

A fresh approach for ministry to American Jewish-Gentile couples

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Published in Global Missiology, Featured Article, October 2004, www.globalmissiology.net

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This paper was edited from a work that Tuvya Zaretsky first delivered at the Evangelical Theological Society on November 21, 2002 in Toronto, Canada. The original title was "An evangelical approach for evangelistic ministry to Jewish-Gentiles couples and their families."

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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This paper will spotlight a significant missiological opportunity among a growing segment of the American Jewish community. Current research data documents the assimilation trend enfolding American Jewish people. The prime evidence is the increase of intermarriage. Studies also show that exogamous marriages are at higher risk of divorce than are endogamous ones. Therefore, a growing number of American Jews are seeking resources for preserving cross-cultural spousal relationships and for raising bi-cultural children. The conditions call for a fresh evangelistic approach that considers a proper regard for Jewish ethnicity and the Christian hope.

This paper reports substantial research data that was collected during doctoral studies at Western Seminary's Division of Intercultural Studies. Twenty-three Jewish-Gentile couples were interviewed to discern some of the key cross-cultural tension points that are threats to marital stability and satisfaction. Findings of the qualitative study were reported ethnographically.

The methodology was to first understand the tension points experienced within the research population. Once having noted the nexus where challenges arise, it ought to be possible then to design strategic methods for appropriate evangelistic ministry for the intended audience.

Traditionally, America Jewish community leaders have viewed intermarriage as a problem for Jewish continuity. Evangelicals ought to see it as a wonderful missiological opportunity. It is certainly possible to introduce Jewish-Gentile couples and their families to spiritual harmony through sensitive presentation of the good news in Jesus Christ, (Hebrew: Y'shua HaMashiach).

Definition of Terms

Jew

The term "Jew" identifies a person of ethnic Jewish descent. It is not a religious factor. In it's simplest sense, a Jew is the natural descendant of other Jews. The religious law of Judaism, *halachah*, requires birth of Jewish parentage and more particularly to be the child of a Jewish mother.¹

Jewish

The term "Jewish" is the descriptive term for that which is distinctive of people that are Jews. For example food, humor and social practices are typically described as "Jewish." It is appropriate then to speak of the people who are Jewish, as Jews. "Jewry," by distinction, is the collective

¹ Sklare, *ibid.* P. 26

word for Jewish people. The emic, or insider's view, in the Jewish context is to speak collectively of "Soviet Jewry" or "American Jewry."

Judaism

The term "Judaism" is the name for the traditional monotheistic religion of the Jewish people. However, it has also been used in a particularistic sense as a broader description for Jewish civilization and culture. Sociologists, Liebman and Cohen concede that, while the religious "tradition is a hoary one..." many Jewish people view Jewish life from "a secular perspective and interpret its symbols in ethnic or national terms."² Judaism then is one cultural trait to distinguish religion. It does not equal, nor does it encompass Jewish ethnicity.

Gentile

The American Jewish point of reference is taken with the term "Gentile." Gentile (Hebrew: y/G [gôy]), is the Jewish point of view for a non-Jew. Gentiles do not ordinarily use the term apart from the Jewish context. In the collective sense, it means a nation of people. Individually, in the Jewish point of view it is anyone "who belongs to another nation, a Gentile, or non -Jew."³

Jewish-Gentile couple

Throughout the study the term "Jewish -Gentile couple" has in mind heterosexual American couples. They are dating, cohabiting or married. In all cases, one of the partners is a Jew. It an intentional choice so as to be more inclusive than the narrower term "intermarried" couples.

Interfaith couple

The American Jewish point of reference is taken where interfaith refers to the partnering of Jewish and Gentile people who are religiously different.⁴ If we take religion as one culture trait, then the interfaith distinction applies when the cultural difference between a Jew and a Gentile is religious. It notes both the contrasting ethnic and particularly religious differences of a Jewish-Gentile couple.

Intermarried couple

The American Jewish perspective on intermarriage means to marry "out" or to marry a Gentile, a non-Jew. The term "intermarried couple" in this study was descriptive of a Jewish -Gentile couple that is in a married relationship.

