

Jehovah's Witnesses

July 27, 2014

What do Michael Jackson, Prince, Nelson Mandela, and Dwight Eisenhower have in common? These are some of the intelligent people who either are or were Jehovah's Witnesses.

It reminds us that intelligent people can be duped into following a twisted and disturbing cult if they don't open the Bible and read it for themselves. Jehovah's Witnesses began in 1870 and they are growing at an alarming rate. In 1940 there were 96,000. Today there are over 7 million. Their primary method of growth is door-to-door evangelism and their Watchtower magazine. Their goal is to prove Jesus isn't God and get you believing that all organized religion has duped us. Only the Watchtower Society can be trusted.

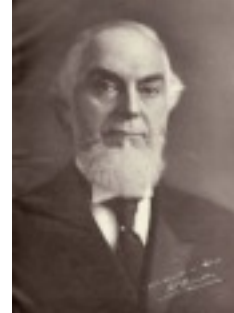
How do we answer a Jehovah's Witness when they come to our door? Are there backstories to this group that we need to know? What are some of their strange practices that they hide until you are in the fold? These are some of the questions we will answer this morning.

If you are new, I want to welcome you. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors at CrossWinds. We are in a series of studies called *Alternatives to Christianity*. We are looking at world religions and false believe systems to see how they compare to biblical Christianity. Last week we began looking at false belief systems that sprouted on American soil. We studied Mormonism. Today we continue in that direction as we look at the Jehovah's Witnesses. If they haven't knocked on your door, it is only a matter of time until they do.

Let's begin with a little history and see how the group started.

How did the Jehovah's Witnesses begin?

The founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses is a man named Charles Taze Russell. He was raised in a congregational church in Allegheny, PA. He was a successful business man who, at the age of 25, was the manager of several clothing stores in North Pittsburgh. Retail wasn't his dream. In 1870, at age 18, he started a home Bible study in Pittsburgh. Six years later, in 1876, the group elected him to be their pastor. He also began publishing a small magazine called Zion's Watchtower.



A strong influence in his life was Seventh Day Adventism. He eventually left the group claiming he didn't agree with all their teachings. Their beliefs colored his understanding of Scripture. In 1884 his publishing went main-stream and he founded Zion's Watchtower Tract Society. In 1908 he moved this publishing business to Brooklyn New York where it remains to this day.

He was a prolific writer who wrote over 50,000 pages of Bible study materials. The most famous of his materials was his seven volume work called Studies in the Scriptures which sold over 2 million copies.

While Charles Russell had a growing following from his prolific writing and charismatic leadership, the passage of time revealed serious character flaws. He wasn't the man of God he claimed to be.

1. He was an extremely egotistical man. He classified himself on the same level as St. Paul, John Wycliffe and Martin Luther.¹
2. He claimed it was more important to read his writings than the Bible.²
3. His wife divorced him after only six years of marriage in 1913 on the grounds of adultery, conceit, egotism and domination. She won.³
4. He had completely unchecked power. He controlled the Watchtower tract society owning 990 of its 1,000 shares.⁴
5. He was involved in false advertising. In 1913 he openly marketed something called Miracle Wheat to farmers claiming five times greater yield. The wheat proved to be no different from any other wheat in government testing.⁵
6. He was sued by the Brooklyn Daily Eagle newspaper for his many false claims and advertising lies. The newspaper won.⁶
 - a. He published sermons in newspapers claiming they were delivered around the world. For example, he published a sermon in a newspaper claiming he delivered the sermon in Hawaii to large crowds with an amazing response. It was proven that he was only in Hawaii for a two hours on a boat layover. He never preached there.

¹ Boa, K. (1990). *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*. pg. 97.

² Boa, K. (1990). *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*. pg. 97.

³ Boa, K. (1990). *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*. pg. 97.

⁴ Boa, K. (1990). *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*. pg. 97.

⁵ Martin, W. (1974), *Jehovah of the Watchtower*. pg. 16.

⁶ Martin, W. (1974), *Jehovah of the Watchtower*. pg. 16.

