

DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES BREAK UP FAMILIES?

There are many articles and blogs on my website discussing the fact that the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, headquartered in New York, the organization that governs Jehovah's Witnesses, *does*, in fact, promote the shunning of relatives, friends and loved ones if that person leaves and either (a) refuses to attempt a return to the faith (repentance)*--wherein they would be expected to stringently follow the religious beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses to the letter or (b) is denied re-admittance to the group by Elders (leaders) who deem that person unworthy (or unrepentant). Although Jehovah's Witnesses will LIE and say that they don't shun family members, this fact cannot be disputed.** There are numerous quotes from their own literature as well as testimonies from literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of ex-members who are *today* being shunned.

It is shocking, then, for former members (like me who has been shunned by my mother, sister, brother and nephews/niece for nearly 30 years) to read something so blatantly hypocritical from the Watchtower. I'm referring to the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society's July 2009 *Awake!* magazine:

"No one should be forced to worship in a way that he finds unacceptable or be made to choose between his beliefs and his family."

THE BIBLE'S VIEWPOINT

Is It Wrong to Change Your Religion?

When Avtar began studying the Bible, her Sikh family was upset. "In my homeland," she says, "changing your religion cuts you off from the community. Even our names have religious meaning. To change your religion is viewed as rejecting your identity and disrespecting your family."

AVTAR eventually became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Was she wrong to change her religion? Perhaps you identify with her family. You may feel that your religion is inextricably linked with family history and culture and should not be changed.

Honoring one's family is important. The Bible says: "Listen to your father who caused your birth." (Proverbs 23:22) But it is more important to seek to know the truth about our Creator and his purposes. (Isaiah 55:6) Is such a search possible? If so, how important is this search to you?

Searching for Religious Truth

The world's religions teach conflicting ideas. Logically, those teachings cannot all be true. As a result, there must be many people who, as the Bible says, "have a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge." (Romans 10:2) Yet, as recorded at 1 Timothy 2:4, the apostle Paul says that it is God's will that "all sorts of men . . . come to an accurate

knowledge of truth." How can such accurate knowledge be found?

Consider reasons for examining the Bible. Paul, who was an inspired Bible writer, stated: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching." (2 Timothy 3:16) As part of your search for truth, examine the evidence that the Bible's claim is true. Investigate for yourself its unparalleled wisdom, historical accuracy, and fulfilled prophecy.

Instead of presenting all religions as equal approaches to God, the Bible tells its readers not to believe everything they hear but to "test the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God." (1 John 4:1) For example, any teaching that truly originates with God must be in harmony with his personality, including his dominant quality of love. —1 John 4:8.

The Bible assures us that God wants us to "really find him." (Acts 17:26, 27) Since our Creator wants us to search for truth, it cannot be wrong to act on the evidence that we find—even if this means changing our religion.

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But what about the problems that this may bring?

Balancing Family Loyalty

When people change their beliefs, they may decide that they will no longer share in certain religious rituals or holidays. Understandably, this can result in strong feelings within the family. Jesus acknowledged this. He told his followers: "I came to cause division, with a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a young wife against her mother-in-law." (Matthew 10: 35) Did Jesus mean that Bible teachings were designed to be an unavoidable cause of contention? No. He simply foresaw what could happen when family members react negatively to one who takes a firm stand for beliefs different from theirs.

Should family conflict be avoided at all costs? The Bible teaches that children should be obedient to parents and that wives should be in subjection to their husbands. (Ephesians 5:22; 6:1) However, it instructs those who love God to "obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) Thus, at times, loyalty to God may result in your making a decision that is unpopular with some family members.

Although the Bible makes a clear distinction between true and false teachings, God allows each person the freedom to choose how he or she will respond. (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20) No one should be forced to worship in a way that he finds unacceptable or be made to choose between his beliefs and his family. Does study of the Bible lead to family break-up? No. In fact, the Bible encourages a husband and wife who practice different religions



Mariamma and her husband

to remain together as a family.—1 Corinthians 7:12, 13.

Overcoming Fears

You may fear how the community will react if you study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Mariamma says: "My family was worried that I would not be able to find a suitable husband who could provide for me. So they opposed my Bible study." Mariamma put her trust in Jehovah God and continued studying. (Psalm 37:3, 4) You can do

The Bible's message changes lives and personalities for the better

the same. Rather than fear the results, consider the benefits. The Bible's message changes lives and personalities for the better. People learn to show unselfish love for their family. Bad habits, such as verbal and physical violence and abuse of alcohol and drugs, can be overcome. (2 Corinthians 7:1) The Bible promotes such wholesome traits as loyalty, honesty, and industriousness. (Proverbs 31:10-31; Ephesians 4:24, 28) Why not study the Bible and see the benefits of applying its teachings in your life?

