



A guide to religious trauma points among **Jehovah's Witnesses**

**A guide for mental health professionals in identifying the
causes and effects of religious trauma among Jehovah's Witnesses**

This guide is intended to bring to therapists and counsellors the religious landscape to both active and non-active Jehovah's Witnesses. It makes no recommendations as to what actions to take regarding therapy but should provide a first-hand guide into the practices of this group and the impact these have on the mental health of current followers and those who have left.

The primary goal of this guide is to address the common view that this religion's greatest fault is waking people early on Saturday mornings. The damage it causes to individuals using disciplinary and high-control methods is largely unknown. Whether this religion is a cult might be argued as there are no universally assigned criteria, however, it is undeniable that the religion exerts very heavy and oft repeated measures of control. These are listed later.

The ex-Witness community have assigned acronyms to both current and ex believers into the four groups listed below:

PIMI (Physically in, Mentally In)

PIMI Witnesses are committed members who follow the edicts and teachings of the religion. They will follow the teachings passed down to them by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses (q.v.) and obey virtually without question some of the cruel practices mandated by them. As part of their religious commitment to the cause they will attend all meetings and take part in preaching work among other things.

PIMO (Physically in, Mentally out)

PIMO Witnesses maintain the appearance of being fully committed to the religious group. They attend most congregation meetings, may even preach each month. However, they no longer believe in the doctrines of the group and would much prefer to leave the religious group but fear the repercussions they may face in doing so.

POMI (Physically out, Mentally in)

This group is probably the most complicated. Whilst maintaining an unshakeable belief in the teachings, they have stopped practicing for one or more reasons. Some may have been expelled from religion or cut all ties, or they just could not commit to that level of worship, time and dedication that is necessary to be Jehovah's Witness in good standing.

POMO (Physically out, Mentally out)

This group are no longer practising or believing members of the group. They do not attend meetings, except for maybe funerals or weddings (if permitted). POMO individuals are likely shunned by their family and friends who remain in the religious organisation.

Much of what is outlined here will apply to many other groups labelled as "end-times" or "doomsday" religions resulting from numerous schisms in the nineteenth century. Religions which adhere to a teaching of Apocalypticism would certainly include the Exclusive Brethren and Seventh-day Adventists and to some extent the Mormon, or Latter Day Saints church.

There is notable overlap in the teachings of these groups, as they have their roots in the Judeo-Christian religion. Much of what is discussed in this guide can be usefully applied as a basis to understanding the trauma associated with membership. Some of the terms here are mentioned to provide context while not in themselves points of stress or trauma.

From the vast experience gathered over the years from ex and current members, these icons will serve to illustrate the level of mental harm caused in general. It is a broad guide as many will find

certain aspects of being a Witness more harmful than others will – for example the organisation’s attitude to homosexuality.

- 0** For context only. No levels of trauma are necessarily associated with this subject.
- 1** Disquieting and unsettling.
- 2** Stressful.
- 3** Very stressful or traumatic.

Whilst this guide will be accompanied with personal experiences it is not intended to be an outpouring of bitter rhetoric. They aren’t unique to me and similar, if not identical, experiences can easily be found on such forums as the Reddit exjw forum and similar Facebook support groups.



“In the case of fundamentalist beliefs, people expect that choosing to leave a childhood faith is like giving up Santa Claus – a little sad but basically a matter of growing up.

But religious indoctrination can be hugely damaging, and making the break from an authoritarian kind of religion can definitely be traumatic. It involves a complete upheaval of a person’s construction of reality, including the self, other people, life, the future, everything.

People unfamiliar with it, including therapists, have trouble appreciating the sheer terror it can create and the recovery needed.” – Marlene Winell, Ph.D.

The Watchtower organisation 0

The Jehovah's Witness movement is controlled by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. This society can be broken down into two main parts – the administration of the society and doctrinal teachings with information dissemination. The latter part is controlled by a group of men (nine at the time of writing) known as the Governing Body or “the Slave Class.”

Existential Dread 3

As an end-time order, the main focus of this religion is an impending apocalypse. Surviving this apocalypse is determined on your “heart condition” at the moment of judgement. Unlike say, Born Again Christians, salvation is not guaranteed. No Witness will say that they will be saved and are consequently obliged to admit that their deliverance is not a certainty. To this end, Witnesses in groups one and two (PIMI and POMI) live with the knowledge of impending and unannounced destruction. Bearing in mind that confirmation (or baptism) into this religion can be carried out from any age, mostly between eight and late teens, this perpetual unease about one's own existence can last, quite literally, a lifetime. I have known many who have given their all to the organisation whilst living each day with this Damocles Sword over their heads. They will not have experienced one day of respite. Those who are disfellowshipped but remain convinced in the religion's teachings, will acknowledge that as someone who is excommunicated, their destruction, should the apocalypse come tomorrow, is certain. As an erstwhile member of this group – a POMI – I lived for seventeen years in this state of existential dread with no possibility of redemption.

Disfellowshipping 3

This practice is carried out once a baptised member, accused of wrongdoing, is judged to be sufficiently unrepentant as to warrant excommunication by a three-man panel. Wrong doing will include, but not be limited to fornication, illegal drug use, homosexual practices, working at a military base, smoking, selling lottery tickets, discussing heretical ideas, drunkenness, gluttony, disrespect to elders (priests – see Hierarchy) etc. The list is more extensive than is given here.

In the case of the discovery of immorality by a young female member, no questions by the three-man inquisition are off limits during a judicial hearing:

“Did you orgasm?”

“Did you perform oral sex on each other?”

“Did you use protection?”

“Did he fondle your breasts?”

“Did he penetrate you, if so how many times?”

Their disfellowshipping will be announced at the next meeting. Shunning will then begin.

Shunning 3

This is not a practice unique to Jehovah's Witnesses. A baptised Witness who is disfellowshipped or has issued a written desire to leave the religion, will have had their families and friends ordered to cut all communications with them. As this is a closed-community religion, this means those shunned will have few people outside of the religion to fall back on for support. The exceptions to shunning are spouses and resident children.

Children

If old enough, they will be pressured into leaving home. As mentioned previously, having no

external connections, they become isolated and struggle in an environment which is alien to them. They will have little or no street-wise education. Suicides, though uncommon, are not unknown.

Adults

Adults, of course they fare better having had work experience and the acquisition of street-smarts that come with that, but their social lives, friends and non-work experiences, will have mostly centred around their congregation and its members. Again, though rare, suicides are not unknown.

Experiences

Various forums and ex-Witness support groups, will have posts from members saying how they only learned about the birth of a grandchild via a third party. Some learn of the death of a parent through the same method where committed Witnesses refuse to make contact informing them of vital, key family moments. Ex-Witnesses will not be invited to the wedding of their closest of family members. They will rarely be informed if a close family member is involved in a life-threatening accident or has contracted a terminal illness. The command to shun is repeatedly doubled down on. Unashamedly they will broadcast videos to demonstrate how families are to ignore calls, text messages and emails from the disfellowshipped or disassociated family members. I personally know ex members who have not had contact with their parents for several decades. Ironically, they teach this as a “loving provision”.

“Family members can show love for the congregation and the erring one by respecting the disfellowshipping decision. ‘He was still my son’ explains Julian, ‘but his lifestyle had put up a barrier between us.’” – Why Disfellowshipping Is a Loving Provision – Watchtower magazine, April 2015.

This action punishes people both side of the fence as Witness members are forced to shun their nearest and dearest.

