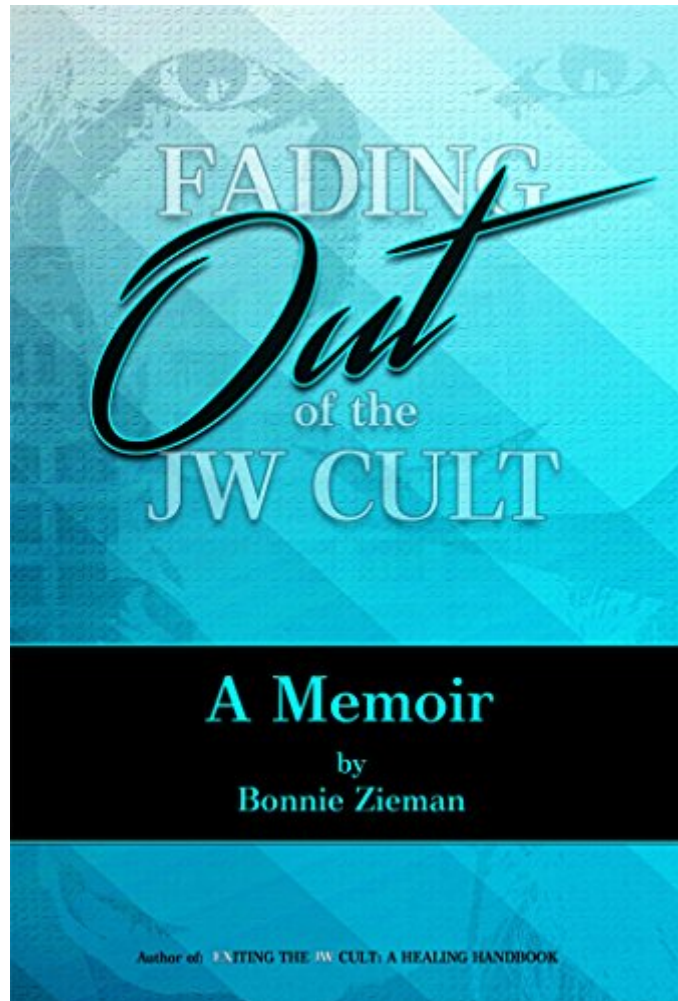




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Fading Out Of The JW Cult: A Memoir



Synopsis

Bonnie Zieman was raised to believe she would live forever in an earthly paradise as a survivor of the impending Battle of Armageddon, but when a Jehovah's Witness childhood friend died at the age of ten, that belief was irrevocably shattered. So began Bonnie's long journey to break free of the Jehovah's Witnesses. In this engrossing memoir, the retired psychotherapist chronicles her many years of indoctrination as a repressed and unhappy Witness trying to find a way out without tearing her whole life apart. Her experiences provide vital insights for those attempting to understand what it's like to live under the destructive influence of an all-controlling cult, despite having doubts. Bonnie Zieman goes on to describe her process of creating a life outside the Jehovah's Witness cult, dealing with the enforced separation from her birth family, getting an education, and building her private practice as she and her husband raise three children. Enhanced by her perspective as a psychotherapist, *Fading Out of the JW Cult* discusses the effects of groupthink, undue influence, mind control, cognitive dissonance, family dynamics, and social isolation, and will empower anyone struggling to exit or recover from an abusive situation.

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Customer Reviews

I, too, was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. This is truly a journey of healing, mind, body, soul, and yes, life. Freedom to use the gift that all of us were given, choice, freedom to decide what we want to do! Every day! Thank you so much for sharing your experience with others who have also lost family and friends through unnatural family shunning.

From the moment I started reading I was 100% captivated! What a fascinating and disturbing memoir! I found that I could relate to your life story in so many ways. I appreciate your honesty and willingness to share your story... a story that will help so many of us survivors feel not so alone :)Thank you Bonnie for your bravery!Daisy

Being raised in a jw. Home. Born in. This book helped me see all of the cult feelings I thought it had but was to afraid to say. Thank you Bonnie for sharing.

Amazing story of a brave woman.

I just finished reading Bonnie Zieman's memoir, *Fading Out of the JW Cult*, and I would highly recommend this book. What makes her story so special is that the protagonist is an experienced psychotherapist. While sharing her story, she explains the psychological manipulation at play in trying to shape her personality. In my opinion, Bonnie's 2016 memoir is a must-read book for anyone who wants to understand how the Watchtower (intentionally) and family (mostly well-intentioned) manipulates children and teenagers of Jehovah's Witnesses. If David Letterman was reviewing Bonnie's memoir on his Late Night Show, he would normally present ten reasons for why the public should read her book. But because we have familial and non-familial (a cult) at play unduly influencing Bonnie, I have decided to enlarge the list to fifteen, which are from 15 to one:15. You will get to meet Bonnie's paternal grandfather, who was the epitome of a true believer, putting his three young sons in an orphanage so he could proselytize the teachings of Charles Taze Russell in eastern Canada. Not a good omen for Bonnie's father (familial) and his potential parenting skills¹⁴. If you did not already know it, Canadian Watchtower executives do love their body massages as Bonnie's young, naïve massage therapist mother discovered.¹³ Believe it or not, Armageddon was just around the corner in 1941, but Bonnie's parents ignored Judge Rutherford's warnings not to marry or have children because the end was so close. You will be delighted to learn how they