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- Why examine your religious beliefs?—Proverbs 23:23; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4.
- How can you identify true teachings?—2 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 4:1.
- Should family opposition prevent you from studying the Bible?—Acts 5:29.

Will the Watchtower/Jehovah's Witnesses *ever* acknowledge that this right—to change one's religion or to not have to worship in a way he/she finds unacceptable--should also be afforded to any Jehovah's Witness? Will they ever implement their own words or will they continue to doublespeak—say one thing out of one side of their mouth and something else out of the other side?

Will they abolish the egregious practice of shunning and apologize to the millions in this world who have lost their families for years, even *decades*? Since the publishing of this article, my family has not stopped shunning me. How can that be? Logic dictates that they would have immediately picked up the phone and called me after they received this article from their leaders. But they didn't. Why is that?



I believe the reasons the Watchtower leaders printed this article were to:

- 1) Help make the Watchtower/Jehovah Witness organization look good to outsiders, people they peddle their magazines and beliefs to as they go door-to-door. They don't want outsiders to know that they really *do* shun family and the above statement makes it look like they are accepting of all religious beliefs, which they clearly are not. (See end of this blog for two examples from Watchtower literature.***)
- 2) Encourage *outsiders* to defect from their religion *to become Jehovah's Witnesses while denying this right to their own members (without facing severe consequences)*. In other words, it's a one way street. **It's entirely acceptable for you to become a Jehovah's Witness and leave your Catholic, Jewish, Muslim or other faith, but completely unacceptable (for you) to ever leave the Jehovah's Witnesses.**

I believe the above article is both manipulative and deceptive. Why? Because they go on to explain that studying the Bible does not lead to family breakups. They counter, "No, in fact the Bible encourages a husband and wife...to remain together." What they fail to mention to the non-Jehovah Witness reader in this article, however, is that in the Watchtower/Jehovah Witness religion, where there are differences in opinion as to religious choice, shunning will be implemented:

- Mothers and/or fathers are expected to shun daughters or sons
- Children are expected to shun mothers and fathers and their siblings
- Cousins are expected to shun cousins
- Aunts and uncles are expected to shun nieces and nephews
- Grandparents are expected to shun grandchildren
- Grandchildren are expected to shun grandparents

In other words, if you are not either a husband or wife in the "studying the Bible" scenario, you can and will be SHUNNED by other Jehovah's Witness family members, where deemed appropriate, if you question or fail to follow the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses.

I wonder: Will the Watchtower Society ever walk the talk and free their members from this lifetime of spiritual bondage? Will they ever be completely honest with those outside their faith about their shunning practices? Wasn't lying the original sin in the Garden of Eden?

*Repentance involves the perceived offender dutifully attending all of the weekly meetings at the Kingdom Hall, sitting in the back of the building (typically the last row) while being completely shunned (not even a "hello" or eye contact) by others in the congregation, including his/her own family—for up to a year or more. After which time, the perceived offender has an opportunity to meet with Elders who determine if the offender is sufficiently repentant or not. It is not uncommon for a person to undergo this prolonged emotional abuse and re-indoctrination session, only to be denied re-admittance to the Watchtower/Jehovah Witness organization. If that occurs, then the offender's family is expected to continue to shun that person for as long as he/she lives.



In the cult world, this behavior falls into the category “Dispensing of Existence”—one of the eight points of mind control used by cult leaders—as defined by Robert J. Lifton, author of “Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism.” Dispensing of Existence simply means the cult leader(s) get to determine your right to be saved or be condemned, not God. For to be ousted from a group that is perceived as the “sole channel to God” is a sentence to eternal death, at least as far as any cult member is concerned. When the leader(s) deny you re-admittance, they deny you eternal life or the right to exist.

**If you’d like to see/hear two Jehovah’s Witnesses lie—one at the “Knocking” premiere” in Denver, Colorado, and one on the witness stand in a court of law—stating that they (Jehovah’s Witnesses) do NOT shun family members, go to my website below and click on the video on the far right entitled “Jehovah’s Witnesses Encounter the Truth Fairy.” The video is 10 minutes long and it highlights the hypocrisy and lies.

www.outofthecocoon.net

*** Here are some examples that show that Jehovah’s Witnesses are taught that the clergy in other religions are part of Satan’s organization and will be destroyed by God when Armageddon arrives. So if you belong to any religion *other than Jehovah’s Witnesses*, you’re toast!

