

Why are Jehovah's Witnesses different?

This document is intended to assist anyone who has to interact with Jehovah's Witnesses in an official capacity. The inclination could be to treat them in the same way as any other church but, in dealing with Jehovah's Witnesses, it is important to recognise that, while they label themselves Christian, they differ from most Christian religions in some important ways. These differences affect their behaviour internally and externally. The differences are stated briefly below. Supporting evidence is added in endnotes that reference material from their own publications as well as information already in the public domain.

1. Jehovah's Witnesses interpret the whole of Matthew 24 and 25 as prophetic in relation to the second coming.ⁱ Most Christians understand Matthew 24:45-51 (The parable of the faithful servant) as one of a series of parables with a common theme about the importance of remaining watchful, but Jehovah's Witnesses, although they describe it as an "illustration" still look for a "fulfilment" of the illustration as prophecy rather than looking for its "meaning" as a parable. This is an important difference because it drives point 2.

2. Jehovah's Witnesses place great store by being able to identify a contemporary "faithful and discreet slave". They believe that Jesus returned, invisibly, in 1914 and seek a fulfilment of all the second coming prophecies in world events since then.ⁱⁱ They believe that a relationship with God is only possible via the spiritual feeding that comes from this slave.ⁱⁱⁱ This doctrine must be defended at all cost because the entire belief system of Jehovah's Witnesses rests on this foundation. The claim that the faithful slave is appointed by Jesus and is a part of their organisation is the only thing that lends legitimacy to their beliefs.

3. Jehovah's Witnesses currently teach that the slave corresponds to the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses^{iv}; not to the men as individuals but to the group as a whole. The number of members is not fixed. At the time of writing there are eight. Over time Jehovah's Witnesses have held to a number of different understandings regarding the identity of the "faithful and discreet slave" with the common theme that it is always associated with a person or group of people within their organisation. The most recent change of doctrine in 2012 shifted the identity from 'all spirit-anointed Christians' alive on the earth at a given time' (more than twelve thousand men and women in 2012) to the small group taking the lead at world headquarters, namely the Governing Body.

4. In an environment where it is taught that the Governing Body "is the channel through which Jesus is feeding his true followers" there is little room for feedback and no room for dissent. Whether the members of the Governing Body actually believe they are being used by Jesus or simply propagate this belief as a convenient way to maintain power is open to debate but the effect on the organisation is the same in either case. Guidance presented by the Governing Body is seen as emanating from God so is not likely to be accompanied with an invitation for improvements. Any dissenter will be cut off.^{vi}

5. It is common for Jehovah's Witnesses to have a sanitised version of doctrine or policy that is designed to be palatable to the public while, internally, the messaging is very different. By way of example, the teaching that those who are disfellowshipped or who disassociate themselves from Jehovah's Witnesses are to be shunned is especially contentious. The public sees the practice as inhumane and some courts have deemed it a contravention of human rights. Jehovah's Witnesses respond by presenting a sanitised version of their doctrine for external consumption^{vii}.

There are thousands of ex-Jehovah's Witnesses for whom this action proved the final straw, confirming that Jehovah's Witnesses are unchristian. The experience of members of an ex-JW support group suggests that there are also current Jehovah's Witnesses who ignore the edict and secretly associate with their disfellowshipped relatives. The stated aim of shunning is to bring the sinner back to their senses and cause them to repent and, if that fails, to protect the congregation from the unwholesome influence of an unrepentant sinner.

A well-run organisation would seek honest feedback from its members and former members to determine whether shunning is effective. Jehovah's Witnesses do not seek feedback they seek confirmation of the party line because, having been guided by Jesus, it must be right. A recently leaked letter to circuit overseers asked them to find people who had experienced disfellowshipping and the shunning that goes with it, had been reinstated and would now be willing to voice the opinion that it was a loving form of discipline^{viii}.

6. The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses is solely responsible for the appointment of new members of the Governing Body which leads to a self-perpetuating power base that is highly resistant to change.

