



Attitudes in Witnessing

By Steve Cohen

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Positive Attitudes in Preparation for Witnessing

Perhaps you have a Jewish neighbor, acquaintance or friend. You may have felt, “I really can’t tell my Jewish friend about Jesus, because they’re Jewish! I don’t want to offend my friend by telling him about Jesus.” However, to begin to share your faith with Jewish people (or anyone for that matter!), here are some helpful attitudes:

1. Develop an attitude of willingness to tell others about Jesus.

This is key. Today many people by tradition have moved away from willingly, actively talking about their personal faith. It’s easier to talk about the weather, sports, politics or the economy. But when it comes to matters of personal faith, we tend to withdraw or to become uncomfortable. Perhaps we lack self-confidence. Maybe we lack a knowledge of Scripture or feel inferior when dealing with spiritual things. But the Lord has called us to be witnesses and He will equip us to be His witnesses. Our actions and our words are important.

2. Pray that God will change hearts.

Prayer is the key that unlocks the door to closed hearts. Hearts are not changed because of words or deeds, but because the Holy Spirit moves and touches the individual, initiating and maturing faith.

The person who helped me come to faith in Messiah told me he prayed for me daily for nearly two years. His faithful prayer availed much. It should encourage you to know that praying for your Jewish friends who are not yet believers is a powerful action God will bless.

I’ve heard stories and testimonies of loved ones who have prayed for spouses for 30 or 40 years before they finally came to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. Consistent prayer will bring consistent results in God’s time. But we can never rush God in these matters of great spiritual importance. And, as you pray for your Jewish friend, also pray that God will give you wisdom, discernment and understanding as you take courage in speaking the things of God.

3. Develop sincere, trusting friendships with people.

Often we speak only to our friends about spiritual things. You don’t need to know someone for years before you can speak of spiritual things, but you do need to build a friendship. Build a bridge of trust over which your information can travel, and you will have gone a long way towards initiating personal evangelistic dialogue.

Seek opportunities to involve yourself in the lives of people for whom you are praying and witnessing. Drop a card or note to your Jewish friend during a special festival. If there is a wedding or birth within their family, send a card or note to express your joy for them. If they are experiencing a sickness or death in the family, mourn and sorrow with them.

These opportunities demonstrate the true kinds of love that Jesus demonstrated to us. We can laugh with those who laugh and weep with those who weep, showing people we care and letting them know we respect and love them as human beings.



4. Listen, listen some more, keep on listening...then speak.

Rather than telling someone about our spiritual beliefs, ask about theirs. Ask what your Jewish friend believes and does. Does your friend attend a synagogue in the neighborhood? Has he or she celebrated a holiday recently – or will that person do so in the near future? If so, ask what that holiday means to your Jewish friend. Ask the person which of the various groupings of Jewish people he or she identifies with or belongs to, and what he or she feels those distinctions are.

Become interested and acquainted with their concerns. You might consider asking how they feel about Israel, or intermarriage, or if they feel unity is possible between Jewish people and Christians. If so, how could unity be accomplished? You might mention that many Jewish people today are believing in Jesus as Messiah. Ask them what they think of such a movement, or what they think about the Bible or Jesus.

As I've had the opportunity to speak with Jewish people on a regular basis, I first want to know where a person is spiritually, before I share anything with them about my spiritual life. I want to know whether or not this person is religious, and if so, to what degree. I want to know what he thinks about the Bible, and what his attitudes are towards God, sin, atonement and redemption.

I want to know what he believes about Messiah, if the Messiah is to be a person, an age, or perhaps if he's lost hope in a personal Messiah. I want to know what his attitude is toward Jesus. Does he believe Jesus lived at all? Was Jesus a person in history? A prophet? By knowing and understanding where a person's faith life is, we can then tailor our conversation to urge them to investigate further the things of God.

5. Simply and personally share your own faith.

One of the most important things you can do in relating with anybody, including Jewish people, is to tell of what God has done for you. Your own personal testimony is very important. People may try to argue around interpretations of the Bible or theological perspectives, but they cannot argue about another individual's personal experience.

Perhaps you think your testimony is not exciting. But list the many things God has done for you, and I'm sure you will find several that you can share that give glory to God and communicate to others. Simply demonstrate that God is personal, caring, loving and has made Himself real to you.

Consider Peter's simple, yet powerful, confession in Matthew 16:13-17:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.'



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We, as believers on earth, are not shouldered with the responsibility of convincing people of Jesus' claims. Rather, we are given the privilege of proclaiming His name to all. When we do, we know that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob convinces people's hearts. We can rest on that promise and press ahead, gently sharing the hope that is in us and feeling free to express the Good News of our Savior.

