

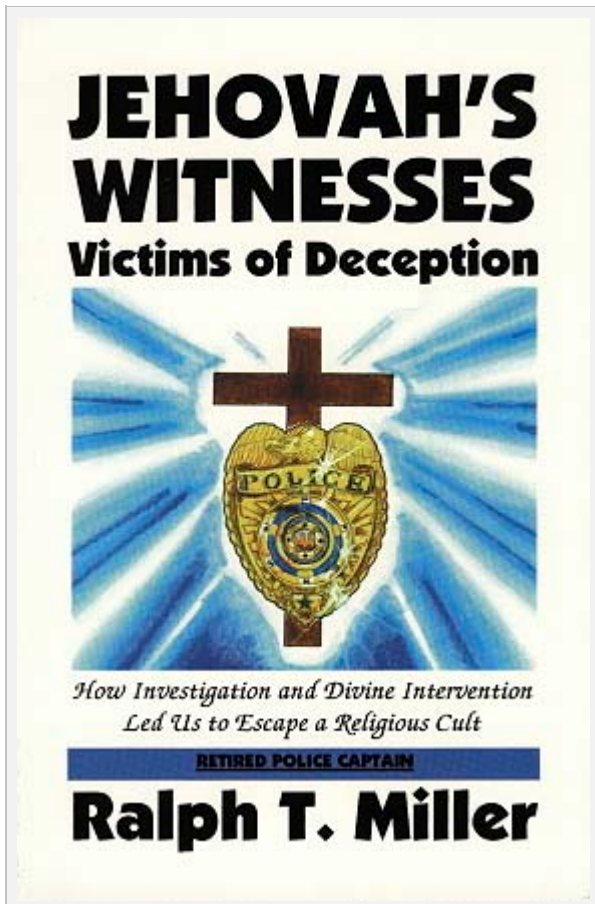
Jehovah's Witnesses

Victims of Deception

by retired police Captain Ralph T. Miller

<http://www.cftf.com/miller/index.html>

"How Investigation and Divine Intervention Led Us to Escape a Religious Cult"



Ralph T. Miller is a veteran of a western Kentucky police department. In his nearly 20-year career he served as patrol officer, narcotics detective, Public Affairs and Crime Prevention Officer, and lastly as Chief of Operations with the rank of Major, the equivalent of Assistant Chief of Police. He retired in 1990 with the permanent rank of Captain.

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Foreword

by **Linnie Miller**

This book is a comprehensive look at how a religious cult can impact on people's lives. It shows, in detail, the way we were ensnared in the beginning and the way members of the Watchtower organization lose virtually all their personal rights and freedoms. The book also shows how prayer and love ultimately prevailed in bringing us to a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

When we came out of the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, we felt totally alone. We searched frantically for information in bookstores and libraries. We are very thankful to persons such as David Reed, Lori McGregor, Joan Cetnar and Paul Blizzard, who took the time to record their experiences and make the information available to people like us, so that we too could escape the evil Watchtower organization.

Because of this, we experienced a heartfelt need to write down our experiences in an effort to help others, and we hope that will be accomplished through the publishing of this book.

Introduction

by **David A. Reed**

-- author of *Jehovah's Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse*

When Jesus Christ sets people free from years of bondage to the Watchtower organization, they almost always want to run outside and tell the world what happened -- how they fell for the cultic snare in the first place, what it was like to be a Jehovah's Witness, and how happy they are now to have finally found freedom in Christ.

Ralph T. Miller is especially qualified to tell that story. He was a JW for thirty years, no less tenure than William Schnell who authored *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave* some decades earlier. As Crime Prevention Officer of a Kentucky police department, Captain Miller developed his God-given writing talent, turning out dozens of informative newspaper articles on subjects ranging from bicycle safety to burglary prevention.

The result is that *Jehovah's Witnesses: Victims of Deception* is entertaining to read, yet gets its point across powerfully and convincingly. While a thirty-year story could easily overwhelm the reader with endless narrative and boring details, the author doesn't let that happen. Like his fictional counterpart, Sergeant Friday of the long-running TV

series “Dragnet”, Captain Miller confines himself to “The facts, M’am, just the facts”. And those facts prove truly fascinating.

Although uniquely his in its personal details, Ralph Miller’s story is typical of thousands of others. The honest sincerity in seeking to serve God through the Watchtower, the human weaknesses and failings frankly admitted, and the confusing distress when his world as a Witness starts to unravel -- these are common threads that all of us who once were Witnesses recognize and identify with. The climax, too, that came through miraculous answer to prayer, is also typical. It is typical of what the Lord does when a lost sinner despairs of finding salvation in himself or in a human organization and finally turns to the living God.

So, keep in mind as you read what follows, that Ralph Miller’s story epitomizes the similar experiences of many other former Witnesses.

Chapter One

1958 was a very eventful year in my young life. It was the month of June and I had just celebrated my seventeenth birthday and, with my mother’s written permission, I had joined the United States Navy. In June of the previous year I had quit school and found that jobs were not very plentiful, so the Navy seemed like a good opportunity for excitement and adventure and the means to earn a livelihood.

Almost two years later, in 1960, while on military leave in my home town of Indianapolis, Indiana, I met and just three months later married my wife, the former Linnie Jane Gilreath. After being transferred a number of times, I was assigned to the Naval Air Station at Jacksonville, Florida.

It was the early summer of 1963 and Linnie and I were now the proud parents of two beautiful blond headed boys: Daniel Patrick, age two years, and Anthony Scott, age five months. My family and I had transferred to Jacksonville from Long Beach, California, where I was stationed on board the U.S.S. Bayfield, a Marine troop transport. We had just moved into a newly redecorated home located on Lavin Road, not far from the Naval Air Station. The house was an FHA repo that we were able to purchase with no money down and small affordable monthly payments. My wife and I were very elated to be moving into our very own home. During our three years of marriage and nomadic military lifestyle, we had always lived in apartments or government housing with very little room for our growing family.

We had been transferred and had to change residences four times thus far, and we were looking forward to an assignment at a shore installation, where I expected to be stationed for at least two years. We were very happy at the prospect of a comparatively normal lifestyle, where I would be able to come home almost every evening and spend time with my family.

However, we wouldn't have been so happy if we had known what the future held for us. We didn't know it yet, but this was to be our last duty station and the end of my promising career in the U. S. Navy. It was also the beginning of problems and difficulties that would plague our entire family for the next thirty years.

I returned home one day after work at the Air Base and was advised by my wife that there had been two women there earlier in the day who professed to be ministers. They had told my wife that they were engaged in a "great separating work" for God, informing people about an impending disaster that was about to come upon the entire inhabited earth. "Armageddon", they called it, "the War of the Great Day of God the Almighty". They told my wife that the only way to be saved was to become a member of God's organization, which was the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Jehovah's Witnesses. Everyone who didn't belong to the organization, they said, would be destroyed. I could tell that this revelation frightened and intimidated my wife. At the insistence of these ladies my wife had invited them back the following week to study the Bible with us, at a time in the evening when I would be home from work. I objected to this Bible Study that was being imposed on us as neither my wife nor I had any experience at all in religious matters. Linnie and I were both just twenty-two years of age at the time and had never read the Bible. We had received a King James Version of the Holy Scriptures as a wedding gift and it was sitting on the coffee table in the living room, gathering dust. Neither of us had come from families who placed much importance or emphasis on going to church, or were what you would refer to as "religious". We both believed in a Supreme Being of some kind. However, like a lot of other people, we just didn't give it much thought.

I didn't want to be disrespectful or unkind to these women representing themselves as ministers of God. But I also wasn't interested in studying the Bible. I informed my wife that she could do whatever she wanted to. However, if she elected to study with the women, she would have to do it without me. I would see to it that I wasn't home.

The following week, the day arrived when the ladies were to study with us. Just before the designated time for their arrival I went outside to the car to leave. It was pouring down rain and, as luck would have it, my car wouldn't start. I was still in my automobile trying to start it when the two women pulled in behind me, blocking my route of escape. I decided that I was trapped and might as well make the best of it. I cordially greeted the ladies and invited them into the house, where my wife introduced us. One of the women was a very elderly person, with white hair and I would guess her age to be in her mid seventies. Her name was Emily Sassard. However, she said that everyone just called her "Sassy". The lady accompanying her was rather matronly looking and appeared to be in her late forties or early fifties. Her name was Una Fremont and she was obviously the one in charge of the two, as she immediately took control of our study. We informed the ladies that we had our own Bible, the King James Version, and we would use it to study from. Una replied, "That is fine". However, she was quick to point out that there were many better translations of the Bible, explaining that the King James Version was written in archaic English and was difficult to understand. However, Una did concede that you could get the truth from any Bible, as long as it was interpreted properly.

As I recall, we proceeded to take turns reading, starting in the Old Testament with the book of Genesis. Una explained the creation account to us, stating how God intended for mankind to live on a paradise earth forever and what God purposes to be, will ultimately come to pass. When it was Una or Sassy's turn to read from the Bible, they read from a modern English translation called the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. After they had read several times from their modern English version, I had to admit that it was easier to understand and I asked Una how we could get a copy of this Bible. This seemed to please them a great deal and they told me that when they returned the following week they would bring us each a copy. After several hours Una concluded the study with a prayer.

After Una and Sassy had left, promising to return on the same day and at the same time the following week, my wife and I talked about how nice they were and how knowledgeable concerning the Bible they seemed to be. Una especially impressed us with her enthusiastic and articulate manner. She was very encouraging, complimenting us often on how quickly we learned and how smart we seemed to be. Una made over our babies, lamenting that she only had one grown son and that she seldom even saw him.

Una also related that her husband was now deceased and that they had not had a good marriage. She further stated that her husband had not been one of Jehovah's Witnesses and that he had been an alcoholic and very abusive of her.

Una explained that she was a "pioneer" for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. She voluntarily put in many hours going from door to door 'just as Jesus and his disciples had,' doing this great separating work for Jehovah God and the Society. Una further explained that the work consisted of separating the "sheep" from the "goats". The "sheeplike ones" were God's people who were teachable and would listen and respond to the Society's message and join the Watchtower organization. The "goatlike ones" were those who would not listen or respond to the Society's message. These were "worldly people", or Satan's followers. We were told these goatlike ones were to be destroyed at Armageddon in the very near future.

Very punctually, the following week, the two nice ladies appeared at our door, Bibles in hand. Just as they had promised, they brought us each a brand new copy of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. Also, they had brought us each a copy of a book entitled Let God Be True. Una explained that this was a "Bible study aid" written and published by the Society, which we would be using. She further explained that the Bible was a very complicated book and that no one could understand it without help from the organization. The only cost to us was a very small contribution to the Society, just to defray the cost of printing. I gave Una two dollars for the four books and thought it quite a bargain.

Over the next several weeks we learned many new and exciting things from our Bible study, about God and what his purpose was for mankind and what he expected from us. We learned all these things from the Society's "Bible study aid", occasionally looking up scriptures in the New World Translation of the Bible, which supported what they were teaching us. Some of the things that we learned were that God's name is Jehovah and that his true followers always call him by that name. This was also part of the proof that Jehovah's Witnesses were God's only true people. No other religious organization called God by this name, we were told. Linnie and I also learned that there were two classes of followers in Jehovah's organization. There was the "anointed class" or the 144,000 who would go to heaven to rule with Christ, and there was the "other sheep class", the millions of other followers of the Watchtower Society who would be permitted to live on a restored paradise earth,

forever, after Jehovah cleansed the earth by killing off all the wicked. The wicked, we were taught, consisted of all those who were not part of God's organization, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Jehovah's Witnesses.

It was further pointed out to us that the wicked included all of the religions of the world, together with all of the churches of Christendom. The churches of Christendom were especially evil in Jehovah's eyes, because they were teaching the people "God dishonoring" doctrines such as hellfire and the Trinity. Una and Sassy also taught us that the churches were responsible for the majority of the wars that had been fought in history and that Christendom has always supported the evil governments of the world, prostituting themselves in an effort to gain favor and power. It was also shown to us from the Scriptures, how all of the world's military forces would be bought into direct opposition to Jehovah by Satan the Devil and would be completely destroyed at Armageddon. Needless to say, this information made me feel a bit uneasy, since I had intended to make a career of the military.

During the course of our studies, with the coaching of our teachers, we determined that we were of the "other sheep class" who would inhabit a restored paradise earth after Armageddon. After all, Linnie and I reasoned, we had no real desire to go to heaven, a place that we knew virtually nothing about. The mental picture our teachers gave us of what the earth was to be like was magnificent. No more wars, sickness or hunger, and even death would be done away with. Everyone would have a beautiful home of their choice and man and animals would live in perfect harmony together, under one world government. I remember thinking, "Who wouldn't want to live in a wonderful world like that?"

We were later to find out that the worldwide government they were referring to would be the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. Elders in each congregation were portrayed as "Princes in the Earth" who were preparing to govern and carry out orders directly from the Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. Loyal followers, who would be the survivors of Armageddon, would be expected to take commands and direction from the elders or 'Princes,' without question. Those who opposed this arrangement in the "New World Order", we were told, would immediately be executed.

After studying with Una and Sassy for several more weeks Una advised us that we should be attending the meetings at the "Kingdom Hall", in

addition to our weekly home Bible study. She explained that the “Kingdom Hall” was what they called the place where individual congregations met to study the Bible and the Watchtower publications as well as worship Jehovah. Una likened the attending of these meetings to “taking in spiritual food”. She said that there were five meetings a week and that we should try to arrange our personal affairs in an effort to attend them all.

Una explained that on Sunday mornings there was a Public Talk that lasted for one hour. The second meeting immediately followed the first and was for the purpose of studying The Watchtower magazine, one of the Society’s monthly publications. There was an article selected from this magazine each week and everyone in attendance was expected to study the article in advance and be prepared for the question and answer session. This meeting also lasted for one hour. On Tuesday evenings there was another Bible Study that everyone was required to attend. The congregation was broken up into small groups and met at the Kingdom Hall, as well as private homes.

Each group had a study conductor who was either an elder or some other “servant”, as their leaders are called. One of the Society’s books was studied at these meetings which lasted for one hour. You were also required to study prior to this meeting and be prepared for the question and answer session. Everyone was expected to participate. Then there were two meetings on Thursday nights. They were of one hour duration each, one following right after the other. They were called the Theocratic Ministry School and the Service Meeting. Basically these meetings were used for the purpose of teaching Jehovah’s Witnesses public speaking, and demonstrations were given on how to effectively place the Society’s literature and solicit donations from the public. Una taught us that to miss any of these meetings, unless it was absolutely unavoidable, was a sin.

In addition to all of these meetings, Jehovah’s Witnesses are expected to spend as much time as possible in “service” to Jehovah and the organization. This “service” is to be done to the exclusion of secular work, such as overtime on your job, extracurricular activities such as sports, Scouting or hobbies, or even obtaining a higher education. “Service” involves going from door to door, witnessing to people about Jehovah and the organization and placing the Society’s literature, soliciting donations and attempting to start Bible studies, in an effort to gain converts. The donations received from the sale or placement of their magazines, books and tracts

are sent to the Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. This procedure is still in effect today, just as it was in 1963 when we first became associated with the organization, only with a slight twist. The Watchtower followers today are expected to donate money out of their own pocket for the publications when they first receive them; then if they are able to obtain a contribution at the door, that is also required to be sent to the Society. For persons going out in "service", usually arrangements are made to meet in car groups at the Kingdom Hall or some other designated location.

There are maps available of the area to be canvassed and this "territory", as it is called, is an area within a specific circumference of the Kingdom Hall. Detailed records are kept of interested persons with the "territory". Interested persons were basically defined as people who have accepted literature and/or made contributions to the Society. This is done so that some other Witness working the "territory", perhaps the following month, might call on that same person again. These records are also used to make notations about problems at certain addresses. For example, it might be noted that a person is violently opposed to the witnessing work, or that someone harbors a vicious dog that could pose a danger. The next Witness working that "territory" might wish to skip the house in question.

A record of the amount of time put in by individual Witnesses, or "publishers" as the average rank and file members are also called, is very important and is turned in on a monthly basis to the Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. The Society suggests that regular publishers should put in at least ten hours per month. "Pioneers", that is, persons who go out in "service" full time, are supposed to put in at least sixty hours per month. The Witnesses teach that the amount of "service" that a person performs has a direct bearing on their eternal salvation. Even though Jehovah's Witnesses believe in a type of grace doctrine, through the blood of Jesus Christ, they also believe that their followers must zealously pursue the works program formulated by the organization.

These works must be vigorously and faithfully performed in order to be worthy of salvation. Each "publisher" and "pioneer" is required to turn in a written report of all their activity each month: the number of hours they have spent in the door to door ministry, as well as the hours spent conducting Bible studies and a detailed breakdown of Watchtower publications they have placed. These individual activity reports are compiled into a congregation report by one of the elders and then forwarded on to Society headquarters.

Chapter Two

Sunday morning, promptly at 9:30 a.m., Una pulled into our driveway in her ancient and dilapidated Ford. The first meeting, the Public Talk, started at 10:00 a.m. and it was decided that we would all ride in Una's car for our very first visit to the Kingdom Hall. It was especially difficult for my wife, getting herself and two small children ready for the occasion, and Linnie and I were both apprehensive about meeting a lot of new people.

After loading ourselves and the babies into Una's compact automobile the drive to the Kingdom Hall only took a few minutes. Una wanted us to get there early so she could introduce us to everyone.

The Kingdom Hall was a very unpretentious building, plain looking in fact, located at the end of a dead end street. It was not like any church or Synagogue that I had ever seen, and there was really nothing to indicate that it was a place of worship, except the large sign near the entrance that said, "Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses". I used to think that all Christian congregations exhibited a cross on their building or place of meeting. However, Una had explained to us in our studies that the cross was a pagan symbol that came into use by the churches when Satan the Devil seized authority over them. Una also informed us that Jesus Christ had been "impaled" on an upright "torture stake", without a cross beam. As we entered the building, Una was busy introducing us to almost everyone there. I thought it amazing that Una knew so many of the people in attendance, and I wondered how I was going to remember all of their names.

Everyone there was very neatly dressed and well groomed. The men and boys were almost all wearing suits and ties, and I felt slightly conspicuous in my casual slacks and sport shirt. I determined then, that if I wanted to fit in I would have to buy myself a suit at the earliest opportunity.

Everyone was extremely friendly and courteous and it seemed to me that everyone had a smile on their face. I remember thinking, "What a happy looking bunch of people!" It wasn't long until a voice boomed over the public address system and stated, "Brothers and sisters, it's time to find a seat and begin the meeting". After just several minutes, everyone had been seated and it became very quiet.

The speaker was introduced and began his talk.

There were approximately one hundred people in attendance and they all appeared to be paying close attention to what the speaker on the platform was

saying. However, at this point I was more engrossed in looking over the inside of the Kingdom Hall building and the people sitting around me.

The speaker didn't sound anything like the preachers that I had heard the few times that I had been in church when I was a youngster. The speaker was very businesslike and well polished and you could tell that he had some kind of formal training in public speaking. After approximately forty-five minutes, the discourse was concluded and everyone applauded. The applause took me by surprise and somehow it didn't seem appropriate in a place of worship. However, I joined in, since it was apparently the accepted thing to do.

