

WINNING JEWS TO CHRIST

A Handbook to Aid Christians in their Approach to the Jews

by

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

SOME PRACTICAL WAYS OF APPROACH

Remember that bearing God's message to men has always been a difficult, thankless and risky task. We are not surprised that the great prophets, Moses, Amos, Jeremiah, Jonah, etc., tried hard to evade this task, but the Lord compelled them to do His will.

The Jews, surely, would not appreciate your telling them that the most important things which they have always believed to be right and good are wrong and unacceptable. No one would. But as Christ's ambassador you may expect no better fate than was His and should not expect immediate successes.

You bear the message whether they will hear it or not. But, as did the Master, bear it in love, with patience and tact.

Now let me suggest a few practical hints as to how you might make the first contact with the Jew.

Always be tactful. Don't show any condescension of superiority over him. He is sure that he is a member of the chosen people, a scion of kings and prophets, that his way of life, his culture, his religion is the best in the world. Don't try to controvert, to minimize these opinions.

On the contrary, show him that you have high regard for his opinions, that as a student of the Bible you know his exalted position as one of a people chosen of God and that you hold sacred the words of his ancient prophets.

Show him that you are aware of the lofty, noble qualities of the Jewish people, and that you admire them. Show him that you think it an unpardonable sin the Gentiles have committed in persecuting the Jewish people. Show him that you believe that his people are still to play a most important role in the history of mankind.

In short, without overdoing it, show him love, kindness, readiness to help in any good way. You will later, when you have found a path to his heart, have an opportunity to show him that even he, as a Jew, is not infallible, even his people have been capable of sin and according to his own Bible, have often sinned. Their own prophets have rebuked and reproved them most sternly.

According to their own Bible, God has often chastised His people severely but for the sake of their saintly forefathers and the everlasting covenant and their appointed mission, He did not destroy them utterly, as He destroyed other peoples in retribution for their iniquities.

Later on, when you find him attentive, you may remark cautiously, that those Jewish leaders who delivered Jesus into the hands of the Roman executioners, might have erred in condemning Him. Indeed, that is the opinion generally held by all, including a great many Jewish intellectuals, who know the story of Jesus and His environment.

Those leaders who rejected Jesus' claims and caused His death, were not of the best Jewish type. Indeed, their actions were very un-Jewish in their dealings with Jesus. The best that can be said in their exoneration is that they did it out of fear of the Romans, who might have used the new Messianic movements as an excuse for further and harsher oppression. Many Jewish writers have expressed such an opinion.

This is perhaps the best method to use in carrying out the initial steps.

If you have succeeded in arousing his attention so that as he is ready to ask questions, to argue — then half the battle is won. All you have to do now is answer his questions honestly, reason with him (he may be earnest in his arguments, he may be cynical) and refute his misstatements, his traditional misconceptions and purposeful falsehoods.

You have disarmed him, you have won half the battle, but you have not yet turned your opponent into a friend. You have not yet won him to Christ. But this task of regeneration, conversion, is not yours. It is only the Lord Himself who can work this miracle of grace. You may keep on praying for his salvation, you may help him, guide him faithfully, patiently on the way leading toward God's grace. And this you will do.

All I have said now depends on your having succeeded in rousing his attention to your words. If you have not succeeded in this, then try, try again. If after several trials you have not yet succeeded, do not be discouraged, do not despair. You keep on performing your duty to preach the Gospel. Victory is not your duty. The Lord will see to it if He wills so. Further on we shall present some of the typically Jewish questions and arguments about Christ and Christianity with suitable answers.

Let us now consider a few of the usual ways of making contact.

Approach the Jew like an adroit salesman, as if you have something to sell him at a great profit to both of you, which in your case is quite true. Think first how a good salesman would handle such a case. You may start with something casual, depending on the time and the place of meeting: on the bus, in a waiting room, in the park, on the play ground, at work, in the store, etc. A cursory starting point is the weather, some remarkable event of current interest, or you may even at once introduce yourself: "I am a Christian and have special tracts for Jews. I hope I don't offend by offering you some of them," or something like that. Of course, your next action depends on his reaction to your introductory remarks.