All of the current members were appointed exclusively from a group known as "helpers to the Governing Body". Current Governing Body members will already have been working with them for some time before appointing them. It is highly unlikely that they will appoint someone who is critical of their way of doing things. They are surrounded by yes men and appoint new members from among the yes men. Anyone who is critical of their teaching will quickly be disfellowshipped^{ix} for "apostasy" where the definition of apostasy is determined by the Governing Body and, in effect, is a shorthand for openly expressing disagreement with the Governing Body.

7. In order for the Governing Body to overturn an existing policy a two thirds majority vote is required.

Perhaps the most high-profile case of disfellowshipping was that of Raymond Franz^x who was a member of the Governing Body between 1971 and 1980 when he was disfellowshipped for apostasy. He later wrote about his experience and revealed some of the inner workings of the Governing Body to which rank-and-file Jehovah's Witnesses are not privy, among which was the two thirds majority voting system. The rationale begins with the assumption that decisions of the Governing Body are guided by Holy Spirit. In that context, it makes sense that any change to a previous decision would have overwhelming, if not unanimous, support. Given that the Governing Body currently has eight members, this means that just three of the 'old guard' could stand in the way of a change to policy that affects the lives of more than eight and a half million Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide.

8. Branch offices have no autonomy; they are guided entirely by edicts from the Governing Body. While a representative from the Britain branch might speak in a way that implies cooperation, there will always be the caveat that suggestions must be taken away for consideration. What this really means is that the branch must seek the approval of the Governing Body before taking any action that is not already covered by a policy dictated by them.

9. Unless you are a Jehovah's Witness you will, in the near future, become their enemy and will then be eternally destroyed by God. The narrative of being God's chosen people with an appointed channel of communication from God, carries with it the idea that attacks from Satan are to be expected. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Armageddon is a literal event that will happen very soon. As part of the lead up to that event they expect that secular authorities will turn against religious organisations and all false religions (they reference these with the collective term, "Babylon the Great") will capitulate. This will leave only Jehovah's Witnesses, now open to a final attack, which will provoke divine intervention at the battle of Armageddon^{xi}. They have been fed with articles and video presentations that embed this mindset over the last three or four years (2016 onwards) placing them in a state of high alert. Taking a position that seems to oppose them plays into their narrative^{xii}. On one hand they accept that secular authority is temporarily allowed to exist by God's permission, so they will happily call the police to protect their Kingdom Hall from vandalism. On the other, they believe that the whole world (including law enforcement agencies) is lying 'in the power of the wicked one' and is destined for destruction by God.

10. Jehovah's Witnesses subscribe to a concept of "theocratic warfare" that allows them to lie when necessary to defend their organisation. They will usually avoid a direct lie if possible, preferring a misleading answer^{xiii}, but will resort to a blatant lie if necessary. They believe they have God's blessing in doing so^{xiv}.

Endnotes

ⁱ Screen shot from Watchtower online library: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/b/r1/lp-e/nwtsty/40/24#study=discover>

marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,+ 39 and they took no note until the Flood came and swept them all away,+ so the presence of the Son of man will be. 40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken along and the other abandoned. 41 Two women will be grinding at the hand mill; one will be taken along and the other abandoned.+ 42 Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.+

43 "But know one thing: If the householder had known in what watch* the thief was coming,+ he would have kept awake and not allowed his house to be broken into.+ 44 On this account, you too prove yourselves ready,+ because the Son of man is coming at an hour that you do not think to be it.

45 "Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time?+ 46 Happy is that slave if his master on coming finds him doing so!+ 47 Truly I say to you, he will appoint him over all his belongings.

48 "But if ever that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is delaying,'+ 49 and he starts to beat his fellow slaves and to eat and drink with the confirmed drunkards, 50 the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect and in an hour that he does not know,+ 51 and he will punish him with the greatest severity and will assign him his place with the hypocrites. There is where his weeping and the gnashing of his teeth will be.+

Overview of Matthew

Jesus' Great Prophecy About the Sign of His Presence (24:1-25:46)

Matthew 24:1

Indexes

Matthew 24:2

Truly: See study note on Mt 5:18.

by no means will a stone be left here upon a stone: Jesus' prophecy was remarkably fulfilled in 70 C.E. when the Romans demolished Jerusalem and its temple. Apart from a few sections of the wall, the city was completely leveled.