Families

The Jewish value placed on family is fairly one of obligation.⁵ The structure is commonly an extended family and self-identifies as a culturally particular subset in American life. The Jewish family would include children, parents, siblings and grandparents, parent's siblings, their children and in-laws. The view of "family" may also extend to include other Jewish people more broadly

² Liebman, C. and Cohen, S. *Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1990. P. 6

³ Heller, A.M., *The Vocabulary of Jewish Life, revised edition*. New York: Hebrew Publishing Co.1967.p.179.

⁴ Schaper, D. *Raising interfaith children: spiritual orphans or spiritual heirs?* New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co. 1999. p 9

⁵ Sklare, M. *America's Jews*. New York: Random House. 1971. P.74.

as being “members of the tribe.” Religious beliefs, ancestral tradition and survival of the nation are inherent values associated with family.

Ethnographic study

This was a research project to discover and describe meanings according to the Jewish-Gentile people we seek to understand. The ethnographic description in this case reports the words, feelings and thoughts about the challenges of Jewish-Gentile couples.

Personal Motivation

In the course of ministry among Jewish people, I was aware of a rising incidence of intermarried couples and a need for evangelistic ministry to their children and extended families. 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) confirmed the fact of a skyrocketing intermarriage rate. A sociological awareness of the trend also revealed an inadequacy to meet a key evangelistic opportunity.

Missiologist Paul Pierson has said, “spiritual breakthrough and renewal movements usually begin in the margins of a society.”⁶ Intermarried Jews and Gentiles find themselves culturally marginalized by synagogues and churches.

Currently only two qualitative studies are available that report the Jewish-Gentile experience. Only this current one reports specifically the challenges of these couples. It was a pre-evangelistic effort that sought to report only the descriptions. A fresh approach for evangelistic ministry to interfaith couples is needed.

At this time, there are concerted efforts within American institutional Judaism to ensure Jewish continuity. It aims to enfold or bring both partners into the Jewish community and to convert the Gentile spouse. At the same time, very little is being done to recognize the specific cross-cultural challenges that Jewish-Gentile couples face when they approach the Christian church for resources.

My personal motivation is to find ways to effectively minister the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles in this study. This paper provides some insights gained through a qualitative study on this challenge of Jewish-Gentile couples. It is but a brief summary of what has been learned and suggests some preliminary strategy from the findings.

⁶ Paul Pierson, “Historical Development of the Christian Movement.” Fuller Theological Seminary, 1988.

II. DIACHRONIC VIEW: 20TH CENTURY JEWISH-GENTILE MARRIAGE TRENDS

Trends

Three primary trends have been at work in the American Jewish community. The following section will briefly introduce them. They are the growing dissatisfaction with and movement away from Jewish institutions, the increase of Jewish-Gentile marriages and a birth rate in decline.

Disaffiliation

The 1990 and 2001 National Jewish Population Surveys (NJPS) revealed dramatic trends taking place within the American Jewish community. Most prominent were the declining birth rate, rising intermarriage rate and a steady exodus out from Judaism. Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman noted that about 63 percent of the core Jewish population were unaffiliated.

They belong to no synagogue and, in most cases, do not hold membership in any Jewish organization or institution. These unaffiliated Jews contribute far less to Jewish charities than those who belong to synagogues: few subscribe to Jewish publications or observe religious practices at home.⁷

Eighty percent of American Jews would say that their religion is Judaism. However, only eleven percent of those Jews born in America, who do identify their religion as Judaism, attend synagogue weekly.⁸ Demographer, Samuel Heilman, analyzed the findings of the 1990 NJPS, ‘Jewish identity seems to have moved increasingly toward ethnicity or heritage and culture, while being a ‘good Jew’ has been defined in vaguely moral terms.’⁹

The American Jewish community has become largely secularized. In Rabbi Haberman’s analysis, Jewish people have responded to American culture with a ‘waning will to be Jewish.’¹⁰ Professor Jack Wertheimer of the Jewish Theological Seminary along with sociologist Sylvia Barack-Fishman suggest that American Jews are undergoing ‘coalescence’ -

A pervasive process through which American Jews merge American and Jewish ideas, incorporating American liberal values such as free choice, universalism, and pluralism into their understanding of Jewish identity.¹¹