Higher education 0

This is heavily discouraged; very heavily and repeatedly. An expanded and more critical view of the world comes with higher education which leads to critical thinking and critical thinking is the enemy of high-control religions. To this end, university attendance is discouraged. The society will propose a single alternative which includes “doing more for Jehovah”. The congregation body will be encouraged to congratulate any young person eschewing higher education in favour of full-time door-to-door, unpaid ministry, known as Pioneering.

Celebrations 2

Jehovah’s Witnesses notably don’t celebrate Christmas as this was determined to be a pagan festival. Along with this proscription comes birthdays, Valentine’s day, Guy Fawkes night, Easter, Halloween, Mother’s day, Father’s day. This is very hard on children who cannot, for example, celebrate the birthdays of their class mates, being obliged to turn down party invites.

Sexuality 3

A favourite whipping boy of many religions, non-hetero sexuality is equally condemned by this religion. Recently, in face of incontrovertible evidence, it would appear that they have come to reluctantly accept that this is not a lifestyle choice. Previously it was seen as a chosen perversion or, as previously taught, the manifest results of masturbation. Again, suicide is not unknown among those who are pressured to reconcile their sexuality with the restrictions imposed on them as being obligatorily non-practising.

In one video, made especially for children using cartoon characters, they are taught that same-sex relationships “make Jehovah unhappy” (q.v. Caleb and Sophia).

The Ministry and Meetings 3

There are a number of activities which Witnesses are pretty much compelled to do. Failing to put in hours on the ministry or door-to-door work, is heavily frowned on. Baptised members are required to record and report the time spent each month in this endeavour. Likewise meeting attendance at the Kingdom Hall is also required. Failure to do so (pandemics notwithstanding) will incur a “shepherding call.” This will involve a pair of elders from the congregation visiting your home to offer spiritual encouragement. This means delving into any personal problems, a veiled lecture and supporting scriptures as to why it is so important and how your life will depend on attendance. Thus is applied the threat of existential dread making it clear that meeting attendance is vital to rack up credit in the spiritual bank.

UPDATE: As of November 1, 2023, this is no longer a requirement but will have had a legacy effect on many long-term members.

Wrong thoughts 2

These can range from thinking about sexual matters even if they’re not acted on. Likewise thoughts about why the religion might be flawed, or ultimately wrong, are heavily sanctioned.

Misogyny 2

Again, not the sole preserve of this particular flavour of religion, the entire hierarchy of the organisation from the rank and file up to the administration and Governing Body, are male. Even the most basic tasks within the congregation are seen as the exclusive domain of men and only men. The sound systems in the Kingdom Hall will be handled by a man. The roving microphone for the question and answer sessions will have a male handler. At large convention gatherings, those conducting traffic duties and similar attendants will be male.

Men are the only ones permitted to give instruction to the congregation. Should a woman be assigned to give a talk then she will have to take another woman onto the stage and talk directly to her. If a prayer needs to be given, it will be carried out by a baptised male. If no baptised male is present, a woman will give a prayer, but she will have to cover her head in some way – such as using a handy tea towel. Further, if a young man of, say, ten has been baptised and is in the company of his baptised mother, she will be subjugated to his spiritual authority and he will conduct the prayer if no older male is available.

*“You know, scientists say that the cranial capacity of a woman is 10% smaller than that of a man so now this shows that she’s just not equipped for the role of headship. Her role is one of subjection to the man.” – Samuel Herd (now Governing Body member) giving the talk *The Value of Our Theocratic Sisters*.*

Domestic abuse 3

This subject crosses over into the above subject of misogyny. With domestic abuse it is notable first that Witness literature will usually label the aggressor an “unbelieving spouse” when in reality it’s at least as likely or more likely to be a Witness husband. Articles covering this subject are not beyond victim blaming:

“Selma recalls a lesson she learned from the Witness who studied with her. “On one particular day,” says Selma, “I didn’t want to have a Bible study. The night before, Steve had hit me as I had tried to prove a point, and I was feeling sad and sorry for myself. After I told the sister what had happened and how I felt, she asked me to read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. As I did, I began to reason, ‘Steve never does any of these loving things for me.’ But the sister made me think differently by asking, ‘How many of those acts of love do you show toward your husband?’ – Watchtower 2012 Feb 15 p.29

“I have horrible memories of sitting with two elders and my abusive (now ex) husband. I was told to “not keep count of the injury.” So did that mean my husband could keep on hitting me, hurting me, throwing me across the room, sometimes in front of my two little boys?” Personal account taken from a survey.

*“He might be extremely physically abusive, even to the point that she feels that her health or life is in danger. He might refuse to support her and the family or severely endanger her spirituality. ... some Christians have personally decided that ... a separation is necessary. **But other Christians in comparably difficult situations have not; they have endured and tried to work on improving matters. ... Many loyal Christians have remained with an unbelieving mate under very trying circumstances.**” - Watchtower 2018 Dec p.14*

Not doing enough 3

The pressure to “do more for Jehovah” is constant; unremitting. “Doing more” almost always means more door-to-door work. Children looking to leave school are pressured to become ‘pioneers’. This is an unpaid position which requires a commitment to carry out a minimum number of hours a week. The Pioneer will typically have a part-time job and/or be supported by their family with the financial burden this imposes. This is labelled as a career in order to justify it being a replacement for paid employment.

“Can you and your children do more to honor Jehovah by increasing your activity in the ministry? . . . Have you personally given serious consideration to pioneering? Do you encourage your children to pursue a career in the full-time ministry?” – Our Kingdom Ministry March 1993.

Though primarily aimed at increasing efforts in the ministry work, this will also include maintaining the Kingdom Hall and building projects – all unpaid. This pressure to do more is frequently presaged by guilt:

“Are you doing enough for Jehovah?”

“Could you be doing more for Jehovah?”

“Will you have blood on your hands on the day of Jehovah?”

This last one is used to suggest that failure to carry out an effective ministry will result in people not being contacted with the consequence of their inevitable death as a non-Witness.

This device is used across the community; no one is exempt. School children are told that their classroom is their territory for preaching and demonstrations in the Kingdom Hall will show a child preaching to a fellow student. Naturally these end quite different to real life.

Spiritually weak 3

A pejorative. This ugly expression is used across the board by everyone in judgement of others. This term and its subtle variations are often used by elders speaking from the platform though couched with more acceptable context:

“If we see someone who is spiritually weak in the congregation, what can we do to help them?”

The method of gauging the spiritual strength of other members is based primarily on meeting attendance, ministry efforts and personal habits. The latter can be reading and viewing matter, dress (Q.V. Person grooming), language and attitude. Driving an expensive car or owning an expensive house, holding a good well-paid position in a job; these can all be seen as a measure of one’s spiritual weakness. My own father – a decent, honest and archetypal tea-boy to CEO product – was once spoken of as being “bent” because of his relative wealth. The expression is used as a divider and in organised gatherings those seen as spiritually weak will be the last to be invited, if at all.

Personal grooming 2

A phrase largely applied to the manner in which someone dresses and appears. Women within the congregation are required to wear skirts or dresses which come below the knee and have a suitably high neckline. The wearing of jewellery is often an item for discussion as are tattoos and body piercings. Men are required to wear suits at all religion-based events, even when attending the meetings remotely. This invasion into domestic privacy was highlighted during meetings held by conference call as a result of the pandemic; full Witness battle dress and cameras on!

Sex 3

Again, not a regulative subject solely practised by this organisation. Masturbation, for example, is a favoured subject and is not shied away from in talks or sermons given from the platform to the congregation. I have seen such talks given by means of a discussion where a young man approaches his father with this apparent problem. Inevitably this will result in the parents of younger children having to cope with questions from their smaller children asking what it all means. Masturbation was once even propounded by the organisation as the cause of homosexuality.