- b. He claimed high scholastic achievements with a theological education that made him literate in Biblical Greek and Hebrew. On the witness stand he could not identify any letters of the Greek alphabet. He perjured himself in court.

This is just some of the background we need to know about the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, his character and the way he ran his organization.

In 1917, the second leader of the Jehovah's Witnesses took over. His name was Joseph Rutherford. He was a lawyer and an assistant judge in Booneville, Missouri. In 1931, he officially renamed the organization from the Russellites to the Jehovah's Witnesses, which is what they are known as today. Rutherford was known for trying to cut any connection with Charles Russell because of his glaring character issues and deceptive lying. He also postured the Jehovah's Witnesses as against all other churches and religious organizations. Hatred was his hallmark. Like Charles Russell, he continued pumping out thousands of pages of Jehovah's Witness materials from the Brooklyn New York Watchtower publishing house. Glaring character issues also marked his leadership.

What false prophecies have the Jehovah's Witnesses made?

Last week we saw that Deuteronomy 18:20-22 tells us the way we know a false prophet is they claim to speak for God but their prophecies do not come true. This is something we see consistently with the Jehovah's Witnesses.

1. The Jehovah's Witnesses predicted that 1914 would mark the overthrow of human governments and the full establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

“the full establishment of the Kingdom of God in the earth at A.D. 1914.” - -
Studies in the Scriptures, vol. 2 (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society,
1888), pp. 98-99.

2. The Jehovah’s Witnesses predicted that in 1925 select Old Testament saints
(Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) would rise from the grave and live in San Diego.

“1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the faithful prophets of
old.” - Millions Now Living Will Never Die (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract
Society, 1920), pp. 88-90.

3. The Jehovah’s Witnesses predicted that in 1975 human history would end
and the 1,000 year reign of Christ would begin.

“There are only about ninety months [7½ years] left before 6,000 years of man’s
existence on earth is completed.” - Awake! magazine, 8 October 1966, p. 19.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. When you talk to a Jehovah’s Witness
about these false prophecies, they tell you there is nothing wrong with their
predictions being in error. Their favorite response is Jonah. Look at Jonah. He
was told to go through Ninevah and preach 40 more days and the city will be
destroyed. Look what happened. The city was not destroyed. Jonah, a biblical
prophet, could be wrong. Why can’t they be wrong? This is a misunderstanding
of the Bible. The purpose of Jonah’s preaching to Ninevah was to warn the
Ninevites to repent *or they would be destroyed*. There was an implied condition
in Jonah’s preaching. In fact, Jonah was angry at God because he didn’t want
the Ninevites to repent and God not destroy them.

And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was
yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that
you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast
love, and relenting from disaster. Jonah 4:2 (ESV)

Jonah was not a false prophet. The Jehovah's Witnesses are false prophets. There was no condition in their prophecies. They are just plain wrong. This is very different.

What is the relationship between a Jehovah's Witness and their church?

A Jehovah's Witness is tied at the hip to the Jehovah's Witness organization. Jehovah's Witness are told to read Watchtower literature *in place of the Bible*. They are very clear on this.

"Is not the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society the one and only channel which the Lord has used in dispensing his truth continually since the beginning of the harvest period?" - The Watchtower, 1 April 1919, p. 6414.

"Jehovah's organization alone, in all the earth, is directed by God's holy spirit or active force." - The Watchtower, 1 July 1973, p. 402.

"Unless we are in touch with this channel of communication [The Watchtower Society] that God is using, we will not progress along the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do." - The Watchtower, 1 December 1981, p. 27.

"Avoid independent thinking...questioning the counsel that is provided by God's visible organization." - The Watchtower, 15 January 1983, p. 22.

The message is clear. Don't read your Bible. Don't think for yourself. Don't question headquarters. Thankfully, many people have thought for themselves and questioned headquarters. Many people left the Jehovah's Witnesses because their teachings don't jive with the Bible. Many who left wrote about why they left. How does headquarters react to reading the writing of those who left the organization?

Reading apostate literature (those who have left the organization) is as bad as reading pornographic literature. - The Watchtower, 15 March 1986, p. 14.

