

The Results of the Second
Annual Global Survey
of
Jehovah's Witnesses

2012

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A message to the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses

Dear Brothers

Last year we sent you the results of the 2011 Global Survey of Jehovah's Witnesses by registered post. It was thought that, just perhaps, you might have some interest in the views of the **1,118** current and former Witnesses who took part in our initial survey. We therefore posted the results in seven identical copies by UPS on 8th February 2012, and received confirmation of receipt by a Brother "Yomeitsu" at World Headquarters in Brooklyn on 15th February at 11:02 AM. A screenshot of the delivery confirmation is below...



Sadly, we cannot say we were surprised when you neglected to reply to the survey results, or even acknowledge their receipt. For some time now you have earned a reputation among your flock of being disinterested and aloof to the needs and opinions of individual Witnesses. The events that have transpired since our package was delivered in your Brooklyn foyer a year ago have perfectly illustrated this increasingly pious apathy on your part. In effect, you have responded negatively to the pleadings of those taking part in the survey by the way you have handled matters over the last 12 months.

Specifically, you have furnished evidence that your hard-heartedness and selfishness in four key areas has only deepened, not softened. These areas are: (1) the shunning of dissenters, (2) the indoctrination of children, (3) the mishandling of child abuse and (4) your seeming lust for greater unquestioned power over your followers.

Shunning of dissenters

In last year's letter I wrote: "You brothers may not be aware of this, but of all the issues that provoke outrage among so-called 'apostates', the harsh and unscriptural application of the shunning principle is one of the most contentious and hurtful. Many who you would class as 'apostates' would have little or no interest in trying to persuade their family members and former colleagues that their beliefs are flawed were it not for that fact that you make their lives intolerable by tearing them apart from any meaningful interaction with their loved ones."

Though you neglected to give a direct answer to this plea for mercy, your answer through the publications was unequivocal. The Watchtower of January 15th 2013 advised publishers: "Do not look for excuses to associate with a disfellowshipped family member, for example, through e-mail." (w13 1/15 p.16) As though blocking disfellowshipped ones from email contact with loved ones isn't cruel enough, you went on to label the beliefs of so-called 'apostate' dissenters as "gangrenous" in a more recent Watchtower. (w13 4/15 p.11) The extent of your hatred and bitterness toward those who dare to disagree with you, and your cruel punishment of such ones through shunning, is becoming increasingly apparent for even outsiders to see.

Indoctrination of children

Our growing community was horrified when, in June last year, you released the notorious "Become Jehovah's Friend: Listen Obey and Be Blessed" DVD. It is one thing to ensnare grown adults in your web of false reasoning and deception. It is another thing entirely to deliberately target impressionable young children with your manipulative tactics. The video featuring "Sparlock the warrior wizard" was particularly reprehensible, and represented a clear attempt on your part at weakening logical reasoning ability in young minds.

Even a family member of mine (a parent) who still attends meetings and is willing to give you brothers the benefit of the doubt labeled this film "disgusting." Prior to its release I still had some positive feelings towards you brothers and a feeling that, just maybe, you could be convinced to tone down your more damaging policies. However, the manner in which you have selfishly trodden over the minds of a whole generation of children in shameless pursuit of your agenda is beyond contemptible, and I find myself now incapable of respecting you.

Mishandling of child abuse

Last year's survey sent a clear warning to you brothers that the child abuse policies of Jehovah's Witnesses are in drastic need of overhaul. 91% of voters objected to your treatment of pedophilia as a sin rather than a crime, and 88% objected to your stubborn insistence on the "two witness rule" in determining the guilt of pedophiles. Since then, Candace Conti has delivered a damning blow against you through the verdict that was delivered in California in June 2012, which has shown the world how reckless your policies are in this regard.

If you brothers were as humble as you claim to be, you would have accepted the jury's verdict and set about making much-needed changes to bring your child abuse policies into conformity with Caesar's law. Instead, you are dragging the case through a lengthy appeals process, and in October 2012 you

even sent a letter to elders effectively assuming even *more* liability in deciding over cases of child molestation rather than leaving it for the authorities to do this. By taking this action, you have not only shown contempt for the opinions of hundreds who pleaded with you to change your policies through last year's survey. You have brazenly and presumptuously assumed control over matters which, according to scripture, have been handed over by God to the "superior authorities." – Romans 13:1,2

Brothers, it is very simple. **Write a letter to elders telling them to refer ALL accusations of child abuse to the police. If this is truly God's organization, then make it impossible for pedophiles to hide in it, or abuse through it.** By all means, have your own policies in place for taking judicial action according to the "two witness" rule if you must, but let the authorities do what you yourselves claim they have been mandated by God to do – and investigate these despicable crimes from the outset. **You must stop neglecting the safety of the children under your care,** and allow justice to be served against those who seek to use your organization as a sanctuary from punishment and a cloak for engaging in depraved habits that ruin lives.

Lust for greater power

In last year's survey, 90% of voters disagreed with the notion that you, the Governing Body, represent God's sole channel of communication. Despite this, on October 5th 2012 you announced your "new understanding" of Matthew 24:45, namely that you men alone collectively represent the "faithful and discreet slave" appointed by Jesus over his "domestics."

Not only was this presumptuous announcement greeted with ridicule in our community (including among many active Witnesses), but there was also astonishment at the hasty manner in which you rushed through the new doctrine. In times past, you have been careful to convey "new light" to the entire worldwide brotherhood simultaneously through the magazines. On this occasion, however, your enthusiasm to elevate yourselves at the Annual Meeting to rapturous applause meant that you were not concerned whether the news reached brothers without internet access, or those who could not understand English. This did not go unnoticed by the very people you are trying so hard to impress – the millions of ordinary Witnesses who serve under you and contribute hard-earned funds to your organization.

With the above four examples in mind, there seems little point in reasoning or pleading with you as I did in last year's letter – hence my more forthright tone this time round. As before, I am happy to extend my offer for you to write me (or arrange to meet in person) to discuss these results, which represent the views of **1,488** people. My email address is cedars@JWsurvey.org. I will not be holding my breath, but you should expect to hear from me again next year.

Yours sincerely,

Cedars

Introduction

*Last year's survey results offer a full rundown of the early development of the global survey, and explain how the 2011 survey began on surveymonkey.com before ending up on its own WordPress-based website, JWsurvey.org. The 2011 results PDF can be downloaded by from JWsurvey.org. **For the purpose of brevity, results from last year's survey will not be referred to by way of comparison in this document.***

When designing the 2012 survey, we tried to rectify some of the shortcomings of the 2011 survey by adding voter categories. We made this decision because we wanted to be able to compare results from different groups of voters, i.e. active witnesses, disfellowshipped ones, elders, etc – each of whom would have slightly different perspectives. This was something we were able to do quite easily on *surveymonkey* by using “filters,” but once the survey was moved across to the *WordPress* platform, we lost our ability to drill down and draw more comparative conclusions from our results.

And so, six voter categories were devised for the 2012 survey. These are as follows:

- Active witnesses (not including elders or anointed ones)
- Serving elders (not including anointed ones)
- Anointed (memorial partakers, including anointed elders)
- Inactive ones (faders)
- Disfellowshipped/disassociated ones
- Unbaptized ones

An obvious drawback to having the above categories was the possibility of certain voters failing to understand the categories properly, or being confused as to which category they should vote in. For example, if a voter is an active witness AND an elder AND a member of the anointed, which category should he choose? We resolved this problem by giving detailed instructions on each category as to who should or should not participate in that given category. These instructions covered every conceivable type of voter.¹

Next year's 2013 survey will use the same system of categories, as we feel these worked well for the 2012 survey. We have, however, made extra modifications to further improve next year's survey. Apart from simple improvements, modifications have mostly been made to account for the following two main factors:

1. The suggestions of voters in the “comments” section
2. Changes to JW doctrine (most notably the “new light” regarding the Slave Class)

¹ We did receive one complaint from a voter who claimed that none of the categories applied to him, for which reason he refused to vote. However, when we pressed him as to why the categories didn't apply he refused to let us know why this was. Therefore, we have left the categories unchanged for the 2013 survey.

In addition to making changes to account for these factors, the 2013 survey will also feature a question about the voter's vague geographic location, which will not be too invasive. It will ask for the region of the world in which the voter resides, rather than the specific country. We did have a similar question for voters as part of the sign-in process for the 2012 survey, but collating this information has proved problematic, and we feel the resulting data could not be relied upon. The same applies to the question regarding the number of years baptized. We have therefore decided to disregard geographic and "years baptized" information in this year's results, but we intend to provide this information again in the 2013 survey results.

Shortcomings of the Survey

New Light

During the course of 2012, the Governing Body announced a major change in understanding related to Matthew 24:45, which affected several questions on our survey – particularly a good number of the questions directed at anointed ones. Obviously we could not realistically have foreseen this development when writing the survey. Nonetheless, we feel the answers to the questions we posed regardless of this "new light" will prove interesting.

Objectivity

As we explained in last year's survey results, we recognize that a survey of this kind can never be considered truly reflective of the views of all Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide. This is because it is only accessible online and not via the usual organizational channels employed by the Watch Tower Society.

Jehovah's Witnesses are warned through their literature to avoid the internet, and in particular, any websites dealing with Jehovah's Witnesses that are not authorized by the Watch Tower Society. Therefore, the only active Jehovah's Witnesses voting on such a survey would be those who have already demonstrated a flagrant disregard for the Society's instructions. In other words, most if not all voters *by their very presence* on JWsurvey.org would already have well-formed opinions that conflict with those of the organization's leadership, rendering a negative response against the Society almost inevitable.

I agree with this observation, although I don't believe that it renders the information yielded by the survey inconsequential, nor do I believe it to be sufficient reason to cease running these surveys. I offer the following reasons:

1. By being hosted online, the survey is made available to all of Jehovah's Witnesses, irrespective of whether they agree or disagree with the organization's teachings. The survey questions are worded in such a way as to allow those who agree with the teachings of the Society to express their loyalty, without being influenced by the opinions of myself, or others.

Some devout Witnesses have already logged on and participated in the survey, and these ones are welcome. No loyalists or "apologists" are dissuaded from expressing their opinions on the survey, because it is intended that the results should give as fair a reflection as possible of the

overall opinions surrounding the religion. My approach has always been “the more the merrier.”²

I genuinely believe that the information yielded by the survey should be welcomed whatever consensus it reveals, because no harm can arise from knowing the *real truth* on any matter of this magnitude, irrespective of how uncomfortable such a disclosure may be depending on one’s personal beliefs.