American Jews live in a society that no longer defines people by their ascribed identities, either ethnic or religious. Social barriers have collapsed and intermarriage is part of American culture. However, American Jewry views intermarriage as a crisis that is transforming the Jewish community. Wertheimer called this trend ‘a long process whereby Jews have willingly surrendered ever more aspects of their distinctive worldview in order to ease their own Americanization.’¹²

In 1983 Rabbi Shamai Kanter of Congregation Beth El in Rochester, New York noted that Jewishness without Judaism as a trend in America. The Jewish people were no longer being held together by spiritual values. He wrote,

⁷ Haberman, Joshua O., ‘The New Exodus Out of Judaism’ *MOMENT*, August, 1992: 35.

⁸ Kosmin, Barry A., Goldstein S., Waksberg J., Lerer N., Keysar A. & Scheckner J. *Highlights of the CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey*. New York: Council of Jewish Federations Publication 1991.

⁹ Heilman, Samuel C. *Portrait of American Jews*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1995. P.135

¹⁰ Haberman, Ibid.

¹¹ Wertheimer, Jack. ‘Surrender to Interm arriage,’ *COMMENTARY*, March 2001, P.31

¹² Wertheimer, Ibid.

The subject of God and personal belief is effectively taboo, as much prohibited from polite conversation as once were death, or sex or cancer. Indeed, God may be the only remaining subject that can cause embarrassment in sophisticated social conversation among Jews today.¹³

Intermarriage

Jews have been turning away from the synagogue and also marrying out with non- Jews at a steady pace since 1970. The rate of intermarriage among American Jews quadrupled between 1970 and 1990.¹⁴ The most shocking aspect of the 1990 NJPS study was the accelerated rate of intermarriage since 1960. While the pattern had been observed, Jewish communal leaders were either ignoring or ridiculing it as the number were rising from 7 to 25 percent. By 1990 the intermarriage rate was above 52 percent on average nationally and higher in the Western United States. The 2001 NJPS confirmed that the trend had continued without the large incremental increase of the past decades. Only by changing the operational definition for Jewish identity were the 2001 demographers able to show that the trend had slowed a bit.

Birth rate

The 1990 NJPS also discovered a birth rate of 1.8 children per Jewish couple in America households. A birthrate of 2.1 children per couple is necessary to replace the current Jewish population. If nothing changes, according to Rabbi Buchwald of the National Jewish Outreach Project, the American Jewish population is expected to drop 20 percent every 25 years.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the children of interfaith couples present a sizable population that is open to Gospel ministry. The 1990 NJPS found that there were 750,000 children under the age of 18 who were being raised in interfaith homes. Bruce Phillips of Hebrew Union College found that 34 percent of children of intermarried families were being raised as Christians compared with 18 percent being raised as Jews. Another 25 percent were being raised with both faiths and 23 percent of those children are raised with no faith at all.¹⁶

¹³ Kanter, Shammai. "They're playing our song" *MOMENT*. 3/84: 38.

¹⁴ Lazerwitz, B., "Jewish-Christian marriages and conversions: 1971 and 1990," *Sociology of Religion*, winter 56(4): 1995. 443.

¹⁵ Fishkoff, *MOMENT* 10/00 P. 85

¹⁶ *The American Jewish Yearbook*, 2000 edition, P.213

III. RISK OF DISSOLUTION TO MARITAL STABILITY

Marital stability

Personal experience has led American Jews to realize that they can intermarry if they want. Traditional social authorities finds that the religious taboo is no longer a restraining influence. Christian culture in shaped by American society also. The level of American individualism makes it unpopular to teach Biblical material regarding being unequally yoked. The New Testament is clear about the potential for disharmony when a believer in Jesus joins with another who does not share that faith.¹⁷ So Jews and Gentile Christians are intermarrying at an accelerating rate with significant risk to marital stability.