To further solidify their control of those in the organization they practice something called shunning. If you leave the organization, you will be shunned by your family members and friends.⁷

What is the New World Translation?

The clear direction of the Jehovah's Witnesses is to just read their literature and avoid the Bible. One of the problems the Jehovah's Witnesses ran into is people were reading the Bible and leaving the organization because of it. In an attempt to stop this problem, the Jehovah's Witnesses published their own translation of the Bible called the New World Translation. They claim it is the best translation in existence. In addition, they claim it restores the name Jehovah to its rightful place in the Old and New Testaments. Is the New World translation a good translation? Can we trust it?

Bruce Metzger, who is a brilliant Greek scholar and the editor behind one of the Greek New Testaments used in seminaries today, said this about the New World Translation.

Translation "a frightful mistranslation," "erroneous," "pernicious," and "reprehensible." - Bruce Metzger, *Theology Today*, April 1953.

To begin with, the translation inserts Jehovah 237 in the New Testament where it doesn't occur. They ignore the original manuscripts and just punch in the name of God Jehovah. That is completely out of bounds.

For years there was no way to check the credentials of the translators because the Bible was published anonymously. Eventually Raymond Franz became a high level defector from the organization. In his book Crisis of

⁷ (The Watchtower, 15 July 1963, pp. 443-44)

Conscience, he revealed the names of the five translators of the New World Translation. Four of the five had no training in Greek or Hebrew. The fifth claimed to know Hebrew but on examination by a court in Scotland he failed a basic Hebrew test. Nobody had any Greek or Hebrew knowledge and they didn't have any ancient manuscripts to work from. They made everything up out of their own head.

Let me show you some examples of the New World Translation's Bible twisting.

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was [a] God. John 1:1

Why do they add an "a"? John 1:1 clearly states that Jesus is God. They don't believe Jesus is God. Rather than change their beliefs to fit the Bible, they changed their Bible to fit their beliefs and inserted the article "a." Their official teaching on this verse is that Jesus is not God Almighty but was just godlike.

The problem is the Greek doesn't have an indefinite article in it. They added the article. What I found when working with a Jehovah's Witness is to not stop at the verse they quote but keep reading so you read a verse in its context. Remember that context determines meaning. Look what happens if you read a few verse further in the Gospel of John. Does it say Jesus is godlike or does it say Jesus is God? You tell me.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,.. John 1:14 (ESV)

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. John 1:18 (ESV)

Colossians 1:17

“By means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist” (brackets appear in NWT).
Colossians 1:16

The word “other” is not in the Greek text. They add it because they believe Jesus was the first created being and he created all other things. They change the Bible to make it fit their beliefs. That is completely out of bounds!

Jehovah isn't the name for God.

While the Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jehovah is the only true name of God and it is only if you call on the name of Jehovah that you can be saved, the truth is the name Jehovah is never used in the Bible. It is actually a combination of the Hebrew consonants for YHWH and the vowels for the name Adonai.

Where did the word Jehovah come from? The ancient Jews were fearful of pronouncing the name of God “Yahweh.” They were afraid of speaking the Lord's name in vain and violating the third commandment. In public reading of the Torah, they either substituted the name Adonai for YHWH or add the vowels of Adonai to the consonants of YHWH making the sound Jehovah.

Jehovah is technically not God's name. It never was and never will be. Yahweh is God's name. Some old English translations use the name Jehovah to follow the old oral Jewish tradition but the truth is Jehovah is not God's name. It is the name the Jews used to cover for God's name Yahweh because it was so sacred they didn't want to pronounce it.

The Jehovah's Witnesses run this Jehovah ball as far as they can. In the New World Translation not only do they add the name Jehovah to the New Testament 237 where it doesn't occur but they change every reference to God in the Old Testament to the name Jehovah,... no matter what the original text said.

This is completely out of line. If you study Old Testament in Hebrew you find God has many names that purposefully describe different aspects of his character. For instance, in Genesis 17 God is called El Shaddai which means Mighty God to describe God's power. The Jehovah's Witnesses flatten all this out under the name Jehovah.