The speaker then announced that there would be a ten minute intermission before the next meeting began, and he encouraged everyone to stay for the Watchtower Study. Apparently this break was to give people the opportunity to go the rest rooms and to stretch their legs. I excused myself and went outside and lit up a cigarette, along with a number of other men. It seemed like no time at all that I heard someone announcing over the public address system for everyone to take their seats, as the Watchtower Study was due to begin. After the Watchtower Study was finished and everyone dismissed, Una introduced us to the "Literature Servant", so we would know whom to obtain the Society's magazines, books and tracts from when we started going out in service on our own. Una also showed us how to fill out the Monthly Activity Report form that everyone had to turn in at the end of each month.

From that point on, my family and I started attending the five required meetings a week on a regular basis. We discovered that it wasn't easy being one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Linnie concluded that attending the meetings, going out in service, taking care of two small children and a husband, not to mention cooking, cleaning and taking care of a household was no small task. I found it very difficult as well. However, we were determined to be loyal to Jehovah and his organization, so we continued to endure.

After about six months of diligent study with Una, sometimes twice a week, in addition to all the other activities and meetings, it was decided that we should be baptized. Una advised us there was a District Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses that was being held at one of the sports arenas in Jacksonville in a week or so, and she felt that we were ready for baptism. Linnie and I were both rather elated at the prospect. Baptism to us meant, among other things, that we would be full fledged members of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Jehovah's

Witnesses; we would be God's people and perhaps deemed worthy of our family being spared at Armageddon. By this time, we were well aware that our salvation hinged on our faithful obedience to the Watchtower organization. We had been taught that after baptism we would be required to continue faithfully attending all of the meetings each week, going out in service from door to door as much as possible and placing the Society's literature and soliciting donations. We would also be expected to start Bible studies with interested persons, in hopes of bringing them into the organization, and keeping abreast of current teachings through our own personal study. This would be a formidable task for anyone. However, I was soon to find out that I had an even greater challenge ahead of me that was destined to change the course of our lives forever. Jehovah's Witnesses had taught us that the military establishments of all the earthly governments would be in opposition to Jehovah and would be completely annihilated at the Battle of Armageddon, when it occurred. As a result, Jehovah's Witnesses were conscientious objectors, refusing to be in the military or even perform alternative service. We had been told that some of the brothers had gone to prison, rather than serve.

Then there was the dilemma of saluting the flag. The Witnesses had taught us that saluting your country's flag was an idolatrous act, and I had been maneuvering now for several weeks, attempting to avoid locations where I knew there was an American flag. This was no easy task, when you consider that I spent eight to twelve hours a day on a military installation where there were a great number of American flags. Also, needless to say, my superiors were not very understanding as to why my Christian conscience would not permit me to render the required salute when the occasion called for it, and I had already been taken to task several times for failure to do so. In addition, as soon as it became known to my comrades in arms, that I was refusing to salute our country's flag, I became the object of a campaign of patriotic harassment. Each day when I reported for duty, I would find various pamphlets on the history of the American flag, all over my desk. When I went home in the evening I would find more pamphlets and pictures of American flags all over my car. Also, people at work whom I once considered friendly and took coffee breaks with, would no longer speak, and they made it abundantly clear that they didn't want to associate with me.

I was feeling totally ostracized and rejected by my peers. When I talked to Una and the Congregation Overseer about the situation, they explained that this

always happened to true followers of Jehovah. They showed me scriptures in the Bible where Jesus said that his followers would be persecuted, just as he had been. This persecution I was suffering further assured me that the Witnesses were truly God's people, and it gave me the courage to do what I did next.

I wrote a letter to the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington, DC, via the proper chain of command, requesting that I be discharged from the U.S. Naval Service, due to my new found religious convictions. I explained that I had come to believe that fighting wars, which resulted in the killing of my fellow man, was contrary to Bible principles and the teaching of Jesus Christ. I further stated that my Christian conscience would no longer permit me to be a member of a military organization. The congregation overseer wrote a letter in my behalf and I submitted it, along with my request.

When I turned the letter in to my supervisor, he read it and sneeringly stated, "You really don't think this request will be approved, do you?" I advised him that I didn't know if it would or not. However, to satisfy my Christian conscience, I had to try. My supervisor then informed me, "If it is approved, you'll probably be given a 'Bad Conduct' or 'Dishonorable' discharge. They may even give you some time in the brig". Needless to say, these possible repercussions pointed out by my supervisor, were not very encouraging. However, I had done what I believed to be right and what Jehovah and the organization had inspired me to do. Whatever happened now, I would just have to accept the consequences. I was told by my supervisor that it would take several weeks to get a reply to my request, so I resolved to wait.

A day or so later, as I was busily engaged in some typing at my desk, the Chief Personnelman who was my supervisor, called me over to his cubicle and informed me the Base Chaplain wanted to see me in his office. I got my hat and quickly walked the two streets over to the building where the Chaplain's Office was located. I had anticipated this happening. The Witnesses had warned me that Satan the Devil would try to keep me from leaving his domain. What better way, than to have one of Christendom's ministers of false religion try to talk me out of the decision that I had made to get out of the military. I was very nervous as I walked into the Chaplain's Office and told the receptionist my rank and name and that I had been ordered to report to the Chaplain. The receptionist advised the chaplain over the intercom that I was there, and he directed her to show me into his office. As I entered, the Chaplain was sitting in a large overstuffed chair behind the

desk, smoking a pipe. The aroma from the lit pipe tobacco permeated the air, and he puffed several times as I briskly walked to the front of his desk and stood at attention. I informed the Chaplain of my rank and name and that I had been ordered to report to him. He advised me to stand at ease and directed me to sit down in a chair across from his desk. The Chaplain was a slender built man, probably around forty years of age, starting to gray at the temples, with a stern, “no nonsense” look about him. I don’t remember his name, but I do recall that he held the rank of Lieutenant Commander. The Chaplain informed me that he had been asked by my commanding officer to talk with me about the letter I had submitted, requesting to be discharged from the Navy. The Chaplain began to ask me questions about Jehovah’s Witnesses and their beliefs and wanted to know how long my family and I had been associated with them. He also asked me numerous questions about the Bible, in an obvious effort to test my knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. I fully expected the Chaplain to try to convince me that what the Witnesses were teaching wasn’t the truth and hysterically denounce the organization in some manner. Instead, the Chaplain very calmly asked questions and took notes concerning the answers I gave, occasionally taking a puff from his pipe. After questioning me for what seemed to be an eternity, but in reality was probably forty-five minutes, the Chaplain very politely informed me that that was all he needed from me and that I could report back to work. As I walked back to my office, I was slightly perplexed and disoriented by the encounter that I had with the Chaplain. Surprisingly, he didn’t even try to talk me out of my course of action, and never said a disparaging word about Jehovah’s Witnesses. I remember thinking, surely Jehovah was watching over me.

Chapter Three

The time for the District Assembly came, and Linnie and I were baptized. The Congregation Overseer said it was permissible for me to go ahead with my baptism, inasmuch as I had made a formal written request to be discharged from the military. Una was very happy and elated and told us how gratifying it was for her to have brought us into “the Truth”. We were very fond of Una and since Linnie and I were both so far away from our own families, it was natural for us to feel very close to this maternal woman who had befriended us. Una advised us, now

that we had been baptized and were members of the organization, it wouldn't be necessary to continue our weekly Bible study with her. She informed us that now we should be trying to cultivate our own Bible study to bring others into "the Truth". This didn't come as too much of a surprise, but we still felt like the mother bird was kicking us, her young fledglings, out of the nest, and it gave us both an insecure feeling. We had come to depend on Una as our spiritual guide and mentor. Now it seemed we were on our own. However, we didn't realize just how much alone we really were until that fateful day when I received the reply to my request to be discharged from the Navy.

The Chief of Naval Operations' reply was very brief and to the point. It simply directed that I be honorably discharged immediately, from the U.S. Naval Service, with all veterans' benefits in tact. As I read the letter, I didn't know whether to be happy or to cry. However, my supervisor didn't have any such mixed emotions. The Chief Personnelman very anonymously related that he just couldn't believe that they would give me an "Honorable Discharge" and was really surprised that the Chief of Naval Operations hadn't ordered me to be court-martialed. My supervisor further asserted that he was going to "check it out" with our Commanding Officer before he started processing me for separation. A short time later my disgruntled supervisor returned and very disappointedly advised me to report back for duty at 0800 hours the following day, and he would have my discharge papers ready.

I was in shock as I drove home from the base that evening. Everything was happening so quickly. I had completed six years of service toward my retirement and I was a Second Class Petty Officer (E-5), making a comparatively livable salary, not to mention the fringe benefits: medical care, commissary privileges, longevity pay, family allotment pay, etc. All of that would be gone tomorrow morning. Now I had to figure out what I was going to do for a living. I had a wife and two small children who were depending on me to take care of them. The Navy had trained me to do clerical work, teaching me how to use various office machines, and I could type -- not exactly what you would call "high paying skills" in the civilian labor market. Also, I had heard that jobs were scarce in Florida, and I began to wonder now just how I was going to make those "easy monthly payments" on our house, car and furniture.

When I arrived home I broke the good news to my wife. Effective tomorrow morning, I would no longer be a member of the U.S. military, which the Witnesses had taught us was in opposition to Jehovah

God. The bad news was that I would also no longer be among the gainfully employed. Linnie's reaction was also one of disbelief, that things were happening so quickly. However, she encouraged me by reasoning that, because it did happen so quickly and since I was to be discharged honorably, with no time in the brig, and had retained my veterans' benefits, surely these were signs that God's will was being worked out in our behalf.

The next morning I reported to the naval Air Station, Personnel Office, promptly at 8:00 a.m. I had brought all of my uniforms and other equipment that I had been issued and was instructed to turn them in to the Base Storekeeper. Upon returning to the Personnel Office, I was handed my DD-214 Form (Statement of Service), a set of Military Orders, and an Honorable Discharge certificate signed by the Commanding Officer. That was it. My military career was over. I felt a deep sadness and apprehension as I stopped at the gate and watched the Marine guard motion me through for the very last time.

The next six weeks or so were spent pounding the pavement and driving from place to place, filling out applications and going to job interviews. I didn't have much experience in job seeking, inasmuch as I had been in the Navy since I was seventeen years old, but I was learning fast. For example, I learned not to make known the fact that I had been discharged from the Navy as a conscientious objector. The first interview that I mentioned this, the interviewer gave me a very disapproving look and advised, "We'll call you". He acted as though I had just divulged to him that I was a Russian spy. Needless to say, he didn't call. After that, when inquiry was made concerning my military record, I simply told them that I had been discharged honorably.

I also found out that employers didn't like to hire high school dropouts. At one job I applied for with the railroad, I had to wait for an interview for almost three hours. When I finally got in to see the man doing the hiring, he looked at the application I had laboriously filled out and stated that he couldn't use me because I hadn't finished high school. I vigorously protested that I had an equivalency certificate. I informed the interviewer that I had received a high school level GED while in the military. Apparently the interviewer wasn't impressed. He simply shrugged and stated, "That isn't good enough", and that was the end of the interview.

All the time that I was looking for a job, we were still faithfully attending the five weekly meetings and going out in service as much as possible. The only time we saw our good friend and mentor Una was at the Kingdom Hall meetings, and occasionally Linnie

would accompany her out in service. Everyone at the Kingdom Hall was friendly enough and sometimes they would even inquire as to how I was progressing in looking for a job. However, that was about the extent of their concern for us. No one came to visit us at our home or offered us assistance of any kind. I was beginning to feel abandoned by God and the organization, and my previously felt enthusiasm for “the Truth” was starting to fade.

My perseverance in job hunting eventually paid off and I landed a job with Ryder Truck Lines as a clerk and teletype operator. I don’t remember what the job paid. However, I do remember that it was considerably less than what I was earning in the Navy. After several more months, due to my period of unemployment, coupled with working at a job that paid less, we were starting to get behind on our house, car and other financial commitments. This development necessitated my getting an additional job, working nights and weekends as a store clerk for Seven Eleven Markets, in an effort to try to catch up and to “make ends meet”. I was working so many hours now, I no longer had time to attend the meetings and go out in service. I wasn’t able to do anything except work, eat, sleep, and become more and more disillusioned and depressed.

When it became apparent that I wasn’t attending the meetings, the Congregation Overseer inquired of my wife if there was a problem. Linnie explained to the Overseer that we were having financial difficulties and I was required to work seven days a week at two different jobs, in an effort to take care of our obligations. The Overseer advised my wife that he would talk to me concerning the situation very soon, explaining the seriousness of missing the meetings and my “spiritual food”.

The next afternoon, as I was preparing to go to my second job at the Seven Eleven Market, the Overseer knocked on our front door. I invited him in and apologized that I was running late for my second job and that I couldn’t talk very long. The Overseer informed me that he understood and advised me that he wouldn’t keep me. The Overseer then handed me a fifty dollar bill and related to me that he was sorry that my family and I were having such a difficult time. However, I would just have to do whatever was necessary in an effort to get back to attending the weekly meetings on a regular basis. After all, he explained, quoting from the Scripture, “What would it profit a man if he were to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” I interpreted this to mean, What good would my jobs do me, if I were destroyed at “Armageddon”? I graciously thanked the Overseer

for the fifty dollars and very timidly informed him that I would do the best that I could.

The following day at work, came the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. Around lunch time I was told by my supervisor at Ryder Truck Lines that there was a man in the front office who wanted to see me. When I went to the front office I was confronted by an abrasive, rather muscularly built young man who informed me that he was from the finance company where I had financed our 1958 Volkswagon automobile. The young man reminded me that I was two payments in arrears on my account and that he had instructions to repossess my car. The man further stated, in a rather cavalier manner, that we could do it the easy way or the hard way, indicating that if I didn't give him the keys, he would "hot wire" the car. I was stunned and extremely embarrassed. Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. In a clumsy attempt to act nonchalant in front of the office secretary, who was taking it all in, I removed the car keys from my pocket and tossed them to the man and told him, "You might as well do it the easy way".

I had to take a cab home that evening after work. When I arrived and explained the humiliating way that we had lost our car, our only means of transportation, I also informed my wife that I just didn't feel like we could "make it" here in Florida. I had talked to my mother and stepfather, who lived in Taylor, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit, and they had consented to our staying with them for a while -- until I could find work and get us back on our feet financially. I felt that there were more numerous and higher paying jobs to be had up North. My wife was devastated and very unhappy at the prospect of giving up the only house that we had ever purchased. Linnie asked, "What are we going to do about the house and furniture?" I informed her that our credit was already ruined, due to our falling behind on all our payments, and inasmuch as the finance company had just repossessed our automobile, we might as well let our creditors repossess the house and furniture as well.

However, what I didn't tell my wife was, in addition to trying to better ourselves financially by moving to Michigan, I was also trying to distance myself from the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. I had come to the realization that I just couldn't live up to the demands that they had imposed on me and my family, and I was beginning to resent the fact that I had to give up my career in the Navy. I also blamed the Witnesses for the financial problems we were having and the humiliation that we were suffering as a result. I just wanted back the peace of mind and security that we once had, before we became involved

with Jehovah's Witnesses. However, I still believed that the Witnesses were God's people and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was God's sole channel of communication here on earth, just as they had taught us. At the time, I had no reason to believe otherwise. I just felt that I was weak and inadequate and as a result, I would surely be destroyed at "Armageddon".

After the embarrassing day that my car was repossessed, I never went back to work at Ryder Truck Lines. I resigned by telephone and asked that my final pay check be sent to my Mother's address in Michigan. I called the Federal Housing Administration, where our house was financed, and informed them that we would be moving out of state and we would have to let the house be voluntarily repossessed. I then called the loan company that held the lien on our furniture and informed them that we couldn't pay for it and they should come and pick it up. Surprisingly, within just a few days, all of our affairs were settled and we packed up what few possessions remained and shipped them via rail to Taylor, Michigan.

Prior to our departure for the railroad station to begin our long journey north, Una and the Congregation Overseer came to our house to bid us farewell. Una hugged us and our baby boys and told my wife to be sure to get started back to the Kingdom Hall, just as soon as we got settled in Michigan. The Congregation Overseer shook our hands and very sarcastically informed my wife that if he had known we were going to leave, he wouldn't have given us the fifty bucks.

Chapter Four

The long, tedious journey to Michigan by rail took three days and two nights. I had told my wife Linnie that travel by rail would be a little more expensive than by bus. However, it would be a lot more comfortable, especially traveling with two small children. I was very much mistaken.

Anthony Scott, our youngest, was now around eighteen months old and had a fungus infection in one of his eyes. He was obviously very uncomfortable and he let us know it at every opportunity. Linnie had to hold Scott on her lap constantly, and he fussed and cried almost the entire trip to Michigan. To add to our discomfort, we couldn't afford the sleeper car and had to spend the entire trip sitting up or lying across the seats, whenever there was room. We also couldn't spare the money to

eat in the diner car, and Linnie had packed us enough food to last the trip.

It was an extremely miserable three days for us all and we were very glad to reach our destination.

When we got off the train at the station in Detroit, my mother and stepfather were there to greet us. It was an especially warm and loving family reunion, and my mother and stepfather were particularly happy to see their grandchildren whom they hadn't seen for quite some time.

The following day, after getting my family settled in, I borrowed my stepfather's car and set out to look for work. I wanted to get a job as soon as possible, so that we could rent our own house. My parents were being extremely generous to us, and I didn't want to take advantage of their kindness and hospitality. However, there was another consideration that really bothered us. My stepfather Elburn was a newly ordained Primitive Baptist minister and, according to what the Witnesses had taught us, he was part of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. Linnie and I believed that Dad was a very kindhearted and considerate person. However, based on what we had been taught by the Witnesses, my stepfather was being used by Satan the Devil to mislead people through false religious teachings that would ultimately end in their eternal destruction at Armageddon. This made us feel a bit uneasy living in his house, and we knew that the Witnesses wouldn't think well of us staying in that situation any longer than was necessary.

The very next day after our arrival I was able to find a job as a teletype operator with a company called City Car Terminal. The firm was an auto mobile loading and shipping operation for Chrysler Corporation, located in the Detroit railroad yards. The only drawback to the job was that I had to work eight to ten hours per day, seven days a week. I knew from my experience in Florida that working seven days a week was not a good situation for a family man, or for one of Jehovah's Witnesses who was required to attend five meetings per week. However, the pay was adequate, so I took the job with the expectation that perhaps I could find something better later on.

After several weeks of living with my parents, my mother informed my wife and me, in the nicest way that she could, that our staying with them just wasn't working out. She further advised that she sensed an "undercurrent" between us, due to our drastically different religious views, and she felt that it would be best for all concerned if Linnie and I had our own place. My wife and children had started attending the meetings immediately after our arrival,

and it was necessary for my wife to ask for rides from the brothers and sisters, to and from the Kingdom Hall. On one of those occasions a Witness sister came to the door, to assist my wife with the children, getting them to her waiting automobile. The woman evidently whispered something derogatory to my wife concerning the fact that my stepfather was a preacher. My mother overheard the remark and was, understandably, quite upset.