2. In spite of the encouragement to avoid or limit any use of the internet, all of Jehovah’s Witnesses are personally responsible before God for their beliefs - especially concerning matters of conscience that are not directly legislated for in the scriptures. It has been noticed that increasing numbers of active Jehovah’s Witnesses are coming to the realization that the partial prohibition of the internet has more to do with shielding the Society from negative publicity than any genuine desire to protect worshippers from supposed ‘Satanic propaganda.’ The opinions of such conscientious visitors are just as valid as those who choose to have their consciences dictated to them by the Governing Body when it comes to the use of the internet.
3. Just because the Society dissuades people from visiting unauthorized Witness-related websites (and, by extension, *JWsurvey.org*) this does not necessarily mean that we should automatically abandon any attempted online survey of believers. It would be unfair to deny those who have researched Jehovah’s Witnesses online the opportunity to express their opinions simply because the organization that they no longer agree with has restricted use of the internet among its members in order to shield itself from criticism. To do so would be to succumb to bullying, and this does not sit well with me at all.
4. It is hoped that, as the survey grows in popularity, more and more devout Witnesses will become curious and seek to participate and express their views. At present, the survey is only a recent development, and its existence is not widely known among Witness circles. However, the longer it remains online, with sufficient publicity and ‘word of mouth’ stirring up interest, the greater the likelihood that it will come to the attention of increasing numbers of ordinary Witnesses - *including* those who limit their use of the internet. It is hoped that such ones will eventually take part through curiosity, even if they choose not to broadcast the fact that they have done so. I envisage broadened participation as an increasingly inevitable outcome the longer the survey is online, so hopefully any perceived disparities in the voting pool will gradually even themselves out over time.

Another shortcoming is that neither myself, nor the website developer John Hoyle, have any formal qualifications in the area of conducting surveys. Also, neither of us can be described as impartial, because both John and I share the opinion that many of the teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses are deeply flawed, and that the organization does not represent God’s chosen people on Earth.

² Occasionally, during the course of the year, I have found it necessary to block certain individuals from using *JWsurvey.org*. I have only taken this drastic action if the individuals concerned were “spamming” the site, or being rude or offensive to its users. I derive no pleasure from banning visitors in this manner, and I genuinely hope that they had the opportunity to fill in the survey before they were banned – regardless of how biased the views of such ones may be. However, I have a responsibility to make our website a pleasant environment for people of all beliefs, and I reserve the right to implement measures to make this possible.

Normally when a survey is undertaken on such matters, the work is outsourced to an external organization that can offer impartiality in the way the survey is run and the way the data is gathered. That way, there can be no accusations that the figures have been tampered with, and one has a degree of assurance that everything has been done in a statistically sound way and in accordance with “best practice” when it comes to conducting surveys.

Obviously, it is inconceivable that the Governing Body would consent to our conducting a survey of all Jehovah’s Witnesses with unequivocal support. This is clear from the way it has historically wielded power over the organization, and ruthlessly quelled any hint of uprising against the way things are done. In short, there is no room for dissent among Jehovah’s Witnesses, and it is highly improbable that the Governing Body would ever entertain any perceived weakening of its autocracy. After all, its members consider their organization to be run *theocratically*, and not democratically.

So, should the fact that we do not have the Governing Body’s backing prevent us from undertaking this global survey to find out what Jehovah’s Witnesses really think? I don’t believe it should, although you are entitled to disagree. Nor do I believe that the survey idea should be dropped because we cannot afford to hire an outside specialist agency to conduct the poll. We are working with the resources at our disposal as men “unlettered and ordinary,” and hopefully the end outcome will be just as authoritative and insightful as if we had pursued the more costly alternative.

Motives

As far as our motives are concerned, I can only give you the utmost assurance that neither John nor myself have any interest whatsoever in deceiving anyone when it comes to this survey, or its results. Voter information can now be displayed in real-time, immediately after votes have been cast – making it extremely difficult for us to tamper with the figures before they are viewed, even if we wanted to. We are just as interested in seeing a fair and impartial survey conducted as anyone, regardless of what the results reveal.

Credentials

When it comes to our credentials (or lack of) it is worth noting that the Governing Body is equally “self-certified” when it comes to wielding authority over the entire organization. Nobody asks them for proof that God supports their leadership, or that Christ has chosen them to act as his “faithful and discreet slave.” They simply expect us to believe it and get on with it – stomaching their profound influence over even the most sensitive aspects of everyday life in the process.

By comparison, I do not believe myself to be a spokesman for God, nor any form of prophet - and neither does John for that matter. We seek your trust, not in wielding any authority over you, but simply in our assurance that we will not distort figures or attempt to mislead anyone through this survey. If people decide they cannot trust us for whatever reason, then they are entitled to their opinion, and we cannot insist on being afforded the ‘benefit of the doubt.’ However, hopefully I have sufficiently explained how the same questions of trust, motives and credentials that could be leveled against us might also be directed towards the Governing Body, and how in conducting this survey and gathering votes we are asking for far less from ordinary Witnesses than they are.

When it comes to the management of statistics, I have attempted (to the extent that my high school education will permit) to be as meticulous and thorough as possible in the way figures are calculated and shown. In compiling the following results, I have copied the final results directly from the website onto a spreadsheet, and from there into this report – being certain to double-check all figures and make sure that they are accurate.

Correcting Mistakes

If there are any particular areas of concern as to how figures or statistics have been arrived at, you are more than welcome to contact me directly by email at cedars@JWsurvey.org and I will attempt to explain any anomalies and/or correct anything that is found to be in error.

As mentioned above, I derive no personal benefit from publishing untruths or exaggerations. It is not in my interests to devote so much time and energy to something (on an unpaid basis) with the sole purpose of misleading people. I am therefore appreciative of any efforts to correct genuine errors or oversights on my part.

It is hoped that the following information will prove useful and informative to any who may read it, and I would like to thank all those who voted for sharing their opinions in our survey.

General voter statistics

At least **1,488** people participated in the Global Survey of Jehovah's Witnesses for 2012.³ The survey went live on January 28th and was closed on 31st December 2012.

Active Witnesses

294 active Jehovah's Witnesses (16.7% of voters) participated in the 2012 survey.

This number was made up of:

- 33 serving elders (not anointed)
- 13 anointed ones (memorial partakers), incl. 3 anointed elders
- 248 non-elders with an "earthly hope"

Active Witness voters declared themselves to hold the following positions within the organization:

- 195 normal publishers
- 50 Ministerial Servants
- 36 Elders
- 27 Regular Pioneers (incl. 8 Elders)
- 26 RBC volunteers (incl. 7 Elders)
- 19 Regular Auxiliary Pioneers (incl. 4 Elders)
- 7 Bethel volunteers (incl. 2 Branch/Country Committee members)
- 3 Special Pioneers (incl. 1 Elder)
- 2 Hospital Liaison Committee members
- 2 MTS/BSSB graduates (incl. 1 Elder)
- 1 Circuit Overseer

As you can see, the voters professing to be active Witnesses represented a good cross-section of the organization. Enough active elders, servants and publishers voted to form three or four congregations. The number of Bethel workers voting was also encouraging.

³ The total number of voters was derived by adding up the peak votes from each category (the highest number of votes for a single question in a given category). Therefore, the total number participating in the 2012 survey may well be higher, but I would rather work with confirmed figures. This also means the voter numbers will not always fully correspond between questions, because not all voters voted for each and every question.

Inactive ones (faders)

545 inactive Jehovah’s Witnesses (36.6% of voters) participated in the 2012 survey. This meant that the total number of combined active and inactive Witnesses (baptized JWs) taking part was **839**, or 56.4% of voters – a majority.

Inactive Witness voters declared themselves to have previously held the following positions within the organization:

- 455 normal publishers
- 176 Ministerial Servants
- 174 Regular Auxiliary Pioneers
- 167 Regular Pioneers
- 73 Elders
- 70 RBC volunteers
- 35 Bethel volunteers
- 9 MTS/BSSB graduates
- 8 Special Pioneers
- 3 Circuit Overseers
- 2 Missionaries

Obviously, as with all results on this survey, we need to consider the possibility that at least a small number of voters answered questions falsely, perhaps for mischievous reasons. I therefore, for example, try not to read too much into the fact that three former Circuit Overseers participated in the survey, although it is perfectly likely that this is so.

All the same, one thing becomes strikingly apparent when viewing the above list of former positions, and that is how experienced many inactive “faders” claim to be. Nearly a third of all inactive ones taking part in our survey claimed to have once been Ministerial Servants, and enough former Elders took part to preside over a dozen congregations.

Certainly it cannot be said that Witnesses drift away from the organization simply because they do not correctly grasp the teachings and doctrines. The above list represents a contingent that was previously very active in the organization and well versed in its teachings. The reason for falling away must therefore be more complicated than mere laziness or ignorance on the part of the individual.

This is borne out by the answers given to the following question...

What were your reasons for becoming inactive? (tick any that apply)

	%	#
I can no longer preach about something that I do not believe in my heart	73%	393
I discovered the real “truth” about Jehovah’s Witnesses	71%	383
I no longer believe that Jehovah’s Witnesses are the one true religion	70%	375
I can no longer pretend to be a Witness at meetings	50%	267

I am shocked or stumbled by the actions of individuals in my congregation	31%	166
I just can't be bothered with all that anymore	19%	104
I was never that interested in the first place	9%	46
I am spiritually weak	5%	25
I would rather not say	1%	8
Total voters:		538

The book *Organized To Do Jehovah's Will* says the following of inactive ones on page 155...

"An inactive person may have failed to study God's Word regularly, or because of experiencing personal problems or persecution, he may have lost his zeal for serving Jehovah."

The above sentiments are certainly not reflected by the majority of those inactive ones taking part in our survey. A clear majority (70%) stopped attending meetings and going on the ministry simply because they no longer believe that Jehovah's Witnesses represent the one true religion. Only a tiny number (5%) claimed to be spiritually weak.

Disfellowshipped/disassociated ones

428 disfellowshipped/disassociated ones (28.8% of voters) participated in the 2012 survey. These voters, all former Witnesses, declared themselves to have *previously* held the following positions within the organization:

- 320 normal publishers
- 132 Regular Pioneers
- 123 Regular Auxiliary Pioneers
- 91 Ministerial Servants
- 48 Elders
- 22 Bethel volunteers
- 20 RBC volunteers
- 9 Special Pioneers
- 3 Missionaries
- 2 MTS/BSSB graduates
- 1 District Overseer

As previously mentioned, though it is proper to greet some of the claimed previous positions with a degree of skepticism, the above list does indicate a collection of former believers who claim to have once been extremely active in the organization and therefore knowledgeable about its teachings.

