

To the Jew First

Many Christians think they should avoid sharing the gospel with Jewish people.

While I was talking with a Christian friend recently, he noted that he had several nonbelieving Jewish friends. He did not know how to begin to share his faith with them and asked me for some advice.

Naturally, I was delighted by his question! It is a common one. Most Christians hold three basic misconceptions about sharing the good news with Jewish people.

1. Jews don't need Christ for salvation. As a teenager I heard the gospel from zealous Christians. When I told them that I was Jewish, I always seemed to get an apology. Surprisingly, many Christians think they should avoid sharing the gospel with Jewish people. But Jewish people need Christ for salvation like everyone else. In fact, Romans 1:16 tells us that the gospel is "to the Jew first."

2. All Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah. The truth is, many Jewish people have no idea who Jesus actually is! When a Jew hears "Jesus Christ," he automatically thinks "the God of Christianity" rather than "the Jewish Messiah." It is not that Jewish people have rejected Jesus. They simply do not know who He is.

3. Jewish people are better acquainted with Scripture. Wrong. Only about 10 percent of Jews are Orthodox and actively study Scripture. Although the Jewish people are referred to as "the people of the Book," most of them have never even read the Scriptures.

By first removing these misconceptions, we can concentrate on the following practical approaches to reaching our Jewish friends, co-workers or family members with the good news.

Use the Old Testament. The entire gospel—sin, heaven, hell, the virgin birth, the atonement and resurrection of the Messiah—is found in the Old Testament. Jesus used the Old Testament to prove He was the Messiah (see Luke 24:27). And the apostles wrote the New Testament using the Jewish Scriptures as their text!

Learn key Messianic prophecies. There are more than 300 Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, but with just a little study you can learn many of them. Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah is proof of His Messiahship and the supernatural nature of Scripture.

I have had the privilege of leading many of my Jewish brethren to the Lord through key Messianic prophecies such as Isaiah 53 and Jeremiah 31:31-33.

Use the correct terminology. Terms such as Jesus Christ, Christian, church, convert and baptize mean something very different to a Jewish person. Until I found the Lord, I didn't know that Jesus was Jewish or that His name was Yeshua, which is Hebrew and means "salvation."

Use Messiah instead of Christ and Yeshua instead of Jesus. Make it clear that a Jew does not have to convert to Christianity to be saved—he simply needs to accept his Messiah, promised in his own Torah and by his own prophets.

Share your testimony. Jewish people love the supernatural.

Very often someone who isn't receptive to preaching or discussing the Bible is still very interested to hear what happened in your life that caused such a drastic spiritual change. Let them know that the God who changed your life can do the same for them!

Be a sincere friend. If you are there for them consistently over time, they will eventually want to know why you believe and act the way you do. Remember: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Pray! Prayer moves the hand of God and changes people's hearts. Don't give up. The Word of God never returns void (see Is. 55:11). I have known the Lord since 1980 and am still the only member of my family who believes in Yeshua. But I believe my entire family will one day know the Messiah as their Savior.

Write me in care of Charisma, and I will send you a list of books on this subject. I'll be happy to answer you if you have a question about Israel, Jewish people, Messianic Judaism or the Jewish roots of Christianity.