Because of this incident and other related problems, my mother, along with my wife, set out the following day to find us a house to rent. My mother and Linnie were able to find a suitable two bedroom house on Penny Road, located in Dearborn Heights. Dearborn Heights is a small town adjacent to Taylor and also a suburb of Detroit. My mother paid the first month's rent for us and we moved into the house several days later. My mother also loaned us an old bedroom suite that had belonged to my stepfather's mother, and we were able to buy some other items of furniture that we needed, second hand.

The next problem to be dealt with was transportation. I kept watching the newspapers, and one day found a used 1952 Chevrolet automobile advertised for sale. The seller was asking only \$89.00 for the vehicle. However, when my stepfather and I went to look at it, I couldn't believe my eyes. Words cannot describe what horrendous condition this car was in. It lent new meaning to the term "used car". The old Chevy was dented and banged up all over and had so many holes rusted through the body that it looked like a sieve.

Dad and I couldn't determine how many miles the car had been driven, because the speedometer was completely missing. The worst problem was that the floorboards were rusted through in the front, and you could stick your legs through the holes and touch the ground with your feet. However, the engine ran fairly well and the tires weren't completely bald, and I figured that I could put some pieces of plywood over the holes in the front, to keep our feet from dragging on the pavement. Besides, I reasoned, what could you expect for only \$89.00? And, inasmuch as we couldn't afford anything more expensive, I decided to go ahead and purchase the car.

Since there was no Kingdom Hall in Dearborn Heights, my family was assigned to attend meetings in another adjoining town called Inkster. The Inkster Congregation was made up almost entirely of black brothers and sisters, which at first made us feel rather conspicuous at the meetings. It occurred to me that we must be feeling the same way a black

couple probably feels when they are the only blacks in an all-white group. I had known quite a few black people, having grown up and gone to school with some in Indianapolis, Indiana. Also, I had met and worked with black people in the Navy.

My wife, on the other hand, had been born and reared in McCreary County, located in Eastern Kentucky. Linnie had never laid eyes on a black person until she was thirteen or fourteen years of age -- and that was from a distance when she and her family were visiting relatives in Williamsburg, Kentucky. There were no black people where Linnie lived in Pine Knot, and it was many years later before she came into contact with any again.

I don't know if the people in the Inkster Congregation were unusually friendly to everyone, or perhaps they were trying extra hard to make us feel welcome, because we were different. Whatever the reason for it, as a group they were the warmest and friendliest of all the Witnesses that we had ever encountered. There was one family in the Inkster Congregation that we were especially fond of. Their last name was Reilly. Brother Reilly was of unusual stature. He was almost seven feet tall and weighed over three hundred pounds. I felt almost like a dwarf next to him. In stark contrast to his imposing appearance, he was an extremely soft spoken and gentle man. I very seldom went out in the door-to-door ministry after we moved to Michigan and only attended the meetings when Linnie nagged me or there was a special event such as the annual "Memorial Celebration", the "Lord's Evening Meal". The next several years in Michigan were not very happy ones for our family, primarily due to my immature and fatalistic attitude, which had been implanted in my young, impressionable mind by Jehovah's Witnesses. The Witnesses had taught us that, in order for a person to be saved from God's wrathful vengeance at Armageddon, he must adhere to certain moral ethics and vigorously apply himself to the works program prescribed by the organization. That consisted primarily of meeting attendance, literature placement, and the Society's proselytizing activity.

The Witnesses had convinced my wife and me that they were God's sole channel of communication -- that they, in fact, spoke for God. Even though intellectually I felt that what they were teaching us was "the Truth" because it seemed to be so logical and was based on the Bible, for some unexplainable reason it just didn't seem right for me personally. Because of this feeling I had concluded in my heart and mind that I probably just wasn't "teachable" or "sheeplike", as the Witnesses termed it. Therefore, I constantly carried around a vague dread of God's

judgment and a fear of Armageddon. I had no hope, and this generated an attitude of, “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die”, that would adversely affect my life and those around me for many years to come.

My wife Linnie’s attitude was just the opposite of mine, and this caused a great number of problems for us that sometimes resulted in extremely fierce arguments. Linnie continued to attend the meetings faithfully and went out in service whenever she could arrange it. She conscientiously studied the Watchtower and Awake! magazines, as well as all the other books and publications that the Society required us to read. Linnie’s unswerving dedication to the organization, in addition to caring for the needs of our two small children, left her very little time for me.

There were many occasions when I wanted my wife to accompany me to Christmas festivities, New Years Eve parties and birthday celebrations, as well as other social functions with family members or other persons that I had become acquainted with. However, Linnie’s conscience wouldn’t allow her in most cases, because The Watchtower had taught us that almost all worldly holidays were of pagan origin and true Christians wouldn’t participate in celebrating them.

Also, Jehovah’s Witnesses have an attitude of superiority toward other persons who are not “God’s People” or “in the Truth”. The Witnesses are taught that everyone who is not a member of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is under Satan the Devil’s influence, so they do not like to associate with people outside the organization. This exclusivistic mindset shared by my wife wasn’t confined to just strangers. This “us and them” mentality applied equally well to family members. As a result, my wife spent as little time as possible with my mother, stepfather and also my sister who had moved to Dearborn Heights from Indianapolis, Indiana. To a certain extent Linnie’s superior feeling also applied to me, since I had “fallen away” and didn’t seem to be measuring up to the Society’s standards. Because of this situation Linnie and I never had any friends in common. It was always “Linnie’s friends”, who were Jehovah’s Witnesses, or “my friends”, who were usually acquaintances from work. On occasion I would consent to socialize with the Witnesses, but it was rather awkward, because they viewed me with suspicion since I infrequently attended the meetings and no longer went out in service.

However, as strange as it might seem, even though the majority of the time I resented the organization monopolizing my wife’s attention and energies,

sometimes I actually encouraged Linnie to attend the meetings and participate. This was because, in the back of my mind, I truly believed that her loyalty to the Watchtower would result in Linnie and our children being saved at Armageddon. The Society had taught us that as long as one parent of the marriage was a member of God's organization, any children resulting from that union would be saved.

Another problem that Linnie and I encountered as a result of our religious beliefs was the occasional confrontations that we had with my stepfather Elburn Dorris. As I stated previously, Dad was a recently ordained Primitive Baptist minister, and we had been taught that he was being used by Satan the Devil to promote false worship, as were all of Christendom's ministers. Fortunately for us, my stepfather was an unusually patient person and he and my mother tried to pretend, most of the time, that our unorthodox religious beliefs didn't bother them. However, when we discussed religion and Dad would quote a passage of Scripture to prove a point and Linnie or I would contradict him with the Watchtower's interpretation, he would sometimes become annoyed.

On a number of occasions my wife Linnie and I unequivocally informed my parents, as diplomatically as possible, that the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society knew more about the Bible than anyone else in the world. We further explained that the Society had brothers at the headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, who had devoted their whole lives to the study of God's Word, in an effort to inform their followers of the proper understanding and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. After all, we explained, the Watchtower had millions of followers worldwide, and we were convinced that they were Jehovah's only true organization, doing his work, separating the "sheep" from the "goats" in these "last days" prior to the final Battle of Armageddon. "Who else was doing this type of religious work?" we reasoned.

After a number of similar discussions, I believe my stepfather finally saw the futility in arguing with us. What probably hurt my mother and dad the most was the fact that we wouldn't allow our children to attend church with them. They were very fond of our two boys and wanted to show them off to their friends. However, we had learned from the Witnesses that to allow our children to enter a place of false worship would have been a terrible and idolatrous sin.

After approximately six months at City Car Terminal my sister Donna Cable helped me to get a job as an office clerk at Clark Equipment Company, the Brown Trailer Division, where she was employed as a

secretary. The job was better paying and it was only a five day work week. After almost two and one half years working at the Detroit branch, the position of Office Manager became available at the St. Paul, Minnesota, office. I applied for the job and was accepted. Once more, my family and I packed up, and we moved to the Twin Cities.

Chapter Five

It was the winter of 1968 when my family and I arrived in St. Paul, Minnesota. My wife and I had flown there a week or so earlier, courtesy of Clark Equipment Company, and had rented a nice three bedroom house located on Hurley Drive. We then returned to Michigan and made arrangements with a moving company to have our furniture and the rest of our household effects shipped to our new home. We were all very excited about the move -- an opportunity to see new places and meet different people and a promotion, making more money. When we first arrived we liked St. Paul very much, even though the weather there was much more severe than what we had been used to anywhere else we had ever lived. During the winter months in St. Paul, which were basically September through May, there was always lots of snow and the temperature sometimes dipped down to seventy and eighty degrees below zero. It was so cold, it was necessary to purchase an electrically heated oil dip stick for our automobile, which we parked in front of the house overnight. We then ran an electric extension cord from the car to an electrical outlet on the front porch. If you forgot to hook up this device before retiring for the night, you could rest assured that the oil in your car would be so thick the next morning that your engine wouldn't even turn over, much less start. I learned about this situation "the hard way", the same way that I learned about another problem, which seemed to be peculiar to our new surroundings: when they are forecasting a large snowfall at night in St. Paul, it isn't advisable to park your car on the street. Through my lack of experience I made this fateful error, and a snow plow came down our street before dawn the next morning and completely buried our car in the snow. At first, I thought the car had been stolen, and then I realized that it was still in the same place I had parked it the night before, only now it was buried under several tons of snow. Needless to say, I was quite annoyed, and it took me all of that day and part of the next to dig my car out.

However, on the “up side” of life in our new environment, it seemed as though the sun shone in St. Paul every day. This was a refreshing change from the usually cloudy and dreary winter days that we had experienced while living in Michigan. Also, the restaurants in St. Paul and Minneapolis served the best food we had ever eaten. The seafood in particular was especially prominent and plentiful in that part of the country, and Linnie and I dined on our favorites, lobster and shrimp, as often as possible.

My new job as office manager involved a lot of responsibility, which kept me occupied, working long hours through the week and a lot of weekends. Linnie and our sons attended the meetings at the Kingdom Hall and went out in service, and things went pretty much the way they had when we lived in Michigan. I attended the meetings occasionally, and there was a young couple that came to our house once a week to study with us. However, I was progressively becoming dissatisfied with my job, due to the company’s growing demands on my time and energies. In addition, because of the tremendous stress and pressure connected with my job, I was beginning to develop stomach ulcers as well as other physical ailments. I was twenty pounds overweight, due to a lack of proper exercise and poor eating habits, and I was drinking alcoholic beverages to excess.

I had frequently imbibed, beginning some years before, while in the Navy. However, after we became associated with Jehovah’s Witnesses, which resulted in my untimely discharge from the Navy, as well as many other problems, my drinking increased in both quantity and frequency. Instead of going home after work at night, tired as I was, I would make the rounds of the bars and nightclubs, drinking and dancing, looking for what I believed was a good time. I wanted to experience all the fun that life had to offer, before my annihilation with the rest of the wicked at Armageddon. Moreover, this “fast lane” lifestyle that I had adopted was beginning to take its toll on my wife’s patient and loving nature, and it put further strain on our already deteriorating marriage. Some time around March or April of 1970, my mother wrote and informed us that my stepfather was going to retire and they were planning to move to a town near Dad’s place of birth in Kentucky, called Madisonville. Madisonville, my mother wrote, was a nice place that had a small town atmosphere, yet was large enough to contain sufficient stores, restaurants, and gas stations, etc., for convenient living. My mother lamented in her letter that she missed us and the grandchildren very much and wanted to know if we would consider moving to

Madisonville as well. Mom further related that Dad had bought two Sinclair Service Stations and that he would provide me with employment, assisting him in managing them. My mother also wrote that my sister Donna Cable and her family, who were presently living in Tennessee, had already decide to join them and move to Madisonville as well. Mom thought it would be really great if we all lived in the same location for a change, instead of being spread out all over the country.

My wife Linnie was thrilled at the prospect of moving back to her home state of Kentucky. She had been homesick for some time, missing her parents and her six brothers and two sisters, and Madisonville was only about two hundred miles from McCreary County, where the majority of Linnie's family still resided. I thought it would be interesting to be in business with family members, and even though I knew I would be making considerably less money, the small town life sounded appealing as I conjured up mental pictures from the old television show "Andy of Mayberry". After living in the "rat race" of big cities all my life, with the accompanying traffic jams, crowded stores and rampant crime, I decided this would be a good move and an ideal place for us to settle down and raise our family.

It was May 3, 1970, when we arrived in Madisonville, Kentucky. The exact date is very clear in my mind, because, coincidentally, it was also our tenth wedding anniversary. My mother had already rented us a small three bedroom house, located on Loven Lane. The house wasn't as nice or as large as the house we had left behind in St. Paul. However, it seemed adequate for our immediate needs and we were very happy to be there. It took us several days to get settled and I immediately started to work at the service stations with my step father and my brother-in-law Jerry Cable. I worked with Dad and Jerry, running the two service stations for over a year. However, as things progressed, it became apparent that Dad was quite set in his ways and we didn't seem to get along any better when it came to business matters than we did concerning religion. That being the case, I decided that If I wanted to keep peace in the family, it would probably be in everyone's best interest if I were to seek employment elsewhere.

It was August of 1971, when I read in the local newspaper that the Madisonville Police Department was hiring patrol officers. I had thought about a career as a policeman with the Detroit Police Department when we moved to Michigan from Florida. However, my wife and mother talked me out of the notion due to the high mortality rate of Detroit police

at the time. Back in the sixties, law enforcement officers in large cities all over the country were being ambushed and killed at the alarming rate of approximately one per month. However, that was some years ago, and since Madisonville was a comparatively small town with a population of around 20,000 residents, I felt it couldn't be as dangerous or difficult to police as a large city such as Detroit. After further consideration I decided that this would be a good opportunity to begin a career in law enforcement, so I applied for the job and was selected.

During this time, Linnie had become pregnant with our third son, and he was born, Andrew Christopher, on December 17, 1971. Again coincidentally, Chris was born the same day that I graduated from the Police Academy.

Linnie and I both had started back to the Kingdom Hall shortly after we moved to Madisonville, and I regretted that I hadn't been living in accordance with Bible principles and the Society's high standards, and I made a commitment to do better in the future.

I was determined to take a more active and aggressive role in the "preaching work", perhaps even becoming a "servant" or an "elder" in the congregation. I rededicated myself, "turning over a new leaf", resolving to work hard in an effort to win the approval of Jehovah and the organization, so that I might survive Armageddon and live on into the "New System" with my beloved wife and children. The Watchtower was continuing to predict that Armageddon was just a scant few years away now and would likely occur in the Autumn of 1975.

I began attending the meetings regularly and going out in service as much as time permitted. I was even conducting a Bible study with a troubled young teen, whose mother was a Witness and thought that her son might be impressed and favorably respond to a policeman teaching him the Scriptures. However, it didn't work out, and I had to discontinue the study when the young man was arrested in a stolen automobile several months later.

Some time after that study abruptly terminated, I was brought into contact with another disturbed seventeen-year-old boy, who lived with his mother in the Madisonville government housing projects. One of the elders in the congregation, whose wife was studying the Bible with the boy's mother, came by my house one evening and asked me to accompany him to the woman's home. The elder explained that the woman had evicted her son from the residence earlier in the day, due to some type of misconduct, and was refusing to allow him to come back into the house. The now homeless lad had no other family in

the area and no one he could turn to. The boy had contacted the elder's wife in desperation, hoping that she could talk his mother into letting him back into the house. The elder wanted me to talk to the woman in my official capacity as a police officer, thinking it might shake her to her senses.

It was after dark when we drove up in front of the woman's apartment, and I told the boy to wait for us in the car. The woman immediately responded to our knock on the door and, recognizing the elder with me, invited us in. The woman appeared to be around forty years of age, with long brown hair, combed straight back. She was neatly dressed and well groomed, and she smiled at us as we entered the living room. I was pleasantly surprised as my eyes scanned the nicely decorated apartment with its freshly painted walls and new looking modern furniture positioned around the room. I was impressed. Most of the project apartments I had been in weren't nearly as nice or as clean as this one. I showed the lady my badge and identification and watched the pleasant smile on her face turn into a frown, as I explained to her that I was a police officer as well as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I further explained to her that I was there at the request of the elder with me, to talk to her about her son. The woman's face was now turning beet red with anger, as I tried to make her understand that she couldn't legally throw her under-age son out of the house with no way to care for himself. I further informed her that, as far as the law was concerned, the lad was her responsibility to care for until he was eighteen years of age. The elder then pointed out that the woman also had a moral obligation to care for her son, as well as a legal one.

At this point, the woman began to expound in a very loud voice how her son wouldn't "mind" her and how the boy's father had deserted them. The woman also complained that, because of the boy's size, she could no longer physically control him. This brought us to another problem that I needed to discuss with the lady. On the way from my house to the woman's apartment the lad had made allegations that his mother and father used to punish him by tying him face down to the bed and beating him across the back with a belt. When I confronted the woman with this accusation, she readily admitted it. She acted as if there was nothing wrong with punishing a child in that manner, and I was appalled at her callous attitude. After questioning the boy's mother further, it became quite apparent that she had no affection for her son and she obviously didn't want him around anymore. Suddenly, I found myself disgusted by this woman who, just moments earlier, I

was beginning to feel sorry for. I was extremely saddened that the boy had to return to this unloving and uncaring environment. However, I reasoned that it was better than living on the street, and at least the boy was big enough now to physically protect himself from his mother. All the boy had to contend with now was his mother's verbal and mental abuse. While the elder went to the car to retrieve the boy, I informed the woman that I would be checking back periodically, to see how she and the lad were getting along. I knew that I should probably make a report to Child Welfare and let them follow up. However, since the woman was studying with the Witnesses, I thought that perhaps her learning and applying Bible principles in her life might eventually straighten things out between the woman and her estranged son. Before departing, I gave the boy my telephone number and my address and told him to contact me if he had any further problems. As it turned out, the boy had quit school when he was sixteen years of age and he didn't have a job or anything else to occupy his time or energies, so he ended up spending a great deal of time at my house. I thought this would be a great opportunity to "save" the wayward young man. I resolved to start a Bible study with him, teach him "the Truth" and bring him into the safety of the Watchtower organization.

We began our Bible study on a weekly basis at my house, with the rest of my family in attendance. The boy's mother had discontinued her study with the elder's wife, and I was very disappointed to hear that she later joined a Pentecostal church. After the young man became eighteen years of age, legally an adult, I was able to get him a job with the city Street and Sanitation Department, and he eventually was able to rent himself an apartment not too far from where my family and I resided.

Some time later, as I was working the midnight shift, I heard over the police radio that one of the other patrolling units had found a young man prowling around behind one of the businesses in the downtown area. The suspect told the officer that he was just looking for a Coke machine to buy himself a cold drink from. The suspect also informed the investigating officer that he was a personal friend of mine and that I could vouch for him. When I was given this information over the police radio, along with the suspect's description and name, I signaled the officer back that the boy was "all right" and that he could release him. After all, I reasoned, the young man wouldn't steal anything; I was studying the Bible with him. Due to my vouching for him, the lad was released from custody.

