

Pray for Jon & Kate

I'm single and I want to get married someday, but my No. 1 fear is that I'll end up like Jon and Kate Gosselin. The thought of watching my husband flaunt another woman in the national media, giving inquiring minds a front-row seat into my marriage, is enough to keep me away from any altar.

The Gosselins appeared to be a loving couple when they first appeared on reality TV years ago. They willingly invited us into their home and shared their unpredictable lives as parents to twins and sextuplets. But the show eventually revealed their many flaws.

Kate at times seemed berating and controlling, and Jon appeared weak, letting his wife emasculate him before millions of viewers. Season after season, *Jon & Kate Plus 8* became less about the children and more about mom and dad. I don't know what went wrong in their marriage, but they are separated and have filed for divorce.

When God Comes Knocking

Are you a woman struggling with the call of God on your life? You know He wants you to share His Word, but you're not sure how to get started or what to expect. We all grapple with similar issues as we branch out into ministry, but we can trust Him to help us.

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Israeli Supreme Court Declares Messianic Bakery Kosher

Following a lengthy legal battle, Israel's Supreme Court on June 29 ordered the Chief Orthodox Rabbinate to grant kashrut certification to an Ashdod bakery owned by a Messianic Jew, a decision likely to spark further confrontation between the nation's highest legal arbiter and the ultra-Orthodox community.

In its verdict, the court ruled that the 51-year-old Yemenite baker's belief that Jesus was the Messiah did not make her baked goods unkosher.

Furthermore, the court found that the Chief Rabbinate Council had exceeded the authority granted them by the Kashrut Law when they demanded that the bakery meet special conditions such as promising not to engage in missionary activity and turning the keys to the bakery over to a kashrut supervisor, conditions demanded solely because the owner is a Messianic Jew.

The owner, Pnina Conforty, who became a believer while working in Ohio for an evangelical Christian family, enjoyed impressive business success after returning to Israel and opening the bakery in 2002. Conforty, however, quickly saw a sharp decline in sales after her faith was publicized in an article in a Messianic Jewish magazine.

She suffered from demonstrations outside her bakery and posters with her picture distributed throughout the city warning that she was a missionary.

“Finally I won. This is my baby,” said Conforty after giving credit to the Ohio family that led her to Christ. “God arranged it that I arrived at a place where there were Christians who love Israel more than most Jews do. Their love and faith were so different from the religion I learned at home that was based on fear. I was never taught to serve God out of love until then.”

Source: International Christian Embassy Jerusalem,

Sharing the Messiah with Your Jewish Neighbor

✘ In my book, *You Bring the Bagels; I'll Bring the Gospel: Sharing the Messiah with Your Jewish Neighbor*, I used a standard communication model to organize all the material into four sections: You, The Gentile Christian; Your Message, the “Jewish” Gospel; Your Audience (Your Jewish neighbor) and The Feedback: Barriers to Belief.

In the first section, I made the point that to effectively communicate a message, the messenger must have credibility, and that one of the key aspects of credibility is “identification.” In order to reach his own people, Paul explained, “With the Jews I put myself in the position of the Jews in order to win Jews” (I Cor 9:20).

He identified with his people, not in a false way, but in a sincere way. Clearly, when he was in Rome, he did (some) of what the Romans do, getting into philosophical dialogue. But with his own people, since he felt at home, he emphasized his Jewishness.

In order to share with your Jewish neighbor, you too need to identify with the person to have credibility. That will make you a more effective communicator. As one gentile member of my congregation here in Maryland said to me recently: "We need to make Emmanuel Messianic Jewish Congregation a place where Jewish people feel comfortable." He got it right. Messianic congregations need to create "Jewish space" for visitors, space with which they can identify.

Christians, too, need to identify with Jewish people, especially since the One they follow is a Jew and came "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Even Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, told the Roman believers "to provoke the Jewish people (the natural branches) to jealousy for their own Messiah (Romans 11:11).

