



WHY DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES EAT TURKEY *AFTER* THANKSGIVING?

When November rolls around, can't you just smell the delicious turkey, stuffing and pie? When I was a child, my Jehovah Witness mother always purchased a turkey right before Thanksgiving (because they were on sale), but we'd always have leftover meatloaf or some other disappointing concoction on Thanksgiving Day. To me, it was like waving chocolate under a three-year-old child's nose and then saying, "Now don't you touch this for two months!" Ah, yes, we eventually had the turkey—usually in January, after all the "pagan" holidays had passed. My mother had to make sure we didn't "appear" to be celebrating holidays with "worldly" people. But somehow, by then, it didn't taste that great.

So now, not only do I make it a point to savor every bite of my Thanksgiving meal, I think about why I'm thankful:

- 1) I'm thankful to have many precious friends in my life, even though my Jehovah Witness mother, sister and brother are not permitted to be.
- 2) I'm thankful that I live in a country where I've had the opportunity to get a college education and establish a good career, even though my parents didn't support my journey or my success.
- 3) I'm thankful I live in 2009, not 1955, when women were considered a husband's possession, not his partner. (The Housekeeping Monthly of May 13, 1955 stated, "A good wife always knows her place" and "You have no right to question him." - referring to the husband.)
- 4) I'm thankful that I can sleep in on weekends and not have to leap up at 6 a.m. to have the "privilege" of going out in service all day for the Watchtower. You see, now that I'm "free," I can leisurely brush the soft cotton sheets with my toes, reflect peacefully on my life, and rejoice that I'm no longer a slave.
- 5) I'm thankful that my son is healthy, happy, and well adjusted, far better off than I was at his age; and I'm grateful that we have the kind of a relationship my mother and I will never know.
- 6) I'm thankful that when I come home (even if I've been gone five minutes) my two dogs bounce around the room like absolute freaks. It tells me they can't live without me and makes me realize how wonderfully unconditional an animal's love is.
- 7) Most of all, I'm thankful for lost love, the flu, abject poverty, and severe depression so that I can know what it's really like to be in love, be healthy, have enough, and experience joy.

I hope that this month you will really take some time to reflect on what you are thankful for. We all have some pretty incredible experiences in our life, and we should embrace them—good and bad. Don't be afraid to dig down deep and latch onto the "this or that" in your life that helps you value and appreciate what you have and who you are today. Tell me what *you* are thankful for.



WHAT AM I THANKFUL FOR?

“I am thankful for the fact that I am currently helping people out of cults rather than being trapped in one and having my life totally destroyed and wondering why. Also, with all of the health problems going around, I am thankful I am still very healthy.” - David



“If you were to ask me eight years ago what I was thankful for, I would have a hard time thinking of anything. When your life is ripped apart and your friends and family desert you when you need them the most, it makes it hard to see anything good, anything to be thankful for. I am thankful for the true friends who do not judge me because I believe a certain way. Friends who celebrate the difference of our belief rather than condemn it. Friends who have supported me when all others faded into the shadows. Friends who helped me walk out of the shadow, and into the light of God's love. I am thankful that the years of learning intolerance has shown me tolerance for all. I am most thankful for my freedom in Christ, and the love and grace in Him. Freedom to think for myself without fear. Freedom to worship from my heart.” – Roy

“I am thankful to be free to read and study anything and everything...I have more spirituality in my life today than when I was in a religion. Today, my life is not dictated by dogma, doctrine, and best of all, not by fear. I was taught from birth that there is so much danger and ugliness in the world. Well, one usually finds what they look for. Since finding my true path in life, I am surrounded by love and beauty, something I once believed did not and could not exist in the ‘world.’” - Erica

“I’m thankful for a great family: my wife, son, daughter and all my siblings, mother, and grandmother living in my hometown in Kansas (USA). I thankful for the fact I still love the job that I've had for the last 13 years. All that money really helps! I'm really thankful of my health and the health of my family. I'm really thankful that I found the ex-Jehovah Witness Meetup group because I now understand that I wasn't alone. Many others have doubts about the Watchtower Society. I'm really grateful for all the new friends I've made. I know that my wife is still in but I'm hopeful that she will see the real "New Light" some day. So I guess the last thing I am thankful for is...being patient.” – Sylvan

“I am thankful for my three children who are living happy and healthy lives, my three grandchildren who give me a warm and fuzzy feeling every time I lay eyes on them, and my husband of two years who gives me my space to pursue my dreams.” - Elva

“I’m thankful that I don’t have to be depressed and hate life anymore because today is a gift, that’s why they call it ‘the present.’ Growing up as a Jehovah Witness, I was encouraged to see living as something to get through until Armageddon rather than something to be celebrated and enjoyed. **Why would Jehovah give Jehovah’s Witnesses everlasting life when they can’t even appreciate this one?** I’m thankful for diversity. Today I enjoy hearing people’s different opinions rather than hating them for it. I’m thankful too that my sole happiness isn’t getting a donut on Saturday morning when going out in field service and that I can appreciate every moment now.” - Darlene

“I am so very thankful for my newfound FREEDOM (imagine how Mel Gibson yelled that word in (the movie) “Braveheart” and that's how I feel)! It was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life –to break away from that mind-controlling organization. The immediate consequences were seemingly unbearable and, honestly, I don't know how I got through. I would never want to experience it again, that's for sure. It even took me months and months after the break away to fully realize the freedom I had gained because the mind control still remained in so many ways. Of course, it was mainly the *Cocoon* newsletters and Meetup group that helped me to see my worth as a person in this world. Seeing others (like Brenda Lee) enjoying and experiencing life and accomplishing things encouraged me to want to do the same and not feel guilty about it. Since then that is exactly what I have been doing, and I've never felt healthier (physically, mentally, and emotionally) in my life! I now have the ability to see the world as a beautiful place, full of beautiful people. Yes, there are still not so nice people out there, but there are a lot of absolutely good-hearted individuals, too. I have made wonderful friendships based on honesty and trueness of character, unconditional - amazing! I could go on and on about this. I see the world in **COLOR** now, for I was only seeing in black and white for the last half of my life.” – Anita