In explaining the reasons why people get disfellowshipped, the Society has this to say:

*“But what about our time—‘the Lord’s day’? Are the same evil influences evident? Yes, for **immorality is by far the leading cause for disfellowshipping among God’s people.** How important, therefore, that we avoid association with all individuals—inside and outside the congregation—who are a morally corrupting influence!” – w02 10/1 p.21 par.16*

With this in mind, consider the answers to the following question and answers:

Why did you leave Jehovah's Witnesses? (tick one)	%	#
I disagreed with the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses	60%	251
I transgressed the moral code	28%	117
I was unfairly disfellowshipped for something I didn't do	5%	22
I transgressed some other Bible command	4%	15
I would rather not say	3%	13
Total voters:		418

Far from immorality being “the leading cause,” the above figures seem to suggest that the majority of those who leave Jehovah’s Witnesses do so simply because they no longer agree with the teachings.

Of course, *disfellowshipping* and *disassociation* are slightly different in nature (albeit with the same outcome), and the above Watchtower quote refers only to disfellowshipping. Also, there is a possibility that some of those answering this question were not being entirely honest about their reasons for leaving for whatever reason.

All the same, taken at face value, the above results suggest that not all who leave Jehovah’s Witnesses do so because they are hopeless sinners, but rather because they no longer believe the organization’s teachings. At the very least, there is good reason to conclude that the reasons for disfellowshipping are not always as straightforward as the Society claims.

Unbaptized voters

221 unbaptized non-JWs (14.9% of voters) participated in the 2012 survey. These ones described their connection to Jehovah’s Witnesses by answering the following question:

What is your current relationship with Jehovah's Witnesses? (tick whichever apply)	%	#
I have family who are Jehovah's Witnesses	61%	133
I have little or nothing to do with them	28%	62
I have close friends who are Jehovah's Witnesses	21%	45

I am studying with them	13%	29
I am regularly visited by them	9%	19
I am romantically involved with one of Jehovah's Witnesses	6%	13
Total voters:		219

It can be concluded that a reasonable majority of those voting under this category are unbaptized Witness family members, although having Witnesses in your family obviously does not necessarily mean that you live in the same household as them. Still, you are certainly more likely to become a baptized Witness if you already have family inside than if you have no direct connection whatsoever, as appears to be the case with nearly a third of those voting under this category.

Though it is surprising that as many as 62 individuals with “little or nothing to do” with Jehovah’s Witnesses felt inclined to participate in an online survey about them, it is nice to consider that these ones may have received a more rounded impression of the religion through visiting *JWsurvey.org* and going through the survey questions than would have otherwise been the case.

When asked, “What is your opinion of the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses?” only 5% of voters in this category (10 individuals) ticked to say, “I would like to be one of them,” despite 29 individuals claiming they were studying with the Witnesses in the previous question.

What is your opinion of the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses? (tick whichever apply)	%	#
They are a cult	61%	134
Their beliefs are deeply flawed	56%	124
They are good people	31%	68
They are just another Christian denomination	12%	27
They go by what the Bible teaches	10%	22
I would like to be one of them	5%	10
Total voters:		221

Topics of interest

Anointed

Jehovah’s Witnesses who entertain a heavenly hope, commonly referred to as the “anointed” or “little flock,” are an enigma to many Witnesses. Their numbers are on the increase (with 12,604 partaking at the 2012 memorial) even though Watchtower publications are written primarily to cater for Witnesses entertaining the hope of a resurrection to a paradise Earth. The 2012 survey attempted to find out more about this unique group, and how these ones are so certain of their calling – particularly through the following question:

What led you to conclude that you are of the anointed remnant? (tick any that apply)	%	#
I just know that I am going to heaven	44%	4
I had a dream or vision that revealed my calling to me	22%	2
It's personal, I would rather not say	22%	2
There is nothing special about me, I believe that all true Christians go to heaven	11%	1
Total voters:		9

It is interesting that nearly half of the nine professed-anointed who answered this question said that they “just know.” Only two claimed to have a particular dream or vision that revealed their calling to them. At least one anointed voter even claimed, as do many Christians, that there is nothing special in having a heavenly calling, because this is extended to all who accept Christ as savior.

Anointed voters were also asked whether the number of 144,000 stated at Revelation 7:4 is a literal number. This question was asked because many outside Jehovah’s Witnesses believe it to be a symbolic number, as nearly all numbers mentioned in Revelation seem to be. The Society uses the number to enforce their concept of “two-tier Christianity” wherein only an elite group of Christians may entertain a heavenly hope. Anointed voters answered the question as follows...

Do you believe that the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation is a literal number?	%	#
Yes	69%	9
No	31%	4
Total voters:		13

Though the majority supported the Society’s view that the number is literal, it is noteworthy that nearly a third of the memorial partakers taking part in our survey did not share the same view.

The remaining questions to anointed voters on this part of the survey focused on the Society's previous understanding of Matthew 24:45, namely that all members of the anointed are the "faithful and discreet slave," even though a very limited number (the Governing Body) serve as the representatives of these ones despite having no contact with them. This understanding changed at the October 5th 2012 Annual Meeting, but nonetheless it is interesting to note the opinions of the small number of anointed voters who took part in our survey in the months surrounding that change.

The previous understanding of the "domestics" in Matthew 24:45 was that all anointed members, including the Governing Body members, were the "domestics" when they were receiving spiritual food prepared by the Slave Class. This teaching was onerous to grasp, because anointed members not serving on the Governing Body or at World Headquarters NEVER actually had the privilege of dispensing spiritual food. They were only ever on the receiving end. Therefore, the following question was asked...

As an anointed member of the Slave Class, would you appreciate an opportunity to participate in feeding the "domestics", or are you content to always be on the receiving end of spiritual food?	%	#
Yes, I would appreciate the opportunity to participate	45%	5
I'm not sure	36%	4
No, I am happy to just receive spiritual food	19%	2
 Total voters:		 11

It's interesting that only 2 out of 11 anointed voters indicated that they were happy with the arrangements at that time.

The anointed voters were also asked whether they personally authorized the Governing Body to act as their "representatives" in dispensing spiritual food. Their response was emphatic.

The Governing Body claim to be "representatives" of the Slave Class. Do you personally authorise the Governing Body to act on your behalf in dispensing spiritual food to the worldwide brotherhood?	%	#
No, they do not have my permission to act in such a manner	80%	8
Yes, they have my permission to act in such a manner	10%	1
I'm not sure	10%	1
 Total voters:		 10

Even before the "new light" was announced at the Annual Meeting, it was felt by many that the Governing Body was attempting to down-play the significance of their fellow anointed by claiming that some memorial partakers may be mentally or emotionally imbalanced in a 2011 *Questions From Readers* article. This issue was raised in one of our questions...

A recent Questions From Readers (w11 8/15 p22) suggested that some memorial partakers might be mentally or emotionally imbalanced. What are your thoughts on this? (tick whichever applies)

	%	#
I do not consider myself mentally or emotionally imbalanced	89%	8
I object to this suggestion	44%	4
It was an attempt to diminish the role of the anointed in relation to the Governing Body	44%	4
It was a fair observation	11%	1
I have no thoughts on this	0%	0
Total voters:		9

The response was more amicable than expected. Less than half objected to the suggestion that memorial partakers might be insane, and one voter even considered it a fair observation! Interestingly, not all voters on this question were able to tick to say that they are not mentally or emotionally imbalanced, although the majority did. At least four voters felt the *Question From Readers* article DID represent an attempt to diminish the role of the anointed in relation to the Governing Body.

Finally, when asked whether there was a need for the Governing Body members to make some effort to contact the anointed, opinions were split down the middle...

The Governing Body says there is no need to contact the anointed or find out who they are. Do you agree with this?

	%	#
Yes	50%	4
No	50%	4
Total voters:		8

Apostates

Apostate Witnesses are increasingly being singled out for intense criticism and stigmatization by the Society, so the 2012 survey set out to discover how active Witnesses feel about apostates, and how apostates feel about them.

The following question was put to all active Witnesses...

What is your view of so-called "apostates" - those who disagree with the Society's teachings? [Click all that apply]	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Some may have legitimate concerns	65%	162	55%	16	91%	10	65.3%	188
Some are justifiably hurt by the way they have been treated	60%	150	59%	17	91%	10	61.5%	177
I consider myself a secret "apostate"	43%	107	31%	9	36%	4	41.7%	120
I regularly participate on "apostate" forums and websites	38%	95	34%	10	27%	3	37.5%	108
I still have love for them	37%	91	31%	9	73%	8	37.5%	108
I would join them if I had the opportunity	26%	65	17%	5	36%	4	25.7%	74
I feel sorry for them	22%	54	17%	5	18%	2	21.2%	61
They are bitter and vindictive	16%	40	10%	3	27%	3	16.0%	46
They have unreasonable expectations of the Society	13%	31	10%	3	9%	1	12.2%	35
They seek to draw off followers after themselves	12%	29	7%	2	27%	3	11.8%	34
Their concerns about the Society are entirely unfounded	6%	14	7%	2	0%	0	5.6%	16
They are mentally diseased	2%	5	7%	2	0%	0	2.4%	7
Total voters:		248		29		11		288

(The light gray boxes indicate the category with the highest percentage of votes.)

Nearly two thirds of active JW voters expressed that they feel apostates “may have legitimate concerns,” and are “justifiably hurt by the way they have been treated,” which is certainly a long way from how the Society would prefer active Witnesses to view dissenters against its teachings. 41.7% of active voters even considered themselves to be “secret apostates,” which is perhaps unsurprising given that these voters needed to defy the Society’s instructions on avoiding apostate websites to even take the survey.

In its notorious July 15th 2011 issue, the *Watchtower* labeled apostates as being “mentally diseased,” yet agreeing with this accusation proved the least popular option out of all the potential answers

under this question, with only seven individuals out of 288 concurring with the Society's offensive label of former believers.

On the opposite end of the battleground, former Witnesses (disfellowshipped /disassociated ones) who consider themselves "apostates" were asked about their feelings toward Jehovah's Witnesses. They responded as follows...