Fornication or pre-marital sex is an offence attracting judicial action and probable disfellowshipping, likewise adultery and homosexual practices.

The religion has never shied away from entering into proscribing certain sexual practices within a marriage. In a heart-rending letter to their local headquarters, a Witness asks for guidance within his own marriage. Having erectile dysfunction, he had found a means by which he could fulfil his marital duties, likely oral sex. The response from the society was to condemn this as being “an unclean practice.” This letter and its reply were printed in the

“In the past some comments have appeared in this magazine in connection with certain unusual sex practices, such as oral sex, within marriage and these were equated with gross sexual immorality. On this basis the conclusion was reached that those engaging in such sex practices were subject to disfellowshipping if unrepentant.” – Watchtower magazine Feb 15th, 1978

book *Crisis of Conscience* by Raymond Franz – once a member of the governing body. The inset shown here is a preamble for the carefully-worded repeal of the oral sex prohibition. Cautious in its tone in changing its principle, there was no apology for those who were disfellowshipped and as a result lost contact with their loved ones due to shunning.

Bringing reproach on Jehovah's name

This has served as a catchall to justify counselling and other forms of discipline.

A divorce is seen by the society as a failure, not only in the marriage, but of the religion and thus an action bringing reproach on Jehovah's name. More worrying than this is the way in which the reporting of child sex abuse is covered up. Many ex-Witnesses report being prevented from reporting CSA over concerns of having the religion's image tarnished.

Heirarchy

This is very much a pyramid structure.

The rank and file baptised Witness.

Baptised men, women and children holding no appointed position within the congregation.

Ministerial servants.

Wannabe elders. Usually young men in their very late teens, early twenties or older converts deemed spiritual enough. They will usually have minor administrative duties within a congregation. An unpaid position.

Elders.

Men who are selected by the circuit overseer (see below). They will handle heavier duties such as judicial and disciplinary matters, public talks, finances, local legal matters and ministry-assignment. They are directly answerable to the circuit overseer. An unpaid position.

Circuit overseers (CO).

A promoted elder who will have a number of congregations within his jurisdiction. His duties will include calling elders to account for actions, both good and bad, within the congregation. The CO will have been provided with a car by the organisation with a modest stipend to cover clothing and other out-of-pocket expenses. Their accommodation is provided by someone in the congregation. They are feted by the rank and file to the extent that their week-long visit will guarantee greater meeting attendance.

Pioneers.

This group of Witnesses will have taken on the unpaid role of carrying out at least ninety hours of ministry (these hours were adjusted during the pandemic and may have changed at the time of writing). This position holds a curious amount of prestige and it's not uncommon to see them as self-aggrandising.

Bethelites

Those employed at the local branch headquarters, known as *Bethel* (Hebrew for house of God). They likely have served time as a pioneer to earn their spurs. On entry they sign an agreement to a *Vow of Poverty*, renamed a *Vow of Obedience* but meaning the same thing. Any monies earned above the small stipend they receive each month must be reported and might well be confiscated as a contribution to the organisation. It should be noted that no payments are made to any pension and in the US recently, when there was a mass laying off of some Bethelites, many senior ones who had

spent most of their entire lives in this institution were cut adrift with no savings, no pension and no worldly experience.

Though less usual, married couples are invited to attend Bethel if either of them has a skill valuable to the society. It's no secret that there is some prestige for parents whose child has become a Bethelite.

Governing Body helpers.

These men (yes, always men) will be assigned tasks by the Governing Body particularly where discretion is required. They are often given sermons which they give to camera for the online broadcasting service.

"5. To abstain from secular employment without permission from the Order;

6. To turn over to the local organization of the Order all income received from any work or personal efforts in excess of my necessary living expenses, unless released from this vow by the Order;" – Points 5 and 6 extracted from the Vow of Obedience agreement, previously titled the Vow of Poverty.

The Governing Body.

This position, its meaning, impact and history could easily take up an entire book. In essence these are men who have come up through the ranks and believe that they are brothers with Christ and will serve in heaven during Armageddon, killing all non-Witnesses. The credentials required to show that one is anointed in this way is self-recognition of this status. No other proof is needed. These nine men (at the time of writing) have complete control of the entire organisation with regard to doctrinal matters. Known also as "the Faithful and Discrete Slave Class" from one of Jesus' parables, they are venerated, revered and given celebrity status which they enjoy. Children have been encouraged by their parents to send to Bethel, drawings they have made of these men. Their teachings are known as "[spiritual] food at the proper time" as per Jesus words.

In times past, the rank and file weren't aware of the members of the governing body but with the event of the internet and online broadcasting, they have taken a more central role. As the extract box shows the power they now exert is absolute and unchallenged, made manifest from this rather chilling instruction. Any questions regarding their authority and their decisions could result in disciplinary actions and even disfellowshipping.

"At that time, the lifesaving direction that we receive from Jehovah's organization may not appear practical from a human standpoint. All of us must be ready to obey any instructions we may receive, whether these appear sound from a strategic or human standpoint or not." – Watchtower November 15th, 2020.

Disassociation 2

A Witnesses' options for leaving the organisation without being shunned are limited. It is most often that some will fade by not attending or joining in the ministry. This attempt will be matched aggressively by the local congregation who will arrange for a "shepherding visit" by two elders. Labelled as a loving provision, this will entail a lengthy probe into the person's personal circumstances with the goal of victim blaming: *"If you hadn't taken that full-time job you would have been able to attend more meetings."* The encouragement on offer with boil down to a few instructions:

"Pray for help and ask the elders for guidance."

"Attend more meetings so as to not lose out on spiritual food."

The downside to fading is that the ex-Witnesses personal activities will come under close scrutiny and might be reported back to the elders by other members. If serious enough then judicial action

will brought against them with them disfellowshipped in absentia. The result will be shunning by family members and friends.

If a Witness, wishing to leave, has no family within the religion and doesn't rely on fellow members for employment or society, then a clean break by letter is carried out. Effectively they have placed themselves in the same position as someone who is disfellowshipped.

Blood transfusions 3

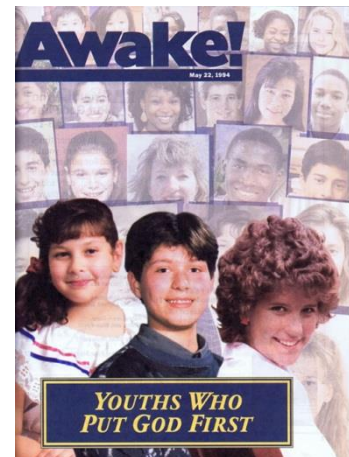
By dint of skewed Biblical interpretation, the organisation has prohibited blood transfusions. In order to see that this is enforced in hospitals, a crash team known as the HLC or *Hospital Liaison Committee* will install themselves into hospitals. This will be in order, not just to convince the staff of their patient's right to refuse potentially life-saving treatment, but to maintain pressure on the patient and their family to see that they do not yield in their desire to survive. Medical staff will frequently offer transfusions in disguised containers to fool the attendant HLC members. Common arguments before and after the fact will be:

*"There's nothing to say that they most certainly need this treatment."
"Yes, they died, but there's nothing to say that a transfusion would have saved them."*

The HLC will not typically be medical professionals but will be fully versed in low-level, amateur medical knowledge regarding such terms as platelets, blood fractions and blood plasma.