Studies have shown that interfaith marriages are at greater risk of dissolution than same faith marriages.¹⁸ One recent qualitative research examined the tensions experienced within interchurch marriages, where the partners came from similar but not identical Christian traditions.¹⁹ Those stresses are only increased among Jewish-Gentile interfaith couples where spiritual commonalties are not as natural. Social scientists, who are aware of the significantly higher risks of marital dissolution, have sought to provide guidelines for marriage and family therapy clinicians.²⁰

Spiritual intimacy

However tensions also rise from the inability to find spiritual intimacy as well. Marital stability and spiritual intimacy have been studied. One study found that marital satisfaction and marital spirituality both diminish dramatically when there is not mutuality of belief.²¹ In the fieldwork for this study, I found that couples often were aware of the longing for intimacy in their relationships while not grasping that a significant cause was the inability to share spiritually. Couples are at even greater risk of relational failure when they do not know the source of the tensions.

The traditional answer within Judaism is the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse. However, that solution excludes the possibility of any other personal faith or tradition. The Christian response is the uniqueness of salvation in Jesus' atonement.²² However, since the holocaust, Christians are more aware that Jews regard conversion to Christ as mutually exclusive with Jewish identity. A way to a new community must be demonstrated for both spouses, where the answer is not either/or, but both/and. Spiritual intimacy is only possible when both partners are able to share a

¹⁷ 2 Cor. 6:14 "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers."

¹⁸ Call, V. R. & Heaton, T. B. (1997) "Religious influence on marital stability." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36 (3) Pp. 382-392

¹⁹ Williams, L.M. and Lawler, M.G. "The challenges and rewards of interchurch marriages: A qualitative study." *The Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 19 (3), fall 2000. Pp. .205-218

²⁰ Alper S. 1992; Call, V.R. & Heaton, T.B. 1997; Clamar A. 1991; Eaton S.C. 1994.

²¹ Giblin, Paul R. "Marital Spirituality: A Quantitative Study". *Journal of Religion and Health*, Winter, 1997. pg. 321-332

²² Acts 4:12 and John 14:6

common faith in God, without having to disregard their different cultural identities. Such a resolution of the tensions is possible through a mutual faith in Christ while respecting the cross-cultural differences in the marriage partners.

Identity of Children

Another serious threat to intermarried couples is tension over how to raise the children. In qualitative research I found this to be not just a common concern, but most often the greatest. Jewish partners want to maintain the Jewish identity of the children. Accomplishing that is traditionally understood as mutually exclusive with any religious faith but Judaism.

A doctoral study at USC examined how intermarried parents choose the method for religious training of their children. The most common plan was the delegation of the training to one spouse exclusively.²³ That process resolved the tension of a two-religion family, but it did not address the issue of bi-cultural identity and neglected the faith of the other partner's family.

Spiritual intimacy is important for family identity and marital harmony. A strategic approach is needed for evangelistic ministry to intermarried partners and among dual-identity children. It should be able to embrace the cultural heritage of both parents, while advocating a mutually satisfying spiritual solution for both parents and their children. A both/and answer is needed. There needs to be an appreciation for the distinct ethnic identities of the partners, Jewish and Gentile, while finding a mutually satisfying faith in God through the Messiah of Israel, Y'shua (Jesus).

²³ Callahan, M.A. *Interfaith Family Process and the Negotiation of Identity Difference*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation submitted for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, May 2001

IV. SYNCHRONIC VIEW: CURRENT JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSES

Jewish responses and resources

On the Jewish side of the response is the concern for continuity and survival of the Jewish people. On the Christian side is the concern for the eternal state of the beloved Jewish partner. Most of the time, those two core values are regarded as in tension with one another. The following section considers the various aspects of the Jewish response to the rise in exogamous marriage in the Jewish community. A section examining the Christian responses follows that.

Responses to intermarriage

Intermarriage is now a fact which Jewish community leaders have sought to address. Surprisingly, ordinary American Jewish people no longer see intermarriage as a problem. A 1998 Los Angeles Times poll found that only 21 percent of single Jews would marry only someone who is Jewish and 57 percent said that the religion of a prospective spouse didn't matter.²⁴ During the year 2000 presidential race Senator Joseph Lieberman came under fire from American Jewish leaders of many organizations for inaccurately stating "There is no Jewish prohibition against intermarriage."²⁵ At that same time, a survey conducted by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) revealed that Lieberman's comment actually reflected the true belief of the majority of ordinary American Jews. Intermarriage is not an issue in spite of any halakhic prohibition against it within Judaism.