6. Seek many different opportunities to speak of Jesus.

Jewish people today are open to talking about spiritual things, especially when they don't fear that someone is out to change them from being Jewish to being something else. Develop an open relationship and an attitude of honest exchange and your personal, evangelistic dialogue will bring forth good opportunities and good fruit.

When presenting the Gospel, don't give spiritual indigestion to the person. Don't overfeed someone with too many scriptures and spiritual food for thought. Give a little over several visits, rather than a lot in a couple of longer visits. This way, you will not wear out your welcome and you will leave the person with one or two concrete thoughts to think about rather than a host of things to ponder.

You might invite your Jewish friend to a home Bible discussion group, or to a service at your congregation. Sometimes churches in local communities have special speakers who talk about things of interest to Jewish people, or Jewish evangelism. When you see or hear of these events, invite your friend to the service with you, so that he or she can hear and consider for themselves what is said.

7. Use your Bible as the basis of a personal evangelistic dialogue.

The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It's alive and active, and its words can change hearts. We cannot force anyone through coercion or pressure tactics to believe that Jesus is Messiah. The Holy Spirit and the living Word of God alone can do that. Get to know your Bible. Practice using it as a workman uses a tool, so that you can develop the skill of a craftsman.

When witnessing to a Jewish person, it's important to share with them Old Testament passages that point toward the Messiah. (See the Old Testament chain presenting the Gospel below.)

Before you open your Bible, be sure that you ask permission of your friend to show them something there. Has that person agreed, in some way, to allow you to explain or to become your student? As you open the Bible, make sure you don't rise onto some invisible pulpit, and don't speak with a sermonic, preachy tone.

It may be appropriate, if you are in the home of your Jewish friend, to ask to use their Bible. The order of books within the Jewish Bible is different from the Bible you normally use, but the words are the same. Many Jewish homes today have a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures translated into the English language from the Masoretic text. Ask the listener to read from the Bible aloud, giving him the opportunity not only to handle God's Word, but to see, speak and read God's Word for himself in his own voice.



8. Remember that perfect love casts out fear.

Many have been dissuaded from personal opportunities to tell others of their faith because of fear—fear of not knowing enough, or offending, or doing something to turn somebody off to the message of Messiah.

Recently I was listening to a tape of a woman who was discussing this type of fear. She described how she was challenged to overcome it. She was asked to go into a room at night, and follow directions to turn the light switch on and off a number of times. Then, when the light was out, she was asked to turn the light off. She responded, “How can you turn off something that’s already turned off?” Obviously, you can’t. But what’s turned off can be turned on.

Practically speaking, a person spiritually turned off to the things of God can go nowhere but to be turned on to the things of God, through the hearing of your testimony or the Word of God. If you communicate in an honest, sensitive way, those who are spiritually open will welcome with great interest your words and prayers as you have opportunity to share.

In fact, our love for the Jewish people should cast out our fear. Christians should feel great love for the Jewish people. Think of the considerable debt we owe to the Jewish people, through God’s plan. Jesus our Savior was born into a Jewish family, a part of one of the Jewish tribes, in a Jewish town. He lived the life of a Jewish person, followed the Jewish religious practices and affirmed Biblical Judaism throughout His life.

The Scriptures tell us that salvation is of the Jewish people. God promised that through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob down to us today that all nations of the earth will be blessed. This blessing is the blessing of salvation through Jesus.

From the Jewish people came the scriptures, the Old Testament and the New Testament (with the possible exception of Luke). The church liturgy, setting, and other elements have their origins in Judaic roots.

However, don’t choose to love someone simply to try to win that soul into the kingdom of God. That isn’t love, that’s merely bait, trying to hook a line and reel them into the kingdom.

True love is giving. We give to and respect the person, even if that person never comes to follow Jesus. But don’t misconstrue respect. We can’t feel, “I respect you so much that I’m not going to tell you of my faith. I don’t want to offend you by infringing upon your rights. That’s the respect I feel for you.”

If we don’t offer Jewish people eternal life by sharing the Gospel, isn’t that, in effect, the worst form of anti-Semitism? For if you withhold the Good News from Jewish people, they will not hear. And how can they believe unless they hear? And, without Jesus, how will they be given eternal life?

9. Persevere and remain faithful.



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If I could leave you with one word of exhortation, it would be the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

I urge you and encourage you to enter into the Lord’s work of sharing His Gospel. This may not mean full-time mission work or traveling off to Africa, India or Asia. But enter the Lord’s mission field where you live, work, go to school and are given opportunities to influence other’s lives. God can work in their hearts to bring them to eternal salvation through Jesus. Remain steadfast, immovable, and always abound in the work of the Lord, for we know that His work is not in vain.



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For More Information

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