In addition, they say there is no chance of being saved if you don't use the name Jehovah.

“Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.” Romans 10:13 (NWT)

Citing that passage, and others like it, they claim it is only through the proper use of God's name that anyone can be saved. We must say the name Jehovah.

What does the original Greek say.

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13 (ESV)

It is the Greek the word is “Lord” and not Jehovah. In context it is the Lord Jesus Christ's name we are to call on.

What do the Jehovah's Witnesses believe?

While the Jehovah's Witnesses claim to use the Bible, they massively reinterpret the Bible to make it say things the Bible never said. How can they

take such liberty to just cut and paste the Bible and transform what it teaches to their desires? One of their core commitments is what I call the superiority of reason over revelation.

If the Bible doesn't seem reasonable they simply rewrite it. This calls every biblical writer a fool. It says that when they wrote under inspiration of God they were making mistakes. It says that for 2,000 years people blindly followed the Bible's mistakes until the Jehovah's Witnesses came along and with no knowledge of the original languages or history corrected the Bible 2,000 years later. That is the height of arrogance.

Probably the most glaring of examples is the way they handle Jesus

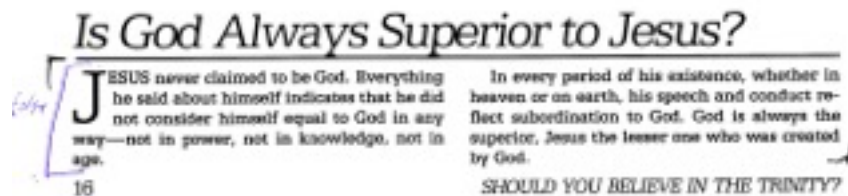
Jesus.

The Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe Jesus is God. They claim it is incomprehensible that Jesus and God the Father are both God. They consider the Trinity a lie from Satan. They believe Jesus was created as the archangel Michael billions of years ago. They believe Michael (Jesus) was the first created being who then created all other things. They do not believe in the incarnation, that is God coming in the flesh, but they believe Jesus was nothing more than a perfect human being. Jesus died as a human being. When Jesus died, they claim he was impaled on a stake and that he did not die on a cross. They believe the cross is a religious symbol used by Satan. When Jesus died he became nonexistent and was later recreated as the Archangel Michael. The physical resurrection did not occur. None of this is found in the Bible. They make it all up out of their own head in very convincing prose. If we simply put our

finger in the Bible we find out the answer. Let me read you a quote from one of their booklets called, "Should you believe in the Trinity?" to demonstrate what I mean.

"Jesus never claimed to be God. Everything he said about himself indicates that he did not consider himself equal to God in any way — not in power, not in knowledge, not in age. In every period of his existence, whether in heaven or on earth, his speech and conduct reflect subordination to God. God is always the superior, Jesus the lesser one who was created by God. - Should You Believe in the Trinity. Watchtower Society., pg. 16.

If we put our
finger in the Bible
we find the exact
opposite.



"We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." John 10:33 (NIV)

Jesus was claiming to be God with such clarity that they were going to kill him for it.

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" John 20:28 (ESV)

Jesus didn't respond to Thomas by condemning him for mistakenly calling him God. He just went with it because it was true.

For in him (Jesus) the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, Colossians 2:9 (ESV)

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

Immanuel simply means "God with us."

Another way they try to prove the stuff they make up out of their own head is by using brief quotes of Bible verses that appear to prove their point. When

you read the verses in context, their arguments fall apart. Let me show you some examples.

Jesus can not be God. He doesn't know the hour of his return.

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Mark 13:32 (ESV)

The Jehovah's Witnesses reason that since Jesus doesn't know the hour of his return, he must be lesser than God who is omniscient. Are they right? Think this through. There are a number of verses that talk about Jesus being omniscient (see Matthew 11:27; 17:27; Luke 5:4,6; John 7:29; 8:55; 10:15; 16:30; 17:25; 21:6-11; 21:17), but in the incarnation Jesus took on a human nature, which is not omniscient. It is only from his humanity that Jesus could say he didn't know the day or the hour of his return. Philippians 2:5-11 tells us that Jesus maintained all of his divine attributes but he gave up the free exercise of those attributes to the will of his father. It is like Jesus still has his the credit card but he voluntarily chose not to use it unless the father said he should. Jesus didn't know the hour of his return because from the side of his humanity he chose to limit his knowledge.

