

A Jewish Believer Who Found Jesus

When Marty Goetz was growing up in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio in the 1950s, his life was steeped in Jewish culture.

“It was like little Israel,” said Goetz. “Almost all the people in my school and all the people with whom we associated were Jewish.”

No one would have dreamed the shy Jewish boy from Beachwood would one day compose melodies set to Scripture, praising Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah.

Bitten by the Show Biz Bug

As a boy, Goetz learned Hebrew, read the Torah, and sang the liturgy at his family’s synagogue. In 1970, he enrolled at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pa., where he pursued a growing interest in the performing arts.

“That’s where I got into show business, and once I got bit by the show biz bug, that was it,” said Goetz.

He teamed up with another young musician named Bert, and the two aspiring performers took off for New York City.

In New York, Bert became a born-again Christian, and Goetz didn’t like it.

“I just wanted to get as far away from him as I could, because I couldn’t stand the whole Jesus thing,” said Goetz.

The act broke up, but Goetz couldn’t stop thinking about the increasing number of Christians who seemed to be popping up in his life.

Finding Jesus in L.A.

A short time later, Goetz left the Big Apple for Los Angeles. It was on his journey west that he discovered an unlikely item that would change his life.

"When I was on my way to California, I went through Cleveland and visited my parents. They had, for some reason, a big family Bible," said Goetz. "They didn't even realize they had it."

Despite his distrust of Christianity, curiosity got the best of him.

"I picked up that Bible, stuffed it in a knapsack, and took it to L.A. with me, and I started reading it."

It was around that time when Goetz began to notice something unusual.

"Things started happening around me that made me just start looking up," he said. "I thought, 'Somebody seems to be taking care of me here.'"

Confused but intrigued, Goetz turned to the Bible for answers. He wanted to figure out whether Jesus could ever fit into his Jewish life.

"If He was going to be my Lord, He had to be the Jewish Messiah," said Goetz. "Then I started to read the first lines in Matthew, that He was the Son of David and the Son of Abraham."

As he read Jesus's words in the Gospels, his heart began to soften.

"I started to think, what do I have against this person?" said Goetz. "And the more I read about Him, the more I liked Him."

Then, a good friend introduced him to a church called The Vineyard.

"At the end of the sermon, the pastor gave a beautiful

invitation,” said Goetz. “He asked for whoever wanted to receive Jesus, and I walked up. That began my walk with the Lord.”

Love and Marriage

Still bitten by the show biz bug, the first thing Goetz did after becoming a believer was audition for a show about the Bible. Hoping to play the part of Jesus, he ended up with the role of “donkey owner.”

“I guess you can’t have everything,” laughed Goetz.

Bigger and better opportunities were around the corner. Goetz was chosen to play piano for recording artist Debby Boone. Thus began a new foray into the world of show business.

While attending a wedding in California, Goetz met a beautiful woman named Jennifer Yaffee. Just like him, Yaffee was Jewish and had come to believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Goetz was smitten.

He married Yaffee in 1984, and they had a daughter, Danyel Misha. Jennifer became her husband’s manager, producer, and booking agent. 28 years later, she still manages Goetz’s career.

“I couldn’t do it without Jennifer,” said Goetz. “Besides putting up with me, she’s my biggest encourager.”

Meeting the Grahams

In 1991, Goetz’s musical talent led him to his first encounter with Billy Graham, who was speaking at an outreach event in New York City. Goetz performed his Messianic music, representing the Jewish believers of New York.

Three years later, Goetz found himself with Billy Graham once again, this time at The Cove in Asheville, N.C. There, Goetz met Mr. Graham and his wife, Ruth.

“He of course is known for his humility,” said Goetz. “It wasn’t like talking to Billy Graham at all; it was just like talking to a brother. He seemed just as happy to meet you as you were thrilled to meet him.”

Goetz’s also had an encounter with Ruth Graham just outside the dining hall.

“I was eating, and I have a bit of a sweet tooth, so I grabbed a couple of brownies,” said Goetz. “After I had eaten dessert I took a couple extras and put them in a napkin.”

He was on the way back to his room, hidden brownies in hand, when he bumped into Mrs. Graham.

“I said, ‘Excuse me,’ and she just smiled,” said Goetz.

“The next day I was getting ready to lead worship in the chapel, and somebody walks in and puts a little box of baggies on my piano with a little note written by Mrs. Graham. It said something to the effect of, ‘Now you won’t have to sneak brownies out in napkins.’”

Still Singing

Goetz continues to be a favorite at The Cove, nearly two decades after his first visit.

The shy, Jewish boy from Ohio is making his mark on the Christian world by using his voice to praise his savior, Jesus Christ.

Goetz’s Messianic music has been compared to the sweeping melodies of Broadway, but Goetz has a different way of describing his unique style.

“In the modern day, if there was such a thing as a psalmist, that’s what I would be,” said Goetz. “I’m a singer of psalms.”

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