

Man who almost died after refusing blood transfusion hits out at 'harmful' Jehovah's Witness teachings



(Stock image)

Rebecca Lumley

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A man who almost died after refusing a blood transfusion has hit out at the “harmful” practices in the Jehovah’s Witness religion that prohibited him from doing so.

Phil Dunne was a devoted Jehovah’s Witness five years ago when he was diagnosed with cancer and told he would die if he did not receive a blood transfusion to negate internal bleeding caused by a tumour in his stomach.

Jehovah’s Witnesses are prohibited from receiving blood transfusions “even in matters of life and death” and report a worldwide following of 8.3 million people.

Speaking on RTÉ Radio One’s Liveline, Mr Dunne described how he was willing to die rather than go against his religion’s teachings.

He said: “I had my father in law at the time write out a will for me because I was too weak in bed. I gave him all the instructions on what to do and I pretty much prepared myself to die.”

Mr Dunne, who is originally from Co Wicklow and grew up in the US, was an active member of his religion at the time and had been attending Jehovah’s Witnesses meetings since the age of seven.

He said he spent four days in hospital before doctors could think of an alternate way to treat him that did not involve a transfusion.

He said: “I think they were hoping that I would just break down and take a transfusion eventually.

“They decided to try very intense, targeted radiation to try and shrink the tumour so rapidly that they’d be able to stop the bleeding and then I’d be able to do chemotherapy to actually control the cancer once they’d stabilised me.”

Mr Dunne said doctors regarded this as a “last ditch” solution, but the procedure proved successful and he has been cancer-free since.

The experience led Mr Dunne to re-evaluate his involvement with the religion.

He recounted: “Everyone around me was so proud of me and I became the shining example of faith and that was kind of weird because on the inside I was really feeling conflicted.

“It kind of feels like you stepped out onto the street and somebody pulls you back just before a bus hits you. I’m just sitting there wondering if I had died for no reason back then, would I have really believed in the teaching?”

Mr Dunne gradually became disillusioned in his faith and after two years left the religion completely. This resulted in the breakdown of his marriage and led him to move away from the area in which he had lived.

He said: “It got to a point where I couldn’t live with the hypocrisy, preaching about something I didn’t believe in.

“They make you really terrified of telling anyone you have doubts or anything like that, so I hid it for a long time and because of that I was breaking down, I was acting terribly and I really wasn’t doing well and that was affecting my marriage negatively.”

When someone chooses to leave the Jehovah’s Witnesses they are as good as “excommunicated”, according to Mr Dunne.

“They can officially shun you, they call it dis-fellowshipping. It’s basically the same as excommunication. So no-one is supposed to talk to you.

“You’re not even meant to say hi if you see them on the street. If people find out that you’ve disassociated yourself they assume that you’re what they call an apostate. You’re what they describe as a mentally diseased person.”

Mr Dunne said that while he has “nothing against individual Jehovah’s Witnesses”, he believes their teachings “can be harmful.”

He said: “People need to be aware of the dangers involved in any organisation.”

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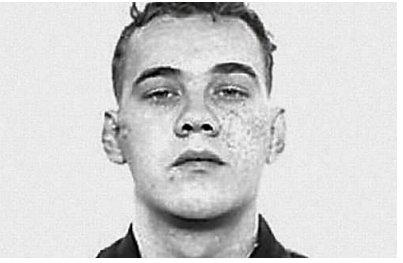
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orascah

4 hours ago

He received non-blood treatment that saved his life and he's now cancer free, and now he's complaining???

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Oxy_Moron

4 hours ago

Ah yes, the cult which predicted the end of the world not once or twice but 7 times and got it wrong. And yet it's followers persist.

Einstein's comment on human stupidity being probably the only infinite thing in the universe is so so apt!

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