

Provoke the Jews to Jealousy

✖ Most Christians know the Great Commission, which says: “Go into the world and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). But this isn’t the Great Commission for Christians; it’s for Jews!

All the men addressed in this verse were Jewish. In this statement Jesus was telling the apostles to go to the gentiles and nations, and make disciples of them. Messiah was actually telling them to teach these pagans (since that’s what they were) about the God of Israel and his Messiah.

Jews going to gentiles was what the Great Commission was initially all about, even though it has been expanded to Christians going to the lost.

In chapter 11 of Romans, Paul (Rabbi Saul) wrote to the believers in Rome about his people, Israel. He spoke of them as “natural” branches of the olive tree, whereas he considered gentiles to be “wild” branches (11:16-24).

He spoke earlier of the relationship between Jews and gentiles in relation to evangelism: “It is by means of their [Jewish] stumbling that the deliverance has come to the Gentiles, in order to provoke them to jealousy.” That is the Gentile Great Commission—provoke God’s chosen people to jealousy. Sadly, over the centuries Jews were provoked to anger at the way Christians treated them. That didn’t provoke much jealousy. But I was blessed to meet a Christian who did provoke me to jealousy ... in my Coast Guard unit.

Swabbing the deck is something that all sailors do. It’s not enjoyable, but it has to be done. For me, a practitioner of an Eastern religion (Transcendental Meditation or TM), I should have been at peace while doing this grunt work. But I wasn’t. However, Loren was. He was a Christian who had that “peace that passes all understanding.”

Loren would swab the deck next to me, whistling and singing, while I was moaning and groaning. He just seemed happy doing menial work while I wanted to get rid of the job as soon as possible. Loren had something that made me jealous.

One day, I had had enough. I went up to Loren (a tall Swede) and said, "What is it about you that makes you so 'blankety-blank' happy." (My speech was rather salty in those days.) Without blinking an eye, he said, "Your Messiah lives in my heart."

"What," I challenged, "is my Messiah doing living in your heart? And who is my Messiah, by the way, and what's he doing in your heart, anyway?" It was then that I learned the secret of Loren's peace. He told me that Jesus was my Messiah and that He lived in his heart (an expression that really sounded strange, especially when I thought about it literally).

But he told me that Jesus was a Jew who came to the Jewish people to bring them back to God, and that he could do the same for me. None of it made any sense to me, but I was provoked to jealousy and later became a follower of the Messiah, too.

How can you provoke your Jewish neighbor to jealousy? With your life, your love and your language. Loren's life reflected a calm that I hadn't seen anywhere around me. His love for me was sincere and I felt it. And his language was sensitive. He was willing to talk "my" language. If he had said he "knew Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior," I would have said, "Well, that's good for you. You're a Christian. That's what you're supposed to do." But he stepped into my world by speaking about my Messiah. He used language that would get my attention and provoke me to jealousy.

I don't know if this Gentile friend had any idea of what he was doing. But because of his life, love and language, I became a disciple in 1973. Since then, I have been involved in

sharing the Messiah with my people through Jewish missions, publishing Messianic Jewish books and Bibles, and leading the oldest Messianic congregation in the world. All because Loren provoked me to jealousy.

Now I know that may sound formulaic. I don't think you're going to have the same scenario. But you can remember the basic challenge Paul gave to the gentiles. It's so important that he concludes this section saying that when Jews accept Yeshua "It will be life from the dead!" (Rom. 11:15). That is so true!

Tens of thousands of Jewish people have trusted Jesus for their salvation and returned to the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. More Jews have believed in the last 20 years than in the last 20 centuries. Many of these people have become latter-day Pauls.

You can play a part in God's end-time revival among the Jewish people by remembering your Great Commission—provoke them to jealousy!

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