ⁱⁱ Watchtower of July 15 2013: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2013533#h=11>

4-6. Why may we conclude that Jesus' illustration of the faithful slave began to be fulfilled only after 1914?

⁴ The context of the illustration of the faithful and discreet slave shows that it began to be fulfilled, not at Pentecost 33 C.E., but in this time of the end. Let us see how the Scriptures lead us to this conclusion.

⁵ The illustration of the faithful slave is part of Jesus' prophecy about "the sign of [his] presence and of the conclusion of the system of things." ([Matt. 24:3](#)) The first portion of the prophecy, recorded at [Matthew 24:4-22](#), has two fulfillments—first, in the years from 33 C.E. through 70 C.E., and second, in a more far-reaching way in our day. Does this mean that Jesus' words about the faithful slave would also have two fulfillments? No.

⁶ Starting with the words recorded at [Matthew 24:29](#), Jesus focused primarily on events that would happen in our day. (**Read [Matthew 24:30, 42, 44](#).**) Speaking about what will happen during the great tribulation, he said that people "will see the Son of man *coming* on the clouds of heaven." Then, in words meant for those living during the last days, he urged vigilance, saying: "You do not know on what day your Lord is *coming*" and, "At an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is *coming*."⁷ In this context—when speaking about events that would take place in the last days—Jesus related the illustration of the faithful slave. Therefore, we may conclude that his words about that faithful slave began to be fulfilled only *after* the last days began in 1914. Such a conclusion makes sense. Why is that?

ⁱⁱⁱ Watchtower of July 15 2013: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2013533#h=7>

1, 2. Through what channel is Jesus feeding us today, and why is it vital that we recognize that channel?

"BROTHERS, I cannot begin to count the times you have put into my hands articles that contained just what I needed when I needed it most." That is how one sister expressed her appreciation in a

letter to the brothers who work at our world headquarters. Can you identify with her? Many of us can. Should that surprise us? Not really.

²The timely spiritual food we receive is proof that Jesus, the Head of the congregation, is keeping his promise to feed us. Through whom is he doing so? When giving the sign of his presence, Jesus said that he would use “the faithful and discreet slave” to give “food at the proper time” to his domestics.* (**Read Matthew 24:45-47.**) That faithful slave is the channel through which Jesus is feeding his true followers in this time of the end. It is vital that we recognize the faithful slave. Our spiritual health and our relationship with God depend on this channel.—[Matt. 4:4; John 17:3](#).

^{iv} Watchtower July 15 2013: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2013533#h=18>

10. Who is the faithful and discreet slave?

¹⁰Who, then, is the faithful and discreet slave? In keeping with Jesus’ pattern of feeding many through the hands of a few, that slave is made up of *a small group of anointed brothers who are directly involved in preparing and dispensing spiritual food during Christ’s presence*. Throughout the last days, the anointed brothers who make up the faithful slave have served together at headquarters. In recent decades, that slave has been closely identified with the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Note, however, that the word “slave” in Jesus’ illustration is singular, indicating that this is a *composite* slave. The decisions of the Governing Body are thus made collectively.

WHO ARE THE DOMESTICS?

11, 12. (a) What two appointments does the faithful and discreet slave receive? (b) When did Jesus appoint the faithful slave over his domestics, and whom did he select?

¹¹It is noteworthy that in Jesus’ illustration, the faithful and discreet slave receives *two* distinct appointments. The first is over the domestics; the second is over all the master’s belongings. Since the illustration is fulfilled only in this time of the end, both appointments would have to come after Jesus’ presence in kingly power began in 1914.

