

We Must Welcome Those Who Are Transitioning into Our Congregations

Yes, the headline is click bait. Yes, I purposely chose those words to get your attention. Yes, I hope that you will still read further.

One of my very favorite New Covenant verses is found in 1 Corinthians 6:11:

“That is what some of you were—but you were washed, you were made holy, you were set right in the name of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah and by the Ruach of our God.”

With these words, Paul speaks strongly, making a bold statement about those who had transitioned from ungodliness and unrighteousness, to faith in Messiah Yeshua. The reason that I love this verse so much is because of the preceding list that Paul provides in v. 9. Paul lists some of the sins that the people he was speaking to and about in v. 11 were involved in before coming to redemption in Yeshua.

Paul said they were sexually immoral, they were idolaters, they were adulterers, they practiced homosexuality, they were thieves, they were greedy, they were drunkards, they were slanderers and they were swindlers. However, they were all welcomed after they transitioned into the kingdom of G-D.

Paul never excused their sins or their unrighteousness, making it very clear that anyone who continued to be the things listed would not inherit the kingdom of God. However, Paul also didn't hesitate to excitedly welcome those who repented of their sins into G-D's Kingdom.

Instead of condemning or rejecting those who were coming out

of sinful lifestyles into the kingdom, Paul rejoiced at their redemption, he held them accountable, he reminded them of their progress and cheered them on like a father cheers for his child.

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Recently, my assistant rabbi's one year old son began to walk. When he stood to his feet and took his first steps without holding onto a hand, a walker or a piece of furniture, all of those watching, especially his parents, were thrilled. People cheered, video cameras came out, texts were sent and social media posts were posted.

His first steps were celebrated as if he was Neil Amstrong taking his first steps on the moon. While I also celebrated those first steps with his parents, there were two things about those first steps that I noticed.

The first thing was that after taking only a few steps, the little guy fell down. He then got up again and fell down again. This getting up and falling down went on for a few days and each time he got back up and took some steps, the people around him rejoiced.

The second thing that I noticed was that even though that little child stood up on his own two feet and took his first steps, he was still wearing a diaper. In other words, even though he was changing from crawling to walking, he still required someone more mature to be there to handle cleaning him up when he dirtied himself.

As I watched this little boy take his first steps, and second steps, and third steps, and so on, in my mind I felt convicted by the Spirit of G-D. I realized that every new believer was just like this little boy. They were learning to walk, and just like this little child, as they learned to walk, they

would fall down many times and have to climb back up onto their feet and start to take their next few steps.

I found myself asking myself why was it that I rejoiced as this little boy got back up after falling down over and over, each time saying, "Come on you can do it," but I wasn't always that encouraging to those who were newly born into the kingdom and were also just learning to walk.



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If our congregations are going to fulfill the Great Commission, then our buildings are going to be filled with people who are transitioning: people who were sexually immoral, were idolaters, were adulterers, practicing homosexuality, were thieves, were greedy, were drunkards, were slanderers, were swindlers.

And like Paul, we need to welcome the people who are transitioning. And like parents watching a child learning to walk, we need to understand that these transitioning people are going to stumble and fall down and that they will become spiritually soiled and spiritually need to have their diapers changed, just as we were welcomed when we transitioned to faith.

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