The following day it was determined that the business my young friend was found behind had been burglarized. When police questioned the boy several days later, he confessed that he had broken into the building, and upon conducting a search of the boy's apartment, the officers found the items that had been taken in the burglary. Needless to say, this was very embarrassing for me, and I was angry that my young friend would use me the way he had, after all the kindness my family and I had shown him. Inasmuch as this was the boy's first offense, he was given probation instead of time in jail. The young man didn't come to our house anymore for our Bible study, and I didn't seek him out after that. The next time I saw him was six or seven years later. He was married and had two children of his own.

Chapter Six

The fact that Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate any holidays, other than wedding anniversaries, caused our family a great many problems all through the years. Even though we tried our best to explain to our small children the reasons for not celebrating the holidays, they were just too young to fully comprehend. Of course, what made it especially difficult for our boys was observing all the other children doing things that they weren't permitted to do. Christmas, New Years, Easter, Thanksgiving, birth days, Halloween, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentines Day and St. Patrick's Day were all holidays that were either "of pagan origin" according to research published by the Watchtower, or shouldn't be celebrated simply because "worldly people" celebrated them.

For our sons Daniel and Scott, who were both attending public school now, it meant being excluded from many activities and functions and made them feel very conspicuous and alone. For example, whenever Valentines Day was close at hand and the children at school would make Valentines and give cards to their classmates, my wife would have to talk to the boys' teachers to make sure they didn't have to participate. The teachers were usually very understanding and would excuse the boys, sending them to the office, and then my wife would have to pick them up from school. This procedure took place anytime there were holiday related activities.

In addition, our sons were taught that it was wrong to salute the American flag or sing the national anthem, as this was considered an act of idolatry by Jehovah God. While everyone else in their class would stand with their hand over their

heart and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, the boys would simply sit quietly in their seat. Our sons were also instructed that it wasn't really acceptable for them to play with children who were not Jehovah's Witnesses. They were taught that all the other boys and girls were bad associates because they were "worldly" and part of Satan's organization. If there were no other Witness children in the boys' classes, which was usually the case, they were instructed to play by themselves. This applied to recess, lunch period or any other social occasions. However, my wife sometimes made exceptions to this rule at home, to allow the boys to play with neighborhood children under her watchful eye and close supervision.

Our second oldest son Scott recently revealed to me that, because of his refusal to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag in grade school, some of his classmates called him a "Communist". Scott jokingly related that, even though he wasn't sure what a Communist was at that young age and he doubted that the children calling him the name did either, it still hurt his feelings. Of course, just by virtue of being "different", the boys were ridiculed and ostracized by their classmates, being made fun of and called names on occasion. Even though it saddened us to see our sons mistreated, we tried to make it clear to them that we were true Christians who had to endure persecution for our beliefs, and someday soon we would receive our just reward for being faithful and obedient to Jehovah and the Watchtower organization. In addition, we continually explained to our sons at our family Bible study and on other occasions, how all those people outside God's organization -- some of whom were making fun of them now -- would be destroyed at Armageddon, and we would be saved.

As our sons became older, they were not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities at school. Sports, Scouting, hobbies, etc., according to the Society, were all a waste of valuable time. Our children's energies, we were told by the organization, would be better spent in going from door to door, warning persons about Jehovah's impending judgment at Armageddon. The Society sternly warned us constantly that this lifesaving work was more important than anything else we could spend our time on. When Armageddon occurred and someone was destroyed because they didn't have the opportunity to learn "the Truth" due to our being neglectful of going out in service, Jehovah would hold us accountable, and that person's blood would be on our hands.

In addition, if it were perceived that the total number of hours spent in service for the month for the entire congregation was less than what the elders thought it should be, we were always reminded that “those who don’t use their time wisely now won’t have any time in the New System”. The obvious implication was that if you didn’t put in sufficient hours in service to Jehovah’s organization now, you wouldn’t live to spend and enjoy time in the New System of things after Armageddon. You would be destroyed along with the rest of the wicked.

Abstinence from celebrating the holidays was especially difficult for the boys at Christmas time and on their birthdays. Our boys would hear their class mates at school talking about the presents they had received at Christmas or on their birthday. In an effort to lessen our children’s disappointment of not receiving Christmas gifts, we would take advantage of the after Christmas sales, buying our children toys and gifts at reduced prices. These presents would be given to our boys, not as part of the worldly holiday celebration, but rather just because we loved them. When it came to birthdays, we basically used the same scheme, presenting the boys with gifts after their birth date, not in celebration of the occasion, but simply out of our love for them. Linnie and I both sometimes felt that we were being dishonest by this subterfuge. However, it appeared that all the other Witnesses we knew did the same thing, so we continued the practice.

Chapter Seven

As the year 1974 faded into history and 1975 began, there was a heightening climate of anticipation among Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Watchtower’s publications had been pointing toward the Autumn of 1975 as the time of Armageddon and Christ’s cleansing of all the wicked from the earth before restoring it to a paradise condition. It was almost as if everyone was holding their breath, waiting for that first worldwide, earthshaking event that would signal the beginning of the end. The Watchtower had been telling us that world political leaders would turn on organized religion and there would be worldwide anarchy.

In addition, there appeared to be a “speeding up” of the separating work taking place, as Jehovah’s “sheeplike ones” clamored to join the organization. There was a phenomenal growth taking place, with people reportedly being baptized in unprecedented numbers. This was further proof to us that Arma

geddon was just months away and God's Kingdom would soon reign.

We had heard and read about brothers and sisters all over the world selling their homes and quitting their jobs so they could "pioneer" for the organization during the short time remaining in this old system of things. The Society commended them in their publications and stated that these faithful "pioneers" were setting a fine example for the rest of us. Also, we had heard locally of Witnesses doing other things in anticipation of the end of this system. Some were using up their savings, cashing in insurance policies, and going into debt unnecessarily. Others we knew had put off decisions concerning marriage, having children, buying homes, and having needed surgery performed. I am sure there were many other important decisions that the Witnesses made which were duly influenced by the coming world's end.

I remember wondering, several years prior to 1975, why we were planning to build a new Kingdom Hall on Aubry Prow Road. After all, I reasoned, Armageddon is just a year or so away. Weren't we running the risk that the product of all our expense and hard labor might be destroyed with the rest of this old wicked system? When I mentioned my misgivings to one of the elders in the congregation, he looked at me like one might look at a ten-year-old who had just asked a very foolish question. The elder then matter-of-factly informed me that, "Jehovah wouldn't destroy one of His own buildings". I felt embarrassed at asking such an obviously idiotic question, so I simply shrugged and smiled, then replied, "I guess I didn't think of that".

As the prophetically marked year of 1975 faded into history and 1976 began, everything seemed to be "business as usual". The foretold great event had not occurred, and I was feeling disillusioned and betrayed by the Watchtower Society. As time passed, with no immediate explanation from Jehovah's organization and sole channel of communication, my disillusionment turned to anger. At that time I quit going out in service altogether and only attended the meetings with my family sporadically. It wasn't long until the Society started making excuses for their failed prophecy, and ironically they put the blame on their followers. They stated that some of the brothers, in their enthusiasm for God's Kingdom to be established, misinterpreted statements made by the Watchtower Society. The organization also indicated that this may very well have been Jehovah's way of testing his followers' loyalty to see if they were truly sincere or were simply serving God to a specific date. That was "it" for me. I wasn't buying into their excuses. I had enough, and I was though with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and Jehovah's

Witnesses. However, as it later turned out, they weren't through with me.

Sometime in 1976, I made a conscious decision to leave the organization, just as I heard numerous others were doing. I didn't write them a formal letter, notifying them of my decision; I simply stopped attending the meetings, and I had already ceased my door-to-door witnessing activity. However, my wife Linnie loyally continued, seemingly undaunted by the Society's false prediction. Linnie seemed to overlook the Watchtower's shortcomings concerning 1975 by accepting another of their standard excuses: that they were just imperfect human beings and, as such, were subject to error. I, on the other hand, had lost my faith in the Bible, in the Watchtower organization, and in Almighty God himself, and I was back to my old attitude of "eat, drink, and make merry, for tomorrow we die".

In an effort to replace the lost spirituality in my life, I turned to secularism and became totally dedicated to my police work. With the appointment of a new Police Chief and a subsequent reorganization of the department, I was promoted to Detective Sergeant. I was assigned to work on dangerous drug and narcotic cases for the newly formed Investigation Division, working long hours on surveillance and development of drug informants.

It was now sometime in the Fall of 1979, and I was getting dressed to go to work on the three-to-eleven shift at the Police Department. My wife Linnie came into our bedroom and informed me that there were two elders from the Kingdom Hall in the living room, and that they wanted to speak to me. I asked Linnie if she knew what they wanted. My wife had a very puzzled look on her face and replied that she didn't know. I couldn't imagine why they would want to see me. I had not attended a meeting in several years and only had occasional contact with the Witnesses, usually when they came to the house to visit with Linnie or when I met one of them on the street.

I walked into the living room and greeted our visitors. After they had introduced themselves, we shook hands and I invited them to sit down on the couch, opposite me. Both men were dressed in business suits and ties, wearing overcoats, and appeared to be thirty to forty years of age. One of the men was tall and slender looking, and the other man was of medium height and stocky build and had several scars on his face. I remember thinking they looked more like Mafia hit-men than elders of Jehovah's Witnesses. Their ominous appearance and nervousness, coupled with the fact that I didn't recognize them as members of the local congregation, concerned me.

When I asked the two men what I could do for them, they informed me that they had been sent from California to Madisonville by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. They further stated that Jehovah's Spirit was being hindered here in Madisonville, as evidenced by the fact that there had been no growth in the congregation for some time. Their job, they informed me, was to determine what the problem was and to take whatever action was necessary to correct it. The men further related that they felt that perhaps there were people in the congregation that were involved in wrongdoing which was grieving God's Holy Spirit. At that point, I asked the scar faced man doing most of the talking what that had to do with me. The man replied that it had been brought to their attention by members of the congregation that I had been seen smoking. The scarfaced man then brazenly informed me that, even though I was inactive, I was still considered to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. If the report about my smoking was true, I would be given a short period of time in which to correct the problem and, if I refused, I would be disfellowshipped (excommunicated). I felt humiliated and embarrassed by these complete strangers' accusation, and I could feel my face growing flushed as the resentment welled up inside of me. I had willingly "kicked" the cigarette habit back in 1973, when the Society had ordered all of their followers to stop using tobacco in any form. The organization had determined it was an "unclean habit" that was injurious to people's health and therefore a sin to use it. I had started smoking again in 1976, when I stopped attending meetings and going out in service. However, I really didn't think that these two coarse looking characters from the Watchtower Society had any right to come into my home and dictate to me how to live my life. Looking at the two men with the hardest, coldest stare I could muster, I reached into my inside coat pocket and pulled out a cigar. As I lit up and puffed several times to get it started, the two men abruptly stood. The man with the scars on his face angrily stated, "Well, I guess you've made your decision". I calmly retorted, "I certainly have, and now it's time for you to leave". I got out of my chair and followed the two men as they quickly walked to the front door and exited our house. After the elders' sudden departure my wife came out of the bedroom where she had been waiting and asked me, "What happened?" After I informed Linnie what had transpired, she became very annoyed with me, contending that I had treated the elders badly. One of the reasons the elders' visit and domineering attitude upset me so greatly was that, just a year or so before, Linnie and I had had the worst altercation

of our entire marriage. It was so serious that it resulted in my moving out of the house for a short period of time. The quarrel and resulting temporary separation was over a Watchtower magazine article that dictated what sort of contact was proper between husband and wife in the marriage bed.

I was sick and tired of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society interfering in our personal lives, and I told my wife that, since I was going to be disfellowshipped by the organization anyway, Jehovah's Witnesses were no longer welcome in our house. Being disfellowshipped by the Witnesses means that you will be completely shunned by former friends and associates and even family members not living in your household. They will no longer speak or have anything to do with you.

The Thursday night following my confrontation with the elders, my wife and youngest son Chris, who was now seven or eight years of age, attended the Ministry School and Service Meeting at the Kingdom Hall. When they returned home, my wife somberly informed me that one of the elders had made the formal announcement that I had been disfellowshipped. I was disconcerted by this news. Not because of being disfellowshipped; I was expecting that. Rather, I was offended and annoyed by the way the elders had vilified me in the presence of my youngest son. I am sure that Chris was too young to fully understand the proceedings and everything that took place. However, I was equally sure that Chris got the distinct impression that his "Daddy" had done something very bad. According to my wife, the elder making the announcement didn't state the reason for my being disfellowshipped. That was left to the imagination of the congregation, to figure out what terrible sin I was guilty of.

After my being disfellowshipped, I had no further contact with Jehovah's Witnesses for the next four or five years. Even though my wife Linnie continued in the organization as a member in good standing, because of my being disfellowshipped none of the Witnesses ever visited her in our home. I continued my career with the Madisonville Police Department, having been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, assigned as the Department's Crime Prevention and Public Information Officer. Our two eldest sons, Daniel and Scott, had grown into manhood and were no longer active Witnesses. Only our youngest son Chris, who was now a teenager, accompanied his mother to the meetings at the Kingdom Hall.

It was October 1984, when the greatest tragedy that had ever befallen our family occurred. Our beloved first-born son Daniel was killed in an automobile accident. Daniel was twenty-three years

old and had been married just over a year to a girl he had known since they were teenagers in high school. Daniel and Patricia had been blessed with a delightful baby girl, Catherine Michelle, who at the time of our son's demise was only five months of age. Our daughter-in-law, the former Patricia Sidman, and all of her family were devout Catholics. As you might imagine, this presented us with some problems that had to be dealt with at a very difficult time.

Our daughter-in-law wanted her family's Catholic priest to perform Daniel's funeral, and Linnie wanted one of the elders of Jehovah's Witnesses to officiate at the ceremony. Even though I had been disfellowshipped by the Witnesses, I sided with my wife. I felt that Daniel had been reared as a Jehovah's Witness, so it seemed appropriate that he should be buried as a Witness. However, I also believed that Daniel's young wife and her religious preferences should be taken into consideration.

In an effort to resolve the dispute, the funeral home director suggested that the ceremonial proceedings be split or shared by the Catholic priest and the Witness elder. This seemed like a plausible solution to the problem, and the Catholic priest was willing to compromise. However, the Witness elder asserted that he wouldn't participate at all, unless he was permitted to conduct the entire funeral ceremony. The elder further stated that the Society wouldn't approve of his being a party to a joint service of any kind with a teacher of false religion who was a member of Satan's organization. Inasmuch as Linnie was so adamant that the Witnesses conduct our son's funeral, our daughter-in-law reluctantly conceded, permitting the Witnesses to take charge of the entire proceedings.

There were over three hundred people in attendance at our son's funeral, with a great number of them being Jehovah's Witnesses. As is customary, after the funeral many of the people approached my wife and me to express their condolences for our tragic loss. Some shook our hands and others hugged us. However, even though I was standing next to my wife, the Witnesses completely ignored me. Many of them I had been acquainted with for years, and they treated me as though I wasn't even there. Naturally, this hurt me a great deal, at a time when I was extremely vulnerable, and only served to add to my already deep feelings of grief and pain.

Chapter Eight

The next six years of our lives were reminiscent of a chapter directly from the Bible Book of Job, and after our young son was killed Linnie and I both came to believe that Jehovah had completely turned his back on us. Just six months after our son's tragic death, my stepfather Elburn Dorris succumbed to his second heart attack and died. Dad had been ill for several years, and the whole family felt that Daniel's untimely demise was just too much for Dad's already weakened heart.

Then in 1988, my father Joseph Miller, who was a retired railroader living in Port Charlotte, Florida, passed away. My father was hospitalized at the time for the removal of a spot from one of his lungs. Even though the surgery was deemed a success, complications were later encountered, resulting in heart failure, and the doctors were unable to resuscitate my father.

Next, in 1988, my wife Linnie and I and our youngest son Chris were on a mini-vacation in Hot Springs, Arkansas. While on an amphibious sight seeing bus called "the Duck", we were hit head-on by an automobile traveling at a high rate of speed.

Miraculously, no one was killed in the accident.

However, Linnie and I both sustained severe neck and back injuries requiring a short stay in the hospital and eight months of physical therapy.

As our misfortune continued to mount, in 1989 it was learned that it was going to be necessary for my wife Linnie to have a complete hysterectomy. It was during this time that we had our first real encounter with Jehovah's Witnesses' so-called "blood issue".

The Witnesses do not believe in taking blood transfusions, citing the Bible Book of Leviticus that placed dietary restrictions on the Israelites, from eating blood. The Watchtower teaches that taking a blood transfusion simply bypasses the digestive process and directly nourishes the body. All Jehovah's Witnesses carry a signed Medical Card on their person, directing emergency medical personnel that they are not to be transfused with blood under any circumstances. The Witnesses carry this card, which constitutes a binding legal document, in the event they are found unconscious or for some other reason are unable to make their wishes known. The Witnesses are taught by the Watchtower that, rather than violate God's Law against taking blood, it is preferable to die. They reason that if you should die because of refusing a blood transfusion, you will have proved your loyalty to Jehovah and the organization and in all probability, will be resurrected in the New System.

The Watchtower Society has recently formed "Liaison Committees" that accompany Jehovah's Witnesses to the hospital, who consult with medical

staff to ensure that no blood is used, should surgery be performed.

Linnie consulted with her gynecologist, relating to him that she was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and explained her religious views concerning blood transfusions. The young doctor arrogantly informed my wife that he wouldn't perform the operation, guaranteeing her there would be no blood transfusion. The doctor further elaborated that if he felt it necessary during the procedure, he would get a court order and force a transfusion on my wife. The doctor's insensitive attitude upset my wife and only added to her apprehension concerning the needed surgery.

We looked for another gynecologist who would be more understanding and accommodating concerning our religious stand. We were finally able to locate another doctor, who was very kind and understanding of our plight. The doctor was a very religious person himself and even though he didn't agree with the Watchtower's teachings on the matter, he consented to perform the surgery without a blood transfusion. However, it was necessary for my wife and me to sign waivers relieving the doctor and the hospital of all liability in connection with this "bloodless surgery". The doctor explained that after we had signed the necessary documents, there would be no turning back. Once Linnie was anesthetized and the surgery was in progress, I could not change the decision she had already made. This information frightened me because, in the back of my mind, I had already plotted that if an emergency arose and the doctor thought that a blood transfusion would save Linnie's life, I would give my consent. I reasoned that under those circumstances, Jehovah and the organization couldn't hold my wife responsible, and I was already disfellowshipped, doomed for destruction in any event. Fortunately, as it turned out, my fears were allayed, as the surgery was successfully performed with no complications requiring a blood transfusion.

Linnie recuperated nicely at home for the next five or six weeks, and I was able to take time off from work to care for her. Also, Linnie's mother Eva Gilreath was able to make arrangements to stay with us for several days during Linnie's convalescence. Unfortunately, as fate would have it, that was the last time we were able to visit with my mother-in-law. Some time later, after Eva returned home, she suffered a stroke and was rushed to the Lexington, Kentucky, Medical Center. She passed away three days later without ever regaining consciousness. After her mother's death and all the other losses we had suffered, Linnie became very despondent and withdrawn. She was extremely depressed and at an

all-time spiritual low in her life. Because of this, Linnie discontinued her door-to-door witnessing activity and no longer attended the meetings either. In Linnie's words, she felt as though she had hit rock bottom.

