

# How I helped my Family Leave Jehovah's Witnesses

(anonymous)

**Foreword:** The following account is provided in the interest of those who face the dilemma of wanting to leave the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses known as the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society. I was involved with the organization for nearly 27 years from December 1968 through July 1995. I was active for a total of 25 years. I served in various congregational positions including Elder. In my active evangelizing for the Watch Tower Society I helped a total of 15 people become Jehovah's Witnesses including my four children.

**Introduction:** In January 1992, before I actually ceased meeting attendance and started the healing process of unlearning thought patterns typical of Jehovah's Witnesses, I had reached my decision to do something with my family.

Having read the book, *Crisis of Conscience* by Raymond Franz in the spring of 1989, I had many of my own concerns about the organization verified. What he wrote was right on the money. I wrote to him and we exchanged some correspondence. I have only a few disagreements about some of the things he said, but they are too minor, and I no longer recall exactly what they were.

I stayed with the Watch Tower organization for three more years for two reasons. After reading *Crisis of Conscience* I could not see *where* else to go, and my family were all active Jehovah's Witnesses. I did not want to rock their world unless and until I could see a better way for myself.

In November 1991, just after attending Kingdom Ministry School for Elders and Ministerial Servants at Woodburn, Oregon Assembly Hall, I read *In Search of Christian Freedom* by Raymond Franz. This book helped me to see an important application of scripture that led to my final decision to leave Jehovah's Witnesses.

In the book, *In Search of Christian Freedom*, Ray made an interesting application of Hebrews 13:13 about going outside the visible security of a camp or city to be with Christ. He likened this to modern day visible organizations and the *visible* security they offer. It was at that moment my earlier Christian training and view of life came into focus as to what was wrong with "organized" Christian religion. Upon that realization, I completely made a paradigm shift in all my concepts about Christianity and moved from any organizational focus to focus *only* on Jesus Christ. From that point forward, the Bible seemed like a new book, Christianity seemed like a whole new faith, and my association with *any* organized religion was totally and forever changed.

**How I got my family out:** The question then facing many of Jehovah's Witnesses who considering leaving association with the Watch Tower Society is: *What* do I do with my family? If I march into the house and tell them that the Watch Tower Society is a bunch of bunk, they could all react with standard JW training and shun me. I too faced this exact issue, and pondered what I needed to do deal with it.

So, I took time to assess *how* I could get *information* to them so they could make *their own choice*. These are the basic principles I decided to employ and stick with no matter what:

1. I would get information to them to make a choice *before* I was *ready* to formally leave.
2. I would respect their personal choice even if they chose to shun me.
3. I would offer and give *unconditional love* to all of them no matter the consequences.
4. I would be there for them all if they left Jehovah's Witnesses to help with the healing process.
5. I would be there for them even if they remained Jehovah's Witnesses, so that they would always have me to rely on.

Given these general principles, I then formulated a plan to discuss information with my family in such a way so as not to *impose* anything on them. I had to allow them to do *their own thinking*, and arrive at their *own conclusions*. But, at least they would have something that I did not have 25 years earlier ... *Informed Consent!*

Our family studies were on Monday night where we engaged in a number activities, such as preparation for the Watchtower Study, the Book Study, and the Service Meeting. In January 1992, I opened up our family study something like this:

‘Okay family, I have an idea I want to put before you and see what you think.’ They all listened nicely. I said, it would be good if we could take a new course for a while and discuss something that especially ‘you children are going to face’ as you get older. I told them that as they mature in their Christian faith, they will encounter people at the door, on the job, and even at the Kingdom Hall who will say and do things that will challenge their faith. I told them, “You need to know for *sure* how to answer them; and for this to happen, you need to be resolved in *your own* hearts as to what you think. So, let's start off 1992 by discussing some real challenges and how to address them.”

