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GRACE

M A G A Z I N E



MODERN DAY BRITAIN A COUNTRY IN CRISIS?

The value of prayer 3

Pressures facing women today 6

The time is short 9

REACHING JEWISH PEOPLE

'I am Jewish, I will always be Jewish,
I will die Jewish and I do not want to be converted'



This belief is one of the many obstacles that you will encounter when sharing the gospel with your Jewish neighbour or friend. It was what I thought until I came to know Yeshua as my Messiah. We also need to bear in mind that the average Jewish person does not know the Bible or who Christ is. Coming from a Jewish background myself, I can appreciate the difficulties that Jewish people have with the gospel. A combination of two thousand years of persecution and a lack of understanding about Yeshua enforce the negative attitudes that our Jewish friends have towards Christianity.

Through our own outreach to Jewish people, whether it is hospitality, friendship evangelism, street evangelism or discipleship, we have learned that the most effective form of outreach is building relationships. It is vital to show Christ's love in practical ways.

Many Jewish people are bound by rules and regulations; their lives are dictated by the Law and their Rabbi's views. Jewish evangelism is challenging. This article aims to highlight some tips on how to reach Jewish people.

KEY FACTORS OF JUDAISM

It is good to have some idea of the different aspects of Judaism as this helps to be culturally sensitive. The main strands of Judaism are Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Ultra-Orthodox.

The Orthodox Jewish person will keep the traditions and seek to live strictly by the Law. The Conservative Jewish person tries to keep a balance between the ethical and the liturgical teachings of Judaism, seeking what they feel are the important aspects of Judaism and getting rid of those religious practices that they deem as not so vital. Reformed

Judaism tries to move with the times as far as the practices and the objectives of Judaism are concerned. Finally there is Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, often known as the Hassidic movement. It is a movement that incorporates different sects. Hassidim is a cult which has to adhere to a strict dress code and many rules and regulations. Each sect has a leader. They will spend lots of their time studying and will keep within their community. Their Rabbi is for them the oracle of God.

What all these Jewish movements have in common is that no matter what their Jewish background may be, they all identify themselves as Jewish and do not want to turn to what they perceive as 'another false religion' which is how they view Christianity. For example I was brought up in a Liberal Jewish home, but my identity was still Jewish and I celebrated all the Jewish Festivals.

SENSITIVITY

There is no formula to bring a Jewish person to the Messiah. Very few Jewish people come to know the Lord, and it is an arduous task to witness to them. It is important to know that the Jews are still waiting for a Saviour (many, even today, continually ask their Rabbi when the Messiah will come). We need to tell our Jewish friends that the Messiah has already come. It can be beneficial to share with them some prophetic Scripture about Yeshua as the Messiah. It is also imperative to point out to a Jew that to know Yeshua as the Messiah is a completion, not a conversion. Sadly, when I became a believer I was told that I was not Jewish anymore. It was only years later that I realised that by accepting Yeshua as my Saviour I had become a completed Jewish person. This new knowledge opened the eyes of my own understanding of Yeshua's completed work on the cross and it will do the same with the Jewish person to whom you are reaching out.

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THE DO'S AND DON'TS

If we look at friendship evangelism we should know that if we invite our Jewish friend or neighbour for a meal, it is best to check if they are Kosher and what foods they can or cannot eat. Do not offer pig or shell fish or anything with blood in it.

Perhaps surprisingly many are atheists or agnostics and are anti-religions. Some may be into New Age ideas or the occult. Some may be deeply religious and rely on a neighbour to turn the light on or off for the Sabbath. Try to find out their views, get to know them and build longstanding relationships and endeavour to gain their trust.

It is important when speaking to Jewish people not to refer to the Jewish as Jews but as the Jewish people. Try not to introduce our Jewish friend as, 'And this is our Jewish neighbour', but refer to them by name. Remember there have been years of anti-Semitism and we need to be aware of this. We also need to use the word Yeshua, the Hebrew name for Jesus. We must not use words like missionary, mission or crusade as these words have bad connotations for Jewish people. It is wise not to tell Jewish jokes to Jewish people as this will come across as anti-Semitic. Be careful not to mistake enquiry with interest in Jesus. Some Christians can be too forceful and this can have the opposite effect to the one desired. We should not expect our Jewish friend or contact to come to church as soon as they have shown some interest in Yeshua. Church represents persecution and some Jewish people, even when they come to faith, find it difficult to go to church as it is perceived as a betrayal of their family and culture.

Jewish people are suspicious and defensive towards the gospel and need to see Yeshua in a different light than that which has been portrayed by Christendom through the centuries. It is vital to pray for our Jewish neighbour as this can break down defences. Coming to know Yeshua for the Jewish person, just like for the Gentile, is through the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Remember there are no set formulas to show us how to reach our Jewish friends. There is no quick fix. But we need

to be a light for Jesus and be willing to go that extra mile. For example we had an opportunity to be able to witness to one Jewish lady through looking after her parrot. This forged a long lasting friendship and we are able to pray and be a witness through being there for her.

PERSEVERANCE

Many people give up and feel they are wasting their time if they do not see quick results. Our aim is to build long term relationships and be a witness for Christ. We need to remember that God is in control and by witnessing we are sowing seeds. Sometimes it is years before we see fruit. We must never write our Jewish friend off. We have ministered for a long time to a lady who was deeply hurt by her husband. She knows Jesus is the Messiah, but is unwilling to make a profession of faith. We need to know that God is sovereign and not lose heart. God never gives up on someone and neither should we. Another young Jewish man is a student in Middle Eastern Politics. After a year he is starting to read the gospel. It takes time. Although witnessing is hard, I believe that the gospel should be first for the Jew then to the Gentile (Romans 1:16). We need to be patient because God is the Lord of the harvest. He is able to bring about fruit.

My wife and I attended All Nations Christian College and felt called to the Jewish people. Our ministry deals with the Hassidic communities of Stamford Hill and to Jewish people living in other areas of London. It is a difficult ministry as we receive a lot of animosity from the Jewish people. However, we do see some fruit and it is a blessing when an Ultra-Orthodox Jewish man or woman takes one of our tracts. Part of my ministry is also to preach and I am also in the process of completing a website for Jewish questions and answers to target those who are interested in knowing about the Messiah Yeshua. We completed our training with Counties Evangelism in January and so we are praying for guidance

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