To take this medical expedient was once a disfellowshipping offence with the resulting shunning. This form of blatant blackmail was found to be illegal in many countries. To circumvent this law, the goalposts were moved and the religion decided that anyone having a blood transfusion had effectively written a letter of disassociation, thereby effectively disfellowshipping themselves. This exploited a legal loophole to punish someone wishing to save their own lives.

Children who make this stand, just old enough to fall outside the system where they might be made a ward of court, are celebrated. The inset shows an edition of the *Awake!* Magazine, published in 1994, listing the names of "young, loyal servants of Jehovah." Interestingly this magazine is hard to find in the online library on the organisation's website as they now go back only to 2000. Nevertheless, this article concentrates only on children who were moribund with terminal illnesses, who would eventually pass anyway, thus mitigating the real tragedy with regards to the loss of young life. None of the examples listed in this issue tell of a young person whose whole future was cut short due to withholding this treatment.



To offset the obvious misery and heartbreak of the parents, the Witnesses teach the consolation of a resurrection hope.

Funerals 1

Witness funerals are usually held at a place of the deceased or deceased family's choosing. Commonly, an elder will be appointed to give the eulogy. This content of the eulogy is outlined by the organisation and is meant to last no more than thirty minutes. Heartfelt and spontaneous comments are clearly forbidden.

The outline (shown in full in the appendix) dedicates just three lines of instruction as to how the conductor will talk about the deceased, even then one of those will lines is an instruction to relate the deceased's performance as a Witness.

The remainder of the eulogy is a hard sell of the religion with twenty seven lines of talking points and scriptures for the conductor to consider; the deceased is no longer part of the service. This proselytising opportunity doesn't go to waste as it recognises the likelihood that many attending will be non-Witness relatives. As shown in the inset, individuals wishing to make their own contribution to the deceased simply aren't permitted meaning that matter how dear a father, mother, husband or brother has been to them, a relative will not be allowed to personally relate what their departed loved-one meant to them.

My own mother died during lockdown and I went to her funeral. My mother and her seventy plus years of marriage to my father were distilled to seven minutes. The fifteen which followed were dedicated to evangelising. Yes, I timed my mother's funeral. Note this line from the footnote from a previous edition of the outline, shown below:

"Instead of eulogizing the deceased, use the material in this outline to give a fine witness concerning the truth." (q.v. "The Truth")

(Note: Opening with prayer is optional. Instead of eulogizing the deceased, use the material in this outline to give a fine witness concerning the truth. Good balance should be observed in this respect. Doctrinal points can be presented as beliefs of the deceased, which served as motivation for him. Purpose of talk is to uphold Jehovah God as a God of love and mercy and at the same time bring comfort to the bereaved. Use of a song such as No. 111 is optional. A brief prayer at the close is fitting. When arrangement is made to go to the grave, it is well to consider quite briefly the hope through the Kingdom, reading one or two scriptures, such as Job 14:14, 15 and 1 Corinthians 15:54b-57. This service may also be closed with prayer, thanking Jehovah for the resurrection hope, which is of great comfort. The talk need not exceed 30 minutes.)

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"Do not invite the audience to make expressions about the deceased, as this could introduce inappropriate or unscriptural elements into the program."
– Funeral Discourse Instruction.

Child sex Abuse 3

The organisation's view on this is based once again on *"bringing reproach on Jehovah's name"*. For many years the organisation hasn't held back condemning the Catholic Church in its covering up of child sex abuse (CSA). Recently, lawyer Irwin Zalkin, CEO of a law firm specialising in representing victims of institutionalised child abuse, said in an interview that the "Jehovah's Witnesses have a bigger problem than the Catholic Church". Zalkin's eponymous website dedicates a page to cases being prosecuted on behalf of Jehovah's Witness CSA victims.

Many cases brought to the attention of the elders are ignored as per the two witness rule (see inset information) and where an admission takes place the matter is kept largely confidential in the congregation despite the presence of children. Some parents may be informed but the abuser is still allowed to go out on the ministry door-to-door work where he will encounter families in the community and when invited in, be in the company of children.

In 2015, the Australian Royal Commission conducted a series of televised public hearings into institutionalised child abuse. During that hearing, Geoffrey Jackson, a member of the Governing Body, admitted that the religion held records of over a thousand unreported cases of abuse in Australia alone. In the light of what was discovered, not only within the Jehovah's Witness organisation, but with other institutions, a voluntary redress scheme was introduced into which all institutions would contribute to provide financial aid to any victims requiring compensation. All but

The two-witness rule.

This rule, based on a scripture in the Old Testament, means that for any sin to be proven within the Jehovah's Witnesses' congregation, it must be witnessed by two people. This ignores the obvious where there will never be two witnesses in instances of CSA.

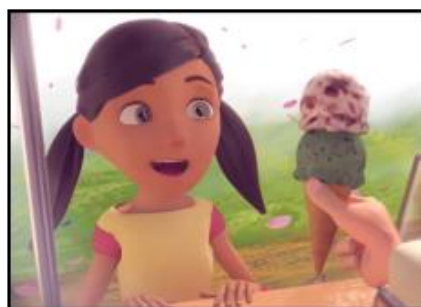
three of the organisations complied, Jehovah’s Witnesses being one of them. When the real threat of losing their charitable status loomed, they capitulated saying their hand had been forced as it had become a legal requirement – which it was not!

In the numerous cases brought against the religion, their defence is consistently that they have clergy/laity confidentiality to observe and reporting is the duty then of the parents. Nevertheless, the Ex-Jehovah’s Witnesses who have related their experience of CSA handling were encouraged not to go to the authorities in the interest of not bringing reproach on Jehovah’s name.

This subject is so extensive, so detailed that no justice to it can be served here and further Googling of this issue is recommended.

Childhood indoctrination 2

Hoping, and probably succeeding, to make inroads into indoctrinating small children, the organisation developed a series of 3D animations using young Jehovah’s Witness characters named Caleb and Sophia. Using these two, the religion conveys its own moral standards as being from Jehovah. It pulls no punches when suggesting that children are capable of making Jehovah angry going on to condemn the gay community and questioning their choice of toys. One video vigorously pushed the anti-birthday agenda by showing Caleb mortified; ridden with guilt for tasting a cup cake at school intended as a birthday treat. The guilt heaped upon this young character and thereby vicariously onto children watching it, was disproportionate to the perceived offence.



The inset picture is part of a video in which Sophia is urged to give up her ice-cream money and donate it to the society. The full video, serving to guilt children into handing over their pocket money “to Jehovah”, is available for viewing online.

My book of bible stories 3

Again, a tool for childhood indoctrination, this highly traumatic publication is an illustrated bible commentary written especially for children. It has no qualms using illustrations of extreme, uncensored violence.



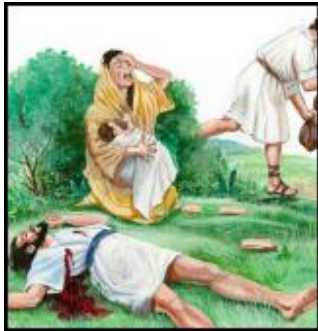
A scene of mass drowning from Noah’s flood, this detail shows a baby soon to be drowned with its mother.



One of the Nephilim robbing someone of their possessions by choking them to death.



Old Testament character, King Jabin, shown here having had a tent peg hammered into his skull.



As an indication of pre-flood lawlessness, we have a picture of a man stabbed to death.