¹²When did Jesus appoint the faithful slave over his domestics? To answer that, we need to go back to 1914—the beginning of the harvest season. As we learned earlier, at that time many groups claimed to be Christian. From which group would Jesus select and appoint the faithful slave? That question was answered after he and his Father came and inspected the temple, or spiritual arrangement for worship, from 1914 to the early part of 1919.* ([Mal. 3:1](#)) They were pleased with a small band of loyal Bible Students who showed that their heart was with Jehovah and his Word. Of course, they needed some cleansing, but they humbly responded during a brief period of testing and refining. ([Mal. 3:2-4](#)) Those faithful Bible Students were true Christian wheat. In 1919, a time of spiritual revival, Jesus selected capable anointed brothers from among them to be the faithful and discreet slave and appointed them over his domestics.

13. Who are included in the domestics, and why?

¹³Who, then, are the domestics? Put simply, they are those who are fed. Early in the last days, the domestics were all anointed ones. Later, *the domestics came to include the great crowd of other sheep*. The other sheep now make up the vast majority of the “one flock” under Christ’s leadership. ([John 10:16](#)) Both groups benefit from the same timely spiritual food that is dispensed by the faithful slave. What about the Governing Body members who today make up the faithful and discreet slave? Those brothers also need to be fed spiritually. Hence, they humbly recognize that *as individuals* they are domestics just like all the rest of Jesus’ genuine followers.

^v Jehovah’s Witnesses hold to a literal interpretation of Revelation 7:4 so that they believe the number of Christians taken to heaven will be limited to 144,000. The vast majority of Jehovah’s Witnesses do not claim to be of this group but hope instead to live forever in physical form on a paradise earth. The calling to a ‘heavenly hope’ is a private thing between the individual and God; it is impossible for an individual who believes they have this calling to prove it and impossible for anyone else to disprove it.

The change made in 2012 formalised an understanding that took shape over many years, whereby the Governing Body had previously presented itself externally as “spokesman” for the faithful slave while making clear internally that they did not expect to consult with any other Jehovah’s Witness, whether claiming to be spirit-anointed or not, on matters of doctrine. Power had been in the hands of the few for a very long time. The doctrinal change made it plain that this was the case.

^{vi} See <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1989725#h=17>
Watchtower October 1 1989.

12. How can wrong ideas and teachings be dangerous to spiritual health?

¹²This world’s wrong ideas and teachings can also infect us. Paul warned: “There will be a period of time when they will not put up with the healthful teaching, but, in accord with their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves to have their ears tickled; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, whereas they will be turned aside to false stories.” ([2 Timothy 4:3, 4](#)) False teachings are like gangrene. ([2 Timothy 2:16, 17](#)) When it sets in, a portion of your flesh dies because life-giving blood has been cut off from that part of the body.

13. If spiritual sickness has set in like gangrene, what should be done?

¹³How fast gangrene spreads! To prevent death, the doctor may have to amputate a part of the body. So, if doubts, complaints, or apostasy threaten to contaminate you spiritually, cut them away quickly! (Compare [Matthew 5:29, 30](#).) Get help from the congregation elders. Do not become like those whom Paul described as “mentally diseased over questionings and debates about words” because they did “not assent to healthful words.”—[1 Timothy 6:3, 4](#).

14. What may the elders find it necessary to do to protect the spiritual health of the congregation?

¹⁴To protect the spiritual health of the congregation, elders need “to exhort by the teaching that is healthful and to reprove those who contradict.” (Titus 1:9, 13, 16; 2:1) Perhaps such persons can be restored to a spiritually healthy state. (2 Timothy 2:23-26) But what if they unrepentantly promote false teaching? Then, in effect, they must be quarantined. They are disfellowshipped, and we stay away from them so that their spiritual infection does not spread to us.—Romans 16:17, 18; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Titus 3:9-11.

^{vii} See <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/shunning/>

JW.org has a frequently asked questions section that addresses the question of shunning directly but the answer given is deliberately obfuscatory.

The answer describes the experience of someone who “makes a practice of breaking the Bible’s moral code and does not repent”, avoiding the fact that the treatment of someone who simply writes a letter indicating that they no longer wish to be known as a Jehovah’s Witness will be treated in exactly the same way.