chose to spend their time, instead of preaching doom-and-gloom for non-JW believers at Armageddon.¹² Bribing Bonnie with six sticks of grape gum, then just a very little girl, to go out in the Watchtower Street work will leave you wondering, “What was her mama thinking?”¹¹ Bonnie’s mom could have easily been an accessory to a major crime. But with a little luck, and not Jehovah’s invisible hand, “being lucky” saves the day.¹⁰ The story of Bonnie’s childhood friend, Bobby, will tear at your heart strings, an experience that proved to be a significant coming-of-age wake-up call for her.⁹ Bonnie’s baptism experience is an indictment of Watchtower’s blatant use of undue influence on children by JW parents. You will love Bonnie’s mom, but not on this occasion, although it’s really Watchtower’s psychological manipulation.⁸ If you think that you can trust good JW young men to behave on dates, one chapter in her book will definitely change your mind.⁷ In a chapter called The Slap, Bonnie and her father awaken to the reality that dysfunction is a major bi-product of Watchtower’s culture, although neither of them knew it at the time; the invisible hand of Watchtower at work.⁶ A chapter about Bonnie getting married “properly” according to a died-in-the-wool JW elder in her husband’s family could only happen in JW La-la Land.⁵ If you have the misguided belief that Watchtower leaders are all kind, loving and benevolent, Bonnie describes a dinner scene with a circuit overseer that should jolt you to your senses. Unfortunately, behind-the-scenes behavior like this are not that uncommon because of the nature of Watchtower’s pyramid-like culture.⁴ If you think Watchtower’s long-time VP, Fred Franz, was not crazy, Bonnie will set you straight several times in her book. Fred Franz, I believe, was plighted with a severe case of Asperger’s Syndrome, and he was allowed to set policy and prophesy future events for Watchtower without any accountability.³ When a person leaves Watchtower, he or she must be prepared to negotiate a long and challenging learning curve if they want to find and claim their authentic identity. Bonnie’s book is an excellent roadmap to show readers how it can be done in spite of massive amounts of misinformation and emotional abuse.² For me personally, the total lack of human feelings and emotions (the cult identity) by hard-core true-believing JWs is brought home to roost in chapter 36. While reading this chapter, I was reminded that anyone who chooses to attend and confess at a JW Judicial Committee Meeting should never go alone. A good attorney and someone from the press should be there with them, although if those were the conditions, it could mean the Waterloo for these kinds of Watchtower-style kangaroo courts and sinister undue influence.¹ In Chapter 2, Bonnie tells the story about The Gift, a talk delivered by a District Overseer at a 1978 Montreal convention. It was an unplanned gift, that had it been filmed live and preserved, it would have brought Watchtower to its

knees and shown the public how Watchtower psychologically manipulates its members. You can read all about the gift and much more in Bonnie Zieman's excellent memoir, *Fading Out of the JW Cult*.

This book is an enjoyable and very honest story of one woman who was born into the Jehovah's Witness religion. Bonnie tells her story with some humour, some sadness but most of all with hope. Bonnie explains that many of the Jehovah's Witnesses are nice people and that they are even easy to spot and make excellent neighbours. That is a very common impression that people have of JW's (using their own short form from the JW.Org branding they love). Bonnie goes on to explain exactly what is involved in being a JW and how you will be treated if you even attempt to gently back away from the 'religion'. Jehovah's Witnesses often exclaim bewilderment at why ex-Jehovah's Witnesses write books, speak out about their former believe system and generally "try to cause them trouble". The common question from JWs is, "Why can't they just quietly leave?!?" Well here is a book that will really answer that question!

"Fading Out of the JW CULT" offers a wonderful insight into the inner workings of the Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) from the perspective of a hardworking adherent. If you yourself are or have been a JW, this book will resonate on so many levels. Many times I found myself nodding silently as I read, having seen or personally experienced what the author was retelling. In the end, a fair and genuine retelling of life while within the JW organization - filled with stories that had me laughing, reflecting and perhaps even a tear or two. I highly recommend it!

I was never a baptized witness but was raised as one. Virtually my whole family is a Jehovah's Witness, and this book truly describes the guilt and brainwashing one endures. As an adult, I sometimes thought about studying and becoming a witness like the rest of my family, as like you said, once you're indoctrinated, it is hard to ever put out of your mind. However, this nagging, deep within my heart, could never let me be secure in my decision and instead raised a myriad of questions that could never be answered. However, always feeling like I never had enough knowledge of the "truth" still made me want to learn more and see where the witnesses and my family have the practices they have and if they really are from the Bible. This so-called religion has always been a large dark cloud over me. I was so glad I never became a baptized witness! This book is a true eye opener and shows that my feelings are perfectly normal, and the questions I have always had, now have some answers. Thank you for this amazing book.

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