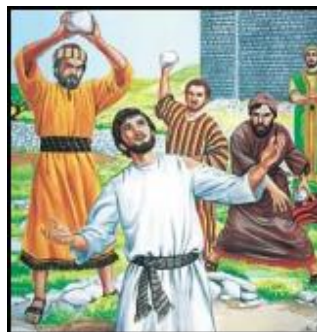
Cain bludgeoned to death by his brother.



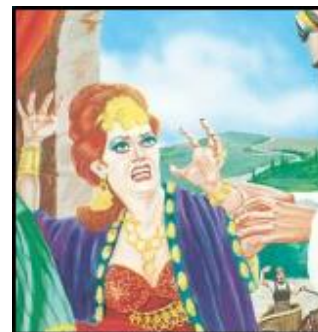
Jesus's nailed to the torture stake – the society doesn't hold that Jesus was crucified.



The judgement of Solomon where a baby is under threat of being severed in half.



Stephen being stoned to death by Saul of Tarsus.

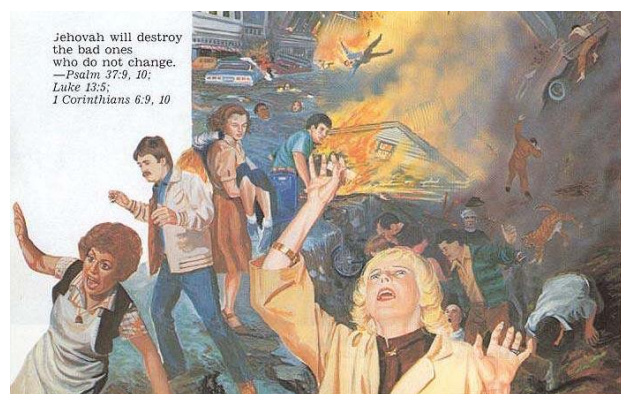


Queen Jezebel before she is thrown from a window to be eaten by dogs.



Abraham about to cut his son, Isaac's, throat.

These distressing illustrations are by no means the full story of the graphic horrors being shown to children. Convention and other broadcast videos show the menace of Witnesses being hunted down and hiding in basements, being chased by authorities and facing the horrors of Armageddon. These have raised complaints by the rank and file. In an online broadcast, two Governing Body members addressed these concerns and justified them saying that this will prepare children for the visceral horrors waiting for



them when all around them people they know and possibly even love, will be destroyed. Such scenes are frequently depicted, similar to those in the inset.

Similar graphic pictures showing the destruction of “worldly” people are frequently published in their magazines. No consideration is given to children who care for their friends and family who are not baptised and the terror these images invoke. Many ex-Witnesses describe the feelings of fear and anxiety they felt as children, knowing these illustrations portray the death of a non-Witness parent.

Worldly 1

In order to make a clear distinction between themselves and non-Witnesses, the organisation employs the word *worldly*. This pejorative term is employed liberally by all ranks of Jehovah’s Witnesses, not only to non-members but as an indicator of another Witnesses level of spirituality. This ties in with the expression Spiritually Weak (q.v.).

As a slur someone may be judged as having *worldly habits* dressing in a *worldly fashion* using *worldly language* or having *worldly associates*. This term is used in the society’s magazines in a similar manner.

By labelling non-Witnesses as being worldly, the society can control with whom a Witness associates and thereby keep their community closed. To reinforce this isolation, Paul’s admonition which teaches that “*bad associations spoil useful habits*” is frequently wheeled out. (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Harry Potter and the prohibited reading list 1

The society, by means of sermons and publications, takes it upon themselves to indirectly prohibit items of literature. Indirectly? “*As God-fearing Christians, would we want to read books or watch movies which depict wizards and sorcery?*” They draw an outline knowing the congregation will colour it in and take it upon themselves to authoritatively title the books not actually mentioned. “*You do know that talk means Harry Potter/Lord of the Rings etc. don’t you?*” and what should be conjecture becomes fact. This whole idea will often take on a life of its own with some parents going as far as to ban Disney movies because the animals talk – just like the snake in Genesis.

Stumbling 3

A verb intended to keep Witness behaviour in check. Taken from Jesus’ words in which he uses the word *stumble* to suggest an action by someone which causes another to trip and lose faith. For example, the issue of beards, which the organisation is against, was backed with poor reasoning but could be usefully underpinned with the probability that wearing a beard would stumble others. Worse – if they are stumbled they might lose faith and leave the religion with their blood on your hands. This is used as a catchall where scripture isn’t enough to back a prohibition. This can also be used as an add-on to rules of their own devising:

“*To express private, personal opinions that seem plausible to you but for which you have little or no basis, can easily confuse the immature, causing them to stumble*” – Watchtower, September 1961.

“*Never mind that we can’t find enough reason to condemn your behaviour, think how you might stumble others.*”

Its utility doesn't end there; it can also be used reflexively. Are you being stumbled? Are you allowing yourself to be stumbled? With this they can cast judgement on both the offender and the offended.

"Yes, they might have stumbled you, but did you allow yourself to be stumbled?"

This is also especially useful in preventing people from questioning teachings; if you have problems with the organisation or its members then you have allowed yourself to become stumbled.

Note: With no explanation, Watchtower change its position on beards in mid-December 2023 saying that there's no scriptural reason why beards cannot be worn.

Persecution 3

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." – Matthew 5: 11 (NIV)

Every adverse action against the religion at all levels is deemed persecution and the work of Satan. By this means the organisation can turn legitimate criticism against them as having been foretold and a fulfilment of scripture. They can interpret it as a form of vindication – after all if Jesus was persecuted, shouldn't we accept similar?

In recent years, Russian witness activity has been placed under ban. Ignoring this ban, many Witnesses have been placed under arrest providing

valuable column inches to the society's publications. What the organisation fails to mention is that Witnesses were not singled out – this applied to all religions placing themselves above the Russian Orthodox Church. These articles make no attempt to tackle the distinction between being persecuted for a religious belief and being arrested for breaking the law – it has to be persecution because of Jesus prophecy.

So frequent are the society's references and dramatic depictions of persecution that it has been labelled by some ex-Witnesses as "persecution porn" – something which gets Jehovah's Witnesses excited. After news broke about the Russian ban I received a text linking to the report with the line *"it's too late for you now"*. That is, things are now moving as prophesied and it's too late for repentance and salvation. Nice.

Persecution is used as the rationale for every adverse action against the society; that they are being sued repeatedly for covering up child sex abuse is clearly Satan-led persecution.

This has led to the belief that the end-times problems, known as The Great Tribulation, will result in governments world-wide imprisoning Jehovah's Witness, because they alone are God's chosen people. Fanciful dramatic reconstructions shown in videos on their website, convention videos and magazines, depict groups of Witnesses, holed-up, Anne Frank style, in basements and attics. These reconstructions use menacing music to elevate the mood of extreme threat and jeopardy until police, in full military-style flak jackets, helmets and carrying semi-automatic weapons, break into their refuge. The occupants then stare down their aggressors, unintimidated and defiant; God's chosen people. The inset is a frame from this video.

"If they treated Jesus in such a manner . . . then what should Jesus' followers expect? Being persecuted because of my faith has really strengthened my conviction that I am on the right path!" – Galina Parkova as reported on the organisation's website.



The Great Tribulation/Armageddon 3

Prophecies taken mostly from the gospels and Revelation, supposedly point to a time of upheaval with a series of defining events. These events mark the Great Tribulation and culminate in Armageddon and the destruction of non-Witnesses. For over a century the organisation has directly or indirectly nominated dates for this to begin.