The answer describes “... a man who is disfellowshipped but whose wife and children are still Jehovah’s Witnesses?” and suggests that “The religious ties he had with his family change, but blood ties remain. The marriage relationship and normal family affections and dealings continue.”, This obscures the fact that in a case where the couple had separated, the wife and children would shun the disfellowshipped husband / father who no longer lives in the family home. In the case where it’s a child in a family that is disfellowshipped, they would normally be expected to leave the family home if they are old enough to do so. Such cases have lead ultimately to the suicide of an abandoned young adult. A very specific single example is used to make the point that normal family affections and dealings continue. Because the children of the family are still minors and the husband and wife have not separated or divorced, the whole family continues to live in the same home and has normal family dealings. In any other case, the disfellowshipped person, whether child or parent, will be shunned by the rest of the family.

^{viii} A leaked letter reveals that the branch office has asked circuit overseers to locate “individuals who were disfellowshipped in the past but have returned and are doing well now.” The circuit overseer, passing on the request to congregations in his circuit, quotes directly from the letter he has received from the branch, which states:

“Particularly, we would like to hear of those who openly express their confidence that the disfellowshipping arrangement is loving, and that they have personally benefited from this discipline. Preferably, the experience should illustrate the points in the second, third and fourth paragraphs in the online article “Do Jehovah’s Witnesses Shun Those Who Used to Belong to Their Religion?” The experience does not need to be a recent one. However, please only submit experiences of those who are still doing well spiritually.”

In other words the “correct” answers have already been determined. Disfellowshipping and the shunning that goes with it is a loving provision; it must be because the Governing Body says it is and they speak for Jesus. It is effective in bringing people back to the faith for the right reasons and those who have experienced it feel they have benefited. We just need to find a few people who are willing to go on record to say so; ideally, they should be people whose experience fits precisely with the cherry-picked example we have used to illustrate our point.

^{ix} See the case of Rolf Furuli (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rolf_Furuli), who was a Jehovah's Witness until very recently. Although he had been vocal in the past in support of the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses, more recently, he wrote a book suggesting that, contrary to their claims, the modern day Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses has no precedent in first century Christianity, and thus no legitimacy. He was promptly disfellowshipped.

^x See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_Franz. Franz wrote the book "Crisis of Conscience" after his expulsion from Jehovah's Witnesses and later wrote "In Search of Christian Freedom".

^{xi} <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2019603#h=8>
Study Watchtower October 2019

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE "GREAT TRIBULATION"?

3. According to [Revelation 17:5, 15-18](#), how will God destroy "Babylon the Great"?

³ **Read Revelation 17:5, 15-18.** "Babylon the Great" will be destroyed! As mentioned earlier, the nations will have no control over what happens at this point. Why not? Because "God [will] put it into their hearts to carry out *his thought*." What is that thought? To destroy the world empire of false religion, including Christendom.* God will put his thought into the hearts of "the ten horns" of the "scarlet-colored wild beast." The ten horns represent all the political powers that support "the wild beast"—the United Nations. ([Rev. 17:3, 11-13; 18:8](#)) When those political powers turn on false religion, that will mark the beginning of the great tribulation. It will be a truly catastrophic world event.

4. (a) What might the nations say to justify their attack on false religion? (b) What will the former members of those religions likely do?

⁴ We do not know what reasons the nations might give to justify their attack on Babylon the Great. They might say that the world's religions are an obstacle to peace and that they constantly meddle in politics. Or they might say that those religious organizations have accumulated too much wealth and property. ([Rev. 18:3, 7](#)) It seems reasonable that this attack will not mean that all the *members* of those religions will be destroyed. Rather, it seems that the nations will get rid of the religious *organizations*. Once those organizations are gone, the former members will realize that their religious leaders failed them and will likely try to distance themselves from those religions.