This is the Gentile Great Commission and it's not being fulfilled very well. Christians need to identify with Jewish people to have more credibility, thus winning them to Messiah. But how can Christians do this?

One way is by participating in Jewish community activities. When there are movies on Jewish themes or talks by Israeli speakers, attend and let your Jewish neighbor know you are sincerely interested in them and the Jewish people.

You might even suggest that you and your Jewish neighbor go together and discuss what you heard. Discussion (even arguing) is a very Jewish thing to do. You will be identifying and also learning about matters near to the heart of God. However, from my experience, there are several problems non-Jews have with identification, which affects their credibility, and their witness.

The first is that, in their zeal to identify, some Christians misuse Jewish symbols. For example, instead of following the centuries old custom of lighting two Sabbath candles on Friday night, they light three, to affirm their Trinitarian theology,

while expecting to identify by lighting these candles. Christians are free to create any sort of image to help their faith, but when they invite a Jewish person to dinner, and light three Shabbat candles, that is misusing a Jewish symbol and is offensive.

Over-identification

The second, over-identifying with Jewish people, i.e. being more “Jewish” than most Jews, can backfire. Well-meaning Christians may learn how to speak Hebrew fluently, but since most American Jews don’t, it can make them feel inadequate, at least initially. Unless a person knows you, and trusts your sincerity, it might breed suspicion. Of course, discernment is called for.

A gentile believer in my congregation has been wearing a kippah (a yarmulke or skull cap) ever since I’ve known him. I asked him if he might be over-identifying, risking offending Jewish people. His response was that he wore a kippah for the same reasons Jews do: to show reverence to God. I’ve never asked him about it again. He was not over-identifying. He was sincerely identifying.

Refusing to Adjust

A third challenge in the identification issue is refusing to adjust. The congregant who said we should make our congregation a place where Jewish people would feel comfortable was surprised when I pointed out that at our oneg (lunch after morning services), someone brought delicious corned beef, but no rye bread.

Whoever brought the corned beef (very Jewish) didn’t know that you just “couldn’t” eat a corned beef sandwich on any bread other than rye bread—along with good mustard (not mayonnaise). He didn’t know that, but because he wants to identify with my people, he was willing to adjust. He’ll enjoy his next corned beef sandwich, like the Jewish people who come to services.

This is unlike someone who used to be in my congregation and just refused to adjust.

Several years ago, when I was explaining identification to my congregation, I mentioned the Miracle Whip/Hellmann's Real Mayonnaise controversy. For the most part, Jews do not use Miracle Whip, rather preferring Hellmann's Real Mayonnaise. It's not that Miracle Whip isn't tasty, it's just not one of those foods that Jews eat, and I'm not sure why. One woman got so incensed, that she left the congregation, never to return. I guess she just liked her Miracle Whip so much she refused to adjust, although she undoubtedly had other issues, too.

So, in terms of reaching out to Jewish people, Christians need to think about credibility, specifically identification, not misusing Jewish symbols, not over-identifying, and being willing to adjust. Knowing the heart of Paul, an observant rabbi, toward his people, identifying with his people will enable you to be the most effective messenger you can, and truly "provoke the Jews to jealousy" for the faith you have. You just need to step into Jewish space, which, by the way, is a wonderful place to be.

Rabbi Baruch Rubín is president of Messianic Jewish Communications () and Rabbi of Emmanuel Messianic Jewish Congregation both of Clarksville, Maryland.

Lessons From the Red Sea

One of the most fascinating demonstrations of God's unmatched power is the biblical account of the parting of the Red Sea. Today this vast body of water is home to all types of living

creatures and coral reefs, and is a hot spot for divers and marine scientists. But do you know why some archaeologists call it the *Reed Sea*?

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A Voice for the Voiceless

The niece of Martin Luther King Jr. was an unlikely woman to become a pro-life activist. She had an abortion herself, but the painful experience helped her uncover the lies used by the abortion industry.