In July of 1990, after almost nineteen years of service, I retired from the Madisonville Police Department. I was a Shift Supervisor at the time, holding the rank of Captain. Normally, I wouldn't have been eligible for retirement for another year. However, I had been diagnosed with a hearing impairment that interfered with the performance of my duties. I had been fitted with several different types of hearing aids, one of which was hypoallergenic. However, they all still produced an allergic reaction and I wasn't able to wear them. This partial loss of my hearing ability prematurely brought my career as a police officer to a close. A short time after my retirement, I secured part time employment, working as a security officer at the Regional Medical center in Madisonville. It was during this time that I turned to God once again.

However, this time it was completely different from the several previous occasions that I had vacillated in and out of the Watchtower organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. For some unexplainable reason, I was feeling a great love for God and wanted to please Him, whereas before I felt only fear of his Divine retribution. I had an overwhelming desire to truly know my Creator, and I felt drawn by Him. This was especially perplexing to me, because up to this time, due to all the misfortune we had experienced during the preceding six years, I felt betrayed and alienated from God. I even cursed Jehovah in a drunken fit of rage one night, shortly after my son's tragic demise and asked God to take my life as well. I was grief-stricken and depressed and I blamed God for my son's senseless death. At the time, I no longer wanted to live.

The only way that I knew how to fill this great need for intimacy that I was experiencing was through prayer and study of God's Word the Bible, just as the Watchtower organization had taught me so long ago. I had ample time since my retirement, and I began to study the Bible with a passion, often reading for as long as six hours at a time. The compulsion I felt was similar to physical hunger, and in a very short time I had completely read the Holy Scriptures through twice. However, even though I was praying to Jehovah regularly and taking in knowledge, as the Watchtower taught, I still felt that there was some thing missing.

A short time after my employment at the hospital, a long-time acquaintance named Ray Peach, who

was also a retired police officer, became my coworker in the Security Department. Ray was a Christian and a student of the Bible, and during the next year or so, we had many interesting and lively discussions concerning the Holy Scriptures and our different beliefs. Ray and his wife Brenda were both Baptists, and even though I professed no particular Christian denomination at the time, I had studied for many years with Jehovah's Witnesses and had accepted their teaching and interpretation of the Bible. This led Ray and me to be mostly at odds in our many verbal encounters. Nevertheless, Ray and I became close friends, and one day he invited me to his church's weekly Bible study.

Ray informed me that they met every Wednesday evening at 6:00 p.m. in the church for study and discussion of the Holy Scriptures. I was reluctant, at first, to accept Ray's invitation, reverting back to what the Witnesses had taught us: that the churches of Christendom were evil and teachers of false doctrines. However, I finally consented, reasoning that I was disfellowshipped by the Witnesses anyway, so what did I have to lose? After the mistake the Watchtower organization had made concerning the occurrence of Armageddon in 1975, I was confused and wasn't sure what to believe anymore.

I informed my wife Linnie that I was going to a Bible study at a church with Ray and Brenda. Linnie didn't approve of the idea. However, inasmuch as she wasn't attending the meetings at the Kingdom Hall herself, she didn't object too strenuously.

Wednesday evening arrived and Ray and his wife picked me up around a quarter of six. When we arrived at the church, Ray introduced me to the pastor and several others, and promptly at six o'clock we began our study. The first thing the pastor stated was, "The Trinity consists of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. If you don't understand it or you don't believe it, that's just too bad, because that's the way it is".

I was completely taken back by the pastor's adamant assertion, and it seemed almost as if his declaration was made specifically for my benefit. I had been taught, and Jehovah's Witnesses believe, that the Trinity doctrine of Christendom is of pagan origin and that it dishonors God's sovereignty. We further believed that Jehovah and Jesus Christ are two separate persons, with Jehovah being the superior of the two. The Holy Spirit is Jehovah's invisible active force that He simply uses in accomplishing His purposes -- certainly not a person as the churches of Christendom teach.

I felt offended by the pastor's remarks, and I resolved then and there not to return. After the

study, driving home, I thanked Ray and Brenda for inviting me to accompany them. However, I also informed them that because of the pastor's distressing statement concerning the Trinity, I wouldn't be going back again. Ray advised me that he was annoyed as well and was surprised by the pastor's blunt statement. Ray further informed me that he had contacted the pastor prior to the Wednesday night meeting and had told him that he was bringing a friend who was a Jehovah's Witness to the study. Ray had specifically requested the pastor not to mention the Trinity, because, through our numerous discussions, he knew that it was a very sensitive issue with me. This revelation disturbed me even further, as it then became apparent that the pastor's abrupt statement was planned and was made in an effort to shock or annoy me. If that was the pastor's intent, he had succeeded. I then informed Ray and Brenda that I was thinking of returning to studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses again. After all, I reasoned, even though they obviously weren't perfect, who knew more about the Holy Scriptures than the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society?

When I arrived home, I informed my wife about my negative experience at the church and how I just couldn't understand how any informed person could believe in the Trinity doctrine. Naturally Linnie agreed with my sentiments, and it was then that I informed her that I had decided to return to studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Linnie was surprised and elated at the idea, and she confided in me that her conscience had been bothering her since she became inactive several years earlier. After some further discussion Linnie and I resolved to start back to the Kingdom Hall together, that very next Sunday. Our return to Jehovah's organization and the Kingdom Hall was a momentous occasion. My wife Linnie was gladly received and appropriately treated like a "long-lost relative" that was returning home after being absent for a very long time. Brothers and sisters in the faith clamored to shake her hand or hug her, welcoming her back into the fold. However, I was treated with the same coldness that I had experienced at our son's funeral some years before. I was greeted with blank stares and complete indifference, and no one spoke to me or even acknowledged my presence. It was a strange feeling to be shunned in that manner and, in some ways, it was almost comical. I remember thinking of the humor in the situation and the lyrics to an old Chris Christopherson song, "Are you a figment of my imagination, or am I a figment of yours". I was beginning to wonder if I was really there.

Linnie and I dutifully took a seat at the back of the Kingdom Hall, because that was where disfellowshipped persons were expected to sit if they were being properly humble. After the Public Talk and the Watchtower Study adjourned, we were approached by the Congregation Overseer. He was a middle aged Afro-American who, we later learned, had recently been transferred to the Madisonville Congregation from Illinois. The elder's eyes nervously jumped back and forth between Linnie and me, as he asked questions and made comments. Since none of the Witnesses were supposed to talk to me due to my disfellowshipped status, our conversation was similar to speaking through an interpreter. The overseer looked directly at my wife as he asked, "Is he really sincere in wanting to return to the Kingdom Hall?" I answered in the affirmative to my wife, and Linnie shook her head "Yes" to the overseer. This procedure continued during several more questions, and then the overseer abruptly terminated the conversation and walked away. The overseer's last comment was that he and one of the other elders would pay a visit to our home in a few days to discuss with me the procedure for being reinstated.

Several days after we had attended our first meeting at the Kingdom Hall, the overseer called my wife and asked if it would be convenient for him and another elder to come to our house that evening. After consulting with me, my wife arranged for the brothers to meet with us at 7:00 p.m. I was extremely nervous all through supper, wondering what I was going to have to do, in order to win the brothers' approval and reinstatement to Jehovah's organization. At approximately 7:00 p.m., the brothers arrived, and I invited them into the house. The overseer introduced the elder accompanying him, and all four of us were seated in the living room. The overseer immediately asked Linnie if she would mind leaving us alone. After my wife excused herself and left the room, the Congregation Overseer asked me if I was still smoking or used tobacco products of any kind. I assured the brothers that I had quit smoking almost a year earlier and didn't anticipate any difficulty in continuing to abstain.

The overseer then informed me that, in order for me to be reinstated to the organization, the first thing that I would have to do is write a letter to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. In the letter, the elders instructed me to state why I was disfellowshipped initially and to request that I be reinstated. Next, I would have to faithfully attend all of the meetings at the Kingdom Hall that I possibly could, for an undetermined period of time. This was to show my sincerity, and during this trial period I was to exhibit a repentant attitude by sitting in the back

seats of the Kingdom Hall. In addition, I was not to speak to anyone else in attendance, nor would they greet or speak to me. I was informed that these conditions would prevail until such time as the elders saw fit to reinstate me. I willingly agreed to the conditions and then very timidly asked if it would be possible for someone to study with me. The overseer advised me that until I was officially reinstated that wouldn't be proper. However, just as soon as I won reinstatement to the organization, one of the elders would be assigned to study with me and my wife. After the elders left, I immediately sat down and composed a letter to the Society, requesting reinstatement just as the brothers had directed me. I put the letter in the mail the very first thing the following morning.

After almost six weeks of faithfully attending the meetings at the Kingdom Hall, I was standing in front of the bulletin board located at the back of the building, casually glancing over the various announcements posted. It was Sunday morning, and I was just passing the time, waiting for the Public Talk to begin. Linnie was sick that morning and had not accompanied me, and there was little else to do, since I wasn't permitted to speak with anyone. There was another brother standing next to me, also looking over the various notices stuck to the board. He too looked as though he was just "killing time" until the meeting began. I recognized the brother as someone I had known from some years before, when my family and I had previously attended the Kingdom Hall. My wife had earlier informed me that this brother was a disfellowshipped person as well, and that he was also attempting to be reinstated to the organization.

Suddenly, I felt a kinship with this man whose circumstances appeared to be very similar to my own. He too was an outcast that no one would speak to or associate with. I thought of what an unbelievable situation this was, for grown men to be treated like adolescent boys, being punished for their mischievous behavior. As I stood there, I envisioned the two of us being made to stand in a corner, wearing dunce caps on our heads. As I looked over at the brother I smiled and said, "How are you?" Without ever turning his head toward me, the brother slyly looked back at me out of the corner of his eye. Through a sheepish grin he whispered, "Pretty good! How are you?" At that, I turned and walked away from the brother, smugly feeling as though I had just gotten away with the crime of the century. I returned to my seat at the back of the Kingdom Hall and waited for the Public Talk to begin.

Immediately after the meeting, the Congregation Overseer confronted me as I was going out the front door. It really took me by surprise, inasmuch as no one had paid the slightest attention to me in six weeks. The overseer very accusingly asked me what I was doing talking with that other disfellowshipped brother. I replied that I didn't think there was any harm in speaking to another disfellowshipped person. After all, I attempted to reason, weren't we "in the same boat?" The overseer sarcastically informed me that we were not "in the same boat", and he reiterated that I wasn't to speak to anyone at the meetings. I subserviently informed the elder that I was sorry and that it wouldn't happen again. Driving home, I thought to myself how humiliating it was to be treated like a child, and the incident made me realize just how closely I was being watched.

After a total of almost three months of continuing to faithfully attend all of the meetings at the Kingdom Hall, one Thursday night meeting the Congregation Overseer instructed me to wait and see him after the meeting. I wondered what I had done wrong now. When almost everyone else had left, the overseer ushered me into a small room that doubled as an office and a library. Accompanying the overseer was another elder, and after the three of us were seated I was instructed to turn in my Bible to Chapter Eighteen of the Book of Matthew. I was then told to read along silently, as the overseer read aloud verses twelve and thirteen. It reads, "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? And if it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray".

After the overseer concluded reading the foregoing verse, he abruptly closed his Bible and said, "Ralph, you are that lost sheep". With that the overseer stood up and stuck out his hand to me and said, "Congratulations, brother! You've been reinstated". As I stood and shook the brother's hand, I felt surprised and delighted. Finally, my shunning period had come to an end, and I would now be able to fellowship with all of my brothers and sisters in the congregation. The overseer also informed me that one of the elders, who was designated as the Ministry School Servant, would be studying with my wife and me. This was considered to be somewhat of an honor, as that particular elder had the responsibility of instructing the entire congregation in the art of public speaking as well as witnessing from door to door. Before I left that evening, arrangements were made to study with this elder for one hour every Wednesday evening.

The following Wednesday at the prearranged time of 7:00 p.m., the elder arrived to start our study. As I directed the brother into the kitchen, where we had decided to conduct the meeting, I felt a mild sense of excitement and anticipation. I had been looking forward to studying the Bible with the Witnesses again for some time, because I still believed that they were genuine Bible scholars and, in fact, the final authority in matters pertaining to the Holy Scriptures. I hungered for the Bible knowledge that, we had been taught by the Society, would lead us to eternal life. The elder informed Linnie and me that we would be studying a Watchtower publication entitled *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. He provided Linnie and me each a copy of the book and after saying a prayer asking Jehovah's guidance and direction, our study began.

Linnie and I progressed well in our studies, and after several months I was informed that arrangements would be made for me to start going out in service once again. Linnie was advised that she could go out on her own. However, apparently it was felt that I needed some type of special supervision. The first few times that I went out were on Sunday afternoons, and I was accompanied by several of the elders. This was acceptable to me, inasmuch as I really didn't feel confident enough to go out on my own just yet. For the most part, the elder I was paired off with did the talking and I simply stood there and listened.

At almost all of the meetings there was great emphasis placed on the door-to-door witnessing for Jehovah and the organization. The "pioneers", who put in sixty hours or more each month in service, were held in very high esteem and were constantly praised as excellent examples for the rest of us to emulate. After a time, I began to be aware and to take note of a constant barrage of what I considered to be threats. Sometimes they were subtle, and in other instances they were extremely direct and to the point. One incident stands out in my memory quite clearly, involving the Congregation Overseer at the end of the Service Meeting one Thursday night. Addressing the entire congregation from the platform, the elder indicated that we were becoming lax in the number of hours that we were devoting to the door-to-door ministry. In an elevated and ominous tone of voice he stated, "Brothers and sisters, lives are at stake and perhaps even your own". Everyone there understood the implication of this threatening statement. The overseer was relating that people outside the organization were in danger of being destroyed at Armageddon, if we didn't spend sufficient time in service, offering these people salvation through the Watchtower Society. If we failed in

this important separating work for Jehovah and the organization, we too would be deemed worthy of destruction.

These constant threats irritated me, and I told my wife that I didn't like the way the elders were always trying to intimidate us. However, even though the threats annoyed me, I reasoned that this was God's work, so I resolved to try my best to comply, and I was determined to start going out door-to-door as often as I could. In an effort to increase my service hours, in addition to the Sunday afternoons that I had already been going out with the elders, I decided to also go out with a different group on Wednesday mornings. I knew that the elders would be proud of me when they noticed that my time in service had increased, and perhaps they might even consider me for a more responsible position in the near future. This was called "reaching out".

Several weeks later the elder we were studying with arrived at our home for our usual weekly Bible study. After the meeting was concluded the elder looked at me and very sternly asked, "Can I speak with you frankly?" "Sure!" I replied, thinking to myself that the elder was just joking around. The elder slammed his book shut and angrily announced, "You've gone against the theocratic order". I was shocked and dismayed at the elder's accusation. When I meekly inquired as to what he had reference to, the elder informed me that I had gone out in service without asking him first. This indicated an independent spirit on my part. I was truly bewildered by this surprising allegation, and I defended myself by pleading ignorance. I advised the elder that I wasn't aware that it was necessary for me to obtain his permission, and I thought all the elders would be pleased that I was displaying some initiative. The elder then very dogmatically warned me that, even though I had been reinstated from being disfellowshipped, I was still in somewhat of a probationary status. After the elder's departure, I was rather disheartened, and I concluded from the incident that I was still being watched very closely, and anything that I might want to do that was not of the usual routine, I had better ask permission from someone first.

While out in the door-to-door ministry one Sunday afternoon on the dusty back roads of Hopkins County, we came upon an old "Block House". It was fairly isolated, setting back off the road, and there were no other houses close by. Even though it was inconvenient, it was part of the "territory" that the elder accompanying me had selected, and inasmuch as we were taught that everyone should have the opportunity to learn the "truth", we dutifully pulled

off the road up towards the house. As we drove nearer, the house's decaying and deteriorating condition became more apparent. If it hadn't been for the very old truck parked at the side, I would have concluded that the house was deserted.

As we walked from our automobile to the front of the residence, I could see the outline of a man standing in the front doorway. As we got nearer, I could see that the man was unshaven and very shabbily dressed. He was of medium height and very slender build and appeared to be approximately forty-five years of age. As the elder and I reached the doorway, the man politely greeted us and asked what he could do for us. As the elder introduced us both and began his spiel in an effort to place the Watchtower and Awake! magazines, I could detect the repugnant smell of body odor emitting from the man. The householder advised us that he would like to have the magazines. However, he didn't have any money to give us for a donation. The elder and I both assured the obviously indigent person that it was quite all right, that the donation wasn't always required and that he could have the magazines if he would read them.

The man assured us that he would look at the magazines and invited us into the house as the elder continued his persistent prepared discourse in an effort to lay the groundwork for a Bible study, or at the very least gain the man's permission to return at another time. As we entered the dwelling and I looked around, there appeared to be only four rooms. The small house was even more decrepit and dirty on the inside, and the only sign of furnishings was a mattress on the floor of one room and a single worn-out looking overstuffed chair in what I guessed was at one time a living room. There was a wood burning stove near the center of the room we were standing in, and I saw a double barrel shotgun leaning against the wall in one corner.

The man apologized for not having any place for us to sit down, explaining that he was getting his belongings together to move his residence. The man further related that he was out of work and his rent was due and he didn't have any money to pay it. When I asked the man if he had any family who could assist him, he informed us that he was divorced from his wife, and they had a grown daughter. However, the man elaborated that his daughter was married and had two small children of her own and really didn't have the means to help him. I then inquired of the man where he was going to move to. He replied in a desperate sounding, almost sobbing voice, that he just didn't know what he was going to do. In addition to all his other

problems, this destitute individual informed us that the power company had sent him a final notice before turning off the electricity to his house. As if these problems weren't enough, his old truck was in need of repair and the man had no means of transportation or the money required to obtain the necessary parts to fix it.

In the face of all this adversity it seemed ludicrous to me to continue attempting to impart anything spiritual to this poverty stricken "down and out" individual. However, the elder accompanying me seemed undaunted by the man's pitiable circumstances and continued quoting him the Bible, chapter and verse. After the elder finally concluded his dissertation of the Scriptures, I asked our host how much his rent was. He replied that it was only forty dollars per month. I glanced over at the elder, thinking perhaps he might suggest some practical solution to the man's immediate needs. I thought possibly there might be some sort of monetary funds available at the Kingdom Hall for just such emergency situations. The elder didn't comment, and judging from his unconcerned attitude, it became abundantly clear that if this man was going to receive any relief, it would have to come from me personally. I reached into my pocket and pulled out two twenty dollar bills from my wallet and handed them to the man. The man was obviously surprised, and he thanked me profusely all the way to the front door as we made our exit. As we departed, I advised the man that I would return the following day to check on his welfare and see if I could assist him further.