If you consider yourself to be an "apostate", what are your thoughts towards Jehovah's Witnesses? (tick any that apply)	%	#
The Governing Body know what they are doing, and they should be held to account for their actions	66%	262
I have nothing against Jehovah's Witnesses, but I would like to see the Watch Tower Society dissolved	60%	238
I would like to see the Watch Tower Society drastically change its policy towards family shunning of former members	58%	231
How dare they call me "mentally diseased"?	55%	219
I love Jehovah's Witnesses, and I am concerned that they are being misled	44%	176
If someone still wants to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses despite knowing the real truth, I am OK with this	24%	96
I would rather not say what I think, it would be too offensive	5%	19
I would like to draw them off as followers after myself	3%	11
I hate all Jehovah's Witnesses	2%	9
Total voters:		399

Interestingly, only nine so-called apostates out of 399 were disturbed enough to tick that they "hate" all Jehovah's Witnesses. The majority seemed able to separate their feelings for Jehovah's Witnesses from their indignation towards the Watch Tower Society, with 60% saying they have nothing against JW's but would like to see the Society dissolved. 44% of apostates went so far as to say that they love Jehovah's Witnesses.

It was also interesting to see a common myth about apostates seeking to "draw off followers" utterly dispelled, with only 3% of apostate voters admitting to having such aspirations.

Blood transfusions

The resolute ban on whole blood transfusions is perhaps one of the teachings that Witnesses are most notorious for in the minds of the public. Therefore, this survey attempted to gauge just how seriously ordinary Witnesses take this ban, and whether opinions soften once leaving the faith.

The following question was therefore asked:

What is your personal stance on blood?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Secretly, I would accept treatment with blood if my life was at stake	39%	92	43%	12	17%	1	29%	146	4%	16	22.6%	267
I refuse whole blood transfusions, but accept treatment with fractions	29%	67	32%	9	17%	1	6%	28	2%	24	10.9%	129
I would rather not say	12%	27	11%	3	16%	1	11%	55	10%	39	10.6%	125
I refuse blood in all forms	11%	26	3%	1	33%	2	4%	23	4%	18	5.9%	70
I openly accept all forms of treatment with blood	9%	22	11%	3	17%	1	50%	257	76%	306	49.9%	589
Total voters:		234		28		6		509		403		1180

The above results would not make for pleasant reading by Governing Body members. Nearly half (49%) of all active Witnesses taking part in our survey expressed that they would either openly or secretly accept treatment with blood depending on the severity of the situation. This percentage *rises* among elders to 54% - elders being the ones responsible for enforcing the policy. Only 40% of active Witnesses taking part made expressions that comply with the Society's current stance on blood, namely that blood is to be refused entirely or only used as a treatment through fractions.

Predictably, the percentage of those accepting blood rises dramatically once Witnesses become inactive or leave the organization, to as high as 80% among disfellowshipped and disassociated ones (76% openly + 4% secretly).

If you are an active Witness reading these results, and you are confused as to why so many would disobey the Society's instructions regarding the use of blood, please visit www.JWfacts.com for more information on why the ban on blood should not be considered scripturally binding.

Disfellowshipping (shunning)

Shunning is unquestionably one of the most damaging elements of the Jehovah’s Witness faith, and can lead to serious mental and emotional trauma for both the ones shunning and those being shunned. The 2012 survey attempted to find out how ordinary Witnesses feel about shunning, and how it affects those who leave.

The following question was asked of all active Witnesses...

What is your attitude regarding shunning? (Tick any that apply-max. 5)	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
I object to all forms of shunning	62%	147	50%	14	44%	4	60.2%	165
I believe that shunning is to keep the congregation clean, and should have no bearing on family ties	38%	90	43%	12	44%	4	38.7%	106
I am currently shunning a family member who is disfellowshipped / disassociated	11%	25	11%	3	22%	2	10.9%	30
I would be prepared to shun a family member who is disfellowshipped / disassociated	8%	20	7%	2	11%	1	8.4%	23
I would be prepared to shun a family member who is inactive / not strong in the truth	2%	4	4%	1	0%	0	1.8%	5
I am currently shunning a family member who is inactive / not strong in the truth	1%	2	4%	1	0%	0	1.1%	3
Total voters:		237		28		9		274

The majority of Witness voters (60%) made it clear that they object to all forms of shunning, and only 10.9% of voters admitted to shunning a family member at present.

Only 8.4% of those polled admitted that they would shun family members in the future if these were disfellowshipped, and less than 2% said that they would consider shunning (or ARE shunning someone) who has become inactive or is “not strong in the truth.”

These are certainly not figures the Society would be proud of, having made it clear in recent publications that the shunning of relatives is a “Bible command” even though Paul’s principle of shunning is only prescribed as a measure for keeping the congregation clean – with no direct reference to its application on family members.

As regards those on the receiving end of shunning, the following question was asked of disfellowshipped/disassociated ones...

Are you shunned by any family members who are Jehovah's Witnesses?	%	#
Yes	76%	313
No	24%	98
Total voters:		411

Three quarters of former-Witness voters indicated that family members are presently shunning them, although it is interesting that nearly a hundred individuals in this category answered to the contrary.

Shunning is primarily a tool that is used as a threat by the Society to ensure that members are retained and cannot leave of their own free will without repercussions. With this in mind, those who are inactive (who have stopped attending meetings but are still considered Witnesses) were asked the following question...

Are you remaining "inactive" through fear of being shunned if you disassociate yourself?	%	#
Yes	61%	322
No	36%	192
I'd rather not say	3%	14
Total voters:		528

The majority indicated that they were indeed remaining a Witness merely because of the repercussions threatened through shunning. When inactive ones were asked whether they would leave the organization if shunning were abolished, the answer was more emphatic...

If shunning were abolished within the organization, would you leave?	%	#
Yes	84%	423
No	16%	81
Total voters:		504

The above answer indicates that the threat of shunning is fulfilling the function that it was intended for – namely to keep members bound to the organization against their will, and prevent dissenters from speaking out and potentially sparking an exodus among their family members.

Another problem with shunning is that, as with so many rules imposed by the Society, Witnesses will often go to extremes in observing the rule in an effort to prove their spirituality. In the case of shunning, Witnesses will often inflict "pre-emptive shunning" on inactive ones who stop attending meetings, even though the Society does not expressly mandate this.

To gauge how bad this problem is, inactive ones were asked the following question...

Do you experience “pre-emptive shunning” from active Witnesses, who view you as “bad association”?	%	#
Yes	77%	395
No	23%	116
Total voters:		511

The above answer indicates that a clear majority of inactive ones consider themselves to be shunned even though they have not technically left the religion. This is yet more evidence of the damaging effects of Watchtower practices. Witnesses are so eager to prove themselves that they will go above and beyond what is expected of them in shunning those who fall away.

Elders

As already mentioned, a total of 36 serving elders took part in our survey (including the three professed anointed ones claiming to serve in that position). The 33 non-anointed elders described their positions within the congregation as follows:

In what capacity do you currently serve as an elder? (tick one)	%	#
Another congregational role	42%	14
Congregation Secretary	33%	11
Coordinator of the Body of Elders	15%	5
Service Overseer	6%	2
My work at Bethel precludes me from any of the above roles	3%	1
Traveling Overseer	0%	0
Total voters:		33

It is encouraging that the elders participating in our survey represent a good cross-section of congregational positions, with more than half of those voting serving on congregation “service committees.”

There was, however, one slight anomaly. The option for “traveling overseer” was not ticked in the above poll, even though a further question we asked elders indicated that one circuit overseer participated in the survey...

Do you serve in any of these other roles? (tick whichever apply)	%	#
Regular Pioneer	40%	8
RBC volunteer	35%	7
Regular auxiliary pioneer	20%	4
Hospital Liaison Committee member	10%	2
Branch/Country Committee member	10%	2
Special Pioneer	5%	1
MTS Graduate	5%	1
Bethel Volunteer	5%	1
Circuit Overseer	5%	1
Missionary	0%	0
District Overseer	0%	0
Total voters:		20

The above poll also indicates that two branch/country committee members participated in the survey. If true, this means that the survey is known about at high levels of the organization. This was further indicated in the following question...

Do you currently serve at a Branch Office or the World Headquarters of the Watch Tower Society?	%	#
No	96%	27
Yes	4%	1
Total voters:		28

The reason why only one person ticked the “yes” option rather than two (as in the previous question) may be because (1) this question specifically refers to Branch Offices rather than Branch OR Country Offices, or (2) the second elder serving in a Branch Office may have skipped this question.

Elders were also asked for their opinions on what motivates elders to serve...

What factors do you feel motivate elders to serve? (tick any that apply)	%	#
A desire to help and shepherd the flock	69%	20
A desire for prominence	55%	16
An ambition to succeed	52%	15
A desire to comfort those in distress	45%	13
A desire to teach from God's word in an expanded way	38%	11
A desire to fulfil people's expectations	38%	11
A desire to set a good example	24%	7
Total voters:		29

As you can see, the majority of elders ticked that “a desire to help and shepherd the flock” plays a role, although this was by no means the only factor indicated. More than half of elders answering this question indicated that “a desire for prominence” and “an ambition to succeed” is also a consideration.

The survey also sought to garner the opinions of all voters regarding whether they consider elders to be truly appointed by Holy Spirit, as the Society’s publications repeatedly suggest. This was how the votes were cast across all six categories...

Do you believe that elders are appointed by Holy Spirit?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
No	84%	199	82%	23	80%	4	98%	504	99%	401	94%	200	95.3%	1331
Yes	16%	37	18%	5	20%	1	2%	8	1%	3	6%	12	4.7%	66
Total voters:		236		28		5		512		404		212		1397

An overwhelming majority of 95.3% of voters felt that God’s Holy Spirit does NOT appoint elders, in total contradiction of the Society’s publications. Even 82% of elders voted accordingly. It is noticeable that the answer is more emphatic among those who have left the organization, or who are not yet baptized. Between 94 and 99% of leavers and non-JWs felt that elders aren’t “spirit-appointed” compared with between 80 and 84% among active Witnesses.

Freedom of expression

A common trait among cults is that they do not tolerate differences of opinion over their official teachings. For this reason, the following question was asked...

Do you believe that you are free to express a difference of opinion within the Witness faith?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
No	89%	210	86%	24	100%	6	95%	487	92%	370	92%	194	92.3%	1291
Yes	11%	26	14%	4	0%	0	5%	28	8%	33	8%	17	7.7%	108
Total voters:		236		28		6		515		403		211		1399

As you can see, 92.3% of voters emphatically indicated that there is no freedom of expression in the Witness faith. It is also noticeable, once again, that the “no” was generally more emphatic among those who are unbaptized, or who have left the religion – although the feelings of the six anointed voters who voted on this issue were unanimous.