The events heralding the Great Tribulation include

- The worldwide persecution of the organisation (see above).
- Jesus to start sorting human kind into the sheep and the goats.
- The rapture of the remaining Anointed (q.v.)
- A declaration of peace and security.
- The collapse of all other religions.
- The eventual start of Armageddon.

For the rank and file Witnesses the line between the two events – the start of the Great Tribulation and Armageddon – has been blurred. A condition which might usefully be termed “*Armageddon Fatigue*” affects many when a cataclysmic event takes place. The prophesied end-time signals no longer apply. Many after waiting literally their whole lives have hair-spring trigger responses. The Witness jungle drums via social media start banging out a clear message – “*this is it!*” Look at any natural or man-made disaster in the last sixty years from tsunamis to terrorism, e-bola to 9/11 and this will have been heralded by many as bible fulfilment and the start of Armageddon. They will rejoice and exchange congratulatory messages between themselves. Even the ruling Governing Body has been caught up in the fervour of anticipation. Consider this televised statement by Governing Body member, Stephen Lett at the very start of the corona virus pandemic:

“The events unfolding around us are making clear that we’re living in the final part of the Last Days, undoubtedly, the final part of the final part of the Last Days, shortly before the Last Day of the Last Days.” - March 2020

This is a clear signal to the rank and file that everything is going according to prophecy regardless of the fact that this is a reworking of similar messages made since the early twentieth century. The recent pandemic elicited a similar frenzy of expectations.

Most of the long-term servants of the religion are tired of waiting. They’ve given everything all their lives with diminishing evidence that anything is actually coming to pass. The repeated promises of “just a few more years”, “before the end of the century” and “only months away” are later disregarded by use of cognitive bias and intellectual dishonesty. The extract below from 1969, affected me personally.

“If you are a young person, you also need to face the fact that you will never grow old in this present system of things. Why not? Because all the evidence in fulfillment of Bible prophecy indicates that this corrupt system is due to end in a few years... Therefore, as a young person, you will never fulfill any career that this system offers. If you are in high school and thinking about a college education, it means at least four, perhaps even six or eight more years to graduate into a specialized career. But where will this system of things be by that time? It will be well on the way toward its finish, if not actually gone!” - Awake! 1969 May 22 p.15.

Are they a cult? 1

There are many metrics which are used to define what exactly a cult is to the extent that this encompasses such things multi-level marketing schemes. Whatever criteria employed, they will all recognise high control as the single most consistent measure.

Steve Hassan, once a member of the Moonie movement and now a recognised authority on cults, established the B.I.T.E model of authoritarian control; **B**ehaviour control, **I**nformation control, **T**hought control, **E**motional control. This model, which can be seen in detail on the internet, breaks down these component parts to show how cults will bring adherents into dependency and isolation. There is little doubt that this religion matches an unhealthy number of the criteria listed here.

Behaviour control

- Dictate where, how, and with whom the member lives and associates or isolates.
- Control types of clothing and hairstyles.
- Financial exploitation, manipulation or dependence.
- Restrict leisure, entertainment, vacation time.
- Discourage individualism, encourage group-think.
- Instil dependency and obedience.

Information control

- Distort information to make it more acceptable
- Minimize or discourage access to non-cult sources of information.
- Keep members busy so they don't have time to think and investigate.
- Impose a buddy system to monitor and control member.
- Report deviant thoughts, feelings and actions to leadership.

Thought Control

- Adopting the group's 'map of reality' as reality.
- Instil black and white thinking.
- Decide between good vs. evil.
- Organise people into us vs. them (insiders vs. outsiders).
- Use of loaded language and clichés which constrict knowledge, stop critical thoughts and reduce complexities into platitudinous buzz words.
- Encourage only 'good and proper' thoughts.

Emotional Control

- Make the person feel that problems are always their own fault, never the leader's or the group's fault.
- Promote feelings of guilt or unworthiness, such as not living up to what is required. Instil fear, such as fear of thinking independently and the outside world.

Of course, members will argue that their religion is not a cult, but when did anyone within a cult ever recognise this?

“The Truth” 2

With unalloyed arrogance, the religion refers to its collective teachings as “The Truth” based on an expression of Jesus. It is used as a badge of identity and commitment – “are you in the truth?”, “how long have you been in the truth?”, “who brought you into the truth?”, “we need to keep up meeting attendance to remain in the truth!” and of course “could you be doing more for the truth?”

This term is so prevalent that ex-Witnesses find this a triggering expression. It portrays a binary stance – you’re either in “the truth” or in “the world”. It is used to create a self-defined delineation – there is no middle ground. It can be used in much the same way in describing someone’s piety as can their spiritual strength (q.v. Spiritually weak) and used as a barometer of a Witnesses standing in the congregation; “they aren’t very strong in the truth.” Consistent with many idioms peculiar to Jehovah’s Witnesses, it is easily exploited to become a pejorative expression.

As the inset here shows, to be “in the Truth” you need to trust the Watchtower organisation.

“To resist Satan’s attacks, we need to deepen our trust in Jesus and in the role he plays in God’s purpose. We also need to trust in the only channel that Jehovah is using today.” – Watchtower July 2020 article – Keep Walking in the Truth

Satan and his Demons 3

Again, a nice catchall for the society. Apostate material comes from Satan and his demons along with your bad thoughts and deeds. The tendrils of this trope extend into Tarot, witchcraft, divination of any sort, astrology, Harry Potter, Smurfs, fortune telling, lucky charms, Yoga, Tai Chi, hypnotism, back-masking on records and many more. Though these claims are unverifiable, the rank and file will claim they’re also unfalsifiable and therefore true.



Many ex-Witnesses will recount stories of their childhood where the simplest of natural things had become items of terror. Parents will dutifully relate to their children the dangers of demon possession which can come from owning an inappropriate toy or watching an unsuitable film.

The following is a true, personal experience.

My family went away with another Witness family over the Christmas period. Whilst tobogganing, and against my father’s warning, the father of the other family placed his child in front of him on the sled and crashed it with the little girl breaking her leg. A short time after, the father spoke of the incident in front of the congregation. He made it clear that his child’s leg had been broken because she had worn a coat bought in a charity/goodwill shop. The previous owner had clearly been involved in divination, hence the coat was demon possessed.

Possession of objects by the demons has been attributed to many things carrying along with this message the associated menace. For children the demonic can become a point of terror and the only clear explanation for the unexplainable. They will be unable to find solace in the comfort of parents who will have bought into the idea and likely back it up – “Yes, it’s probably demon possession.”

“Often the wild and uncontrolled conduct of mentally unbalanced persons is due to possession by these invisible minions of Satan. Sometimes it is reported that spirit mediums have cast these demons out” – Insight on the Scriptures, Vol 1 p 614.

The anecdotes spawned by these ideas are legendary with such stories as possessed toys walking out of Witness meetings unable to “take the truth being preached” (it was a Smurf!).

Satanic influence can be found disseminated in any media – books, radio, popular music, films and television and of course, worldly people. The smallest thing can become a gateway object if its provenance isn’t fully checked. This is not to say that demons are a constant, ever-present worry, but more a gap-filler for the unexplained.

We have recently published articles questioning the generally accepted theory of gravitation. Demons manifestly understand how to insulate against gravitation, if it exists. To the existence of this power we attribute the erection of the Great Pyramid, the handling of the great stones at Baalbek, the setting up of the statues at Easter Island, and the placement of blocks in the Peruvian fortress above Cuzco.

