

Reference Document

“Why Elders & the Faithful Are Abandoning Jehovah’s Witnesses”

EVERY CLAIM, SOURCE, AND VERIFICATION STATUS

How to Use This Document

Each entry below identifies a specific factual claim made in the video, the source it is based on, where you can verify it, and any notes on confidence level. Claims are organized in the order they appear in the video. Wherever the video shows a document on screen, the link here takes you to the same source so you can read it in full context.

Verification levels:

PRIMARY — Sourced from government inquiries and court records, official Watchtower publications (including internal manuals), the New World Translation, or reputable research organizations. Primary sources can stand on their own.

SECONDARY — Sourced from published firsthand accounts by former insiders and other reputable corroborating material. Secondary sources support a claim and are strongest when paired with a primary source.

Some moments in the video are personal accounts shared anonymously by former members. These are clearly labeled as personal testimony. To protect the privacy of the people involved, identifying details and direct links to their posts are deliberately omitted.

Section 1: What Really Happens to a Letter Sent to Headquarters

Claim: Watchtower’s own Correspondence Guidelines instruct headquarters staff that if an inquirer reflects a “challenging, disrespectful attitude,” it “may be advisable first to contact the elders to determine the person’s standing in the congregation.”

- **Source:** *Correspondence Guidelines* (cg-E), Watchtower internal manual for Branch Office Service Department staff, 2007 edition, p.6
- **URL:** <https://wtsarchive.com/cfs/files/downloads/MLHN6FTPNL2JaiFpi/cg-E.pdf>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — a Watchtower internal manual. Its authenticity is corroborated by former Governing Body member Raymond Franz (see Additional Sources).
- **Key quote:** “If the one inquiring reflects a challenging, disrespectful attitude, it may be advisable first to contact the elders to determine the person’s standing in the congregation...”

Section 2: The Australian Royal Commission (Case Study 29)

Claim: In 2015 the Australian government’s Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse examined the Jehovah’s Witness organisation as Case Study 29, publishing its findings report in October 2016.

- **Source:** Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No. 29: The response of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd*, October 2016
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-studies/case-study-29-jehovahs-witnesses>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official government inquiry.

Claim: The organisation’s own Australian case files recorded allegations of child sexual abuse against 1,006 members, dating back to 1950.

- **Source:** *Report of Case Study No. 29*, p.58 (section 6, Historical data)
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/Case%20Study%2029%20-%20Finding%20Report%20-%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses.pdf>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — government inquiry, drawn from the organisation’s own documents.
- **Key quote:** “...case files relating to 1,006 alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse dating back to 1950.”

Claim: The Commission found the organisation had a general practice of not reporting child sexual abuse to the authorities, and that this demonstrated a serious failure to provide for the safety and protection of children.

- **Source:** *Report of Case Study No. 29*, p.77 (general conclusions)
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/Case%20Study%2029%20-%20Finding%20Report%20-%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses.pdf>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — government inquiry.
- **Key quote:** "The organisation's general practice of not reporting serious instances of child sexual abuse to police or authorities ... demonstrates a serious failure by the organisation to provide for the safety and protection of children..."

Claim: The Commission concluded that children are not adequately protected from the risk of sexual abuse in the Jehovah's Witness organisation.

- **Source:** *Report of Case Study No. 29*, p.77 (general conclusions)
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/Case%20Study%2029%20-%20Finding%20Report%20-%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses.pdf>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — government inquiry.
- **Note:** The report's exact wording is: "We do not consider the Jehovah's Witness organisation to be an organisation which responds adequately to child sexual abuse. We do not believe that children are adequately protected from the risk of sexual abuse..."

Claim: Under oath, Governing Body member Geoffrey Jackson testified that claiming the Governing Body was the only channel God is using would seem to be quite presumptuous.

- **Source:** *Report of Case Study No. 29*, p.14, citing Transcript of G.W. Jackson, Day 155 (14 August 2015)
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/Case%20Study%2029%20-%20Finding%20Report%20-%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses.pdf>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — sworn testimony recorded in a government inquiry.
- **Key quote:** "...it would seem to be quite presumptuous to say that we are the only spokesperson that God is using."

Section 3: The Two-Witness Rule

Claim: In its own current teaching, the organisation states that before elders take judicial action, two witnesses are required to establish an accusation.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower* (Study Edition), May 2019, "Love and Justice in the Face of Wickedness," p.11, par.15
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2019405>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication.
- **Key quote:** "...two witnesses are required to establish the accusation and authorize the elders to take judicial action."
- **Note:** The same article states this requirement governs internal congregational discipline and does not, in itself, prohibit reporting an allegation to the secular authorities. The video makes this distinction and weighs it against the Commission's findings on the organisation's actual reporting practice.

Claim: The Royal Commission found that applying the two-witness rule to child sexual abuse shows a serious lack of understanding of the nature of child sexual abuse.

- **Source:** *Report of Case Study No. 29*, p.77 (general conclusions)
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/Case%20Study%2029%20-%20Finding%20Report%20-%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses.pdf>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — government inquiry.
- **Key quote:** "...the two-witness rule in cases of child sexual abuse shows a serious lack of understanding of the nature of child sexual abuse."