Jesus is less than the Father. He is only a Son.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (ESV)

The Jehovah's Witnesses reason that since Jesus is called God's only son, he must be created later in time and lesser than his father just like an earthly father is greater than his earthly son. The phrase “son of” means to be of the identical essence of the Father. My sons are just as much as man as I am. They

are not inferior to me in personhood. Describing Jesus as the only begotten son of his father is a way of describing how Jesus is of identical essence to his father. Just as an earthly son is of the same essence as his earthly father. As an earthly son chooses to honor his father and submit his father's will so the heavenly son chooses to honor his heavenly father and submit his will.

Jesus cannot be God if he claims his father is greater.

...for the Father is greater than I. John 14:28 (ESV)

The Jehovah's Witnesses point out that Jesus said his Father was greater. This verse is not speaking of Jesus' nature but it is speaking of Jesus' position. The Father was seated upon the throne of majesty in heaven. The Son was despised, rejected by men, surrounded by enemies and soon to be nailed to the cross. In Jesus' lowly position on earth, the father was truly greater at that time, not in identity but in position.

Jesus cannot be God if he is described as the first created being.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Colossians 1:15 (ESV)

Jehovah's Witnesses reason that since Jesus is called the "firstborn," He must have come into being at a point in time and be the first created being. He is therefore lesser than God the Father. The problem is the Greek word "firstborn" doesn't mean first created, but first in rank and preeminence. Firstborn of creation means that Jesus is positionally over everything in creation. There is nothing he is not over since he is first of preeminence.

The strange theology doesn't stop there.

There are two peoples of God.

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that only 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses go to heaven and they are mentioned in Revelation 7 and 14. These individuals look forward not to a physical existence but to a spiritual existence in heaven. The Watchtower teaches that all 144,000 spots in heaven were filled in 1935. Nobody else is going to heaven. The rest will live on Paradise earth.

This is completely unbiblical. The Bible doesn't say only 144,000 go to heaven. It says everyone who trusts in Jesus goes to heaven. There is absolutely no biblical basis for only 144,000 in heaven.

The Second Coming

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach the second coming has already taken place. In 1918 Jesus returned and came to the spiritual temple and began the judgment of the nations. All that is left to happen is the Battle of Armageddon. Why 1918? The Watchtower society says so.

The Atonement

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Christ only offered a partial payment for sins. Christ's death removed the effect of Adam's sin and put man in a position to work out his own salvation. Christ only gave us the opportunity to save ourselves.

["to get one's name written in that Book of Life will depend upon one's works."](#) - The Watchtower magazine, 1 April 1947, p. 204.

What are the works a Jehovah's Witness must perform to save themselves? Door-to-door witnessing. An unbending stance against sin. Total obedience to the Watchtower organization. They are told that if they should fail

during their earthly life or during the future 1,000 year millennium, they will be annihilated.

The Bible tells us that we can't save ourselves. Jesus did it all. It is only by trusting in Jesus that we are saved.

Trying to save yourself is like the man who tried to sail his boat across the Atlantic Ocean with no wind. Frustrated with his lack of progress, he began pushing on the mast. He made a few waves so he thought he was making progress, but as you and I know, he wasn't going anywhere.

It is the same when it comes to saving ourselves. All our efforts to save ourselves are futile and exhausting. No matter how hard we push on the mast, we aren't going anywhere. The only way for us to have a relationship with God is for God to restore us to himself. It is not by our will-power or our self discipline. It is all a gift from God through Jesus.

but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31 (ESV)

Strange theology leads to strange living. Let me show you some examples.

What are some strange Jehovah's Witnesses practices?

Vaccination

"vaccination is a direct violation of the everlasting covenant that God made with Noah after the flood." - Golden Age, 4 February 1931, p. 293.