Golden Age, April 13, 1932

The supernatural realm has not suddenly exploded in modern days resulting from the amount of media exposure it gets on television and in films. In the early days the society put out many articles recounting strange events worldwide, blaming the supernatural. When the organisation, for some reason, doubted gravity, it suggested it had demonic connections. Politicians – Mussolini in particular – consulted demons and each Thursday night, demons enabled a German woman to speak Aramaic, Latin and Hebrew.

With particular regard to hypnotism, which is viewed as placing someone in a bewitched-like state, the line taken is that any form of meditation and similar mental exercise, opens the door to demon possession.

The Bible 0

From shunning family members to sexism and misogyny, anything can be justified, prescribed or prohibited by a tortuous interpretation of the scriptures. This is the Swiss Army knife of control and from it, anyone in relative authority, can pull out a suitable tool. It is intended to be the source of the highest authority. It justifies the existence of the Governing Body along with the deference owed to it.

In the 1950s, the organisation presented its own version of the bible known as *The New World Translation*. Scholars have criticised it openly as “a translation influenced by doctrine” and “not without bias”, noting that many verses have been manipulated in translation to fit with the organisation’s narrative. Since now being read largely on digital devices, it has the luxury of being frequently adjusted and revised with the end user barely being aware.

The Platform 2

Talks, lectures, discourses, demonstrations are given from “the platform”. This front-of-hall podium which will have a microphone and lectern is where doctrine and admonition are given. It is synonymous with authority: “That advice came from the platform.” That which is dispensed from the platform is the final authority. It represents the only information you need; a talisman for truth. If it comes “from the platform” it is beyond questioning.

Reaching Out 2

This is a double-edged term ultimately producing stress, exclusively for male Witnesses. To “reach out” means to make an effort to rise in the ranks and as such is directed to men only. This is, as pointed out, doubled edged as in “the elders would like to see reach out” or “you don’t appear to be reaching out.” Either way the subtext here, even as a message of encouragement, can be easily read as “we’ve discussed your situation and feel you’re not doing enough.”

Glossary of terms

Anointed (remnant)	A select group who self-identify as eventually ruling in heaven.
Armageddon	The coming destruction of non-Witnesses.
Apostate (i)	Someone who no longer subscribes to a previously held ideology (per dictionary).
Apostate (ii)	Someone malevolently disposed to Watchtower (per Watchtower rhetoric).
Awake!	Sister magazine to the Watchtower, ostensibly non-religious in content.
Baptism	The irrevocable subjection to the religion by water immersion.
Bethel	The local branch headquarters of the organisation; nine at the time of writing.
Bethelite	A (usually young) Witness selected to work at a branch office.
Bible study	A member of the public who is studying the organisation's doctrines.
Brother	A baptised male.
Circuit Overseer	An itinerant elder who has jurisdiction over a number of congregations.
Disfellowshipping	The excommunication of a Witness with resulting attendant shunning.
Disassociation	Voluntary excommunication with resulting attendant shunning.
Doors (the)	Door-to-door evangelising work. "I spent an hour on the doors, today."
Elder	A male Witness who is assigned administrative, executive and pastoral duties.
Field service	Evangelising work, mostly door-to-door.
Fleshly	A prefix used to denote blood-siblings rather than a non-relative Witness.
Governing Body	A group of men who determine doctrinal directives.
Great crowd	The Witnesses who survive Armageddon but aren't going to heaven.
Great Tribulation	A manifestation of the end times prophecies in the gospels and Revelation.
Jehovah	The name given to the God of the bible derived from the Hebrew tetragrammaton.
Judicial committee	A jury of three elders convened to judge transgressors.
Marking	A Witness is marked by the congregation for intermediate wrongdoing.
Mentally diseased	Ex Jehovah's Witness.
Ministry	Door-to-door evangelising work.
Ministerial servant	He will be an assistant to the elders but will have no executive authority.
New light	A revised doctrine or belief replacing something labelled as "old light".
Old light	An old doctrine or belief now replaced by "new light".
Order (the)	The Watchtower, Bible and Tract Society as used in internal contracts.
Organisation (the)	The Watchtower, Bible and Tract Society.
Paradise (earth)	The promised restoration of earth after Armageddon.
Pioneer	A Witness who volunteers to dedicate themselves to unpaid, full-time ministry.
Publisher	A baptised Witness who does ministry work – a "publisher of the good news".
Publisher record	A tally of the hours spent on the ministry by individual Witnesses.
Reaching out	To advance in the ranks through more effort, usually in the ministry.
Shepherding call	A visit by elders to someone seen as weak in attendance and/or preaching.
Sister	A baptised female.
Society (the)	The Watchtower, Bible and Tract Society.
Theocratic warfare	A licence for Witnesses to lie where they believe truth is not deserved.
The platform	A podium from which talks are given and so a symbol of authority.
Watchtower (i)	The Watchtower, Bible and Tract Society – the controlling company.
Watchtower (ii)	The principle study magazine. First published in 1879.
Witness (a)	(Noun) An individual baptised into the religion.
Witness (to)	(Verb) To carry out ad hoc or arranged ministry work.
Worldly (i)	Non Witness.
Worldly (ii)	Showing non-Witness traits. A pejorative.

Appendix

1. Funeral discourse guide.

Funeral Discourse

PLEASE NOTE: Opening with prayer is optional. The purpose of the talk is to uphold Jehovah as a God of love and mercy and at the same time bring comfort to the bereaved. Give a fine witness concerning the truth, but also make your talk warm and personal. Not all points and scriptures need to be used. Adapt the material to match the circumstances of the deceased and the needs of grieving ones. While not overpraising the deceased, you may use events from his life throughout the talk to show how those in attendance can benefit from his example. Use good balance in this regard. You may choose to arrange a well-rehearsed interview with a brother in good standing who knew the deceased well. Any use of humor should be moderate. The dignity of the occasion should be preserved. The talk need not exceed 30 minutes. Do not invite the audience to make expressions about the deceased, as this could introduce inappropriate or unscriptural elements into the program. An appropriate Kingdom song may be used to open or close the program or both. A brief prayer at the close is fitting. When arrangements are made to go to the grave, it is good to consider quite briefly our Kingdom hope, reading one or two scriptures, such as Job 14:14, 15 and 1 Corinthians 15:54b-57. This service may also be closed with prayer, thanking Jehovah for the resurrection hope

REMARKS REGARDING THE DECEASED

[Use any that apply and are appropriate]

Give details regarding age, birth, when married, surviving family, and so forth

Share the dedication record of the deceased, including privileges of service

Highlight exemplary qualities displayed by the deceased (Ec 7:1)

WE NEED COMFORT AT TIMES OF LOSS

Grief is a normal reaction to the loss of a loved one (Ge 23:2; 37:34, 35)

When Lazarus died, Jesus showed sympathy and provided comfort for those grieving (Joh 11:23-26, 33-35)

Jehovah God has tender feelings for those who grieve and promises to comfort them (Ps 34:18; 147:3)

THE BIBLE GIVES A HOPE FOR THE DEAD

Jehovah is the God of wisdom, justice, love, and power

Death was not part of his original purpose for mankind

Death is the result of Adam's disobedience (Ge 2:7, 15-17; 3:19)

All of Adam's descendants have inherited death (Ro 5:12)

God has provided a hope that is sure to be realized (Isa 55:10, 11; Re 21:4)

The Bible clearly tells us the condition of the dead

The soul is mortal (Eze 18:4, 20)

The dead are unconscious (Ps 146:4; Ec 9:5, 10)

The Bible gives hope that millions who have died will live again

The resurrection hope is made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Mt 20:28)

