

Delivered From Deception

My name is Joe Wilson. Along with my wife and teenage son, I am a part of Faithworld Center (Indianapolis East Foursquare Church) in Indiana, pastored by Josh Stahl. Prior to coming to Faithworld Center, when my heart was just beginning to open to God, I started attending La Familia Cristiana (Indianapolis Hispanic Foursquare Church), pastored by Olga Medina. That is where I gave my heart to Christ.

My search for God began almost 30 years ago. I remember asking questions to myself about Christ: *Why did such a good man have to die?, Why was He tortured to death by His own people?* In my spiritual ignorance, I wanted to know God's plan for salvation, but I didn't even know the right questions to ask.

At this point, I first came into contact with religion—Mormonism first, then the Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses seemed to answer all of my questions; they had a little book for everything. I soon married a high school friend who was a Witness.

After a few years, I was appointed a ministerial servant (similar to a deacon). It was my cue that I was "approved" by God; if the Watchtower Society granted you privileges, it was the same as God smiling on you. Soon I carried many weighty responsibilities. I remember having to isolate myself more and more from my family to carry out my duties as an elder.

Then, due to immorality in the congregation and the consequential loss of two elders, my workload increased to an unbearable degree. My separation from my family also increased. It became too difficult to juggle everything.

I knew I should be caring for my family, but as I viewed it, I could let down my family or let down God. There was no separating our religious organization from God himself. With Jehovah's Witnesses, the "truth" and the "organization" are

your whole world.

With the cracks leading to a collapse clearly in place, the catalyst that started all things crumbling was a fire, which destroyed our home in January 1999. I finally had the good sense to step aside as an elder to care for my family and to take on the task of building a new home. However, as with our house, the damage to my family was already done. My marriage crumbled.

My faith was in shambles. I was burned out. After relocating, I lost my new home to foreclosure because of the divorce. I also lost my job. My kids were the only thing I didn't lose.

By this time, with all that my family went through, I could not continue on with the Witnesses, mainly because I did not feel true love from them. I was completely drained, and when we needed support the most, we were abandoned.

At the same time, however, I could not consider any other belief, because we were programmed to believe all other religions were a part of Babylon the Great; all other churches were under Satan's control.

Soon thereafter, I met my wife, Arely. She would go to church occasionally, but I wanted nothing to do with it. During this time, my sister, who had drug problems for many years, entered a Bible-based rehab program. She made remarkable changes. My brother also became a Christian during this period. I wondered what was happening to everyone around me.

I decided to start going to church with Arely as an occasional Sunday churchgoer. Needless to say, I hated it. But Arely helped me without even knowing it. At night, she would read her Bible; she didn't say anything but would just sit there and read. I started asking her what she was reading about. She would read to me from the Bible. It was very comforting.

One Sunday, the pastor highlighted Hebrews chapter 11. It was

like cool water flowing over me. Then, more Sundays, more Scriptures, more cool water; it was so refreshing. I began to be consumed with a desire to read God's Word.

I eventually gave my heart to Christ. God is truly blessing my family. In addition to my brother and sister becoming Christians, my mother and niece are now attending a Foursquare Church with my sister. One of my cousins is now a Christian serving in youth ministry.

My closest aunt and uncle's lives have been touched by God; they recently gave their testimony at our church. And now my youngest son, a teenager, is reading the Bible and growing. How could you not glorify a loving Father who does such great things?

All of the anger and confusion of the past is gone. I don't blame anyone for what happened. My life was not a waste. It was a preparation. Because of what happened, I have a burning desire to follow my Lord wherever he leads; and with my wife and children, I want to help His sheep do the same.

To share the water that gives everlasting life—isn't that what it is all about? God has even given me the desire to share these waters with my former Witness associates. I have begun doing it with joy.

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