



Chapter 12 – Searching for Unconditional Love and Acceptance

Excerpt From *Out of the Cocoon: A Young Woman's Courageous Flight from the Grip of a Religious Cult* www.outofthecocoon.net

On the way back to the airport, my father kept badgering me: “It wasn’t that bad, was it, Brenda?” [He was referring to my years living as a (Jehovah’s) Witness.] Even though I had tried countless times to explain how unhappy I was, my dad still lived in a state of denial. He longed to see me shred the plane ticket in my hand and hear me say that I’d forsake Colorado. But I couldn’t. I wouldn’t. Dorothy’s line in “The Wizard of Oz”—“There’s no place like home”—meant Colorado to me, not Pennsylvania.

I didn’t want to hurt my father, but I wanted to impress upon him just how fanatical mother had become. I wanted him to find some peace with the alternate path I had chosen. I wanted him to learn, as I had, that acceptance is liberating. I looked him squarely in the eyes and with steadfast conviction declared, “Dad, if the Jehovah’s Witnesses told mother to **murder** her entire family, like the Jim Jones’ cult did, and twisted some scripture to justify that it was the right thing to do, you know she would have killed us all in an instant.” My father bowed his head and tears welled up in his eyes. While he couldn’t bring himself to verbally acknowledge I was right, he knew I was. With raw passion he hugged his little girl and offered that he’d literally give his right arm to make us a family again. If only he could do something. *Anything*. Dear daddy. Poor, dear daddy...

We sat quietly in his truck for a few moments, absorbing the deafening silence that permeated the space between us. Before I left, I had one burning question to ask. You see, Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t believe in blood transfusions and many have let family members die as a result of that belief. (They once also felt the same way about vaccinations but then quietly changed their policy.) I wanted to know what he would have done had I ever needed a blood transfusion during my childhood. All along, my dad yielded to mother’s religious beliefs. Would he have saved my life if push came to shove? Would he have gone to bat for me when confronted by the Elders? Would he have faced the consequences from the rest of our family in order to save his daughter? I desperately needed to hear that someone in my family valued *me* more than that man-made religion. With sorrow in his eyes, he assured me that he would have stood his ground, but his hesitancy to respond gave me nauseating pause. Sadly, I wasn’t convinced.

We kissed good-bye and I boarded the plane, choking back the tears. It was far more agonizing to leave him behind this time. I desperately wanted to smuggle him into my suitcase and take him back to Colorado with me so he could experience my happiness for himself. I wept for over an hour as I made my way home, never anticipating that, time and again, my own happiness would soon come under attack, forcing me to ask myself where happiness really comes from...(continued)