Christ's resurrection provides a guarantee (1Co 15:22, 23)

God has appointed Jesus to raise the dead (Joh 5:28, 29)

Anointed Christians are resurrected to heavenly life (1Co 15:51-54; Re 20:4, 6)

Jesus' "other sheep" will be resurrected to life in the earthly Paradise (Joh 10:16; Lu 23:43)

Those who lived and died without an opportunity to understand and apply Bible truth also have the prospect of a resurrection (Ac 24:15)

HOW WE CAN BENEFIT FROM BEING HERE

A funeral reminds us of the brevity and uncertainty of life (Ec 9:11)

The reality of death makes us think about how we are using our life (Ps 90:12)

Funeral Discourse

Page 2

By the way we live, we can make "a good name" with Jehovah God (Ec 7:1-4)

Jesus said for us to store up treasures in heaven (Mt 6:19-21)

By our zealous works and godly conduct, we share in sanctifying Jehovah's name (Pr 27:11)

The resurrection hope provides an incentive to learn and do God's will (1Co 15:58; 1Ti 2:3, 4)

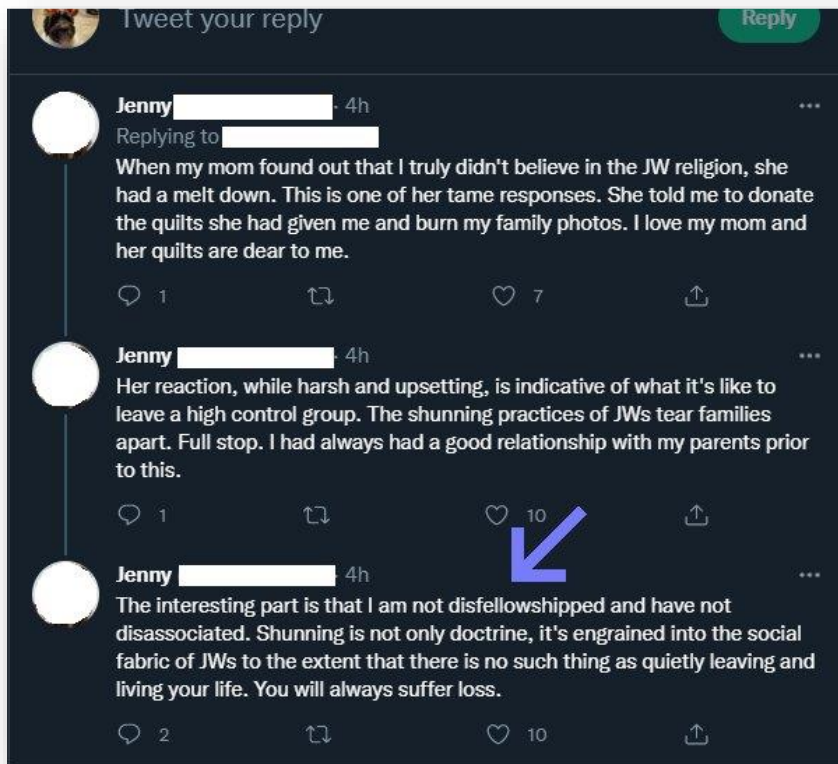
Those who do so can be certain that they will soon see their resurrected loved ones again

We should use this occasion and the days ahead to comfort one another (1Th 5:11)

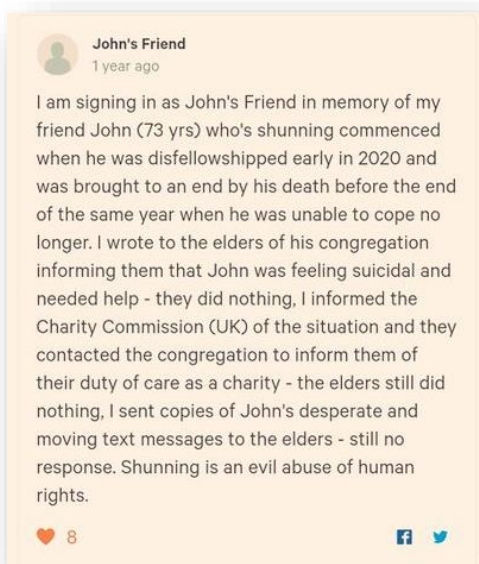
As fellow believers, we can remind one another of our sure hope and provide emotional support (Pr 17:17)

We prayerfully look to Jehovah to give needed strength until he provides permanent relief (Ps 9:9, 10)

4. A sample taken when asked to provide shunning experiences on Twitter.



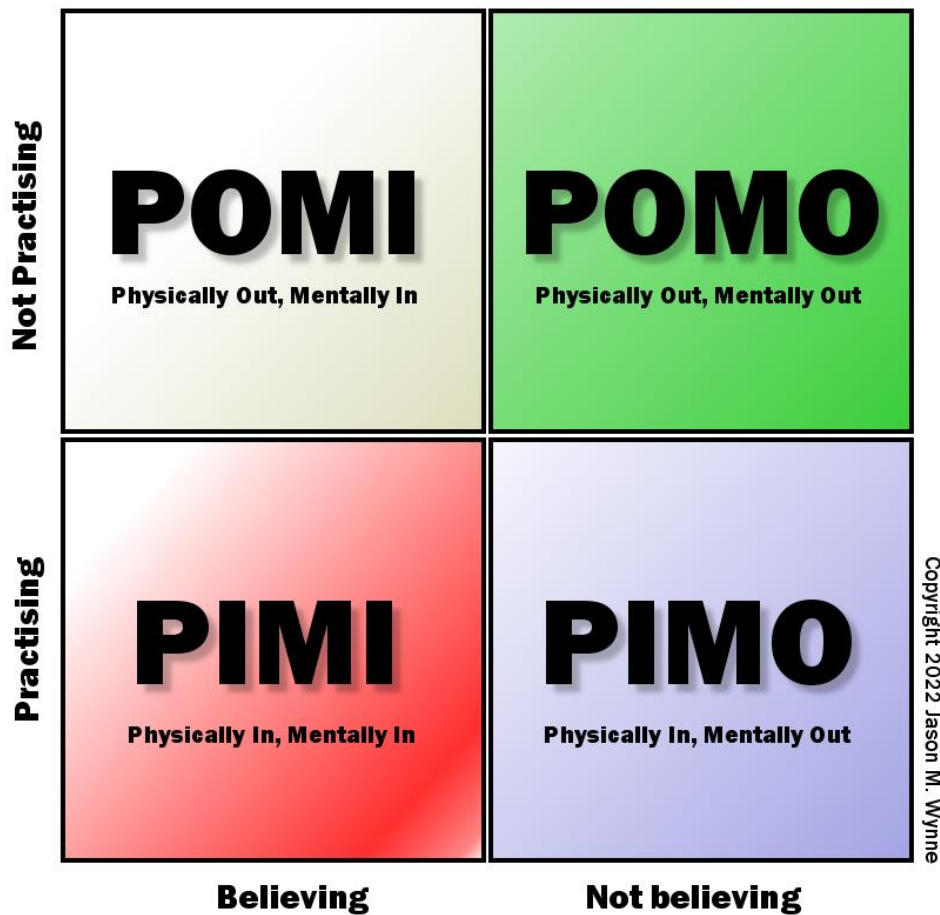
5. An experience on a change.org issue intended to bring shunning to the attention of the government.



6. This on-point meme illustrates the problems Ex-Witnesses have in conveying the trauma they have experienced while in the religion.



7. Diagram illustrating the physical and mental commitment divisions.



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