Internet

The following question may seem superfluous given that most people who venture onto *JWsurvey.org* must have done some degree of research online about Jehovah’s Witnesses. However, this is not always the case. For example, a significant amount of traffic received by the website is from Witnesses typing “JW.org” into their search engine rather than their address bar. Therefore, we thought we would ask the question anyway to find out how savvy voters are with JW beliefs and practices...

Have you ever researched Jehovah's Witnesses on the internet?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Yes	97%	232	96%	27	100%	7	99%	501	98%	393	98%	213	98.2%	1373
No	3%	6	4%	1	0%	0	1%	4	2%	10	2%	4	1.8%	25
Total voters:		238		28		7		505		403		217		1398

The above results indicate that almost all voters claimed to have researched Witness beliefs online before taking the survey, in clear violation of the Society’s instructions to avoid unofficial websites on the internet. It is a shame that only seven active Witnesses took part in the survey that hadn’t done any previous research online, indicating that their sojourn onto *JWsurvey* was a “one-off” event. However, it is encouraging to think that it is at least *possible* for active Witnesses to stumble on websites that are critical of the organization, and it is conceivable that more such ones may participate in the survey as it slowly becomes more widely known.

Judicial Committees

A *judicial committee* is convened when evidence emerges that a JW has committed a sin. Three elders are appointed to speak with the wrongdoer to determine what judicial measures should be taken against him or her. After reading scriptures and asking questions, elders will decide whether to reprove or disfellowship the person depending on whether the individual is deemed suitably repentant. Sometimes people can be disfellowshipped *in absentia*, despite not having attended their judicial committee hearing.

To find out how many had been through these committees, the following question was asked of all voters (apart from unbaptized ones)...

Have you ever been the subject of a judicial committee hearing?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
No	60%	141	68%	19	67%	4	55%	281	67%	269	60.5%	714
Yes	40%	95	32%	9	33%	2	45%	228	33%	132	39.5%	466
Total voters:		236		28		6		509		401		1180

As you can see, the majority of voters claimed to have never been the subject of a judicial committee hearing. It is perhaps most intriguing that only a third of disfellowshipped/disassociated ones ticked the “yes” option. There are two possible reasons for this: (1) disassociated ones do not normally need to attend a hearing, they can just submit a letter of resignation, and (2) as mentioned, it is possible to be disfellowshipped *in absentia* even if one fails to attend the hearing. Technically, in that instance, disfellowshipped voters should have ticked the “yes” option, because these ones were STILL the subject of a hearing even if they neglected to attend it. To avoid any confusion on the 2013 survey, the option has been added, “I was summoned, but didn't attend.”

In the elder category, two questions were posed to find out how elders feel about the decisions reached on judicial committees. These were as follows:

Have you ever served on a judicial committee?	%	#
Yes	97%	30
No	3%	1
Total voters:		31
Have you ever regretted a decision that you have arrived at on a judicial committee?	%	#
Yes	58%	18
No	42%	13
Total voters:		31

It is remarkable to consider that the majority of elders taking part in our survey regretted decisions reached during judicial committee hearings. These are hearings that can have life-changing consequences due to the heavy sanction of shunning imposed on those who are disfellowshipped. The fact that some elders admit they may have reached a wrong decision, especially if this decision was to disfellowship, is highly disturbing.

Memorial

The question was asked of inactive ones:

Do you still attend the annual memorial?	%	#
No	64%	332
Yes	22%	115
Sometimes	14%	73
Total voters:		520

It is noteworthy that the majority of inactive ones polled no longer attend the memorial. Witnesses consider this to be an extremely important Christian event, not to be missed, and the only way to

truly observe Christ’s death. The fact that so many inactive Witnesses (despite knowing all about the event and its meaning) choose to no longer attend indicates that these ones no longer recognize it as having any real significance other than to reinforce the Society’s doctrines.

Moving on

To varying degrees, both inactive ones and disfellowshipped/disassociated persons can be considered as having left the Witness organization. Therefore a number of questions were asked to determine (1) what the current beliefs of these people are, and (2) whether they feel happier or more content now than when they were active Witnesses.

Disfellowshipped/disassociated ones were asked...

How would you describe your current beliefs? (tick whichever applies)	%	#
I am now an agnostic	28%	111
I am a Christian, and I believe that to be saved one must be "born again"	27%	106
I am now an atheist	18%	73
I don't believe in anything	15%	60
I am now a member of a non-Christian faith	8%	31
I continue to share the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses	4%	18
Total voters:		399

As previously mentioned, a common accusation leveled at so-called “apostates” (those who leave the organization) is that these ones try to “draw off followers after themselves,” which implies some sort of evangelism on their part. However, the above results indicate that a combined 43% of former JWs are either agnostic or do not profess to believe anything – hence they have no clearly defined ideology to try to impose on others.

Only 27% professed to be of the Christian “born again” persuasion, with a further 8% claiming to follow a non-Christian faith. The above results show that those who leave the organization branch out into a diverse array of different beliefs (a small minority even clinging to JW beliefs), and therefore such ones cannot be stereotyped as falling under any particular religious or atheistic persuasion.

Inactive ones were not asked about their current beliefs, but they *were* asked the following question...

How would you describe your prospects after you die?	%	#
I don't entertain any hope in particular	66%	343
I am of the Great Crowd (earthly hope)	23%	117
I would rather not say	8%	39
I am of the anointed (heavenly hope)	3%	21
Total voters:		520

A clear majority in this category claimed to entertain no particular hope of an “afterlife,” which indicates that such ones may be either atheist or agnostic. Still, it would have been interesting if we could have had more specific information to indicate religious belief or lack thereof. Next year’s survey will therefore ask the same “beliefs” and “afterlife” questions to both inactive and disfellowshipped ones, so we hope next year to have more insightful information on this intriguing subject.

To find out whether former JW’s (disfellowshipped/disassociated ones) consider themselves to be *happier* than they were as Witnesses, the following question was asked...

Are you happier since leaving Jehovah's Witnesses?	%	#
Yes	96%	397
No	4%	16
Total voters:		413

It goes without saying that the overwhelming majority of voters who have left the organization considered themselves to be happier for it. The small number who felt otherwise (16 voters) corresponds closely with the number in the previous question who said they still share the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses (18).

Obviously, and unfortunately, not all who become disfellowshipped from the organization are able to learn the real truth about its teachings and history during their exile. Mind control can still exert a powerful influence even when one is undergoing shunning, hence the reason why many disfellowshipped ones strive to be “reinstated.”

On the subject of reinstatement, the following question was asked of disfellowshipped ones...

Would you seek reinstatement as one of Jehovah's Witnesses?	%	#
No	96%	394
Yes	4%	18
Total voters:		412

The answer was overwhelmingly negative to the question posed, with almost the same number of voters saying “yes” as those who answered that they are not happy after leaving.

Another similar question was asked...

Would you recommend others to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses?	%	#
No	98%	403
Yes	2%	9
Total voters:		412

It is interesting that, with the same number of voters, the answer here was even more emphatic than for the “reinstatement” question – perhaps indicating that just because one seeks reinstatement does not mean that one would recommend becoming a Jehovah’s Witness to others. Indeed, it has been reported that some disfellowshipped ones seek reinstatement for the sole purpose of renewing contact with Witness family members who are shunning them. This phenomenon will be addressed through a special question in the 2013 survey.

Organization

Recognizing that Jehovah’s Witnesses represent God’s spirit-directed organization is a fundamental tenet of the Witness faith. One of the two baptismal questions to which all newly-dedicated Witnesses should answer a loud and affirmative “yes” is worded as follows:

“Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses in association with God’s spirit-directed organization?”

It was therefore felt that it would be worthwhile to find out just how many taking our survey agree that the organization is truly directed by God’s spirit.

Do you believe that Jehovah's Witnesses represent God's spirit-directed organization?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
No	68%	157	64%	18	37%	3	96%	490	98%	400	89%	194	90.1%	1262
Yes	32%	73	36%	10	63%	5	4%	18	2%	9	11%	23	9.9%	138
Total voters:		230		28		8		508		409		217		1400

As you can see, 9 in 10 voters answered in the negative - that the organization is NOT spirit-directed. It is also striking that the ratio of those voting “no” is considerably higher among those who have left the organization, or who are not yet baptized. Indeed, voters from the “anointed” category voted the other way, with the majority indicating their belief that God directs the organization.

Reform

Some Jehovah’s Witnesses understand that the organization is flawed but believe it is undergoing some form of cleansing or refinement, and will be somehow reformed by God prior to Armageddon. There are even some former Witnesses of a Christian persuasion who feel this way.

To find out how many voters hold such hopes for the Society, we asked the following question...

Do you believe that the Watch Tower Society can (or should) be reformed?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
The Society should undergo reform, but I cannot see it happening	75%	178	75%	21	86%	6	92%	454	89%	357	83%	174	86.4%	1190
Yes, I believe there is a realistic hope of the Society undergoing major reform	16%	39	14%	4	14%	1	5%	26	8%	30	8%	16	8.4%	116
No, the Society doesn't need to reform in any way	9%	21	11%	3	0%	0	3%	15	3%	13	9%	19	5.2%	71
Total voters:		238		28		7		495		400		209		1377

The overwhelming majority of voters clearly felt that, even if the organization *should* be reformed, there is little chance of this happening. This pragmatic conclusion is likely the result of voters observing the way the Governing Body goes about its business without recognizing its mistakes or the opinions of ordinary members of the organization.

Some voters felt that the choice of answers to this question was too restrictive, and that there should have been an answer for those who feel the Society is beyond reform and should be dissolved. For this reason, an extra option has been added to the 2013 survey, worded as follows: "The Society shouldn't be reformed, it should be dissolved entirely."

Suicide

Jehovah's Witnesses pride themselves on being a "happy people," and living in a "spiritual paradise" where all emotional and spiritual needs are cared for. Despite this, reports are often heard of Jehovah's Witnesses suffering from depression or even committing suicide. To find out how bad the problem of suicide is within the organization, the following question was asked:

Have you ever known or heard of one of Jehovah's Witnesses committing or attempting suicide?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Yes	81%	193	75%	21	100%	7	85%	434	88%	357	62%	133	81.7%	1145
No	19%	44	25%	7	0%	0	15%	75	12%	49	38%	81	18.3%	256
Total voters:		237		28		7		509		406		214		1401

An overwhelming majority of voters indicated that they had indeed heard of Jehovah's Witnesses committing suicide. I will not go into the specific reasons why this may be, because I am no expert in mental health or psychology. However, few would deny that the above statistics are disturbing for a religion that prides itself on improving one's spiritual well being and family relations.