As we drove on to the next house, the elder said nothing concerning the incident. However, I got the distinct impression that the elder thought that I had been foolish in giving the destitute individual my hard earned money. The Watchtower Society doesn't place any great emphasis on helping needy persons outside the organization. After all, everyone who is not a member of the Watchtower Society is part of Satan's realm. I knew that I certainly wouldn't be criticized concerning my monetary gift to the man, and it would be considered a good deed by the elders, even though the recipient was a "worldly person". Nevertheless, the Society's thinking was that the preaching of the Kingdom message which leads a person to eternal life was the greatest gift that we could give another person. That was considered to be much more important than anything of material value. However, in my opinion, it seemed almost un-Christian to see a person in such dire circumstances and not do something in a practical way to help. This incident later made me wonder just what the

Watchtower Society did with all the money their followers contributed. With over four and one half million Witnesses worldwide, the organization surely received millions of dollars in contributions each week. I determined to ask one of the elders concerning the matter at the next available opportunity. It wasn't long after the episode with the indigent householder that one of the elderly widowed sisters in the congregation invited Linnie and me to dinner at her home. The sister also invited one of the elders in the congregation and his family to join us. After enjoying a delicious leisurely meal together, the elder and his wife and Linnie and I adjourned to the family room. It was suggested that the four of us play a game of cards while our host and the elder's two daughters cleaned up the kitchen. As we played cards and engaged in casual conversation, I thought this might be an opportune time to ask the elder some questions concerning the finances of the Watchtower Society.

I began by inquiring of the elder if he had any idea how much money the organization received in the form of contributions each year. The elder eyed me rather suspiciously and replied, "Why would you want to know that?" I informed the elder that I was merely curious and that it had occurred to me that I had never seen a financial statement published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. I further explained that hypothetically in terms of simple arithmetic, if each of the four million plus membership were to donate as little as two dollars per week, that would amount to eight million dollars. In a month's time that figure would increase to thirty-two million dollars and, over the span of one year, it would multiply to three hundred eighty-four million dollars.

I further stated that I felt that the estimated two dollars per person per week figure was probably low, as I believed the Witnesses to be very generous in their monetary contributions to the Society. In addition, that wasn't taking into consideration donations received at the doors from those outside the organization. I couldn't even venture a guess as to how much revenue that generated. I also pointed out that the expenses involved in producing the Society's books, magazines, and other literature were extremely moderate. We had read in the Watchtower magazines how all of the people who worked at the headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, were brothers and sisters who volunteered. The workers were provided with their room and board and a small monthly allowance of eighty dollars. In addition, the Watchtower owned and operated a farm and a dairy,

which provided the bulk of the food required for their work force and staff.

The elder's entire demeanor had changed by now, and he was obviously on the defensive. The elder informed me that the Watchtower published a financial statement every year in a publication entitled the Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses. I replied that I was familiar with the publication he was referring to and it didn't contain what I would call a financial statement. The information that the elder was alluding to in the Yearbook was a list of some expenditures made by the Society on behalf of the organization's traveling overseers and pioneers. I explained to the elder that what I was curious about and wanted to see was a ledger of some type listing the annual amount of money taken in by the organization and all the monies paid out and what those expenditures were for. I further explained that I would also be interested in seeing a list of the Society's assets, to see what properties and other holdings they owned. I elaborated that these seemed like perfectly legitimate questions to me, that might be asked by anyone who solicited and personally made contributions to the organization.

By this time I perceived that the elder was becoming quite annoyed by my inquiries concerning the Watchtower's finances, and it occurred to me that he probably knew just as little about them as I did. In any event, the elder abruptly brought the matter to a close by sternly informing me that there had never been a "money scandal" in our organization, such as there had been in the churches of Christendom. Furthermore, the elder strongly indicated to me that I probably shouldn't concern myself with such matters. I concluded that, in view of the elder's indignant and hostile attitude, it would probably be in my best interests simply to drop the subject. I was very much aware that, if my questions and comments were to be interpreted by the elders as "critical thinking" concerning Jehovah's organization, I could be disfellowshipped once again. Inasmuch as the atmosphere had now become rather strained, a short time later we thanked our gracious host for the meal, and we took our leave.

Chapter Nine

It was June of 1992, and it was once again time for the annual District Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses held in Louisville, Kentucky. Linnie and I had been making plans for several months now, having made hotel reservations well in advance to ensure we would be able to get a room. There would

be thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses assembled at one of the sports areas, to receive spiritually uplifting information and enlightenment. The program usually consisted of the releasing of a new book produced by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, as well as public talks on a variety of Bible topics. They also customarily enacted dramas or plays, depicting various Bible characters acting out different stories.

I had been to assemblies a number of times in the past and I really didn't like attending them. Among other things, the seats were usually uncomfortable, the food served was atrocious, and I had an aversion to crowds. As the time for the assembly drew nearer, I began to dread attending, more and more.

One evening after our Tuesday night study, I inquired of the elder conducting the meeting, why we were required to attend all those assemblies. My questioning came as a result of the earlier proud announcement by one of the sisters in attendance, that she had quit her job when her employer informed her that she couldn't be absent from work on the days the assembly was scheduled. The elder had commended the sister for her steadfast loyalty to Jehovah and the organization.

In an effort to reason with the elder, concerning the mandatory attendance of the assemblies, I stated that everything that takes place at the gatherings is recorded and published in subsequent issues of the Watchtower magazine. Therefore, if you're not able or don't want to attend, you really don't miss anything. The elder advised me the Scriptures clearly admonish Christians not to forsake the gathering of themselves together, as some have the custom of doing. Then, in an obvious effort to further intimidate me and those others listening, the elder stated that under the Hebrew Law those who failed to attend certain meetings were put to death. "That's just how serious the matter is".

This comparison with the ancient Mosaic Law and our possible failure to attend an assembly, in my opinion was ridiculous. I retorted to the elder's comment that, inasmuch as we gather ourselves at the five meetings every week, I failed to see how we could possibly be lacking in "gathering together". I then facetiously inquired of the elder, "Just who decides how much gathering we're supposed to do?" Obviously failing to see any irony in my question, the elder staunchly replied, "The Faithful and Discreet Slave, of course", meaning the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. Once again, I could see that my questions and comments were irritating our Study Conductor to the point of anger, so I just dropped the subject. After a number of other encounters with the elders concerning questions that

I had about the teachings of the organization, I began protesting to my wife that there was something very wrong with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Jehovah's Witnesses. I couldn't put my finger on it yet, I informed her, but it was really bothering me. It was like an itch that you couldn't scratch, and I was beginning to become very disturbed over the feelings I was experiencing. On one occasion, when I admitted to the elder studying with us that I sometimes had questions and doubts concerning some of the organization's beliefs, he advised me to just set my questions aside for a while. The elder assured me that, eventually, Jehovah would grant me understanding of those things, and that we all had doubts occasionally. I had been attempting to comply with the elder's suggestion. However, my questions and doubts had reached the point that I could no longer set them aside. I remembered that I had never had this problem before, when we had studied with the Witnesses years ago. I had simply accepted what the Society had taught me, without question, and I wondered why this time it was so different.

Certainly I was older and more experienced, and perhaps all my years as a police officer caused me to be suspicious and not to accept things at face value. Whatever the reason for my misgivings, it was beginning to take its toll on my faith in the Watchtower organization. The time of the assembly in Louisville arrived, and even though I had no desire to attend, my wife and I dutifully made the long journey east to the big city. When we arrived at our hotel and checked in, we were very disappointed with our accommodations arranged for us by the Society.

In addition to the linen on our king-size bed being soiled, the carpet was full of cigarette burns and didn't appear as though it had ever been cleaned. The lamp hanging from the ceiling was dangling by one wire and wouldn't light when you turned on the switch. However, the worst of it was that the air conditioner was malfunctioning and wouldn't blow cold air. My wife and I would have preferred to try to find another hotel room. However, unfortunately because of the assembly being held in town, finding a vacancy elsewhere was not very likely, so we decided we would just have to make the best of a bad situation. That evening, while eating dinner in the hotel restaurant, we encountered a number of Witnesses from the Madisonville congregation, and many of them were also very unhappy with their accommodations.

The next morning, we arose bright and early. The assembly was scheduled

to start at 9:00 a.m., and we wanted to get there in advance of the crowd, to enable us to obtain seats -- preferably close to the front due to my hearing disability. Unfortunately, everyone else seemed to have the same idea. We had to park our car, what seemed like miles from the stadium, necessitating a long hot walk to the entrance. When we finally got inside, the only seats still available were high up in the bleacher section. I grumbled to my wife as we trekked up the steep ramps, that if I had known we were going to have to sit so far from where the program was taking place, I would have brought my binoculars. We finally found two seats together and, after squeezing our torsos into them, I mused to myself about how some of the overweight brothers and sisters were going to fare in these very small seats constructed so close together. I was glad when the meeting finally got underway and my attention was diverted from the already intense heat and our cramped and uncomfortable surroundings. As I recall, the program started off with a public talk. After several different subjects were expounded upon, the speaker made a startling announcement that really shocked my sensibilities. This declaration he made brought about a turning point in my life that would eventually lead my wife and me out of the tangled and twisted web of Watchtower deceit for ever. The speaker stated, "You brothers and sisters who have friends outside the organization that you have witnessed to, and they haven't accepted the 'Truth,' you should now completely disassociate yourselves from these people". "After all", the speaker continued, "bad associations, spoil useful habits". That statement didn't surprise me too much, since the Witnesses felt that everyone outside the organization was being led by Satan and shouldn't be associated with. However, then the speaker continued, "And you brothers and sisters who have family members that you have thoroughly witnessed to, and they haven't accepted the 'Truth,' you should now spend as little time as possible with them also". The speaker's statement almost caused me to stand in protest, and I looked around me, expecting an outcry from members of the audience. However, everyone just sat there quietly, some busily fanning themselves due to the heat, and others with a bored expression on their face. I couldn't believe the speaker had made such an incredible statement. I leaned over to my wife and asked in a whisper if she had heard what the speaker had said, about spending as little time as possible with family members outside the "Truth". Linnie replied that she had heard and, sensing that the statement had annoyed me, attempted to "soft pedal" what the speaker had

meant. Linnie clarified that the speaker's declaration didn't mean for us to totally shun our family members. We needed only to limit our time with them to necessary contact. My wife's interpreting for the speaker irritated me even further, and I couldn't believe that a person as intelligent and kind as my wife couldn't see this for what it was.

I sat through the remainder of the program in resolute silence, just waiting for the noon break for lunch. As soon as we were dismissed, Linnie and I returned to our hotel room to eat lunch and rest before the afternoon session began. During the drive to the hotel, I informed Linnie that I was outraged by the speaker's assertion that we spend as little time as possible with family members who were not Jehovah's Witnesses. I asked Linnie if she realized the full implications of what the speaker was advocating, inasmuch as we were the only Witnesses on either side of our family. It meant spending as little time as possible with our now grown sons, our beloved grandchildren, our parents, and all of our brothers and sisters. I reminded Linnie that a great deal of what was wrong in our society today was a result of the disintegration of the family unit, and I couldn't believe that any Christian organization would attempt to further alienate its followers from their families. After all, I further asserted, wasn't the family arrangement ordained by God, for the benefit of mankind? It also occurred to me -- and I related it to my wife -- that this business of isolating people from their families and friends outside of their religious group was a favorite tactic used by religious cults. With outside influences drastically limited, it is easier to control people. I recalled that "isolationism" was the same strategy used by the infamous Jim Jones and the resulting tragic Jonestown massacre.

After arriving at our hotel room I informed Linnie that I had no intention of returning to the assembly, and that I didn't want anything to do with a group or organization that advocated separation of the family. I further advised Linnie that, if she wanted to take the car and return for the remainder of the assembly after the noon break, she could. However, I would wait at the hotel. Linnie advised me that she didn't want to go back to the assembly alone, so we decided to just pack up and drive home that afternoon.

While we packed, I once again adamantly asserted my misgivings concerning the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and repeated my earlier statement to my wife, that there was something terribly wrong with their organization.

However, what I failed to recognize until sometime later, was that this strategy of alienation of family

members outside the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses was not a new revelation or teaching, as I had thought. I had not been exposed to the Watchtower and their doctrines for some time, during my period of disfellowshipping, and I had all but forgotten about their "Us and Them" mentality. I also recalled that this Watchtower policy had been more of an attitude and, until the assembly in Louisville, I had never heard it verbalized that I could remember. That was apparently why no one else seemed to be upset or offended by the statement, including my wife.

When we arrived back home in Madisonville, I informed my wife that I was going to undertake a thorough study of the Holy Scriptures on my own. I announced that I would no longer read or be influenced by the Watchtower publications or their teachings, in my search for the real 'Truth.' I then surreptitiously purchased a copy of the New International Version Study Bible and a Bible dictionary from a local bookstore. I still wasn't confident enough in my newly proclaimed independence to venture into a Bible bookstore, as I was still concerned about being seen by one of the Witnesses and turned in to the elders.

I continued to accompany my wife to the public talk at the Kingdom Hall on Sundays, and my feelings of paranoia made me wonder if any of the elders noticed that I was no longer carrying or using the New World Translation Bible to look up the scriptures referenced during the meeting. I knew that eventually someone would notice the New International Version Study Bible I was carrying, and I would be confronted by the elders. However, before the matter ever came to light, another very unexpected tragedy befell our family. My elderly stepmother, who lived in retirement in Port Charlotte, Florida, fell suddenly ill. My wife and I were required to travel there to be with her during her serious illness and remained to take care of family matters after her subsequent demise. It was during our extended visit to Florida that God very decisively intervened in our lives. The Lord took us by the hand and very lovingly began to lead us out of the darkness of Watchtower deception.

Chapter Ten

After my stepmother's unexpected death my wife and I set about taking care of various business matters that required attention. My stepmother's house in Port Charlotte had been willed to my sister

and me jointly, and it was decided that we would attempt to sell it. Subsequently, it was determined that Linnie and I would move into the house temporarily and dispose of it ourselves, rather than placing it in the hands of a Realtor. This idea appealed to me for several reasons. We could save money on the Realtor's sales commission, and it would give us a long break from the Watchtower organization. Also, during this time, I could study my new Bible without the Society's influence, and I could even get away with not attending the meetings. However, after several weeks of absencing ourselves, Linnie's conscience began to bother her, so we located the closest Kingdom Hall and, for her benefit, started attending the Sunday morning public talks. After being in Port Charlotte for some weeks, I was still laboring over the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's claim of being God's organization. If the Society wasn't God's sole channel of communication, as they claimed, and they weren't teaching us the truth concerning Jehovah and His Word the Bible as I suspected, who was? The Watchtower had convinced us that if you left the organization there was nowhere to go. They had taught us that all of the other religions of the world were evil and satanically controlled. All of these nagging questions and pondering over the matter was causing me a great deal of stress and anxiety.

It was then that a very simple solution to the problem occurred to me. I would just ask God to resolve the issue for me. After all, I reasoned, why should I try to figure this all out on my own? I was sure that God wanted me to know the truth about Him, and furthermore, I was certain that the Supreme Sovereign of all the universe, who created man and the rest of heaven and earth, would have no problem in providing me with the answer to a simple question.

Also at this time I had a vague recollection of a book that I had heard about once, many years ago, that the Watchtower Society had sternly warned us not to read. They said the book had been written by an evil apostate who was attempting to draw a following to himself. The organization informed us that the reading of this corrupt book would be comparable to reading pornography in Jehovah's eyes. I remembered that the book had been written sometime back in the 1950's and was entitled something about being a slave to the Watchtower. That was all I could recall concerning this elusive book, and I thought that since the Society forbade us to read it, there might be some information in it that could be useful to me in my quest for the truth. However, I concluded that the book had been written

so long ago that I doubted I would be able to locate a copy of it. The publication in question was probably out of print by now, having been written thirty or forty years earlier, and I was amazed that I even remembered the Society's warning about the book. In any event, I decided at my first opportunity I would check the Port Charlotte Library and any old book stores that I could find, in an effort to locate a copy.

I began to pray every day that God would somehow place a copy of the forbidden apostate text in my hands and inform me in some manner if the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was or wasn't His organization. I diligently appealed to God to reveal to me the truth. I also resolved to stop agonizing over my questions concerning the Watchtower Society of Jehovah's Witnesses and simply placed the matter entirely in God's hands. Sometime later—it could have been days or it could have been a week or so—my wife and I were on our way to the shopping mall. As we drove north on U.S. 41A, the main thoroughfare in Port Charlotte, I spotted a large flea market set up on a vacant parking lot. I asked my wife if she wanted to stop to see what they had for sale. Linnie informed me that she wasn't interested and suggested that we just continue on to the mall. I advised Linnie that I was looking for some used tools that I needed at our temporary residence, and that it would only take a few minutes to check at the flea market to see if they had anything that I needed. I turned onto the parking lot and pulled our automobile directly in front of several tables laden with large stacks of books and magazines. As I exited the car I stepped up to the table in front of me and absent-mindedly picked up a red colored book from the top of one of the stacks. As I casually glanced down at the gold lettered title of the book, I was totally dumbfounded at what I read. The book was entitled **Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave** by W. J. Schnell. As soon as I was able to speak, I gasped for air and then shouted to my wife, who had wandered on across the parking lot, to "Come quick!"

After Linnie hurried to my side, I very excitedly showed her the publication I had found and informed her, "This is the book that I have been praying for". As I frantically waved the book in Linnie's face, I further excitedly announced, "It's here in my hand". I was in shock. There was no doubt in my mind that God had intervened and this was definitely the answer to my prayers.

However, Linnie didn't share my gleeful feelings, and she quickly informed me that I shouldn't purchase the book. In a disgusted sounding tone of

voice, my wife informed me that the book was “apostate literature” and she didn’t want anything to do with it. Linnie later confided in me that she was actually very frightened at the thought of my purchasing the book and bringing it into our house. This was due to the Watchtower teaching that possession of apostate writings could lead to problems with demons. However, nothing short of Armageddon could have dissuaded me from purchasing this book that I knew God had provided me with.

After finally regaining my composure, I asked the young woman selling the books how much money she wanted for the one I was holding in my hand. I didn’t want to let go of the book and held it protectively to my chest. The girl’s reply was, “Twenty-five cents”. I chuckled maniacally to myself, as I groped in my pants pocket for change. I was sure by this time, due to my eccentric behavior, the young lady probably thought I was deranged. However, what the woman didn’t know was that I would have paid a hundred dollars or even more to own that very special book.

After finally arriving back home, I read the book from cover to cover. It took me all that evening and almost all of the following day. What eye-opening information the book contained! The author William Schnell divulged a great many facts concerning the many “seedy” inter-workings and dishonest practices used in the establishing of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in its early years. Schnell’s book thoroughly convinced me that the Watchtower organization was shrouded in lies and deceit and that it was more of a moneymaking scheme for those in control than a religious organization dedicated to teaching people about God and the Bible. It was little wonder that the Watchtower Society forbade its followers to examine this publication and the finding and reading of this book gave me the courage I needed to investigate further.