The reaction was overwhelmingly positive. It seemed a lot more interesting to them than our routine Watchtower Studies. We began by my asking a question about the Watch Tower's 1914 prediction and how they could answer that. They had trouble at first, so I walked them through the answer using the Society's literature, both older and newer publications.

After we went through this issue, I asked other questions, and they took off researching and trying to answer. They did not know that I was using both of Ray Franz's books and a lot of other personal research and source references to develop my questions and comments. And the questions were tough, thought provoking, and not easy to solve.

***But I never took a stand during this process!*** My goal here was to *never* make conclusions for them. Rather, walk them through the material slowly and look at all sides and allow them to make a conclusion for themselves. I made no judgments, and did not make negative remarks about the congregation, the Watch Tower Society, or its Governing Body. We continued meeting attendance, field service and all the other related activities. Eventually, I did begin to move in the direction of more fun family outings and I let service and meetings slip a little at first and more as time went on.

I asked questions and then listened. I asked more questions and listened even more. I asked more and listened even more. ***Questions and listening*** are principle keys to this effort. Over and over I repeated this process, and never gave up.

During this family process, coincidentally, an Elder took it upon himself to force an opinion upon my children without my consent or knowledge. One of my children attended home study and the rest went to public school. But he was trying to get my one child to request public school. I confronted him and learned that some were objecting to my daughter being home schooled and it was 'stumbling' some in the congregation. What really happened upon further investigation is that *he* did not like it that some families had children in home study and was trying to get them to change to public school.

These so-called plaintiffs said, 'Well Brother 'so-and-so' has a daughter in Home Study and he is not only a servant but he is one of the Anointed! This angered the Elder and he made it his personal mission to undermine my authority with my children. This event troubled my children because we had always followed the standard that the Dad was *the* authority of the family and that the Congregation Elders must go through the Dad to suggest adjustments.

So our family study became even more enlivened. They were all prepared for the first time I could remember. They *all* engaged in the study with enthusiasm. They felt a sense of freedom to open up and discuss touchy subjects. I created the environment of *freedom* to allow them a *safe* place to talk about anything and *never* be criticized. ***I gave them what I had given myself in reading x-JW literature: freedom to think, speak, and have their views and opinions valued.***

As time went by I had many occasions to take one or the other family member out for a cup of coffee, hamburger, or pizza, or run errands. During this time I would solicit their comments on the family study and ask if there was anything they wanted to discuss that we were not covering or that they felt required even more privacy.

I said that *nothing* they discuss with me would be told to the Elders or anyone they don't want to know about their comments. Again, this safety net made it possible for them to open up more and more. ***Wow!*** Did that offer produce an avalanche of response! My oldest daughter for example, expressed concern that the Society seems to constantly pat itself on the back for everything it does, and they seem almost proud and arrogant. She said this disturbed her in light of the fact that the Watch Tower Society always demands modesty and humility from the membership.

I did *not* jump on this and say, '***Wow*** kid, you are right, let's leave the organization *now!*' Rather, I said that I really appreciated her observation and never thought of it that way before. I told her that she made a good point that I am not

sure how I could refute it. I then let her move on to other concerns because with some modest acknowledgment, she felt free to say more about what she was *thinking*. That is a key here ... listen to what your family is thinking. This process takes time. It takes time and gentleness to allow them a safe place to *think* for *themselves*. You and I cannot think for them. If we try to, we will lose them to the Watch Tower organization or the world in general.

As April 1992 approached, I was assigned to give the Memorial talk because of my position and mostly because I am of the Anointed. This, too, caused some consternation with the same Elder. The Elder had been assigned the talk, but the Circuit Overseer made it clear that I was to give it since I am a qualified speaker and of the Anointed, and much longer in the truth than the jealous Elder. It was made so.

But this Elder proceeded to put me through hell at every turn in making the arrangements for the Memorial. This was so much the case that it caused the whole Elder body to have a few meetings over it and led to contacting the Society. We eventually compromised. In reality we did things the other Elder wanted and I retained the 'privilege' of giving the Memorial Talk. My family saw all this and with the open thinking in the household, they could see the difference.