To highlight one possible reason why suicides may be such a problem, we decided to find out whether those who fall away from attending meetings face any reprisals from spouses or other family members. This question was put to all “inactive” ones...

Have you experienced family/marital problems through your decision to become inactive?	%	#
Yes	60%	304
No	40%	204
Total voters:		508

At the time of writing, I am inactive myself. Having experienced my own problems with JW family members (expressing dismay at my failure to attend meetings, and putting pressure on me to resume my allegiance to the organization), I can well understand why the majority of inactive voters voted in the way they did. If anything, I am surprised the “yes” percentage isn’t higher.

I believe this sort of pressure is encouraged by the polarizing “you’re either for us or against us” tone of reasoning in JW literature, and the way in which Witnesses are trained to think of spiritually floundering family members as being poised for destruction at Armageddon. This, in turn, heaps enormous mental pressure on those who leave the organization, and I am not surprised that some become severely depressed if they are being stigmatized in this manner. For this and many reasons, I believe the writers of Watchtower literature over the decades have much to answer for.

Watchtower beliefs/practices disagreed with

Which of the following beliefs/practices of Jehovah's Witnesses do you DISAGREE with (if any)?	ACTIVE 233 total voters		ELDERS 25 total voters		ANointed 7 total voters		INACTIVE 502 total voters		DFd / DAd 408 total voters		NON-BAPTIZED 209 total voters		TOTAL 1,384 total voters	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
	Young people are not to pursue higher education	91%	211	92%	23	71%	5	98%	490	98%	398	92%	193	95.4%
Witnesses who leave are to be shunned by family members if they are old enough to leave home	81%	188	80%	20	57%	4	97%	489	98%	398	92%	192	93.3%	1291
Paedophilia: treated as a judicial matter rather than a crime	82%	191	84%	21	86%	6	94%	473	97%	397	91%	191	92.4%	1279
Apostates are "mentally diseased"	78%	182	80%	20	86%	6	96%	481	96%	391	92%	192	91.9%	1272
Outside literature or any other form of information is NOT to be consulted when researching bible teachings, ONLY Watchtower publications are to be recommended.	82%	190	76%	19	86%	6	95%	475	96%	390	89%	187	91.5%	1267
Paedophiles: two witnesses required to convince elders of molestation	80%	186	72%	18	71%	5	94%	470	96%	390	92%	192	91.1%	1261
Young people should not be involved in extra curricular sports	78%	182	76%	19	71%	5	94%	472	95%	387	89%	186	90.4%	1251
The Governing Body is God's sole channel of communication	73%	171	64%	16	71%	5	95%	475	97%	395	87%	182	89.9%	1244
Paedophiles: not automatically prohibited from becoming an elder or ministerial servant in the future	79%	183	76%	19	100%	7	92%	462	94%	382	85%	178	88.9%	1231
Sisters who are beaten by their husbands are not entitled to a divorce. They must remain married, or they will not be able to marry anyone else if they wish to remain in the faith.	74%	173	72%	18	86%	6	92%	460	93%	381	90%	189	88.7%	1227
Past mistakes and future refinements are due to "increasing light" from God's holy spirit	72%	168	84%	21	71%	5	92%	462	94%	385	88%	183	88.4%	1224
Beards are frowned upon, brothers with beards not used to give convention items	81%	188	84%	21	86%	6	91%	456	92%	375	84%	175	88.2%	1221
Paedophiles: names kept confidential from the congregation	73%	170	68%	17	86%	6	91%	458	93%	378	87%	182	87.5%	1211
Disfellowshipped teenagers are comparable to Nadab and Abihu, the Israelite priests who were struck dead by Jehovah for offering illegitimate fire on behalf of the entire congregation	73%	170	52%	13	100%	7	91%	455	93%	380	83%	174	86.6%	1199
Bible prophecy: Christ chose the Bible Students as his "Faithful and Discreet Slave" in 1919	69%	160	72%	18	71%	5	91%	456	92%	374	83%	174	85.8%	1187
Bible prophecy: the anointed "generation" of Matthew 24:32-34 "overlaps" with those anointed ones who witness the Great Tribulation	68%	159	76%	19	43%	3	89%	449	88%	361	82%	172	84.0%	1163
Giving no minimum age for baptism, which leads to many in their early teens (or even younger) getting baptized oblivious to the full ramifications of this decision.	73%	169	68%	17	57%	4	86%	433	89%	363	81%	169	83.5%	1155
Blood transfusions are to be refused, even if life is at stake	57%	133	68%	17	29%	2	89%	446	90%	366	85%	178	82.5%	1142
Celebrating birthdays is wrong	56%	131	68%	17	29%	2	87%	436	91%	373	82%	172	81.7%	1131
The insistence on 607 BCE for the fall of Jerusalem, contrary to commonly-accepted historical evidence	61%	141	64%	16	71%	5	88%	442	86%	350	83%	174	81.5%	1128
Jesus Christ is only a mediator for the 144,000, and not for any members of the Great Crowd	64%	150	64%	16	57%	4	84%	421	89%	364	82%	172	81.4%	1127
Bible prophecy: Christ began ruling as king in heaven in 1914	60%	139	56%	14	43%	3	87%	435	88%	357	84%	175	81.1%	1123
Masturbation is wrong	62%	144	72%	18	57%	4	81%	409	88%	357	73%	153	78.4%	1085

Watchtower beliefs/practices disagreed with (continued)

Which of the following beliefs/practices of Jehovah's Witnesses do you DISAGREE with (if any)?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DAd		NON-BAPTIZED		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
The treatment of women in the organization	54%	125	56%	14	43%	3	81%	409	88%	358	80%	168	77.8%	1077
The Governing Body does not need to have any contact with the anointed remnant	65%	152	60%	15	86%	6	81%	409	84%	342	72%	151	77.7%	1075
Bible prophecy: most prophecies in Revelation and Daniel for the 'last days' fulfilled in early 20th Century	52%	120	56%	14	57%	4	83%	415	83%	338	76%	159	75.9%	1050
Only those who are spirit-anointed should partake of the memorial emblems	38%	89	44%	11	57%	4	64%	320	76%	311	64%	134	62.8%	869
Refusal to accept aspects of evolutionary theory	39%	91	36%	9	57%	4	63%	316	65%	264	63%	131	58.9%	815
Others that are not mentioned above (please specify in the comments box below)	19%	44	4%	1	0%	0	25%	126	24%	98	23%	49	23.0%	318
None. I agree with all teachings and practices contained in Watchtower publications	5%	12	4%	1	0%	0	2%	12	3%	14	3%	6	3.3%	45

Analysis of beliefs/practices question

As with the 2011 survey, the final question in our 2012 survey offered voters the opportunity to indicate which JW beliefs or practices they most disagree with. This question serves as an excellent way of ascertaining which issues are of most concern to awakened Witnesses and former members. There is arguably no other way of getting this kind of data from such a large number of current and former Witnesses.

The statistics from this question have been compiled and produced on the previous two pages in descending order of the most contentious. Perhaps the most revealing statistic is found at the bottom of the list, where we see that only **45** voters out of **1,384** (3.3% of voters on this question) were able to indicate their agreement with ALL teachings and practices in Watchtower publications. Even if you focus purely on active Witnesses, the percentage only rises slightly to 5% of voters in that category. This statistic is even more embarrassing for the Society when you consider that in last year's survey it was proven that some voters ticked this option in error (because they also ticked other options on the same list). It is therefore likely that the true percentage of voters who are completely loyal to the Society is even lower than indicated.

As tempting as it would be to go into detailed analysis of all the issues of contention in this list, I would prefer to briefly discuss the top four most contended beliefs/practices. Though I am avoiding any direct comparisons with the results from last year's survey, it is worth mentioning that the top three issues on the 2012 results are identical to those on the 2011 results, which indicates some degree of continuity regarding the issues that are of most concern to the majority of voters.

Higher Education

The stigmatization of higher education in Society publications continues to be the most contentious belief/practice in our survey. Watchtower publications frequently portray higher education as a "temptation" to be avoided, and encourage young Witnesses to forsake their careers in order to volunteer their time as regular pioneers until the system's end. The argument is that, with Armageddon so imminent, it is more important to please God by pursuing "kingdom interests" than to plan for one's future – including the needs of a potential family.

What few young Witnesses realize is that Armageddon is no more "imminent" now than it was in the 1940s (if anything, the world has improved since then) and by skipping college to go straight into full-time evangelizing they are not only jeopardizing their own future but making life difficult for their future spouse or children should they choose to have any. Watchtower's selfish exploitation of young people with their lives ahead of them is understandably something that meets with almost unanimous disapproval from our voters.

Shunning

With most voters on our survey either disfellowshipped, disassociated or inactive, it is no surprise that shunning has figured so prominently on the list of contended beliefs/practices for two straight years. Shunning is a cruel practice that, as already mentioned, is effectively a tool used by the organization

to wield control over its members. It is a threat that looms over any Witness who begins to entertain thoughts that this might not be God's organization after all.

One of the most frustrating things about the shunning of family members is that it is actually unscriptural, despite the Society repeatedly referring to scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 5:11 in its defense. The Apostle Paul's recommendations for shunning did not expressly call for the shunning of family members. Even the Society admits that a degree of mercy is involved in the extent to which family members should be shunned. For example, a disfellowshipped husband is not to be shunned by his wife or children. However, the Society cunningly knows just where to draw the line and use the principle to its advantage – as a doctrinal barbed-wire fence to prevent awakened Witnesses escaping.

Child Abuse

In third place, just as it was in 2011, is the statement: "Pedophiles: two witnesses required to convince elders of molestation." The two-witness rule is the principle on which the Society's entire child abuse policy hangs, and the Governing Body's apparent obsession with it seriously endangers millions of Witness children all over the world.

The two witness rule was instituted under the Mosaic Law covenant (Deuteronomy 19:15), which was "nailed to the torture stake" along with other laws (such as circumcision and observing the Sabbath) when Jesus died. (Colossians 2:14) However, the Society insists that the "two witness" rule is still applicable and incumbent on all Christians because of Christ's words at Matthew 18:16, where he said: "But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two more, in order that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter may be established."

