

WHO AM I?

Growing Up As A Jehovah's Witness

by Debi Zweifel

At the age of seven, I was told there would be no more birthdays, no more Christmas, no more holidays of any kind. My parents then bought me a puppy. I think they thought it would make up for what was taken from me: MY LIFE.

Since that time, my life and real self has been unknown to me. Alienated and abnormal is what I felt for over twenty-five years. I'm sure there are plenty of other children in the world, growing up as Jehovah's Witnesses, right now, who feel the same pain.

All those years of eccentric behavior, I found, had become comfortable; not to deal with anyone or anything that I was told to avoid as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. It was like walking down a long dark hallway. There was no one else there. You were all alone. There is no place for you. Just a feeling of hopelessness; a hurt deep inside your heart and soul that nothing can penetrate or heal. Out of touch with who I was, life could bring me no real joy or happiness. Happiness put on hold until the "New Order" comes. Every negative thought, feeling or bad thing that may happen is the devil's doing and not relying on or putting your trust in Jehovah. It was like being on a pony ride, going around and around in a circle and getting nowhere. There is only fear and sadness and wishing for "Armageddon." How bleak... How cold...

How does it feel to remain seated during the flag saluting?

Like being on stage. All eyes are on you, wondering what your next move will be.

Embarrassed? Yes! Humiliated? Of Course!
Understood? Never!



How can anyone understand when you give them no answers to their questions? Only some obscure line from a Watchtower publication. You can't relate to others because they can't relate to you. One withdraws into oneself because there is nowhere left to go. The world is divided into "Good versus Bad" and one had better be on the right side at Armageddon. It is just around the corner; you can reach out and touch it or so I am told. You trust no one, fear

everyone and love only the chosen few. I had been reaching out for twenty-five years and never came close, but it keeps you in line. You cannot connect with others because you are continually judging them. It keeps you fearful, angry and judgmental.

We are the "chosen ones". Chosen to live on after everyone else is destroyed by this horrifying destruction known as Armageddon. We had better keep in line. We better not mingle with the wrong people. Don't get attached to those "worldly ones". Don't feel for them: only convict them to eternal destruction. How many of you can understand how powerful the words "total destruction" can feel to a seven year-old child? Emotional distress that does not allow or is given any understanding, only judgment. What am I doing wrong in God's eyes? All home.. All faith... All everlasting life lay within God's Organization, Jehovah's Witnesses; not within yourself and Jesus. This thought was implanted in my mind so that nothing else could enter.

Being one of Jehovah's Witnesses always made me feel unworthy of anything, and like Uncle Sam, that finger was always pointed at me. I was not allowed any normal feelings, normal emotions, and many times I thought

maybe I would be better off dead. Then, perhaps I'd find forgiveness, another life, or at least reclaim the one I had lost.

Is there anything that will fill this void in my heart?

Life goes on around you but you are not part of it. You go through the motions of loving but feel dead inside. You are constantly looking over your shoulder to see if anyone is watching, sometimes feeling like someone is stalking you, just waiting for you to make the wrong move. There is no place to hide, nowhere to run, no choices. You fight internally, day and night, struggling to find out who you are. You soon realize that you are no one; just a part of one big mass of people who seem to believe as you do. You are not an individual but an extension of "God's Organization".

You feel somehow connected to other Jehovah's Witnesses but it's only because you feel so rejected by everyone else. It is the only place to run and hide, to try and forget, until tomorrow when reality sets in and you are once again lost. The only direction you can go is the one given by this organization. They tell you what you should or shouldn't do but they don't tell you how or why. Have faith, they tell you, but they don't give you anything of truth to believe in. Only false hopes, broken promises and shattered dreams. They had total control of my life.

I didn't feel right inside; always a feeling that something was wrong. Wanting an answer but only receiving a slap in the face. No sense of self. No sense about others. No sense of life. Just like a hand puppet guided by someone else. I would think and act and feel what they wanted me to. I had no mind of my own, and could not make decisions for myself.

Emptiness is what I felt. No one understands and neither do you. You're not allowed your feelings because you must keep focused on better things to come, but they never do.

As for forgiveness, only a small group of men are given that power. They decide who is truly

remorseful. Once again being put on that stage for all to see. "God's Organization" interprets the Bible and its meaning. No questions that can be asked. No disappointments in their decisions. They are "God's Light" and "Truth". The ONLY way to salvation. Meeting attendance and door-to-door preaching keep you 'in touch" with God's Organization. You believe ONLY them. The rest are lies,

Is there really something better, or is this all there is?

I didn't think so, but I didn't know where else to turn. I didn't know Jesus. He had been kept from me, masked away in their Bible teachings. I felt I was spinning around like a game piece, not knowing where or how to stop.

Who was this organization that had such authority over me? So much control. They told me it was the truth. If so, why did I feel as if I were deep inside a well of darkness? Looking up and not being able to see any light so that I could find this truth and crawl out?

One day, however, light did find me in that deep, dark well. It reached in and I know then that I was ready to crawl out. That light would be there to catch me should I start to fall back in. It didn't tell me I had to wait or make me fearful. That light was JESUS.

There is comfort now. No more walking alone. It took so very long to come to this realization, but it has come, and I will never again let any person or organization lead me away from the truth.

I thank Jesus that now know he is the light. the truth and the way. Jesus has mended my broken heart. He has shown me who I am.

After all these years, I now realize, there is no going back; but thanks to Jesus I can move forward. KNOW that Jesus will always be there for me.

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