After Linnie and I had concluded our business in Port Charlotte, Florida, and returned home to Kentucky, I began to search the Bible bookstores. I found and read several more books concerning the Watchtower, authored by a former Jehovah’s Witness elder by the name of David Reed. After studying these publications as well as several others by different authors, I arrived at the conclusion that the Society was nothing more than one of the false prophets that Jesus Christ had warned his followers against. I further determined that the members of the Governing Body of the Watchtower were wolves in sheep’s clothing and the organization was just one of

thousands of religious cults in the world. Now came the difficult part. I had to convince my wife. I knew that it would be extremely difficult to convince my wife Linnie to consider any of the derogatory facts that I had uncovered about the Watchtower. At first, I attempted to get Linnie to read the books I had found. This was to no avail, as the Witnesses teach their disciples that it is a disloyal act to read anything critical of God's organization. Inasmuch as Linnie couldn't or wouldn't read the books for herself, I began to read them out loud in her presence. At the onset, Linnie pretended that she wasn't paying any attention. However, as time went on, I knew Linnie was listening, because occasionally she would refute something I read by quoting a Watchtower publication or their Bible. This reading and bantering back and forth went on for several days, until I finally reached the point of just giving up. I felt as though I just wasn't getting through to Linnie and I was simply wasting my time and energy. Then it hit me! In view of what had taken place in Florida concerning my finding the book by Schnell, the solution to my problem was obvious. I began to pray every day that God would open my wife's eyes and let her see the truth about the deceitful Watchtower organization.

Three or four days later Linnie and I were in the kitchen of our home, and she was preparing our evening meal. I decided that I would make one final attempt at convincing my wife that the Watchtower Society was not God's organization but was in fact a false prophet and a religious cult. I don't remember which book I was reading to Linnie from, or even what the subject matter was. However, I do remember very vividly the surprised and dismayed expression on her face. At the time, my wife was standing in front of the microwave oven, waiting for the timer bell to signal that the food she was cooking was finished.

Shortly after I began to read to her, Linnie very suddenly turned toward me wide eyed and aghast, and in a very excited tone of voice stated, "You're right, they lied to us. I can't believe it! They actually lied to us". My wife acted as though someone had just flipped a switch on in her head and she suddenly understood that the Watchtower had been deceiving her all these years. Linnie began pacing around the kitchen in somewhat of a daze, mumbling, "Oh my God, what do we do now?" and "I can't believe the Watchtower would ever lie to us. This is terrible". Obviously, my wife was disoriented and in a mild state of shock, and so was I after observing her reaction.

Once again, God had intervened in our lives, having very decisively revealed the truth to my wife, and I was witnessing my second unmistakable answer to a prayer.

From that point on, my wife seemed to lose her fear of the Watchtower and began to read the books I had found, for herself. The more Linnie studied, the more she became convinced that the religious beliefs that she had held to be “the Truth” all of her adult life were false. The so-called “Truth” of the Watchtower organization was nothing more than Bible verses taken out of context, half truths and damnable lies.

Chapter Eleven

There were many things that we learned through our investigation of the Watchtower Society that assured us that the organization had been deceiving us. First and foremost were all the false prophecies made by the Watchtower Society. We knew that the Witnesses had mistakenly prophesied the end of the world in 1975, because we were part of the organization at the time. However, what we didn't know was that Charles Taze Russell and the Watchtower Society he later founded had made that same false prophecy on at least six previous occasions: first in 1874, then in 1878, again in 1910, 1914, 1918 and 1925.

According to the books we read, many of their followers were badly hurt because of these false prophecies made by the organization's leaders. Some sold their homes and farms, depleted their savings and liquidated other assets to enable them to go on the road pioneering for the organization. These poor souls had erroneously concluded that the New System would soon be established, ending all of their problems. Linnie and I had observed, first hand, some of the same reactions to the false prophecy of 1975.

These false prophecies of the Watchtower were not only physically harmful to their adherents; they were spiritually harmful as well. I had experienced the resulting spiritual abuse of the Society myself when their 1975 prophecy failed and it caused me to lose my faith in God. I was convinced, at the time, that the Watchtower spoke for God, and when their prediction for the end of the world failed in 1975, it was basically the same as God lying or committing an error. Either way, I concluded that God could no longer be trusted. Because of the mass exodus from the Society in 1976, I am sure there were many others who had arrived at the same conclusion I had.

Naturally, the Watchtower Society attempted to explain away their failures with a number of flimsy excuses and arguments. However, the indisputable fact remained, that the organization was guilty of making numerous false prophecies, condemning them in the eyes of God. Deuteronomy 18:20-22 states, "But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. You may say to yourselves, 'How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?' If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him".

The next shocking revelation our investigation revealed was the Watchtower's counterfeit Bible, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. The Society translated its own version of the Holy Scriptures in the 1950's, making additions, deletions and changes as necessary to support their unorthodox doctrines and beliefs. Further, the Watchtower Society refuses to identify the members of the Translating Committee for their Bible, stating that they wish the credit for their great literary work to go to God, rather than men. However, the obvious reason they wish the members of the Translating Committee to remain anonymous is that they do not have the linguistic credentials for such an undertaking.

We found out from a book entitled Crisis of Conscience, written by former Jehovah's Witness Governing Body member Raymond Franz, that the Translating Committee consisted of Nathan Knorr, Frederick Franz, Albert Schroeder, and George Gangas. According to Franz, none of the aforementioned members of the Watchtower Society had any formal educational background in the original ancient Bible languages. The only exception being Frederick Franz, who is reported to have studied modern Greek for two years in college and claimed to be self-taught in Hebrew. In addition, we viewed a video tape entitled "Witnesses of Jehovah", produced by Jeremiah Films, that contained the testimony of Dr. J. R. Mantey, an eminent Greek scholar. Some of Dr. Mantey's statements concerning the New World Translation were "A shocking mistranslation", "Is biased and deceptive", "Deliberately changed words, to support their doctrines", "Obsolete", "Can't get the truth from it", etc.

According to other Bible scholars there are over three hundred translating errors in the New World

Translation Bible that appear to have been done deliberately, in an effort to support Watchtower doctrines and teachings. Also of interest is the fact that the Society has often quoted a former Catholic priest by the name of Johannes Greber in support of their erroneous translation of the Bible. In a book entitled *What You Need To Know About Jehovah's Witnesses* by Lorri MacGregor, we found that Johannes Greber was a person who dealt in the occult and his wife was a spirit medium. As all Jehovah's Witnesses are aware, dabbling in the occult and spiritism is in direct violation of God's law. Leviticus 19:31 states, "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists; for you will be defiled by them". Another startling disclosure our investigation revealed, from several different sources, was that the founder and first President of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Charles Taze Russell, used measurements from the Great Pyramid of Egypt to arrive at some of his erroneous prophetic dates. A book entitled *Jehovah's Witness Literature* written by David A. Reed and the video entitled *Witnesses of Jehovah* produced by Jeremiah Films both detail how Russell arrived at specific dates for the end of the world and the Battle of Armageddon through some of the internal measurements of the Great Pyramid of Jeezeh. Each inch, according to Russell, represented a year in mankind's history, and he regarded the Pyramid as the second greatest witness of God, the first being the Bible. According to our information, Russell died in 1916 and was buried with his tombstone adjacent to a replica of the Pyramid, which served to identify a section of the graveyard set aside for Watchtower headquarters staff.

The person who succeeded Russell as the second president of the Watchtower Society was Joseph F. Rutherford. He was an attorney who embellished his credibility by giving himself the title of "Judge". Rutherford reportedly usurped the presidency of the Watchtower organization through legal maneuvering and seized power after forcibly removing four opposing members of the Board of Directors. They were replaced by Rutherford's own loyal supporters. President Rutherford, who apparently had expensive tastes, had a mansion built in San Diego, California in 1930 and christened it "Beth Sarim". In Hebrew "Beth Sarim" means "House of the Princes". According to our information Rutherford very deceptively informed his followers that this mansion was being constructed to house Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as "other worthies of old" upon their resurrection from the dead. This resurrection, according to Rutherford, was to take place at any

time. Rutherford even went so far as to place the deed to the mansion in the name of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, in the meantime, guess who resided at the palatial estate during the winter months, no doubt to avoid the sub-zero weather in Brooklyn, New York, with two sixteen cylinder Cadillac automobiles at his disposal? If you guessed President Rutherford, you guessed correctly.

Rutherford died at "Beth Sarim" in 1941.

In our continuing investigation, not only did we find numerous false prophecies and other deceptions perpetrated by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, but we also found they pave the way for their followers to tell lies, camouflaged as "theocratic war strategy". For example, the Watchtower magazine of May 1, 1957, page 285, states: "Did she tell a lie? No, she did not. She was not a liar. Rather, she was using theocratic war strategy, hiding the truth by action and word for the sake of the ministry". In the Watchtower magazine of June 1, 1960, page 352, it states that "for the purpose of protecting the interests of God's cause, it is proper to hide the truth from God's enemies". And again in a Watchtower publication entitled Aid to Bible Understanding, page 1061, it states in part, "While malicious lying is definitely condemned in the Bible, this does not mean that a person is under obligation to divulge truthful information to people who are not entitled to it".

Even though the majority of the average rank and file Jehovah's Witnesses are scrupulously truthful, the Watchtower's teaching concerning "theocratic war strategy" is sometimes abused, perhaps misinterpreted by some individuals purposely, to enable them to further their own objectives or those they perceive to be the Society's. For example, one of the Witnesses that I have talked with recently in confidence informed me that he knows the truth concerning the majority of erroneous Watchtower doctrines, but he and his wife are afraid to leave the organization or speak out because he knows they would be disfellowshipped for apostasy. This would place them outside the organization and hence among God's enemies. If that were to happen, his children, who are prominent in the congregation and zealously dedicated to the Society, not only would shun him and his wife, but they would also not allow them any contact with their beloved grandchildren. For that reason, they were remaining in the organization. I informed this former brother that in the State of Kentucky there are now laws that protect grandparents' rights, and that he could take his children to court, if necessary, to secure visitation privileges with his grandchildren. The former

brother shocked me by informing me, that wouldn't work because his children were so "brainwashed" and loyal to the organization that they would use "theocratic strategy" to keep him and his wife from seeing their grandchildren. The former brother further elaborated that his children wouldn't hesitate to lie, under oath in a court of law, perhaps fabricating charges of neglect or abuse by the grandparents to keep them from ever seeing their grandchildren again.

During our study of the history of the Watchtower and its ever-changing doctrines and sometimes bizarre interpretations of the Bible, it became abundantly clear to Linnie and me that the Watchtower's teachings can be very hazardous to your health, and for some they have been deadly. For example, between the years of 1931 and 1952, Jehovah's Witnesses were forbidden to be vaccinated. It was the Watchtower's interpretation at the time, that the Bible forbade persons or their children to be vaccinated against the prevailing diseases of the era, equating it with the eating of blood. However, in 1952 according to the Watchtower organization "new truth" or "new light" -- as they call their ever-changing doctrines -- surfaced, and it became acceptable for Witnesses to be immunized.

Then between 1967 and 1980, the Watchtower decreed that organ transplants were akin to cannibalism and they, too, were forbidden. Then, once again, "new light" flashed up and in 1980 it became "a matter of conscience", meaning that Witnesses might decide the matter for themselves. Discovering this incredible information made us wonder just how much misery, pain and death was inflicted on Watchtower followers because of these faulty interpretations of the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses' constant shifting and changing of doctrines also makes one wonder how soon the Watchtower will change its stand on blood transfusions. Perhaps never. One book we read put forth the idea that so many Witnesses have died as a result of refusing blood, that the Society may never have the courage to reverse its erroneous ruling on this issue.

Also in our investigation I found some interesting figures relating to the Watchtower's finances. Some time ago, I had asked one of the elders in our congregation if the Society published a financial statement for its members. The response I received was one of suspicious indignation. However, in a publication entitled Comments from the Friends written by David A. Reed, I found information indicating that the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is wealthier than I could ever have imagined. The figures I found are far from being a complete

financial statement, but they are revealing nonetheless. The publication stated, "The Watchtower headquarters complex in the Brooklyn Heights section of New York City consists of more than thirty buildings with a current real estate value of \$186 million".

This is only the Watchtower holdings in Brooklyn, New York. Keeping in mind that the Society is an international organization, I am sure they have property and other holdings all over the world.

Also from the same publication I found figures taken from a credit reporting service that states the annual sales for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. for 1991 was \$1,248,000,000.00. According to the report, this was up \$1/4 billion from just over \$1 billion in 1990. The article went on to relate, "The figures, not published for the sect's members, are evidently provided to credit reporting services, so that the firms doing business with the Society will extend credit".

After finding this information, naturally my original question resurfaced in my mind. Inasmuch as the Watchtower Society doesn't provide medical care for the indigent, shelter for the homeless or help to feed the starving millions of the world, what are they doing with the vast fortune they have obviously accumulated through the efforts of their followers?. In all of our revealing research and investigation concerning the Watchtower Society, what really angered me the most, was when I came to the realization of the diabolically clever way in which the Society causes the majority of its follower's to actually reject Jesus Christ's sacrifice made for them. The Watchtower Society taught us that there are two classes of Christians: the "144,000" or "anointed" class, and the "other sheep" class that makes up the majority of their followers. Only the "144,000" or "anointed" class, who will go to heaven to reign with Christ, are deemed worthy to celebrate the annual "Lord's Evening Meal" and partake of the bread and wine that Jesus used to symbolize his body and blood.

Every year, for many years, when the bread and wine cup were passed to me, because of what the Watchtower had taught us I refused to partake and simply passed it on to the person sitting next to me. After studying the Bible without the Society's faulty interpretation, I determined that there are no distinctions among Christ's followers and the ordinance that Jesus gave to "keep doing this in remembrance of me", was directed to all Christians. I was devastated when I realized that the Watchtower had in effect, caused me to symbolically reject Jesus' wonderful and loving sacrifice for me. I felt as

though I had been pushing Christ away from me all those years, and I was conscience stricken.

Linnie and I had been home from Florida for several weeks, and because of the many derogatory things we had learned concerning the Watchtower organization, we both decided that we wouldn't return to the Kingdom Hall. I advised my wife that if any of the elders should inquire as to why we weren't attending the meetings, we would simply inform them that we didn't want to discuss the matter.

After all, I reasoned, this is still a free country and the Watchtower Society doesn't own us. The fact of the matter was, even with all the faultfinding information that our investigation had revealed about the Watchtower, proving to our satisfaction that they were not God's organization, we still felt intimidated by them. My wife especially felt apprehensive concerning any confrontation with the elders, due to her life long association with the organization. Until just recently, Linnie believed with all her heart that the Watchtower spoke for Jehovah and any confrontation with the elders, would be comparable to defying God.

It wasn't very long until one afternoon, one of the elders pulled into our driveway. My wife was busily engaged in sweeping the front porch, as the elder walked up the steps and very unceremoniously demanded to know why we hadn't been attending the meetings. The elder accusingly informed my wife, that he had observed our car in our driveway on several occasions, revealing that we had returned from Florida several weeks earlier. Linnie very timidly advised the elder, that I was in the house and that he should discuss the matter with me. I had noticed the elder walk up to the porch and I was now waiting for him in the living room.

As the elder entered the house, I greeted him and invited him to sit on the couch opposite me. In a very stern and unfriendly tone of voice, the elder once again demanded to know why we hadn't been attending the meetings. I politely informed him that I would rather not discuss it with him. Refusing to accept my unwillingness to discuss the matter, the elder continued pressing the issue, until I finally informed him that we had some questions about the organization that we just couldn't resolve. The elder smugly replied, "If you think you know something that's wrong about the Society, don't you think that sharing it with the rest of us would be the kind and loving thing to do". Feeling myself becoming more and more annoyed by the elder's insistence, I finally blurted out that, "One of the problems is that the Watchtower organization takes the place of Jesus Christ in its followers' lives, amounting to worship of

the Watchtower". At this blatant accusation of idolatry, the elder was obviously outraged. His face turned red and twisted with anger, as he slowly and deliberately replied, "I don't worship the Watchtower. I worship Jehovah!" The elder jumped to his feet and as he walked toward the front door, he mumbled, "I guess this conversation is over", and out the door he went. Well, so much for "sharing information", I thought to myself. It then became abundantly clear to me that we were not going to be able to simply walk away from the Watchtower organization. They weren't going to let us.

Sure enough, the very next evening, two other elders from the congregation showed up at the front door wanting to talk with us. After inviting them in, I informed the elders that because of a great deal of derogatory information that my wife and I had uncovered, concerning the Society, we could no longer believe that it was God's organization. In fact, we had no intention of ever returning to the Kingdom Hall. I then confronted the elders with all of the Society's past false prophecies. The only response they had was to laugh off my accusation and remark, "We don't call ourselves prophets". I didn't argue the point, even though I knew that the Witnesses had referred to themselves as "Prophets" many times in their publications. The organization also claimed to speak for God. However, when their utterances were proven false, they would expect their followers to simply overlook it by claiming that, after all, they were just human and therefore weak and imperfect. One of the elders then asked me if I remembered what the Apostle Peter said to Jesus when all of Jesus' disciples were deserting him. Jesus asked Peter if he was going to leave him too. Peter's reply was, "Where would I go Lord; you have sayings of everlasting life". I thought it was ludicrous that the elder would make such a flimsy attempt to convince me that I shouldn't leave the organization because there was nowhere to go, by quoting a Scripture so obviously out of context. I informed the elder that the Apostle Peter was talking to the Lord Jesus Christ, not to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. I also advised the elders that was another problem we had with the Society: the fact that the Witnesses were required to give to the Watchtower organization their loyalty and obedience that right fully belonged to Jesus Christ.

The elders made no reply to my verbal assault and, after looking at the floor for several seconds, asked me if I would be willing to give them a letter detailing for them why I was leaving the organization. I informed them that I didn't know if I would or not. I would discuss the matter with my wife and get back

with them. The elders then informed me that if we refused to give them a letter of disassociation, they would need to have a hearing before a judicial committee and we would be disfellowshipped for apostasy. I replied, that if they had a hearing we wouldn't bother to attend, as it sounded as though they had already judged us guilty and sentenced us. I then asked the elders if my wife and I were to give them letters disassociating ourselves from the organization, would we then be disfellowshipped also? The elders replied that we would. I countered with, "So it doesn't really matter if we give you a letter or not; we will be disfellowshipped in any event. The elders looked at each other momentarily, then one of them smugly replied, "That is correct".

As soon as the elders had left, my wife went to the kitchen and pulled several large garbage bags from the cupboard and proceeded to our bedroom. When I walked after her in an attempt to discuss what had just taken place with the elders, I found Linnie throwing all of the many years of accumulated Watchtower books and magazines into the garbage bags. When I inquired about what she was doing, Linnie replied that "it's time to get rid of all this junk. They've been taking up valuable space long enough". I couldn't believe my eyes. My wife had always regarded all of the old books and back issues of the Watchtower and Awake! magazines with an almost "reverence", refusing to discard any of them. In the past, when I had suggested we throw out some of the older Watchtower publications, to allow us more space on our bulging bookshelves, Linnie had always protested that we might need to refer back to them sometime. I began helping my wife, and within a short time, we had piled all of the hundreds of Watchtower books and magazines into our garbage bags and removed them to the trash dumpster at the back of the house. The removal of all the Watchtower's false religious publications from our home was a very therapeutic experience, and afterward Linnie and I both felt "cleansed".

