



SHUN: A 4-LETTER WORD

Disfellowshipping. Where does this word appear in the Bible? It doesn't. And if it doesn't exist, perhaps the result of disfellowshipping (i.e., shunning) only has power over us if we allow it. There's a saying, "We teach others how to treat us."

When Jehovah's Witnesses announce that they *need* to shun us, most of us tend to play by their rules because we simply don't know what else to do. We may unwillingly enable their behavior by keeping our distance. The silence turns into weeks, then months and then years.

But what would happen if we refused to participate in this shunning behavior? What if we stopped playing *their* game? We're family after all, and blood is supposed to be thicker than the Jehovah's Witness-diluted water! What would our long-lost relatives do if we repeatedly called them up and said in a loving manner, "Nope, you're not getting rid of me that easily." Imagine their horror and dismay! We have just taken their power away! (Makes you want to pick up that phone now, doesn't it?)

My friend, Dee, recently challenged her elderly Jehovah's Witness mother on this very point. You see, for twenty years Dee had remained silent when her mother said or did something offensive and those ill feelings had welled up like a cancer inside of her. As any good friend would do, I pointed out to Dee that she had as every bit as much right to use her voice as her mother. Dee seized the opportunity to use her voice one day soon thereafter when her mother told a racial joke and began laughing. (Yes, so-called "Christian" Jehovah's Witnesses can and do have prejudices!) Dee expressed her own values in relation to the joke. Her mother, of course, immediately tried to shut her down. Mom's knee-jerk reaction: "Leave and never come back!" Dee's reply? "Mom, I love you, and I'm your daughter and you can't change that fact. I'll see you next week." And guess what—it worked! Not only did Dee set boundaries with her mother, she found she could maintain a relationship with her. Granted, the relationship may not always be wrinkle-free, but it exists.

Keep in mind that ostracism is the behavior Jehovah's Witnesses employ to *try to control us*. **You will never hear the Watchtower leaders (elders/Governing Body) admit that the real purpose of shunning is to keep Jehovah's Witnesses from learning things about the organization that they never knew**—things a defector may be able to share once they have left and been exposed to *the truth*. And perhaps (in some cases), ostracism enables Jehovah's Witnesses to feel superior as "Jehovah's chosen ones." Elitism has its rewards. It validates the erroneous belief that they alone have God's ear. It's the old black and white mentality so indicative of a cult: If you aren't with us, you're against us.

Of course, I'm not advocating that all former Jehovah's Witnesses try to rekindle relationships with long-lost family members and friends. We have to weigh whether or not it is worth it. If the relationship is continuously combative and your Jehovah Witness relative or friend isn't able to respect a smidgeon of your value system (which is typically the case), then perhaps you might want to call them up someday and announce to *them* that while you love them, you have found that their dysfunctional life is too toxic to allow into *your* life on a frequent basis. After all, in the road of life, boundaries can travel both directions.



WHY WERE YOU SHUNNED BY YOUR FAMILY AND JEHOVAH WITNESS FRIENDS?

...because in 1980 I moved away and stopped attending their meetings. I became inactive. That was my sin. – Brenda Lee

...for the horrible sin of **celebrating Christmas**. Interestingly enough, about four years after they gave me the boot, one of the elders who sat on the (judicial) committee that gave me the boot contacted me and invited me to *his* Christmas party. Seems he too saw the light and left the organization. – Dustin

...because we **wrote a tract about the "no blood transfusion"** teaching. We realized that the Watchtower interpretation of scriptures used to support their view was taken out of context and was not applicable to the banning of blood transfusions. We wrote to the Sydney headquarters of the Watchtower Society, and they replied three times. In the last letter they disfellowshipped (excommunicated) us for "starting a sect," which was totally untrue. We were simply using our right to freedom of speech to disagree with their dogma. – Rhona

...for **dating someone** prior to my divorce being finalized. My divorce was in process; I was scripturally free and yet I was disfellowshipped on a technicality. – Anonymous

...**doubts and questions** started the ball rolling:

- 1) Why couldn't we be married to our husband/wife after the resurrection?
- 2) Why can't women wear pants to the Kingdom Halls? It's a heck of a lot better than the men seeing all those bare thighs, isn't it? And has any elder ever tried to sit for two hours with his knees pressed together!?
- 3) Why must men follow rules about their sideburn length? They couldn't be longer than halfway down the ear. What's that got to do with anything?
- 4) After having a family, why was it wrong for a man to get a vasectomy?
- 5) Why must a woman scream when she is being raped? It seems downright absurd and cruel to insist upon this, especially if the woman's life (or her children's lives) were on the line.

Another thing that really got me thinking was when (at the weekly group Bible study in my home) the elder explained it was necessary for Jehovah to kill the children of nonbelievers at Armageddon because it would be like ridding your home of pests, like rats. If you opened a drawer and found a nest of little baby rats, you would kill them too, wouldn't you?! After all, they'd grow up to be big rats. That explanation in particular did not sit well with me....Around 1973, my husband and I bought a puppy from a family of non-JWs and got involved with dog shows. To my surprise these worldly people had high moral standards; didn't swear; were friendly, kind, and unselfish; and put their children first in their lives. What a shock! I'd been convinced that all worldly people were liars, cheaters, non-law-abiding and lived life for quick thrills. I was expecting their evil might rub off on us. Well, guess what? It wasn't like that. So someone was very mistaken about these so-called "worldly" people. One of my sisters was *so* upset that we'd made these friends and socialized with other "worldly" people that she berated me and referred to them vehemently as my "doggie friends"! I gradually faded away from the congregation. My sister couldn't accept the choice I'd made. When she saw Christmas lights, she rushed to the

Out of the Cocoon



elders, and they disfellowshipped me. Yes, I was condemned to eternal death and disowned by my family because of **Christmas lights!** - Charlotte



**UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCE SHOULD JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
SHUN FAMILY MEMBERS—
ACCORDING TO THE WATCHTOWER ORGANIZATION?**

When a Jehovah Witness (male only) qualifies to be an elder (a local leader) in the congregation, he is given an uncirculated proprietary book, *Pay Attention To Yourselves and to All the Flock*, that tells him how to counsel other members.

