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Ex-Jehovah's witness reveals secrets of religious group

The treatment of women, child abuse and how to prevent being visited by followers of the religion are among topics confronted by ex-member

Samuel Osborne | @SamuelOsborne93 | Monday 29 August 2016 | 55 comments

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Jehovah's Witnesses at an annual conference in Paris *Getty*

A former Jehovah's Witness has offered a rare insight into the religious group, describing it as a cult that "tries to control emotions, thought, information and behavior of a person".

The man, who did not want to be formally identified, shared his experience of growing up as a Jehovah's Witness in Poland in an [Ask Me Anything post on Reddit](#).

Using the username "Ohmyjw", the former Jehovah's Witness (JW) elder speaks out against the group's rules, such as prohibiting blood transfusion "even if that costs them their life" or believing the world "will end in Armageddon 'very soon'".

However, he said he tried to "never give an impression that JWs are dumb or intelligent", adding that "many of them are actually quite intelligent, albeit deluded people".

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He also described how his family now refused to acknowledge him and his wife after they left the group.

Those who leave the faith are called "apostates" and are "disfellowshipped", a term for formal expulsion and shunning, where members are "prohibited from talking, and even from saying 'hello' to them", according to Ohmyjw.

In one situation where an elder started to lose his faith and challenge the group, he said they allegedly denounced him and spread gossip about him, pressuring him "so much he jumped into a river and killed himself".

When asked how women were regarded in JW society, the former elder said they were thought of as "a complement for a man", adding: "She should be submissive to her husband, who is the head of their family and it is he who makes all the important decisions.

"Women cannot teach in the congregation, they cannot deliver public talks or say public prayers. When they conduct a private Bible study or say a prayer with another person, while a man is around, she has to wear a scarf on her head as a sign of being submissive."

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One questioner asked what they should do to avoid Jehovah's Witnesses knocking on their door.

Ohmyjw saod the group had "do not call" lists which people can specifically ask to be added to.

He also criticised the group for having a "big problem with child abuse," saying "they believe child abuse is only a sin, not really a crime, the elders in almost all cases don't report to the authorities, instead they try to handle it inside the congregation".

The group allegedly requires "two witnesses to the event" and regularly decide to "leave the matter in the hands of Jehovah".

"They basically value the 'good name of the organisation' more than the safety of the children," he adds.

Discussing what made him and his wife leave the group, ohmyjw wrote: "For me it was actually doctrine. We started to read more and more Bible, and started to find things that the JW publications got wrong.

"We started to ask questions. Then we encountered first hand what happens when you ask hard questions while being a JW. We got punished in the congregation for that, instead of receiving any answers at all.

"That prompted us to dig deeper and deeper, until we convinced ourselves that this could not be the true religion with all its lies and faults."