5. What has Jehovah promised about the great tribulation, and why?

⁵ The Bible does not indicate how long the destruction of Babylon the Great will take, but we do know that it will take place within a relatively brief time. ([Rev. 18:10, 21](#)) Jehovah has promised that he will "cut short the days" of the tribulation so that his "chosen ones" and true religion will

survive. ([Mark 13:19, 20](#)) But what will Jehovah expect us to do between the start of the great tribulation and the war of Armageddon?

^{xii} <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2019603#h=15>

Study Watchtower October 2019

8. How will our message likely change in the future?

⁸ During the great tribulation, the message that we proclaim will likely change. Currently, we are preaching the good news of the Kingdom and we are endeavoring to make disciples. But at that time, we may well deliver a message as hard-hitting as hailstones. ([Rev. 16:21](#)) We may proclaim the impending doom of Satan’s world. In time, we will find out exactly what our message will be and how we will deliver it. Will we use the same methods we have used for over a hundred years to accomplish our ministry? Or will we use some other methods? We will have to wait and see. In any case, it seems that we will have the privilege of boldly proclaiming Jehovah’s judgment message!—[Ezek. 2:3-5](#).

9. How may the nations react to our message, but of what can we be sure?

⁹ Quite likely, our message will provoke the nations into trying to silence us once and for all. Just as we rely on Jehovah for support in our ministry now, we will need his support then. We can be sure that our God will fill us with power to accomplish his will.—[Mic. 3:8](#).

KEEP READY FOR THE ATTACK ON GOD’S PEOPLE

10. As foretold at [Luke 21:25-28](#), how will most of mankind react to what happens during the great tribulation?

¹⁰ **Read [Luke 21:25-28](#).** During the great tribulation, people will be shocked as they see everything that they once thought to be so stable in the world begin to fail. They will be in “anguish,” fearing for their very lives as they enter the darkest period of human existence. ([Zeph. 1:14, 15](#)) At that time, life will likely get more difficult even for Jehovah’s people. Because we remain no part of the world, we may suffer some hardships. We may have to go without certain necessities.

11. (a) Why will Jehovah’s Witnesses become the center of attention? (b) Why do we not need to fear the great tribulation?

¹¹ At some point, the people whose religions were destroyed may resent the fact that Jehovah’s Witnesses keep practicing their religion. We can only imagine the uproar that this might create, including on social media. The nations and their ruler, Satan, will hate us for having the only surviving religion. They will not have attained their goal to eliminate all religion from the face of the earth. So we will become the center of their attention. At this point, the nations will take on the role of Gog of Magog.* They will band together to make a vicious, all-out attack on Jehovah’s people. ([Ezek. 38:2, 14-16](#)) It can be somewhat unsettling to think about those possibilities when we cannot be certain of the exact details. However, one thing is sure: We do not need to fear the great tribulation. Jehovah will give us lifesaving instructions. ([Ps. 34:19](#)) We will be able to “stand up straight and lift up [our] heads” because we will know that our “deliverance is getting near.”*

^{xiii} Some examples of this tactic were seen at the IICSA hearings. Jehovah’s Witnesses usually require an accuser to confront the person they are accusing in the presence of two elders as part of the initial investigation process to determine whether a sin has been committed that requires a judicial committee to be formed. If and when a judicial committee has been formed and the accused denies the accusation, the accuser might again be called upon to present their testimony with the accused present. Exceptions to these general rules were introduced progressively for the case where the accusation is of child sexual abuse and the accuser is a child. Counsel for the Inquiry asked whether it was true that the current policy represented a change compared to previous policy. Here is the exchange, verbatim from the transcript

(<https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/20895/view/public-hearing-transcript-11-august-2020.pdf>

starting on p51 at line 19). Counsel for the Inquiry in plain text, response of CCJW in bold:

“19 Can I just clarify, that was not always the case.
20 Until, I think, the past five or six years, it would
21 routinely have been the case that the victim and the
22 accuser may have had to be in the same room together and
23 have discussions with each other. Is that right?