After appropriately disposing of all our Watchtower publications, my wife and I talked matters over and decided that even though we were "fed up" with being bullied by the Watchtower Society, we would rather quit than be kicked out. So we decided to give them the letters they had requested. Linnie and I both sat down and composed letters advising the the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society that we no longer wished to be associated with their organization, and some of the reasons for our decision. I put the letters in the mail that evening, to the home address of one of the elders, thereby terminating our almost three decades of affiliation with the Watchtower Bible

and Tract Society of Jehovah's Witnesses. The big question now was, Where do we go from here?

Chapter Twelve

The first feeling that we experienced after severing our ties with the Watchtower organization was a great sense of relief and freedom. Linnie and I both felt as though a great millstone had been removed from around our necks. God had graciously shown us the truth about the Watchtower organization, and the truth had set us free. Free from attending numerous boring meetings, parroting repetitious questions and answers, in an effort to "brainwash" ourselves with false Watchtower doctrines. Free from guilt feelings for failing to spend sufficient time in service, propagating the Society's erroneous teachings from door to door like some itinerant peddlers. Free from the monotonous required reading of all the many books, magazines and other publications of the Society. Free to read any translation of the Bible on our own, without the faulty interpretation of the Watchtower. And we were free to socialize and associate with whomever we chose. But most of all, we were now free to pursue our worship of Almighty God in Spirit and truth, and that's what we were determined to do.

It wasn't long after leaving the organization that Linnie and I began to experience feelings of remorse concerning people that we may have favorably influenced or deceived on behalf of the Watchtower Society and its flawed teachings. We decided that family members, neighbors and persons we had studied the Bible with should be informed of our decision to disassociate ourselves from the Witness organization and our reasons for doing so. Linnie and I were very fortunate that neither our grown children nor any other family members had accepted the Society's teachings. We knew that we would be disfellowshipped by the organization any day now, and if we had family members in the Watchtower, they would be required to shun us as well.

It was just a short time after we had mailed our letters of disassociation that it became apparent that we had been disfellowshipped. Linnie and I were shopping one day at a local grocery store, when we met an acquaintance from the Kingdom Hall. Since I had been disfellowshipped for smoking some years before, I knew what to expect and was prepared for what happened next. However, my wife Linnie had never experienced the humiliation and the feelings of rejection at being shunned.

As we passed the former sister in one of the grocery aisles, my wife threw up her hand in a friendly gesture and said, "Hello". The former sister didn't so much as "bat an eye", and she hurriedly pushed her shopping cart on past us, while looking right through Linnie as though she wasn't even there. The former sister didn't smile, gesture or utter a word. This experience was very upsetting for Linnie, and after this had happened to her on several occasions, she just couldn't contain her feelings of hurt and repudiation by these people she had known and associated with in brotherly love for many years. After one incident in particular, when Linnie was snubbed by a woman that she had considered a close friend for twenty years, she came home, went in and closed the bedroom door and cried for a very long time. I tried to comfort my wife and we discussed how we should feel pity for these poor misguided, uninformed souls, rather than anger. The Watchtower's disfellowshipping of us for apostasy was just their very clever way of keeping us from informing our former brothers and sisters of all the detrimental information we had uncovered about the Society. It was then that we decided we would write a letter to everyone in the congregation, setting forth the reasons for our leaving the Watchtower organization. We knew that they had been instructed not to read anything from us "apostates". However, if we left the return address off the envelope, they would probably open it before they realized who it was from. Hopefully, human nature and curiosity would prevail, and even though they were forbidden to read the letter, perhaps some of them would. It was worth a try, in any event, and we wanted our former friends and associates to know that we hadn't done anything evil or wicked, and we felt a Christian obligation to warn them about the Watchtower's deceptive and false teachings.

Our letter was four pages long, and we managed to obtain the addresses of seventy out of approximately one hundred members of the Madisonville Congregation. Unfortunately, we never received any responses to the letters we sent, and we continue to include the Witnesses in our daily prayers. We are hopeful that God will someday open their eyes and set them free from their enslavement to the Watchtower, just as He did us.

Linnie and I continued our study of various translations of the Bible, as well as other books that we had found about Jehovah's Witnesses, trying to figure out what we should do now concerning our spiritual life and our worship of God. It would have been plausible at this point to simply put our unsavory experience with religion and the Watchtower Society behind us and, as one well-meaning

relative advised, "Just get on with your lives". If we turned our backs on our Creator now, we would be playing right into the hands of the Watchtower organization and Satan the Devil himself. That's what they wanted us to do, and we were determined that they weren't going to destroy our faith in God. Another problem we were experiencing at this point was that no one really understood what we had been through. The few friends we had outside the organization, and our families, really couldn't empathize with us, never having been members of a religious cult and never having been deceived and mistreated the way we had been. Linnie and I kept lamenting to one another that "they just don't understand".

Inasmuch as all of Linnie's friends had been Witnesses, she was becoming very lonely and wondered if there were any other former Jehovah's Witnesses living in our area that we could talk with. Linnie and I had just finished reading a book entitled **Why We Left A Religious Cult** by Latayne C. Scott. The book contained the experiences of six different former cult members. The one that interested Linnie the most was written by a lady named Joan Cetnar. Joan and her husband Bill had been reared as Jehovah's Witnesses, and they too had left the Society after observing the hypocrisy, mind control techniques and deceptive teachings of the organization.

According to the book, Joan Cetnar was presently residing in Kunkletown, Pennsylvania, and I encouraged Linnie to call her on the telephone. Joan was very kind and understanding, and it helped my wife a great deal, just talking to someone who was sympathetic and really understood our situation. Joan also informed my wife that there was a former Jehovah's Witness living in our area, by the name of Paul Blizzard. Joan further informed Linnie that Paul and his wife Pat were former third generation Jehovah's Witnesses, and that Paul was now a Baptist minister pastoring the Reidland Baptist Church just outside Paducah, Kentucky. A week or so later, Linnie and I decided to pay an unannounced visit to Paul Blizzard, to see if he could counsel us or give us any advice on what we should do. Inasmuch as Paul Blizzard was now a Baptist minister, it occurred to me, perhaps that was the true Christian faith we should be following.

It was Saturday morning, and it was only about seventy-five miles from Madisonville to Paducah. We arrived around noon and, after eating lunch at a restaurant on the Parkway, we obtained Paul Blizzard's telephone number from information, and my wife called him from a pay phone. Linnie introduced herself and explained to Paul that we were

former Jehovah's Witnesses who had just left the Watchtower organization and that Joan Cetnar had recommended that we get in touch with him. Paul very graciously invited us to meet him at his church and gave us directions on how to get there. Our meeting with Paul was very warm and friendly and lasted for approximately four hours. It helped Linnie and me to meet and talk with someone who really understood what we had experienced and were now feeling. The only problem we had with our visit was that Linnie still had a real fear of being inside a church and, upon entering the building, broke out in a cold sweat, and she later confided in me that she felt uncomfortable almost the entire time we were there.

Paul had no "earth shaking" revelations of truth to relate to us concerning our worship of God, now that we were free from the Watchtower Society. However, Paul did help us a great deal, simply by sharing his experience with us concerning Jehovah's Witnesses and by confirming the unsavory information that we had already uncovered about the organization. Also, Paul didn't attempt to portray the Baptist denomination as being "the only way", as I suspected that he might. Instead, his advice to us was to keep studying God's Word the Bible and praying. Paul assured us that, if we allowed ourselves to be led by God's Spirit, He would guide us to where He wanted us to worship and let us know what He wanted us to do.

In addition to the sound advice, Paul put us in touch with a fellow Christian by the name of Joe Kreisle, who resides in Hawsville, Kentucky, not far from Madisonville. At the time of our meeting, Joe was in the process of starting a support group for former Jehovah's Witnesses and for persons who have family members trapped in the Witness organization. Attending the support group meetings was very helpful, and it was interesting comparing experiences and sharing information with other former Witnesses like ourselves. However, we were shocked at some of the stories of misconduct and immorality on the part of some of our former brothers and sisters of the Watchtower. For an organization that claims to be and portrays itself to the world as "morally clean", "God's organization", "God's people", etc., there seemed to be quite a bit of evidence to the contrary.

In support group meetings as well as other gatherings for former Witnesses we attended, Linnie and I heard numerous heart wrenching stories. One was related by a woman whose husband was an elder in the congregation who had abandoned her and their small children for another woman. A divorce followed

with the elder subsequently refusing to contribute anything to his ex-wife or their children's financial support. All during this flagrant immoral behavior on the part of the elder, he remained a member in good standing with the Watchtower organization.

Another incident involved a young man who became enamored with a married woman in their congregation. After a brief affair the young man became conscience stricken because of his indecent actions and after breaking off his illicit relationship, he approached one of the elders, seeking advice and solace. Upon confessing his sin, the young man was harshly rebuked by the elder and informed that he would probably be disfellowshipped. The distraught young man committed suicide that night.

Another woman, who had been married to an elder in her congregation, reported tales of drunken physical and verbal abuse from her husband, who was also a "closet cigarette smoker". Upon reporting the violent actions of her husband to the other elders in the congregation, in an effort to obtain assistance, the woman was informed that she was causing the problems in their marriage and that she should be obedient to her husband. The abused woman was now divorced and had been disfellowshipped by the organization.

After being a police officer for almost twenty years and dealing with other people's problems daily, I realized that there are always at least two sides to every story. In all fairness, we had heard only one side. However, these sordid accounts, as well as others, caused me to conclude that the moral character and integrity of Jehovah's Witnesses as a group was certainly no different than any other. You always find both good people and bad people in every group or segment of society, and apparently that was also true of the Witnesses.

All during this time, Linnie and I were attending a different Christian denomination or church every Sunday, and we purchased a book entitled **Handbook of Denominations** in the United States by Frank S. Mead. Linnie and I attended the services at the church selected and then went home and read what that particular denomination professed to believe. We attended eighteen different churches in all and found the experience to be educational and spiritually uplifting in most cases. One of the important things we learned from attending so many different churches was that the people of "Christendom", as they are referred to by the Watchtower, are very kind and there is so much more unconditional love and acceptance in the churches than in the Watchtower organization. Everywhere we went, we were welcomed and treated with genuine warmth and affec-

tion. This was a welcome change after the authoritarian and unloving treatment accorded us by the Watchtower Society. The Witnesses had always inculcated in our minds the notion that if we ever left the organization there was nowhere to go. We discovered first hand that this was just another deception promoted by the Watchtower in an effort to vilify the churches of Christianity and keep Jehovah's Witnesses enslaved.

Linnie and I found that studying the Bible without the Watchtower's influence gave us an entirely different scenario. We were both particularly amazed at how the Bible supports the churches' teaching that Jesus was in fact God Himself in the flesh. The Witnesses denied the deity of Jesus Christ and had taught us that Jesus was not Almighty God, but rather Michael the Archangel sent to earth to redeem mankind. After making this discovery, it became obvious to us that, in the true sense, Jehovah's Witnesses are not even "Christians". They are not followers and worshippers of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also became apparent that the Watchtower organization is guilty of teaching "another gospel", which was soundly denounced by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians. Chapter One, verses six through ten, states: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned". The Watchtower magazine of May 1, 1981 flagrantly, almost boastfully admits to preaching another gospel and states in part: "Let the honest-hearted person compare the kind of preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom done by the religious systems of Christendom during all the centuries with that done by Jehovah's Witnesses since the end of World War I in 1918. They are not one and the same kind. That of Jehovah's Witnesses is really 'gospel' or 'good news,' as of God's heavenly Kingdom that was established by the enthronement of Jesus Christ at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914". This gospel of the Watchtower certainly is different from the simple message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ taught by Christianity as the gospel, since its inception. This information, in turn, brought us to the further conclusion that the Watchtower Society is an "apostate" organization, in that Jehovah's Witnesses have fallen away from the original true teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Also, just as the Pharisees of Jesus' day,

the Watchtower falsely teaches its followers that taking in knowledge is required for everlasting life. However, Jesus informed these teachers of the Law in the Book of John, Chapter Five, verses thirty-nine and forty, that “You diligently study the Scriptures, because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life”.

We were further amazed to learn that it isn't the name of Jehovah we should be calling on, as the Watchtower has erroneously taught us all these years. In the Book of Philippians, Chapter Two, verses nine through eleven, it teaches very clearly: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”.

It was the proper understanding of the aforementioned scriptures, as well as many others, and information provided by former Jehovah's Witnesses, that brought Linnie and me to the realization that the only way to true salvation and eternal life was, not through any organization or any good works or service we might perform, or how much Bible knowledge we acquired. It is simply a free gift out of unconditional love, just for the asking from our heavenly Father.

Not long after separating ourselves from the apostate Watchtower organization in April of 1993, Linnie and I sat together in the privacy of our home, held hands, and prayed for Jesus Christ to come into our hearts and become the Lord of our lives. Words cannot express the overwhelming sense of freedom and love we experienced in coming to Christ. We know now that we are completely free from the pseudo-Christian cult of Jehovah's Witnesses forever, and we are happier now than we have ever been in our lives. Linnie and I are both very grateful to our Lord Jesus Christ for intervening in our behalf and permitting us to escape the religious cult of Jehovah's Witnesses.

One of the many important things we learned from our experience of being liberated from the Watchtower organization was that God provided me with evidence divulging the truth about Jehovah's Witnesses, only after I had turned the matter entirely over to Him. It was when I finally realized and admitted that I was totally and completely dependent on God and that I should be relying on Him to resolve my questions and misgivings concerning the Watchtower Society, that He so lovingly provided me with the information I needed. The same was true of

when I was trying so desperately to convince my wife concerning the faulty Watchtower teachings. It was only after I turned the problem over to the Lord in prayer that Linnie finally saw the light. Because of these two prayers that God so decisively answered for me, as well as many others since that time, Linnie and I have come to realize just how beneficial it is to approach God daily in prayer, relying on and consulting Him concerning everything in our lives. Our positive experience with prayer also proved to us that our heavenly Father takes great delight in answering our questions and helping us with all our problems, much as our human fathers might and as the scripture so aptly states in the book of Hebrews, "God is the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him". Our newfound Christian faith has ultimately led Linnie and me to a close personal relationship with the Lord that we never experienced before as Jehovah's Witnesses, and it is a very warm and secure feeling.

However, even with our newfound freedom and happiness, Linnie and I are sometimes troubled and sad when we reflect on the number of Jehovah's Witnesses we have spoken with clandestinely since leaving the organization. These individuals informed us that they know the truth about the Watchtower Society, but are afraid to speak out or leave the organization because they know they would be disfellowshipped and suffer the loss of association with their entire family. Because of these former brothers and sisters being held against their will, as well as all the other Jehovah's Witnesses who have been deceived and are in bondage to the Watchtower organization, Linnie and I have concluded that it is the Lord's will that our Christian ministry be dedicated to continue speaking out and helping other Jehovah's Witnesses to come to Christ for salvation. We also feel an obligation to educate and warn others about Jehovah's Witnesses in an effort to spare them from becoming helplessly ensnared by the organization just as we were so many years ago.

In connection with our ministry, I have made a thirty-minute audio cassette tape of our Christian testimony, detailing how Linnie and I escaped from the Watchtower and were led to Jesus Christ. We have distributed approximately fifty copies to area churches and other newfound Christian friends and acquaintances. Linnie and I have given our testimony in person at six area churches thus far, and we periodically mail information to Jehovah's Witnesses in our area, revealing the deception and error of Watchtower teachings. Also, we are attending services regularly at Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free Church here in Madisonville, where Pastor Mike

Huckins and the congregation are very supportive of our ministry.

It is unfortunate that there are still many people who are laboring under the misconception that Jehovah's Witnesses are merely another denomination of Christianity, harmlessly going from door to door, evangelizing and peddling their Watchtower and Awake! magazines, books and tracts. People have little or no idea of just how diabolically clever and deceptively enslaving the Watchtower's false religious teachings can be. It is therefore our sincere desire that everyone who reads this book will have found the experience of our escape from the religious cult of Jehovah's Witnesses both informative and spiritually uplifting but will also regard it as a warning, so please take heed. Even though you may feel that you are not in any danger of being misled personally by the cults, there are many unsuspecting persons all around you who are. They may be friends or family members, or they may be inexperienced young persons -- such as Linnie and I were almost three decades ago -- who have little or no knowledge of the true teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible. There are also persons of all age groups who attend church services regularly but don't take the time to study their Bibles and are therefore not well grounded or knowledgeable of the teachings of true Christianity, rendering them vulnerable as well. This is evidenced by the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses boast of gaining 65% of their converts from the churches. In any event, the next time you encounter one of Jehovah's Witnesses at your door or any other place, please don't be impolite or unkind to them. It would only reinforce what they have been taught by the Watchtower organization: that you are under Satan's control, doing his bidding, and that they are God's people who are being persecuted. In reality, the Witnesses are just poor unfortunate souls that have lost their way. They are being manipulated and used by an unscrupulous religious cult, to promote its lies, deceptions and false prophecies. Pray for them, and help them find the truth if you can.

John 6:35 & 37

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty". "All that the Father gives to me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never drive away".

Resources

Recommended reading and source material for

persons interested in learning the truth concerning
Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious cults:

BOOKS

Thirty Years A Watchtower Slave by William Schnell

[How to Rescue Your Loved One from the Watchtower](#)
by David A. Reed [out of print, but available on CD]

What You Need To Know About Jehovah's Witnesses by Lorri
MacGregor

[Index of Watchtower Errors](#) by David A. Reed

Why We Left A Cult by Latayne C. Scott

Jehovah of the Watchtower by Walter Martin & Norman Klann

Heart To Heart Talks With Jehovah's Witnesses by Homer Duncan

[Jehovah's Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse](#) by David A. Reed

Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses by Robert M. Bowman, Jr.

Reasoning From The Scriptures with Jehovah's Witnesses by
Ron Rhodes

[Jehovah's Witness Literature: A Critical Guide to Watchtower
Publications](#)
by David A. Reed [out of print, but available on CD]

The Sign of the Last Days -- When? by Carl Olof Jonsson &
Wolfgang Herbst

[Crisis of Conscience](#) by Raymond Franz

[In Search of Christian Freedom](#) by Raymond Franz

PERIODICALS

Comments from the Friends -- P.O. Box 819, Assonet, Massa-
chusetts 02702 -- David A. Reed

Quarterly Journal -- Personal Freedom Outreach -- P.O. Box
26062, St. Louis, Missouri 63136 -- Keith A. Morse

Mount Carmel Outreach to Jehovah's Witnesses
-- P.O. Box 756, Rock Falls, Illinois 61071

Free Minds Journal -- P.O. Box 3818, Manhattan Beach,
California 90266 -- Randall Watters

MacGregor Ministries -- News & Views in the World of the Cults --

P.O. Box 294, Nelson, B.C. V1L 5P9 Canada

VIDEO TAPES

Witnesses of Jehovah -- Jeremiah Films

Witness at Your Door -- Jeremiah Films