It goes without saying that there is a world of difference between resolving a disagreement between two brothers and finding out whether a child has been sexually molested, but the Governing Body doesn't see it that way. They choose to ignore the Bible's command to "be in subjection to the superior authorities" who "stand placed in their relative positions by God" to adjudicate over criminal matters. (Romans 13:1) It is no surprise that this bizarre and extremely damaging policy, which puts so many children in danger, meets with such strong objection.

Hate Speech

Rather disturbingly, hate speech is becoming an increasingly familiar feature of Watchtower literature. It is to be expected that those who are most on the receiving end of it would vote it into fourth place on our list of most contentious Watchtower practices. In 1992 a *Watchtower* magazine encouraged Witnesses to "feel a loathing" for so-called apostates. (w92 7/15 p.12 par. 19) In 2011 the *Watchtower* declared that such ones are "mentally diseased" and that they "seek to infect others with their disloyal teachings." (w11 7/15 p.16 par. 6) And, most recently, Witnesses were reminded that former believers are characterized by their "gangrenous 'empty speeches.'" (w13 4/15 p.11)

As I have already expressed in a recent *JWsurvey* article entitled *Secrecy and deception: Watchtower fights dirty in its war against apostates*, the more the Society resorts to such hateful rhetoric and outright deception, the more it fits itself into the mould of a damaging cult. However, this is small comfort to those constantly on the receiving end, who feel demeaned in the minds of indoctrinated Witness friends and family due to the Society's stigmatization.

Conclusion

Though our survey is by no means perfect, it does offer an intriguing glimpse into the collective conscience of a burgeoning community of those who have awakened from Watchtower indoctrination.

Perhaps the main criticism that can be aimed at our annual survey is that it is SO emphatic in its condemnation of Watchtower policies that it appears rigged or somehow biased, but there has been no tinkering with the numbers (I invite anyone to keep track of the votes as they come in), and the questions give equal opportunity for voters to support the Society if they so wish. There can be no doubt that there are millions of loyal followers of the Society around the world, but if these fail to show up because the Society has banned them from straying beyond the confines of JW.org, this is the Society's problem, and not ours.

We would gladly welcome ALL Jehovah's Witnesses to take part in our survey, even if this made the results more weighted on the Society's side – but we know full well the Society would never allow this. Though it would prove the Society has millions of indoctrinated followers, it would also likely show that there are potentially thousands who are tethered to the faith through fear of reprisals if they make their true beliefs known. After all, this is not a religion – it is a mental prison.

I am of the firm belief that, even if the survey continues to be overwhelmingly condemnatory of the Society, it should still continue as a vehicle for allowing the “silent majority” to make their voices heard year after year. Without the survey one can only say, “there are many of us, that's all I can say.” With the survey one can go further and say “there are at least 1,443¹ of us who object to some or all of the Society's teachings, and many of those are still trapped inside.” In short, the number of voters may be small, particularly in these early days – but at least it is a number, and a number that is slowly growing.

¹ This is the total number of voters (1,488) minus the 45 who indicated that they agree with all Watchtower teachings and practices in the final survey question.

Voter comments

Beneath each voting category on JWsurvey.org is a space for voters to leave comments. A selection of these is reproduced below.

I would point out that the following comments do not necessarily reflect my own personal views, and I do not accept liability for anything alleged or insinuated by them. I have fixed obvious spelling mistakes to a reasonable extent.

Comments from active Witnesses

"Preaching the word of God is encouraged in the Bible, but reporting the hours is nowhere mentioned. It might even guide us away from other important duties such as helping each other (John 13:34, 35)." (*Günther*)

"I have many question about the teaching of watchtower. I'm afraid to tell this in my fellow believers, but in this jwsurvey I notice that I'm not the only one having this feeling. I love Jehovah and Jesus. My joy is to live and walk in Bible's principle not in the doctrine of governing body." (*meek ones*)

"I am an under the radar brother, until I get all the rest of my extended family and friends informed about this retarded religion. Then it doesn't matter. We just want to fade, increase in knowledge. Comparative study on all religion, The Quran did it for me, it blew me away. I would like to give my email, but not just yet. Cedars, you wrote an article that was so honest, it was like medicine. Thank You. One day I it would be so good just to chat." (*gladtoknow*)

"Other things i disagree with: The insistence on door to door ministry even when its clearly not effective and sometimes even offensive in some countries (where I live people hate uninvited visitors to their homes). The view of non-jws: they will die, they are all bad association. That if a jw is caught having "worldly" friends they too become branded as questionable association. Forbidding holidays, martial arts, yoga, tattoos. Discouraging association with non jw family members. Treating homosexuality like immortality. Saying that the bible was written for the anointed (if humans were created to live on earth, then the anointed came about out of necessity, and only represent a small fraction of humanity. Why would a loving god supply his guidance only to them? And just be like 'oh yeah, you other guys can tag along too'). Forcing the sale of kingdom halls then making the publishers pay for a quickbuild when it's not necessary (happening right now in my congregation). The portrayal of Dinah's story in the bible (that its her fault). The pressure to be out in the ministry as much as humanly possible with no regard for planning for financial hardship. The interpretation of pretty much all the prophecies ("how in the hell do you get that?!") Not donating to charities. I'm sure there's more, but that's all I can think of at the moment." (*estelle*)

"Very accurate observations, Bro. I can agree with everything, besides homosexuality. Homosexuality is naturally a sin, but not a sin particularly greater than others. Sin is sin." (*Dick Alden, in response to above comment.*)

"WT is a bonafide cult. I pray your site reaches the millions, keep up the good work Cedars!" (*gladtoknow*)

"I also believe that the GB are corrupt." (*Kat*)

"I was raised as a Witness and was shocked when it was brought to my attention...Has anyone else caught this little subtle change.....when I was baptized in 1979 and I stood up at the circuit assembly the brother asked 2 questions that we answered 'yes' to, question #2 was and I quote 'Have you dedicated yourself to God to do his will henceforth as he reveals it to through Jesus Christ and through the bible under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit?' So us older ones were baptized under Jehovah, Jesus & the Holy Spirit like the Apostles were directed to do.....Now we skip to modern times Question #2 [It is also quoted in the 'Organized to do Jehovah's will' book pg 215] 'Do you understand that your dedication and

baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?' It may seem innocent and harmless but aren't they now baptizing people to the Watchtower society instead of Jehovah, Jesus & the Holy Spirit? It just doesn't seem right." (*Unhappy & upset Witness*)

"Yes 'Upset', I caught it! And I'm glad I didn't dedicate myself inadvertently to an organization by not reading the fine print! I'm sure it wouldn't matter in a judicial committee case, but it's a personal satisfaction that one did not break a vow by disagreeing with articles of faith that do not have biblical support and are not founded on reason." (*Alden*)

"I also disagree with the Society's failure to get involved in real Charity or helping the needy, submitting field service reports, and making countless pharisaic rules to control almost every aspect of our lives." (*Free my mind*)

"Stop dng kids for sex indiscretions-it traumatizes them too much and can make them bitter. They are in the bloom of youth and still learning." (*Erik*)

Comments from inactive ones

"I 'left' the truth because of my homosexuality, and am since glad for a host of other reasons. I regret the immersion and the waste of time. I tend toward Einstein's lack of belief in a personal god." (*mark kiktavi*)

"Michael is Jesus – No he is not. New light is not progressive – yes it is. There was a 1st century Governing Body – No there was not." (*Cicilian*)

"I believe the 'other sheep' Jesus was referring to at John 10:16 were Gentiles, period. I don't believe there was a 'governing body' in the 1st century. I don't believe their explanation of the FDS at Matthew 24:45-47." (*Maksrage*)

"PREACHING WORK: I believe the formal application of this command is binding only to those being gathered as anointed kingdom heirs with Christ who were trained by him to do so. They had a clear message, a specific time and purpose, a productive method to promote it, and unmistakable evidence of divine backing to identify and support them. This was done publicly (in synagogues and other favorable and customary places of gathering), in private homes (as permitted by arrangement and circumstance), and informally (through personal and family contact and associations). THERE WAS NO RANDOM HOUSE-TO-HOUSE METHOD OF PREACHING as required by the contrived GB and FDS today. 'House to house' refers to teaching from locations supported by private homes (check the actual Greek text, even the Society's own Kingdom Interlinear translation shows the error of translation). Christians today seem free to let their light shine at their own discretion, without having to report it to anybody." (*awakenow*)

"Dating rules, double standards, rank & file have to follow one set of rules & elders do not." (*Mary Smith*)

"I stopped going 8 years ago and haven't looked back. I personally think it is wrong the Society to say it was 'Jehovah's Promise' that the generation of 1914 will not all pass away, and then in 2010 totally change the meaning to overlapping generations... that my friend is wrong!" (*Phil Hunt*)

"JW's deny a relationship with Christ, for the most part they are not part of the new covenant and do not have Christ as their mediator 1Tim 2:4,5. As such their sins cannot be forgiven and they have no genuine hope of salvation. At the annual memorial meeting the vast majority of JW's deny Christ by NOT partaking of the bread and wine as instructed to by Christ himself John 6:53-58; Luke 22:19,20." (*miken*)

"If I had to pick only ONE wt doctrine which I think is MOST wrong, it has to be the 2-tiered Christianity espoused by their anointed/other sheep 'classes'. There is no such thing mentioned in the Bible – you're either a 'believer' or an 'unbeliever', period. That doctrine literally divides Christ's body and leads to all sorts of misapplications of scripture. Like 'Maksrage', I now know the 'other sheep' of Jesus' were/are Gentiles and the 'little flock' were Jews, simple as that. Paul went to great lengths to explain this in his epistles, but the witnesses justify it all away as pertaining only to the first century 'anointed'. ALL Christians are 'anointed' by Holy Spirit! There was no box in the survey to check off > I think the wtbs should be dissolved, not reformed. If they want to try again they should start from scratch. Time has proven them absolutely wrong, backwards, and LIARS on just about every topic. Faded – never df'd – don't care – never going back – wish I'd never heard of 'em. ps- my marriage IMPROVED after I faded since my DH was never one of JW's!" <3 (*peacebaby*)"