So in getting your family out of the Watch Tower organization you can take advantage of events that occur. I do not mean to politically capitalize on events, and *never* create an event, but instead if an event takes place, involve your family's opinion and allow them to see all sides and watch what otherwise might be kept in confidence from them. *It will amaze* you to see how your family will rally around you if you let them in on matters and seek their guidance and opinion.

After the Memorial talk, I resigned my position, and ceased going to meetings. I did this rather abruptly, *and I wish I had taken it more slowly*. This was my one blunder. I had wanted to make a slower transition, but I could not stand it anymore, and just told the Presiding Overseer that I needed time off. I did continue to take my family to meetings and assemblies.

Coincidentally, in May 1992 we had a Circuit Assembly at Woodburn, Oregon. I took the children and then went off by myself to the beach at Lincoln City. There I sipped some Scotch and thought a lot about my whole life and what was about to take place, and where I would go from here. My wife stayed home as usual with her depression.

At that Circuit Assembly the Elders learned of another new "loving" provision from the Faithful and Discreet Slave: that Elders and Ministerial Servants who need to reduce or even stop activity could remain as Elders or Ministerial Servants with a majority vote of the Body of Elders. This was offered to offset the decline in Elders and Ministerial Servants from those who were resigning. The idea is that when the Elder or Ministerial Servant was ready, he could resume duties without the long waiting period of being 're-qualified'. Our congregation Elders voted unanimously to refuse my resignation and keep me in holding. I allowed that to stand so I could divert attention from my resignation to continue helping my family.

By June 1992, I took a business trip to Alabama. While there I went to Georgia on the weekend to visit with Ray and Cynthia Franz. We talked at great length about everything from the Trinity, the Bible, and the Watch Tower Society to what to do with the rest of our lives. Upon my return from that visit, I made final plans to tell my family what took place and where I stood. I took each one aside and privately told them that for about seven months we have as a family discussed many concerns about the Watch Tower Society, the Bible, God, religion, why I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses and so forth. I told each one something like this:

'You know that I love you unconditionally. I made a serious decision to reject my Catholic religion to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I did this at risk of losing my family then for what I considered greater principles at stake. Now, that we have considered each of our concerns, some mutual, and some exclusive, I have to make another serious decision. It is time to move beyond words and take action. If you do not agree with what I am about to say, please do not go to the Elders, as I will simply send in a letter of Disassociation and head it off at the pass. But I no longer consider myself one of Jehovah's Witnesses and cannot in good conscience continue association with the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society. I place my faith in Jesus Christ alone as my savior.

'Now, you can choose to shun me, or take *this window of time* to reevaluate the organization for yourself, and then make your own personal decision. I will respect and support whatever decision you make. I love you unconditionally and that will *never* change.'

To my great pleasure, each and every one of them *took the window of time* to make their own assessment. Why was this so effective? Because one path offered by the Society means *NO thought* and *no freedom* but only reaction and loyalty to the Watch Tower organization. No time is allowed to assess matters. Loyalty and obedience to the organization are already in place and no room is permitted to think otherwise.

On the other hand, I offered them *time, safety, freedom to talk openly, value of their opinion, think for themselves, and no pressure, and no fear from me, and most of all my unconditional love.*

Which would you choose? The human spirit needs the essential components of freedom, self-thought, self-esteem, love, a safe environment, openness, discussion, information, and exchange of ideas. ***What I gave my family is priceless but without cost.*** Anyone can do it if you slow down your eagerness to leave the Watch Tower organization and work with your family. Consider each of their individual needs, personalities, and most of all ***respect them.*** I hope this works for you as well as it did for me.

Your fellow friend in following Jesus Christ. (anonymous)

[more specific follow-up](#) to this article (entitled, "Case Example of Talking to My Family")

<http://www.freeminds.org/psych/exithelp.htm>

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