Section 4: How a Sincere Letter Is Handled

Claim: The Correspondence Guidelines tell headquarters staff that when an inquiry involves a complaint or a point of controversy, it may be advisable to write to the elders to get their observations before replying.

- **Source:** *Correspondence Guidelines* (cg-E), 2007 edition, p.5
- **URL:** <https://wtsarchive.com/cfs/files/downloads/MLHN6FTPNL2JaiFpi/cg-E.pdf>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Watchtower internal manual.
- **Key quote:** "...it may be advisable to write to the elders... to get their observations on the situation before replying."

Claim: The manual further advises that staff may ask the local elders to arrange for two qualified brothers to visit the person who wrote in.

- **Source:** *Correspondence Guidelines* (cg-E), 2007 edition, p.7
- **URL:** <https://wtsarchive.com/cfs/files/downloads/MLHN6FTPNL2JaiFpi/cg-E.pdf>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Watchtower internal manual.
- **Key quote:** "...you may decide to ask that they arrange for two qualified brothers to visit him..."

Section 5: Personal Accounts (Anonymous Testimony)

Claim: A pioneer sister, troubled by the Royal Commission testimony, wrote to the branch office about child protection, went inactive, and was afterward informally treated as an apostate.

- **Source:** Anonymous first-person account by a former congregation elder who knew her, shared publicly in an ex-Jehovah's-Witness community discussion.
- **Verification:** Personal testimony — presented in the video as one person's account, not as an independently verified event. Identifying details are withheld to protect those involved.

Claim: A man who had been a Witness for 36 years, 25 of them as an elder and serving as congregation secretary, wrote a letter questioning a decision and received a reply that was then circulated to every elder on his body.

- **Source:** Anonymous first-person account by the former elder involved, shared publicly in an ex-Jehovah's-Witness community discussion.
- **Verification:** Personal testimony — presented as one person's account. Identifying details are withheld.
- **Note:** Multiple other former elders in the same discussion independently described the same practice of copying a member's letter to the full body of elders.

Section 6: How Questioning Was Reframed as Disloyalty

Claim: In 1983 The Watchtower ran material headed "Fight Against Independent Thinking."

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, January 15, 1983, "Armed for the Fight Against Wicked Spirits," p.27
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1983047>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication.
- **Key quote:** "Fight Against Independent Thinking."

Claim: The same 1983 issue tied independent thinking to Satan's temptation of Eve in Eden.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, January 15, 1983, "Exposing the Devil's Subtle Designs," p.22
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1983046>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication.
- **Key quote:** "He promoted independent thinking. 'You can decide for yourself what is good and bad,' Satan told Eve."

Claim: In 2001 The Watchtower framed doubt as something Satan tries to plant in a person's mind.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, July 1, 2001, "Do Not Let Doubts Destroy Your Faith," p.20
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2001484>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication.
- **Key quote:** "Satan would love to plant doubts like these in your mind."

Claim: In 1996 The Watchtower taught that loyal ones, when troubled by matters in the organization, would have waited on Jehovah to clarify these matters.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, March 15, 1996, "Meeting the Challenge of Loyalty," p.17
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1996205>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication.
- **Key quote:** "...they would have waited on Jehovah to clarify these matters, which he did in his due time."

Claim: In 2022 The Watchtower prepared members to obey direction that may seem strange, impractical, or illogical.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower* (Study Edition), February 2022, "Do You Trust in Jehovah's Way of Doing Things?" p.6, par.15
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2022280>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication.
- **Key quote:** "...we may receive instructions that seem strange, impractical, or illogical."

Section 7: Scripture and Membership Retention

Claim: James 1:27 in the New World Translation defines clean, undefiled worship as looking after orphans and widows in their tribulation.

- **Source:** *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, James 1:27
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/b/r1/lp-e/nwtsty/59/1>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the organisation's own Bible translation.
- **Key quote:** "The form of worship that is clean and undefiled... is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation..."

Claim: Roughly two out of three people raised as Jehovah's Witnesses no longer identify with the religion as adults.

- **Source:** Pew Research Center, "A closer look at Jehovah's Witnesses living in the U.S.," April 26, 2016
- **URL:** <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/26/a-closer-look-at-jehovahs-witnesses-living-in-the-u-s/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — nationally representative survey data from a reputable research organization.
- **Key quote:** "Among all U.S. adults who were raised as Jehovah's Witnesses, two-thirds (66%) no longer identify with the group."

Section 8: Additional Supporting Sources

Raymond Franz, *In Search of Christian Freedom*

- **Source:** Raymond Franz, *In Search of Christian Freedom* (Commentary Press), p.242. Franz served on the Jehovah's Witness Governing Body from 1971 to 1980.
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — firsthand account by a former member of the Governing Body, corroborating how correspondence from members is handled at headquarters.
- **Contains:** Insider description of the branch/headquarters correspondence practice referenced in Sections 1 and 4.

Royal Commission — Case Study 29 overview and media release

- **Source:** Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse — case study landing page and report media release.
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/media-releases/report-jehovahs-witness-organisations-released>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official government inquiry.
- **Contains:** Summary of the hearings, evidence, and findings underlying Sections 2 and 3.

Every document shown in this video is linked above so you can read it in its full original context. Where a moment is a personal account rather than a document, it is labeled as such.