"Most of my relatives were not JW's and my parents were discouraged from spending time with them since they didn't want to convert. I wasn't allowed to have friends at school, and the witness children who I was supposed to be friends with were mostly mean to me, or troublemakers. If I had been an only child I'd have been very lonely. Also my mom wasn't able to name my sister the name she wanted because it wasn't a bible name, not a rule for the JW's but one elder decided to talk to my dad about it, and dad wouldn't let my mom use the name after. My dad was abusive and many people in the congregation were mean to my mom for leaving him, so we faded. Also you couldn't get married unless you were baptized."
(*songofecho*)

"JWs are nothing more than a pseudo-Christian Doomsday cult. Their works-based theology seeks to minimize the redemptive value of Christ's sacrifice and God's love. There is one hope for Christians and that is heavenly. Their attempts at interpreting Bible prophecy would be hilarious, were they not so dangerous and misleading. I truly feel for those children with Witness parents, who receive no balancing force in their lives at a critical stage of their development." (*Fenimore7*)

"My mother is still a JW and I am not. She has dedicated her life to that organization and now she needs a little compassion (e.g., the odd phone call, get well message), guess what, they ignore her. At the same time, she is brainwashed into having an intense dislike of me (as someone 'outside' the organization) so that I get constant abuse and criticism for doing everything I can for her – whilst her 'brothers and sisters' who do nothing (and clearly DO NOT care) are still thought of in loving, glowing terms. I detest the JWs. They have destroyed my family and made my mother hate me (as something bad) whereas from a 'worldly' point of view, I have a good career and am a decent, caring person. The elders are poisonous; arrogant, unfeeling, pompous oafs who cannot take criticism – even if couched in the form of a 'please help' sort of question. They want my mother's money but they can't be bothered visiting her or offering any help, even to make a cup of tea. I am glad to be out of their clutches."
(*disillusioned*)

"Doctrinal errors aside, my main bone of contention with the Society is their insistence that JWs accept whatever the 'truth du jour' is. JWs are REQUIRED to accept, believe, and teach whatever comes down from Brooklyn, even if it is something completely different from what was required yesterday. So what is a required tenet today may have been apostasy yesterday and may be again tomorrow, but today you must believe it as if spoken directly from God. No dissension or questioning at all is allowed. If one dares to question a new teaching or the latest flash of 'new light,' you are marked as bad association and avoided like the plague. Lately, JWs are even discouraged from writing directly to the Society with their scriptural questions. They are effectively told to just accept whatever they are told and to not ask questions. If they can't figure out what to believe on their own, they are supposed to just 'wait on Jehovah' and not make waves. This totalitarian, Pharisaical attitude of the faithless indiscreet slave is disgusting to me and constitutes proof that they are NOT being used by God for any purpose whatsoever." (*under the radar*)

"I am sick and tired of having those idiots in Brooklyn telling me what holidays I cannot celebrate with my children. They take every simple joy in life and suck the good out of it and instantly turn it into something disgusting and detestable to Jehovah. We are made to feel guilty and sad about every little thing. We can't even hang up pictures of snowmen in the wintertime because that would be a form of idolatry. C'mon give me a BREAK. Life is only worth living if you are actually LIVING IT and giving praise to God for the life you have rather than spending your life hiding in a bubble always fearful of the ever WRATHFUL JEHOVAH. I think it's time for Jehovah witnesses to celebrate." (*breakthechains*)

"We all have our responsibility to make sure of what we believe, but as you know this religion is not easy on dissent. But it does make you feel like a second-class citizen, and now with the new change at the annual meeting even the anointed are being denigrated. Sad to be sure." (*FadeToBlack*)

Comments from disfellowshipped and disassociated ones

"I requested disassociation after no visits in 7 months during my depression. They were aware of my illness. I disagree with their appointment of men which is NOT done by holy spirit or whether the person is spiritually minded; Rather, it is on the basis of, if the person is a good teacher to persuade others their teachings are 'true'! Their teachings don't hold true to all the bible says; But if you disagree you are made to shut up or go! These legal cases of child molestation shows this organization is not even white never mind pure or holy led. No religion should be entitled to register as a charity unless it can prove that 70% of its gross profits are spent on the needy 'outside' the religion; Not on its improvements to Kingdom halls etc or JW members!" (*messenger4truth*)

"In the 'new system', ones who survive Armageddon will be able to marry and have children, but resurrected ones will not be able to. That doesn't seem fair. I mean, Armageddon survivors will be allowed to 'get it on' but resurrected ones won't even be allowed to masturbate! Not that I'm advocating masturbation, but how silly is that! Will resurrected ones even have breasts and genitals? Why have them if they won't need them." *(a former witness)*

"I disagree with their teachings on Christ and the trinity. I don't believe they can ever be reformed and should be dissolved. I believe they are 'apostates.'" *(Wit(less)momore)*

"Don't agree with having to wear suits and women having to wear dresses that always got to me, hated being looked down upon if I couldn't make ministry even though I've got a very large family and just couldn't make it, hated being ignored all the time in the congregation, by those who thought they were somehow supreme, not being able to let my kids do sports and telling my eldest he couldn't go university or college, even though he's very clever and good job he ignored them he's now got a good job, always felt I wasn't good enough, always felt pressured, always wanted to speak up about my worries but couldn't, being ignored now as an evil apostate even though I love god and I'm a good person and never done anything wrong, except I had blood transfusion, would go back if they changed a lot of stuff and stopped shunning. And I think all should take of the emblems and I think they are being made to watch is disrespectful to god and they are being led in darkness by the devil himself, I was taught that the world was blinded by the truth and couldn't understand the bible unless they opened up and was taught by the JW's. I think they are blinded and being as its the truth they think they are sharing its actually they themselves who are blind." *(serein)*

"I don't believe Jehovah's Witnesses should be made to feel that they have to go around preaching to others and trying to convert them in order to be acceptable to God. They say that it doesn't matter as long as you do as much as you are able to, but the truth is that it matters a whole lot to everyone in your congregation. You are observed by everyone and people DO take note if you have missed going in 'service' for a few weeks or whatnot and it will reflect in their treatment of you. You are also told that baptism is a choice when you feel ready for that commitment and there is 'no pressure' to do so. This is untrue, as if you reach a certain age past your teenage years and have not taken that step, the other people around you will start to treat you the same as others who are 'bad association' or 'worldly' because you have not 'dedicated yourself to God'... This in turn forces you to take the step to feel accepted again and worthy enough to be part of the group." *(Adria)*

"23/10/12 - We are starting to see two things happen with the JW Corporation. 1. They are amassing great wealth on a scale that most corporations and religions can only dream of. 2. They are becoming more isolated from the grass roots than ever before. True colours coming through. This is all about money. Money breeds money and it becomes self consuming. No amount will ever be enough to fill the stomach of this greedy corporation. Their business techniques are very well known amongst the corporate world, hence the partnership investments. If you are a JW, RUN! Live a fulfilling life; do not be controlled any longer by this cult that will fleece you. We pray. Marc." *(Marc Latham)*

"I disagree strongly with the way they treat people with mental and emotional illnesses. I was shunned because I was 'not strong enough' in the 'truth' (man I hate that connection)...I wasn't 'praying hard enough.' Bull. I laid on the floor and cried out deep and soulful to God at times I hurt so bad. If there was a way to pray harder I guess you would have to be on a deathbed praying for heaven. My condition had clear causal roots in severe abuse. The human condition is not righted by the snap of the fingers and a few words. Even Paul was afflicted with maladies that were not cured. I hated the shunning within the congregation when I was trying so hard to do what was right. I had to sit through talks that were subtly pointed to me when I was trying to get help from mental health care givers. Imagine sitting in a room with about 100+ people looking at you in disdain... There was NO LOVE AMONG themselves...the hallmark verse that drew me in, in the first place...and the verse that helped me walk out in the end..." *(exWitless)*

"Regardless of my own circumstances, many others have been treated unfairly and even cruelly by elders, especially regarding the unscriptural practices of disfellowshipping. Although I continue to believe in most of the information that I learned as a Jehovah's Witness, and I have continued to maintain my faith in Jehovah, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Bible as God's Word, I have never sought re-instatement due to the various issues that severely distress me, especially the rules regarding disfellowshipping, and the teaching that the elders can discern if someone is 'repentant' or not. As a brother once said to me years ago, 'Many who are in should be out and many who are out should be in'. The grievous harm that has been done through disfellowshipping and the cover up of child molesting and other abuses in the congregations is disgusting to me. I am shocked that all of this has continued for the past 30 years since I left Jehovah's Witnesses. I recognize that I am no 'saint' and I am aware of my sins and have tried to

follow God's laws to the best of my ability, but apparently the Governing Body is not willing to recognize their own sins, or to repent of them through reformation. The power and control tactics that are being used by elders in judicial committees is not only unscriptural, and not in keeping with Jesus teachings and example, but is not in compliance with laws regarding constitutional rights, and religious freedom, as well as laws that govern corporations in the USA, and many other countries. Although I am not involved in the 'politics' of this world, we are all under the laws of our respective countries, and therefore it is possible that ALL religious groups who practice disfellowshipping and cult-like control tactics could be investigated and even prosecuted to be held accountable under the laws of the land..." (*StillHaveFaith*)

"The Watch Tower Society, and all its associated organizations, are a money-making racket hiding behind a religious front. Like ancient Israel, they have brought disrepute on the name 'Jehovah'. All their cover-ups, lies and deceit will be exposed, and the decent people among them will separate themselves, as huge multitudes have already done." (*Frank*)

"The organization claims biblical authority to require the reporting of time each 'publisher' spends going door to door or conducting other aspects of their ministry where there is no such biblical requirement. The part of this practice that I disagree with is the attachment of the name of the 'publisher'. This becomes simply a control tool to monitor and pressure their followers." (*Joel*)

Comments from unbaptized ones

"I strongly disagree with a religion that first of all lies about providing a Bible study when the truth is it is the beginning of a lifetime of Watchtower publication studies. This way this high control group can make things not important, important. They can eliminate many scriptures. They can color many scriptures. And most of all introducing in their publications that are meant to indoctrinate the scripture in Matthew 10:34-36, which states Jesus has come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother...'. Of course when someone you love declares they are joining a controversial 20th century religious sect, you are going to say something. The Watchtower introduces this verse very early so that new prospects are indoctrinated earlier because they think that 'this must be the true religion because everyone is rejecting it. The Moonies could use this and it isn't a yardstick for measuring truth." (*Alex*)

"My father is an elder, my mother a special pioneer, two of my brothers were baptized and then disfellowshipped, I am 40+ and never baptized. Sadly my parents are about the most antichristian people I've ever met..." (*Number6*)