Other good approaches might be a recent crime wave, or some road fatalities, some catastrophe (flood, fire, etc.), some political event that had at that time aroused public attention. You may ask him about a hotel which he would recommend to you, or what is his opinion about some sports event. He most probably will respond and express his opinions. Then you find a fitting verse in the Bible that would illustrate or affirm your opinion (or his), or say: "If people only heeded God's words. You will, thus, soon find out whether he wants to keep up the conversation.

Suppose you notice that your *vis-a-vis* on the bus, train, etc., is reading a paper or book in Hebrew characters. You start: "Excuse me . . . isn't that Hebrew you are reading? How I wish I could read the Bible in its original language. I am sure it is more beautiful and meaningful than in its translation."

By his reaction to your introductory remarks, you would know how to continue the conversation. Start a discussion about the Bible as the greatest Book in the world, about its prophecies which are now being fulfilled. You may lead up to asking why the Jews refrain from reading the New Testament: "Is it not a Jewish book? A good book, of which the Jewish people have a right to be proud?" When you separate, you may declare your friendship for him, giving him your address and asking for his — so that correspondence may continue on the subject.

An occasion for contact may occur in any office, any place of business:

"Aren't you Jewish?" Some Jews might think you are being sarcastic or offensive, so explain yourself: "I like to study faces. In the Jewish face I recognize an ancient aristocracy: especially the Jewish eyes. I find them so thoughtful, so gentle, so spiritual. Whenever I see a Jew I like to think of the face of Moses, Jesus and His followers. They must have looked like that. That may not sound as a compliment to many Jews who dislike Jesus, but I mean it as a compliment."

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Suppose you have found out that your new neighbor is a Jew. Let him know by telephone, letter or orally that you are glad to have him as a neighbor; that you would appreciate making a more intimate acquaintance, visiting each other, etc. There are good chances that your family (man, wife, children) and his will become friends, or at least, pleasant neighbors, and be ready to meet and exchange opinions and views.

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Invite your Jewish neighbors and friends on certain celebrations, such as birthdays, weddings or some religious occasions (for example, Christmas) or to some excursion or picnic, or even to some service or social in your church. Whether he accepts your invitation, or excuses himself for not accepting, you have the opportunity to continue your contact.

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You may ask your Jewish friend to invite you to a service in the synagogue. If he agrees and takes you along to the synagogue, then you may get a stock of subjects for further contact and discussions that will last you for a long time and lead to the ultimate aim of his hearing the Gospel and accepting it. Of course he may find some pretext for refusing your request. In that case, too, you are afforded chances to make him hear your views. You may ask him why he refuses. His answers may complicate him so that you will have to extricate him from his perplexities.

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A chance subject for contact with your Jewish grocer, attorney, bank-clerk, agent, peddler, etc., may be thus: “Oh, I’m so happy to see you today. I have some questions, and you being a Jew will probably know the proper answer. I had an argument with a friend about this —”

Then you may ask: “What is the meaning of that ‘amulet’ which is fastened to the door posts of Jewish homes? What are phylacteries? What is the real meaning of ‘Mashiach’? Why is the Israeli parliament called K’nesseth? What is the meaning of Sanhedrin?” and such like. It may turn out that he knows little or nothing about these things, in any case, you have subject matter for further contact.

Another excellent approach to the Jew may be made by mail. Send him a certain tract, the New Testament, or only a part of it. At about the same time you let him know by telephone or letter, or orally, that you sent it to him because you thought it might interest him, and that you would appreciate it if he would let you know his opinion about it. If he replies, keep up the contact in accordance with his reply. If after a certain time you get no reply ask him the reason for his silence. (Hasn’t he read it yet? Has he had time to form an opinion? Has he not received it?) He may tell you that he is not interested in such things, and demand you stop sending any such “stuff.” In that case write him that you did not intend any offense and that you hope he or she might still reconsider the matter and get interested, and that you are ever ready to be of help. Preaching by mail does not have to be applied only to Jews whom you know. You may pick out, at random, names from the telephone book and contact them.

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After some practical experience in this work you may find other effective ways of reaching the heart of the Jew. You may adopt some of the methods of the professional missionary, such as house-to-house visits, placing suitable literature in door slots, open air preaching in Jewish neighborhoods, etc. Now, in your dealing with a Jew you should know what type of Jew he is, for there are various types, and the methods that are best for one may not be suitable to another (See Chapter on “Types and Segments”).

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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