

Unit 2 – Equality, Diversity and Rights

At a Glance

- The denomination was founded in the USA towards the end of the 19th Century, under the leadership of Charles Taze Russell. The Headquarters of the movement is in New York.
- There are about 6.5 million active Jehovah's Witnesses in 235 countries in the world (2005), including 1 million in USA and 125,000 in the UK.
- Members are probably best known for their door to door evangelical work; *witnessing* from house to house, offering Bible literature and recruiting and converting people to *the truth*.
- Although thoroughly Christian, the group believes that the traditional Christian Churches have deviated from the true teachings of the Bible and do not work in full harmony with God.
- In 2005, Jehovah's Witnesses around the world spent over 1.2 billion hours on missionary work. All Witnesses who are physically capable of it engage in missionary work.
- Witnesses do this without pay and some called pioneers, spend 70 hours a month in door to door witnessing.
- Jehovah's Witnesses believe that:
 - God the Father (whose name is Jehovah) is "the only true God".
 - Jesus Christ is his first born son, is inferior to God and was created by God.
 - The Holy Spirit is not a person: it is God's active force.

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Beliefs

- Jehovah's Witnesses base their beliefs only on the text of the Bible and take its literal meaning as oppose to the meanings interpreted by other religions. They believe that the Bible is the word of God and consider its 66 books to be divinely inspired and historically accurate.
- Jehovah's Witnesses test any religious idea or teaching against the Bible - if an idea or teaching doesn't agree with the Bible then they regard it as wrong.
- They do not celebrate Christmas or Easter because they believe that these festivals are based on (or massively contaminated by) pagan customs and religions. They point out that Jesus did not ask his followers to mark his birthday.
- The church believes that humanity is now in the last days and that the final battle between good and evil will happen soon.
- Jehovah's Witnesses believe that their missionary work should take priority over career, so many will choose lower paid jobs with limited hours so as to have more time to devote their faith.
- Jehovah's Witnesses:
 - ✓ Regard life as sacred
 - ✓ Avoid taking any unnecessary risks with own life.
 - ✓ Avoid violent sports and deliberately hurting people
 - ✓ Believe abortion is wrong
 - ✓ Believe killing animals for sport is wrong.
 - ✓ Avoid eating flesh of animals that have not been properly bled because they believe it is wrong to eat blood(see also medical ethics).

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Medical and More Beliefs

- Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusion as Bible says 'to abstain from blood'. They take this literally and believe it means to avoid all blood.
- Accepting a transfusion willingly and without regret is seen as a sin. The individual concerned would no longer be regarded as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.
- This refusal to accept blood makes some operations more dangerous and causes some doctors considerable anxiety. Some Jehovah's Witnesses are willing to sign forms that absolve doctors responsibility.
- Much of the Jehovah's Witnesses beliefs concentrate on the 'End Times' and they have pointed to a number of dates as biblically significant, although they have not stated in terms when the end of the world or 'conclusion of the system of things' is expected.
- They believe that when the End finally comes, only 144,000 human beings will go to Heaven and rule the earth from there with Christ - these are known as the anointed.
- Becoming an anointed person is not something that is done by voting or selection. Instead the anointed one knows directly from God that he or she has been chosen.
- The majority of Jehovah's Witnesses are not anointed and will not spend eternity in heaven. They will spend eternity in paradise on earth.
- In fact not only Jehovah's Witnesses but billions of others will have everlasting life on earth and thus fulfil God's original plan for humanity when he put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.