

Roy Schwartz

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We need the church. This may sound over simplistic yet for many years and indeed to the present day many of us continue to act as if we do not need the church. Dare we admit to ourselves that a great impetus for starting the Messianic Congregational movement was because of anger and frustration toward the church. Anger because of its failure to recognize the Gospel's Jewish connection. Frustration grew from the fact that when we pointed this failure out to the church we were accused of building a wall of partition - - when in fact **they** had built the wall.

So where did our frustration lead us? We founded Jewish ministries; parachurch organizations that would do what the church would not do -- bring the Gospel to the Jewish people in it's cultural context. This period saw the rise of organizations like the American Board of Missions to the Jews, Jews For Jesus, Friends of Israel, American Messianic Fellowship and others. Later, the Messianic congregation movement took off in earnest. All of these works sought to foster the Messianic identity the church long denied us.

What effect did the movement have upon the church? Initially, there was the fear that we were being too separatistic. It is pointless to recite a litany of the many instances of the rejection of Jewish missions. The church did not embrace our work.

And yet the Gentiles were not the first to shirk their God given responsibilities. It was us!

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Let me put this in Scriptural perspective: It was the Jewish people who were called to be a light to the Gentiles. Our fathers wanted nothing to do with them. Our attitude was illustrated in the actions of Jonah, who when told to go to Nineveh turned his heel the other way for fear that the Ninevites might repent.

Hosea gave the same indictment to Israel, warning about our hardness of heart: "I will take a people who you say are not a people", he told them, "and make them sons of the living God."

Even our Messiah accused our fathers. While overturning the tables of the money changers which were set up in the Court of the Gentiles he said, "My house is to be a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have turned it into a den of thieves." And as you know Peter had his own reservations about bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles.

What we have accused the Gentiles of doing to us -- refusing to take God's word to our people -- we first did to them. Until we acknowledge and admit to this we will not have the impact on the church that we could.

For many years I was frustrated with the failure of the local church to be actively involved in Jewish ministry. Either the local church did not see the need or it thought that the work of Jewish evangelism was better suited to those missionary agencies committed to Jewish outreach. The Lord's desire is found in (John 10:16) "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold: I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd." God's

desire is that Jew and Gentile might be one in Messiah. The usual sentiment that churches expressed to me when I suggested that they should be more involved with Jewish ministry was “God’s desire is that Jew and Gentile might be one in Messiah.” They believed their ministry was to call all peoples in their community. To single out Jewish people would be unresponsive to the vast majority who were not Jewish, they reasoned

This attitude did not reflect God's call to the church to bring the Gospel to the Jew first (Rom 1:16 NASB) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Acts 13:46 NASB) And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first ... .”

As God's first born among the nations it was clear to me that the Gospel should be proclaimed to our people foundationally and then to all the nations. I believed that this was not just for the first century generation, but for each successive generation.

In time, I became frustrated with the church for it's failure to see these important Scriptural truths and principles. For years I had worked with a mission agency that was committed to working with the local church in reaching their Jewish communities. Our organization was outspoken and opposed to the Messianic movement because of its excesses and a leadership that was for the most part untrained through Bible school or seminary. The Messianic movement however was, providing something that was very much needed. They gave the Universal Body, local congregations committed to reaching the Jew first and also the Gentile. I supported the movement because it did

express the Gospel in its Jewish context, something that the church as a whole did not provide.

Even the reason for my involvement in the Messianic Congregational movement was a microcosm of the church's failure to reach Jewish people. I was working as a part time missionary while a full time student at Moody Bible Institute. I had been used of the Lord to lead a number of Jewish people to faith and needed a church to involve these new Jewish believers in. The Evangelical church in my community had just called a pastor whose theology was not sympathetic to Jewish ministries. There was no question that this man loved the Messiah, but he made a particular point of letting me know that his support concerning the Middle East were toward the "oppressed Palestinians." He made it clear that he would not be a part of any special outreach to the Jewish people.

With the encouragement of my colleagues, I began the Olive Tree Congregation with the help of two other part time workers. The congregation grew and continues to be a thriving independent work leading Jewish and Gentile people to faith and a deeper walk with the Lord.

In fact today Messianic congregations have become so effective that they are part of national denominations. When we planted the second congregation in Buffalo Grove, we did all we could to maintain good relations with the other churches in the community. This policy was greatly rewarded a few years after we had begun. A Baptist church in the community was struggling and invited us to merge with them. This made it possible for the Vineyard Congregation to be a part of the North American Baptist Fellowship. The fellowship turned almost five acres and a building over to the Vineyard Congregation in order to maintain its presence in Buffalo Grove. They encouraged

us to remain faithful to our Messianic outreach. The N.A.B. is the organization that consisted of German Baptists. There are even a number of German speaking churches in the denomination. What a blessing for both of us to join together proclaiming God's reconciliation through the Jewish Messiah. Today, even Jewish communities now acknowledge our right to exist. And this organization, the FMC, The UMJC, and IAMCS, demonstrate by their very existence the growth and vitality of the movement.

