord. On Jenny's memorial stone it is inscribed: "God's special messenger." We believe she truly was. Through her illness and brief life, we came to recognize the deception of the Watchtower Society, profess and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and share this redemptive knowledge with Jehovah's Witnesses around the world.

In addition, during the final 39 days of Jenny's life, in Dallas' Children's Medical Center, My wife and I spent much of our time praying and testifying for Christ with families of other serious and terminally ill children at the hospital.

Finally, some details of Jenny's funeral attest to the evil nature of the Watchtower Society and the control it holds over its members. At Jenny's funeral, the first four pews were reserved for family members. The remaining rows of pews were open to church family and local townspeople. The latter were packed. People from all over came to share in the grief of the loss of this small child.However, the pews set aside for Jenny's family were occupied by only four people -- Myself, my wife Pat, and Jenny's two brothers. No other family members attended the funeral. They were ordered not to by Watchtower leaders. The callousness shown by the Watchtower Society in forbidding relatives from attending the service is deplorable.

In 2007 my father passed away. Not one family member called to let me know of his death.

Our prayer is through our testimony those caught in religious bondage will wake up to the freedom found only in the person of Jesus Christ.

Let me encourage anybody who is thinking of the "losses" if they abandon the Watchtower to follow Jesus Christ. There is a price to pay, there is a cost. Yes, your Jehovah's Witness friends will not speak to you, perhaps even your own family will leave you as orphans. However, if you give your life to Jesus Christ, you will have a heavenly Father who will supply all your needs and then some! Psalm 27:10 says "For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me up." Since we left the Watchtower, we have made hundreds of wonderful friends and have a church family who love us. You are in for blessings you cannot even imagine. One Bible text which has become special to us recently is, Job 42:10: "The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold." Yes the loss of a child is devastating; however we have received a twofold blessing. In December of 2002 we adopted twin orphan girls from Russia. Our new daughters are truly gifts from God. Trust in God, believe in Him, and let Him take care of the details!Watch for my new book coming out. It’s all about five generations who were severely affected by the Watchtower teaching.

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