Page 103 says:

“Jehovah's Witnesses need not be disfellowshipped for associating with disfellowshipped relatives **except if the association involves "spiritual association" or if there is an attempt to excuse the former member's objectional behavior.** “Normally, a close relative would **not** be disfellowshipped for associating with a disfellowshipped person unless there is spiritual association or an effort made to excuse the wrongful course.” (bold added for emphasis)

What does the Watchtower's *Public Relations* Website say regarding shunning? (emphasis added)

Do you shun former members? <http://www.jw-media.org/beliefs/beliefsfaq.htm>:

“Those **who become inactive** in the congregation, perhaps even drifting away from association with fellow believers, **are not shunned**. In fact, special effort is made to reach out to them and rekindle their spiritual interest. If, however, someone unrepentantly practices serious sins, such as drunkenness, stealing or adultery, he will be **disfellowshipped** and such an individual is avoided by former fellow-worshippers. Every effort is made to help wrongdoers. But if they are unrepentant, the congregation needs to be protected from their influence. The Bible clearly states: 'Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.'

What does the Watchtower's *literature* say regarding shunning?

"Such ones willfully abandoning the Christian congregation thereby **become part of the "antichrist."** (1 John 2:18, 19)" "A person who had willfully and formally **disassociated himself** from the congregation would have matched that description." -The Watchtower December 15th 1984 Issue, Page 31

"Cooperating with the Scriptural arrangement to disfellowship **and shun** unrepentant wrongdoers is beneficial." - Kingdom Ministry, August 2002

"**By also avoiding** persons who have deliberately **disassociated** themselves, Christians are protected from possible critical, unappreciative, or even apostate views." "**shunning** would be appropriate... for anyone who rejects the congregation [of Jehovah's Witnesses]" -The Watchtower April 15th 1988 Issue

Jehovah's Witnesses--think about this: Why does the Watchtower lie to the general public, saying they don't shun Jehovah's Witnesses "who become inactive" and yet tell their members to shun them? Are you guilty of shunning a family member who is no longer an active Jehovah's Witness? If you are, why are you shunning your son, daughter, mother, father, sister, brother, etc., when the Watchtower makes it clear to the elders that



they would *not* disfellowship *you* for talking to your loved one, except if there was spiritual association (or if you condoned what they were doing)? Does it feel right to shun someone you love?

How can the Watchtower leaders call your organization “the truth” and lie?

Why does the watchtower practice excommunication/ disfellowshipping when they themselves point out that it is a *pagan* practice?



In his own day Paul had to contend for his right to the position and responsibilities of an apostle of Jesus Christ. Not out of peevishness over that fact, but as a warning to Christians today he wrote concerning religious deceivers: "Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an

angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Cor. 11: 13-15) All those who blindly follow such false apostles through this postwar world will in time go down with them into the ditch of destruction at the battle of Armageddon, "the battle of that great day of God Almighty."



Are You Also Excommunicated?

IF YOU are one of the 138,000,000 people in the world that were born and raised as "Protestants", then you are already excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Hierarchy. This means that you are looked upon with the blackest contempt by the Vatican, being cursed and damned with the Devil and his angels. Says the *Catholic Encyclopedia*:

With the foregoing exceptions [infidels, pagans, Mohammedans, and Jews], all who have been baptized are liable to excommunication, even those [protestants] who have never belonged to the true Church, since by their baptism they are really her subjects, though of course rebellious ones. Moreover, the Church excommunicates not only those who abandon the true faith to embrace [protestant] schism or heresy, but likewise the members of heretical and schismatic communities who have been born therein.

All those belonging to such lodges as the Masonic, Fenians, Independent Order of Good Templars, Odd Fellows, Sons of Temperance, or the Knights of Pythias, are also excommunicated.

This is "canon law" which the Roman Catholic Hierarchy seeks to enforce on the pretext that it is God's law. The authority for excommunication, they claim, is based on the teachings of Christ and the apostles, as found in the following scriptures: Matthew 18: 15-19; 1 Corinthians 5: 3-5; 16: 22; Galatians 1: 8, 9; 1 Timothy 1: 20; Titus 3: 10. But the

Hierarchy's excommunication, as a punishment and "medicinal" remedy (*Catholic Encyclopedia*), finds no support in these scriptures. In fact, it is altogether foreign to Bible teachings.—Hebrews 10: 26-31.

Where, then, did this practice originate? The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says that papal excommunication is not without pagan influence, "and its variations cannot be adequately explained unless account be taken of several non-Christian analogues of excommunication." The superstitious Greeks believed that when an excommunicated person died the Devil entered the body, and therefore, "in order to prevent it, the relatives of the deceased cut his body in pieces and boil them in wine." Even the Druids had a method of expelling those who lost faith in their religious superstitions. It was therefore after Catholicism adopted its pagan practices, A.D. 325, that this new chapter in religious excommunication was written.

Thereafter, as the pretensions of the Hierarchy increased, the weapon of excommunication became the instrument by which the clergy attained a combination of ecclesiastical power and secular tyranny that finds no parallel in history. Princes and potentates that opposed the dictates of the Vatican were speedily impaled on the tines of excommunication and hung over persecution fires. Not