However before we become too self congratulatory, we need to recognize that there are greater opportunities before us. Opportunities that may escape us should we remain complacent and inwardly focused.

For two reasons our mandate should now be to bring our acknowledged Messianic identity into the church. First it is God's vision for the church -- Jews and Gentiles worshiping as one in the Body of the Messiah. And second, because the church is the greatest vehicle for winning Jewish people to the Messiah.

Paul saw the role of the church precisely this light. "Salvation has come to the Gentiles to make them (Jewish people) jealous." This Scripture is key to the endeavor of bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people. In repeated Jewish testimonies it has been a Gentile demonstrating his knowledge and love of the Jewish Scriptures that have provoked these Jewish people coming to faith in Jesus.

But if the church is to provoke Jewish people to jealousy they need to know and understand the Jewish roots of their faith. Teaching the church this Jewish connection is the task of those who are

going to successfully reach the Jewish people. When Gentile Christians experience the Gospel's Jewish connection they will feel a kinship with the Jewish people that will blossom into a powerful witness.

In order to demonstrate the Jewishness of the Gospel and the Scriptures we need to position ourselves in churches where they will allow us to do this. A Jewish calendar, if you will, taught for the edification of Gentile Christians, and the enlightenment of invited Jewish guests.

Scripture also demonstrates that a blessing will follow any outreach to the Jewish people. Paul discovered as he went to the Jews first with the Gospel, not only did Jewish people come to the Lord but multitudes of Gentiles came to faith as well. Many cite the influence of the Jewish people in the spheres of business, finance, entertainment and culture. Lead these people to the Lord and the gifts that made them leaders will be used to the glory of God, bringing blessing to the church and to the entire world.

How do we then accomplish this all important positioning.? Through four basic actions: First join a solid church whose membership is in daily contact with Jewish people. Second educate the congregation that you have joined, this includes making yourself available to teach Sunday School, lead Seders, and work with the children's programs. Third, worship regularly with this church. Fourth serve the church in whatever ways are needed, as a regular member of the congregation. All of these will endear you to the congregation and inure to your benefit and ministry to the Jewish

people.

Let me briefly share some of my experiences at Moody Church in applying some of these principles.

I hope that the following will provide you with some helpful insights.

For those of you who may not be aware of this, Moody Church is in no way affiliated with Moody Bible Institute. They are two separate and distinct organizations. I mention this to clarify the fact that Jewish ministry was not of interest to the church. They did not support a Jewish missionary (though at times in the past they have).

The Pastor of Evangelism, recognizing that Moody Church was surrounded by more than 50,000 Jewish people within a five mile radius, asked me to conduct a Jewish Evangelism Seminar. The seminar, though sparsely attended, proved to be the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

Shortly after this seminar, I led a weekly Bible study luncheon for professionals in the loop, sponsored by Moody Church. We met in posh surroundings, the 56th floor of the First Chicago Bank. I helped these business people understand the Gospel's Jewish roots. In turn, they would introduce me to Jewish people that they worked with whom I would never have met were it not for the Church.

One woman introduced me to her fiancé, a mega successful Jewish lawyer. I explained the Gospel to him and before I had left his office we had prayed for him to receive Jesus as his Messiah.

An unsteady Jewish believer became grounded in this same Bible study, in three weeks I will be pleased to officiate her wedding.

Then I was asked to teach a Sunday School class. Sensing that God was calling me to this church and seeing the open doors, I joined the church.

We began a Jewish outreach called *Light of Israel*, that provided the membership of this church a place to bring Jewish friends and to learn more about the Jewish roots of the faith. Now Moody allows our fellowship to conduct Holy Day services during regular church worship times. The responsive by the people has been wonderful.

I have recently been asked to serve part time as the pastor of evangelism. Being on part time staff has opened even more doors for ministry. Recently a Jewish psychiatrist on the staff of a leading Chicago hospital has come to faith through our ministry. He was brought to the church because of its reputation and that it had a ministry to the Jewish people. That same month a Jewish, international banker came to faith, again because of the church's reputation and that it had a special outreach to the Jewish community.

There have been many members of Moody Church who have written and spoke with me saying how blessed they have been as they have come to understand the Jewish roots of their faith. The Bible has come alive to them as never before. One person suggested after a Passover Seder that she thought she understood what the disciples who walked with Jesus felt like on the road to Emmaus.



(Luke 24:27-32 NASB) And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. {28} And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He would go farther. {29} And they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." And He went in to stay with them. {30} And it came about that when He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. {31} And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. {32} And they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

All of these opportunities for ministry would not have been opened to me without my involvement in the church. In whatever form your ministry to the Jewish people has taken strive to see how you can become involved with a strategic local church. It is practical, missiological, and it is scriptural.