

WHO AM I AFTER LEAVING THE JEHOVAH WITNESSES?



An elderly couple went to England to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. They both liked antiques and pottery, and especially teacups, so they stopped at a local antique shop. Spotting an exceptional cup, they asked, "May we see that? We've never seen a cup quite so beautiful."

As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the teacup whispered back: You don't understand; I have not always been a teacup. There was a time when I was just an impressionable lump of red clay. My name was 'Worldly' and I was so lonely. The 'Jehova Witnesses' showed up, took me into their church, I mean Kingdom Hall, and rolled, pounded and patted me over and over. At first I liked all the attention, but then it began to hurt. I yelled out, "Don't do that. I don't like it! Leave me alone!" but they only smiled and quoted scriptures to me. The peer pressure was so intense and the punishment so severe, I was afraid to disagree, so I said nothing more.

Then. WHAM! I was placed on a spinning wheel crammed with meetings, 'Bible' studies, and service work. I was spun around and around and around. "Stop it! I'm getting so dizzy! I'm can't think straight!" I screamed; but they never heard me. They spun me, poked and prodded, and bent me out of shape. Finally, I screamed! They responded by placing me into an oven. They said it wasn't hell (because there's no such thing as a fiery hell), but I tell ya, I never felt such heat! I yelled and knocked and pounded at the door as they abused me. "Help! Get me out of here!" From inside that furnace, I could see them sitting authoritatively at their judicial committee table, as cool as polar bears, as I sweated profusely. I read their lips as they mouthed, "Repent, unbeliever!" I held firm to my convictions and refused to succumb to their intimidation and bullying tactics. I demanded, "Let me out—now!"

When I thought I couldn't bear it another minute, the door opened. In no time at all, they pronounced me unfit and threw me out onto the road—alone and afraid. Yet, it felt incredible to be free! "Ah, this is much better," I thought. After I cooled down and my anger subsided, the world painted me—a new teacup (which the Jehovah Witnesses renamed 'Apostate')—with a splash of vibrant color. Do you know what else happened? Nearly everything smelled sweeter. I felt *so* alive! And as each day went by, the pain lessened.

Years later I passed by a mirror, a window into my soul, and saw something remarkable. "That's not me; that couldn't be me. I'm beautiful," I sobbed. Quietly, my best friend (the tea kettle, of course) spoke. She said: "I know it hurt to be rolled and pounded and patted, but had you been left alone, you'd not be the person you are today. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel and it was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but even still, you if you hadn't been put through that experience, you would never have been made into this strong teacup. You had to become hardened before you could hold anything so warm and soothing inside. If you hadn't ventured into the world, you would not have had the colorful life you have right now. Now you are a finished product and so many people in your new life love you—unconditionally—even though your Jehovah Witness family, gripped by fear, cannot."



The moral of this story is: When life seems incredibly hard, and you have been pounded and patted and pushed almost beyond endurance; when your world seems to be spinning out of control; when you feel like you have been in a fiery furnace of trials; when life seems to "stink," and you can make no sense of why you have suffered what you have, try this: Brew a cup of your favorite tea in your nicest tea cup, sit down and think about the beautiful, remarkable person you have become. And remind yourself:

“I am not a victim. I am a *survivor!*” ...Uhh, teacup, I mean.

PS. For advice to help you become the very best teapot that you can be, contact Brenda Lee, author of *Out of the Cocoon: A Young Woman's Courageous Flight from the Grip of a Religious Cult*,” www.outofthecocoon.net