Alveda King is an unlikely poster child for pro-life causes. In 1970, when abortion was still illegal in the United States, her doctor gave her an abortion under false pretenses. Then in 1973, the 22-year-old walked into a Planned Parenthood clinic and underwent a second abortion, performed by a doctor who assured her, "It's just a blob of tissue."

Are You Sabotaging Yourself?

Do you have a desire to pursue a passion or calling, but every time you make a move in that direction you talk yourself out of it? Maybe you've wanted to start your own business or launch out into ministry, but soon the idea overwhelms you and you give up before you get started.

The Holy Spirit has placed in you a love for children, shown you a vacant building, given you favor with the property owner, and you still won't open your own Christian school.

Or maybe you have a beautiful voice and lead worship at your church, but the Lord is telling you to take it a step further and make a CD, but the moment you run into a problem you say, "That wasn't God."

It's cyclical. God prompts you to do something. You get excited and go to work on your new venture. The enemy plants doubt in your mind, and you come up with excuses why *this* or *that* won't work. Finally, you lose your joy and do absolutely nothing. Three or four months later, you go through the cycle all over again.

I'm sure you know the enemy doesn't want you to pursue God's leading, but let's not give him all the credit. When fear rules your life, you sabotage your own future. But to be successful, it takes faith, personal commitment and confidence that the Father will finish what He has begun in you.

Scripture says He has not given us the spirit of fear (that comes from Satan), but power (the ability to do) love, and a sound (well-disciplined) mind. So stop starting and stopping. Get busy and start that new business, join the mission field, or audition for *American Idol* if that's what you want to do. But by all means, get to work! You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

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Gathering the Harvest in

Unity

✘ Many men and women of God are prophesying a coming harvest of unprecedented proportions impacting every expression of the body of Christ. Unity and fervent, effective intercession will characterize this next wave. Lines of division are fading as many share their anointed gifts across denominational and cultural lines. God's people are discovering that it is indeed "good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Read Ps. 133, Rom. 16:17-20, 1 Cor. 1:10-17, 1 Cor. 1:26-31, 1 Cor. 3:1-11, 1 Cor. 12:12-31;14:26

Heart Issue

Experiencing the presence of the Lord with believers of diverse worship styles and customs enhances our understanding of the vastness of God's kingdom. Ask the Lord to help you overcome the uneasiness that prevents your participation with those whose experiences differ from your own.

Prayer Focus

Father, we recognize that the most prominent mark identifying Your church is love among all the brethren. Cleanse us of wrong attitudes and grant us courage to follow Your will in this hour. Amen.

Brenda J. Davis is the acquisitions editor of Creation House and former editor of SpiritLed Woman magazine.

God Can Satisfy

☒ Several years ago I regularly struggled with discontentment. I was so disheartened by my problems and life in general that I spent hours seeking God for answers. I would pray in my car, in the office, everywhere. But nothing changed.

The uneasiness I sensed was the last thing on my mind when I went to bed at night and the first thing to flood my thoughts when I awoke the next day. I started to concede defeat and remain unhappy when God spoke to me through His Word.

“For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with good things” (Ps. 107:9, NKJV).

At that moment I knew what God meant. I had experienced many highs in my walk with the Lord. I was used to the Father blessing me every time I sought His hand, so I became relaxed in my relationship with Him. But God wanted more, so He started prodding and creating in me dissatisfaction for spiritual mediocrity.

I cannot adequately describe what God did for me during that season of my life, but I can say I learned never to take His goodness, favor and presence for granted. Yes, God blesses us with earthly blessings, but He is the only person who can satisfy that deep yearning we have for Him because He is the one who creates it.

Don't settle for business as usual. Step out of your comfort zone and let God move you to a new place in Him.

No matter where you are in your walk with the Lord, whether on the mountaintop of life or in the valley of hardships, stay close to Him and seek His face. He will respond and invade your mediocre walk with Him.

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