



Betty Stephens' Testimony
(Reported for taking blood)

I was born into a Christian family. Some of my earliest memories are time spent in church. I joined a Christian Church (Disciple of Christ) when I was twelve. I can remember to this day my decision to walk down the aisle and take the preacher's hand. I cannot remember accepting Christ as my Savior, so I doubt that it happened. I was baptized in a pond at my cousin's home.

My family moved from a small town to Lexington. My father remarried. My mother died when I was eleven. At this time we started going to a Baptist Church. I thought this was strange, because my father had not always spoken kindly of Baptist people. Nevertheless, I joined the Baptist Church and was baptized again when I was fourteen.

When I was eighteen I married a man who was also Baptist and this was the church we were going to when I had my first encounter with a Jehovah's Witness. Lo and behold it was a childhood friend, in fact we had at one time been best friends through the years, thirteen to seventeen. Then we drifted apart. I remember her telling me about a new world, and how things would be perfect there. It sounded too good to be true. She came back and we started a Bible study.

I continued going to the Baptist Church until she told me about the Trinity. She said Trinity means not one God but three gods in one – a three-headed god. I told her Baptist did not believe this, she said they did.

One Sunday morning I was in church singing the song, Holy, Holy, Holy, and at the end of that song, it said, "God in three persons blessed Trinity." I never went back to the Baptist Church. At that time I was twenty-five years old.

When I was twenty-six I was baptized again as a full blown Jehovah's Witness, doing all the things they do – going out in service, conducting Bible studies, placing magazines, going to all the meetings. I didn't dare miss a meeting. I was afraid I would lose my life. This was a very hard time for me at home. My being a Witness tore my home apart. My husband objected strongly. He didn't like my going to meetings, especially he didn't want me to take our daughter. Things were not good between his family and me. They were upset because I would not celebrate Christmas. I would not attend the family dinners, etc.

I continued attending meetings, and going in service thinking I was serving God. I cut myself off from the friends I had. I had no friends outside the organization. I

was not to associate with worldly people. My husband (not being a Witness) and I were never invited to social gatherings or to other Witness' homes. I was very lonely and a very sad person, but I thought this was the way God wanted me to be. Being persecuted was a good thing for a Witness. I was not taught to rejoice in the Lord.

When I was thirty-two I became pregnant. This was a happy, happy surprise for me. For ten years I had wanted another baby. Now God was giving me one. When my baby was born all did not go well. Before I left to go to the hospital I began to hemorrhage. The only thing I could think of – "IM going to lose my baby!" You see – I had never discussed the blood issue with my doctor. I found out later from the doctor, it was not the baby's life that was in jeopardy, it was my life! When I woke up the transfusing was already started. I asked, "Why?" and the nurse told me the doctor wanted me to have it. I said nothing more.

The next day two sisters came to see me. One was Jean Eason. I remember wanting to tell them what I had done. I felt so guilty! I didn't talk to anyone about the blood transfusion. My husband made a smart remark about it, only to make me feel worse. I didn't talk to God about this, but then I didn't talk to God much anyway. I felt unworthy to talk to God. All my life I had been told what to do, how to do, from my parents, my sister, my husband, my mother-in-law. I would do as I was told, rather than start an argument or have them upset with me. I guess I was afraid God would be mad at me. (How different it is today. I can talk to God about anything and know he listens and cares and loves me!) Oh! How wonderful my God is!!

Two months had passed and Jean Eason came to visit me at my home. In all the years I had known her this was the first time she came to my home. She wanted to know if I had taken a blood transfusion when my baby was born. (Jean's neighbor knew I had and told her). I said, "Yes."

About two months after Jean's visit, I received a letter from the Congregation Servant that a hearing would be held. I assumed Jean had reported me for taking blood.

I remember how frightened I was as I walked into the Kingdom Hall. Four brothers made up the committee. One brother was supposed to be of the remnant. He was the hardest on me. One brother was a man whom I had know since I was thirteen. He was the brother of the one who introduced me to Jehovah's Witnesses.

I have tried very hard to remember what I said, and how I felt that night. The only thing I can really remember is the fear and the pain of what might happen to me. Even now the tears come just thinking about the awful hurting inside – that I was not worthy of God's love.

