

Jehovah's Witnesses

Are Jehovah's Witnesses part of the main Christian Church?

No. What Jehovah's Witnesses believe is not the same as what the main Christian churches teach and believe.

The Jehovah's Witness organization distorts the essential teachings of Christianity. It teaches that Jesus isn't God and that he didn't rise from the dead. It denies salvation by grace through faith. This alone makes it non-Christian. To support its doctrines, the group has even altered the Bible, publishing its own version called "The New World Translation" to support their non-Christian teachings.

Jehovah's Witnesses are usually very nice people. They will come and knock on your door or approach you on the street, and will want to talk to you about God. Some of them even speak fluent Chinese. They may invite you to their home for a meal, or to their meetings, or come and visit you in your home or hall of residence. They will certainly want to talk to you about the Bible, and about what you believe. Sometimes they will not tell you that they are Jehovah's Witnesses, but will simply say they are Christians. But please remember that even though they call themselves "Christians", their teachings are in fact very different from the main Christian churches.

What's the history of the Jehovah's Witnesses?

The Jehovah's Witnesses was begun by Charles Russell in 1872. He studied the Bible, but had great difficulty in dealing with some teaching, and claimed the teaching on eternal punishment, the Trinity, and the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit were all wrong. He tried to popularise his own ideas. He published a magazine, called the Watchtower, in which he claimed that the Bible could be only understood according to his interpretations. This kind of claim is typical among leaders of cult religions.

After the death of Russell in 1916, Joseph Rutherford took over the control of the Watchtower Society, which was known then as the

International Bible Students Association. In 1931 he changed the name of the organization to "The Jehovah's Witnesses."

How do Jehovah's Witnesses study the bible?

They will want to look at the Bible with you, but they have a very particular way of interpreting the Bible. They don't really want you to look for yourself at what the Bible means, they want to tell you what it means. The members themselves are not really allowed to interpret for themselves what it means; instead they are told by their leaders what they must believe.

How do Christians study the Bible?

What Christians do in Bible studies is different. They want people to look at the Bible for themselves, and to discover what it means. If you meet for a Christian Bible study course (such as Alpha, Visa, or Christianity Explored) you will read the Bible, and be encouraged to think for yourself what it means, and to understand it. You will be able to read the Bible on your own - you don't need a teacher. Of course, good teachers can help us, but most Christians will encourage you to look for yourself to learn as much as possible direct from the Bible.

What do other churches think about Jehovah's Witnesses?

The main Christian churches in the world do not consider Jehovah's Witnesses to be Christians, even though Jehovah's Witnesses say that they are the "only true church" and the "only true Christians". The Jehovah's Witnesses consider themselves to be Christians because they wrongly believe they are serving God. Like many cults, they think they are the only true church on earth. When people think that their church is the only true church, it is a sign that you should be careful. Real Christian churches meet and cooperate with lots of different denominations and churches. They have the same beliefs about the central issues of Christianity, even though there might be some differences in minor issues or traditions. Christian churches and organisations do not work with Jehovah's Witnesses, as they teach beliefs that are fundamentally very different.

A Word of Advice

What Christians believe and what Jehovah's Witnesses believe is very different. The main Christian churches would recommend that you don't meet with them. However, if you do decide to meet them, you should be aware that they don't use any of the recognised versions of the Bible used by most Christian churches, but instead have their own adapted version of the Bible, called the "New World Translation". In the New World Translation the words and meaning have been altered in many places to make it fit their own teachings. Examples of changes are found in key passages such as Matthew 25:46; Mark 2:5-8; John 1:1; John 8:58; Acts 5:3-4; Philippians 2:6-7; Colossians 2:9, 3:16; Hebrews 1:8; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 2:1.

How can I find out about the Bible, and what Christians believe?

If you want to explore Christian beliefs, you could visit a local church and ask them to explain to you about the bible. Why not join a Bible study group run by a local church, such as the Alpha course, the Visa course, or the Christianity Explored course? You can find out more about courses from:

www.uk.alphacourse.org

www.christianityexplored.com

www.friendsinternational.org.uk

If you are a student, you could contact the Christian Union in your college or university, who will be happy to meet with you and talk about the Christian faith.