

"Hey, Joshua!" called Anthony to his new friend on a hot day in July. "Whatta ya doin' for the fourth? Want to go to the fireworks show?" Joshua had moved into the neighborhood a few weeks earlier, and Anthony wanted to make friends with him. He had even invited him to church, but Joshua wouldn't go.

"We're going to West Palm Beach," replied Joshua.

"The beach, huh?" Anthony wished he was going. He loved the ocean.

"No. We're going to a convention of our church, the Jehovah's Witnesses."

Church convention? thought Anthony to himself. On the Fourth of July? It's not even Sunday!

Anthony did not understand that Joshua's family, like all Jehovah's Witnesses, does not celebrate the Fourth of July or any other holiday. They also do not pledge allegiance to the flag, sing the national anthem, or even celebrate their own birthdays.

Jehovah's Witnesses base this on their view that all holidays and birthdays should be ignored. They believe it is wrong to honor any earthly government or person but only to honor God, who they call Jehovah. They do not even honor Jesus, as Christians do, at Christmas and Easter.

You may have seen Jehovah's Witnesses in your neighborhood. They often go doorto-door distributing the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines and recruiting people into their faith. They claim they are the

only true religion—that all other churches are wrong. They also say to be saved, you must be in their organization. That is why Joshua would not visit Anthony's church.

Not Even Close

Jehovah's Witnesses, besides avoiding patriotic events and holidays, have other beliefs that are different from Christian teachings. Most important is their denial that Jesus Christ is God. In their view He was Jehovah God's first created being, an angel, but not equal with God.

This belief contradicts the Bible.

Consider John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This verse indicates that before His earthly birth, Jesus (the Word) was God, the second Person of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; see Matthew 28:19).

The same chapter says Jesus became a man and lived among us. "The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Sadly, Joshua will miss the fireworks on the Fourth of July. Even sadder is that he will not hear the truth about Jesus from Jehovah's Witnesses. Regardless, Anthony should continue to be Joshua's friend. Eventually, they may discuss their different faiths and Anthony can tell Joshua about Jesus. That will be something to celebrate!