24 **A. Well, it's been the case, as long as I can remember,
25 that no child was ever forced to or brought before**

Continued on p52

1 **a committee to face their abuser under any
2 circumstances, even an investigation process. That's
3 long been our policy. It's also been our policy that
4 nobody, as it says there, is required to make the
5 allegation in the presence of the alleged abuser**

Notice that the spokesman for CCJW evades giving a direct answer to the question of whether or not the policy has changed with time. He makes statements that are difficult to contest because they reference vague time periods such as “as long as I can remember”, “That’s long been our policy” or “It’s also been our policy [without attaching any time period]”. This would be accurate in the strict sense, even if the policy had been changed the day before the hearing but is nevertheless calculated to give the *impression* that the policy has always been as it is currently without actually saying so, which would be a lie. To suggest it has been changed would be to admit that it was previously flawed.

Another example starts on page 119 of the same transcript. It is clear that a member of the panel (Mr Frank) has seen leaked video footage (readily available on the internet) of a seminar delivered at London branch office by Shawn Bartlett, a visitor from world headquarters, responsible for “Records Management”. It appears in the video that instructions are being given about destroying documentary evidence that could lead to Jehovah’s Witnesses being successfully sued. Here is the exchange, CCJW in bold again:

2 MR FRANK: Do you know a person called Shawn Bartlett as
3 a records management overseer?

4 **A. Yes, I do.**

5 MR FRANK: Did he come to give a seminar to elders in
6 England in 2017?

7 **A. Yes, he did.**

8 MR FRANK: Did you attend that?

[In the video evidence there is a long pause at this point]

9 **A. I think I did. I can't recall it specifically.**

10 MR FRANK: You might recall it if you remember the content
11 of the seminar. Can you remember what the purpose of
12 the seminar was?

13 **A. To help us to make sure that our record keeping was up
14 to date with legislation and that we weren't keeping
15 unnecessary documents.**

16 MR FRANK: Not keeping unnecessary documents. Do you mean
17 that he advised you to get rid of some documents?

18 **A. Well, of course, at that time, and even now, we have
19 data protection matters, so we have to make sure that
20 documents adhere to data protection issues, so, yes, he
21 would have advised along those lines.**

22 MR FRANK: My next question is, do you have a data retention
23 policy that you have published?

24 **A. We have a data retention policy. Have we published it?
25 I don't know**

Continued on p120

1 MR FRANK: In any event, you were at the seminar in 2017
2 where Shawn Bartlett, among other things, advised you
3 how to keep and how to get rid of documents?

4 **A. Yes.**

5 MR FRANK: Did he, in the course of that seminar, tell you
6 that the reason for getting rid of documents was because
7 Satan was coming after you? Satan in the form of
8 a legal process?

9 **A. Okay. His comments, as I say, were directed with regard
10 to data protection issues, as I recall. I don't
11 remember exactly what he said on the subject. I don't
12 remember any comments about Satan particularly.**

13 MR FRANK: Do you know whether there is a record anywhere of
14 that seminar, of what was said?

15 **A. I'd have to find out for you.**

Again, there is repeated use of “as I recall”, “I don’t recall”, “I don’t remember exactly” when pressed for details that could have been damaging, even though the fact and the date of Shawn Bartlett’s visit three years ago were easily remembered.

^{xiv} <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1993924#h=22>

Watchtower December 15 1993

In discussing the Bible story of Rahab, a citizen of Jericho who blatantly lied to soldiers who were searching for Israelite spies that she was hiding, the Watchtower commented:

“What about Rahab’s misleading words to pursuers of the spies? God approved of her course. (Compare Romans 14:4.) She took a risk in order to protect his servants, giving evidence of her faith. While malicious lying is wrong in Jehovah’s eyes, a person is not obligated to divulge truthful information to people who are not entitled to it. Even Jesus Christ did not give full details or direct answers when doing so could have brought unnecessary harm. (Matthew 7:6; 15:1-6; 21:23-27; John 7:3-10) Evidently, Rahab’s course of misdirecting the enemy officers must be viewed in that light.”