For 20 years vaccinations were forbidden for Jehovah's Witnesses. The infallible Jehovah's Witnesses organization finally dropped this prohibition in the

1950's. One wonders about their infallibility and how many parents watched their children die because they were not vaccinated against basic diseases.

Organ Donation

...organ transplants are a form of cannibalism and are not appropriate for Christians (The Watchtower, 15 November 1967, pp. 702-04.)

Organ transplants were banned for 13 years until the infallible Jehovah's Witnesses organization changed their mind in 1980.

Saluting the Flag⁸

Jehovah's Witnesses believe saluting the flag of any country is a form of idolatry. They do not pledge allegiance to the flag or sing the National Anthem.

While they are happy to have the protection of the police and the army, they will not join the army or go to war.

Blood Transfusions

...a blood transfusion "may result in the immediate and very temporary prolongation of life, but that at the cost of eternal life for a dedicated Christian." - Blood, Medicine, and the Law of God (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1961), p. 55.

The Jehovah's Witness believe the Old Testament passages that talk about not eating the blood of an animal are a prohibition against modern day blood transfusions. To receive a blood transfusion is direct disobedience to God and means the loss of your salvation. I don't know how many Jehovah's Witnesses have died because of their misrepresentation of the Bible in this area.

Birthdays

The Jehovah's Witnesses strictly forbid the celebration of birthdays. Even the act of sending a birthday card can bring judicial action and disfellowshipping.

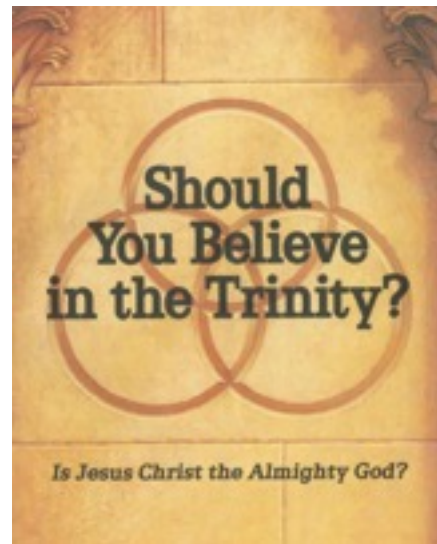
⁸ (http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Do_Jehovah%27s_Witnesses_believe_in_saluting_the_flag)

How do they justify this? They argue there are only two references to birthdays in the Bible, Pharaoh's birthday in Genesis 40 and Herod's birthday in Matthew 14. On both occasions somebody was put to death. In view of this, they believe nobody should celebrate birthdays.

This is what is called "guilt by association." Concluding all birthdays are evil because something bad happened on two of them is warped logic of the highest degree. In Genesis 40 Pharaoh's birthday party proved Pharaoh was evil, not that all birthdays are evil. The same is true with Herod's birthday party in Matthew 14.

Conclusion

At this point I would like to stop and thank the Jehovah's Witnesses. I owe them one. When I was 22 years old a Jehovah's Witness tried to convert me. He gave me a pamphlet called, Should You Believe in the Trinity? The first time I read it, it appeared convincing. The more I read my Bible, did research and reread the pamphlet, the more problems I found.



It soon became very clear that the pamphlet was misrepresenting the Bible. Verses were quoted out of context to twist their meaning. Scholars were misrepresented. The pamphlet I held in my hand was spiritual cyanide. Many people were getting lured out of the church to a Christless eternity because of it.

To make a long story short, after writing a paper to respond to the pamphlet, God laid on my heart the desire to be a pastor and teach the truth line by line from the Bible so others are not deceived. Dwight Eisenhower eventually left the Jehovah's Witnesses when he opened his Bible and realized what they taught didn't square with the Bible.⁹

My prayer is that God uses this series to help you do the same.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ@RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

© You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided (1) you credit the author, (2) modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web address (<http://www.Christ2RCulture.com>) on the copied resource.



⁹ <http://spectator.org/articles/38107/eisenhowers-religion>