I was put on probation for a year. I was to report to the Congregation Servant each month. The first month I reported to tell the servant what I had been doing. He told me I didn't have to do that. It was something the organization recommended. I never told another person about this – one was not supposed to talk to others about such things.

The brother who was of the remnant, never let me forget what I did. I was sure he had told his wife, because I became a slave to them. When they needed transportation, I was called. (They never gave me money for gas, either). I gave her Bible studies I had established. She would ask me for them. She was a pioneer and placing books and magazines was a way she added to her income. (Pioneers are given a reduced price for literature). I felt trapped by their demands.

I'm not sure just when I became disillusioned. I knew I didn't like going door to door, but I went. One day I was at an assembly and the speaker was discussing Romans, chapter 13, where it tells of the higher authority. He was saying the "higher powers" meant governments. I thought I had heard wrong, because the organization had been teaching the "higher powers" were Jehovah and Christ Jesus. Having no confidence in myself, I thought I was wrong again. When the Watchtower came out, they had changed this teaching. I think this was when my attitude began to change. I started missing meetings. I didn't go out in service as much. Then I stopped going altogether. For days I would not answer my phone. I would not answer the door when they came. I didn't want them to talk me into going back. It didn't matter anyway – all I felt was fear. The fear of what would happen if I stopped going, and the fear of going – which was worse?

Seventeen years had passed. In all this time I didn't go to any Kingdom Hall or church. I still had the fear of losing my life.

In the spring of 1981, Jean Eason called. She began to tell me about Jesus, how he had given her a new life, how He had healed her so she didn't need surgery. I thought I should not be listening to her. I wanted to hang up, but couldn't. I explained to her that I thought she was Satan. She understood. She invited me to a meeting at her home. She was to call me back when a certain speaker was in town. When she called to tell me where, and what time, I was shaking with fear. I couldn't go! She called again – still I didn't go.

During this time I began to read the Bible. (Good News for Modern Man). For the first time God's Word began to mean something to me. Also during this time period Jean was disfellowshipped. She continued to call me. I was invited to her home for lunch along with two other former Witnesses who had been disfellowshipped. I said I would come. The day I was to go, I knew I would never make it out there! I felt as if I would die from fear! You see - I had not been disfellowshipped and I could be, just for speaking to her!

Jean came by and left some tapes when I was not home. She called and invited me again to her home. This time I had the courage to go. I had listened to a tape

about how Witnesses were supposed to be obedient to the organization. It reminded me of laws God gave to Moses. At that very minute I decided I did not want to be under the Law of the Watchtower organization anymore!

I went to church with Jean and the other ex-Witnesses. On August 21, 1981, I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. What a beautiful day!

One day I was taking all the Witness literature out of my house. Again that awful fear came back! As I threw it into a sack, I was saying, over and over, "Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me!" The thought came to mind, "Why was I so afraid and who was I afraid of?" I realized it was Satan I was so afraid of! It was at that moment, I knew that the Watchtower organization belonged to Satan. Why else would I have such fear? Fear does not come from God. All those years I had been held in that awful fear!

I am now set free, free to worship, free to praise my Lord. Free to go to the church of my choice. Free to choose my friends, and I have such good ones! Free to love – Oh! How great it is to feel that warm love. Free to accept that sweet spirit of Jesus who lives within me.

I was never disfellowshipped. I wanted to make a commitment to the church where I'm attending, and felt I couldn't with the possibility of being disfellowshipped hanging over my head. I wrote a letter asking them to disassociate me from the organization. The reason I had not been disfellowshipped for going to church was because no one had reported me.

On September 7, 1982, I was received as a member of the little church I'm attending – a place that is so dear to my heart. I know this is where God wants me. I love these people, and they love me. I love Pastor McDonald, and his wife, Connie. I feel secure in their love. Most of all – I am secure in God's love. That awful fear is gone! Praise the Lord!!

1999 update: Betty has continued to serve the Lord since the first printing of this book, 1983. Her love for children led her to teach Sunday School and she has been a great influence on many children for years! She served on the area board of Women's Aglow for several years, and attended many international conferences. Presently she is serving in the Women's Ministry program at her church that involves many activities. She continues working in our ministry, Tutors for Christ.