According to the AJC study of Jewish attitudes toward intermarriage, "The Jewish taboo on mixed marriage has clearly collapsed."²⁶ Only 12 percent of the Jewish people surveyed said that they "Strongly Disapproved" of mixed marriages, and 40 percent were actually "Neutral." Further, 56 percent of the respondents said they disagree with the statement "It would pain me if my child married a Gentile."²⁷

The greater concern among American Jewish leaders is Jewish survival. Since 1990, the debate has been how to allocate funding for programs that would strengthen Jewish identity, refocus attention on community and the synagogue while embracing the intermarried at the peril of changing the definition of what is Jewish in America. The new reality is a synagogue where 80% of its members might be intermarried.

²⁴ Wertheimer, p.27

²⁵ Wiener, Julie. "Changing Attitudes: US Jews Accept Intermarriage in Growing Numbers, Survey Finds." *The Jewish Journal*, Los Angeles, November 24, 2000

²⁶ "Facing Facts on Intermarriage". *The Jewish Week*, November 10, 2000, P. 6

²⁷ Klagsbrun, Francine. "Survey Says Intermarriage is Okay" *MOMENT*, April 2000: 32

Responses within traditional Judaism: Jewish continuity

Communal Jewish policy has taken two separate tracks. The first seeks to promote Jewish continuity especially to the younger generation. A case is built for the richness of Jewish tradition and a call is made to retain allegiance to the Jewish people. Serious funding has gone into revitalized programs for Jewish education, youth movements, summer camps and Jewish centers on university campuses. However the issue of intermarriage and advocacy of endogamy are avoided for fear that to do so will only buck the American values of tolerance and equality that are already deeply enculturated in American Jewish youth.

After the 2000 American Jewish Committee (AJC) survey had revealed that intermarriage is normative in American Jewish life, the AJC leadership hosted a closed-door meeting in early 2001. They formed a Jewish coalition that now opposes intermarriage. Their stated purpose is, "To work together to help restore the ideals of in-marriage and to promote its importance to the future of the Jewish community and to the preservation of Judaism and the Jewish people. We believe that there exists a leadership responsibility to shape the communal climate and set norms."²⁸

Responses within traditional Judaism: Outreach

The second track is generally as some form of outreach. Seeking to meet the needs of interfaith families, programs have been designed to involve them more in "normative" Jewish communal life. Since 1983, religious authorities like the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) have worked together as a joint commission with the Central Conference of American Rabbis on Reformed Jewish outreach. They have responded with attempts to bring intermarried families back into the synagogue and find a place for the Gentile spouses and children within communal structures.²⁹ Proselytizing of "unchurched" spouses, seeking their conversion to Judaism, has been another method to preserve normal Jewish life.

There are significant problems in this approach. One is that the so-called "normative" religious standard is in reality in the minority. Rabbi George Gittleman of Reform Congregation Shomrei Torah, in Santa Rosa, California said that outreach is a moot point when 80 percent of your congregation is intermarried. He noted that he doesn't talk about the needs of the intermarried, but about the needs of his congregation.³⁰

Also interfaith couples and their families have been asked to play by traditional Jewish rules that were already rejected by the fact that they married "but" in the first place. So even the most inclusive approaches within Judaism run into trouble trying to define roles for Gentile spouses. Issues, like their conversion to Judaism or the accepted degree of synagogue participation, work against the goal of an unambiguous inclusion within Judaism and Jewish life.

Another form of outreach has been to include as many people as possible by blurring the definition of who is a Jew. In this case, ambiguity is the strategy. In 1983, the Reform movement issued a ruling that was contrary to the traditional rabbinic law of matrilineality. Any child with

²⁸ Nussbaum-Cohen, Debra. "New Coalition Opposes Intermarriage" LA Jewish Journal March 9, 2001: 24

²⁹ *MOMENT*, 8/92: 37.

³⁰ Fishkoff, P.76.

only a Jewish father was to be regarded as Jewish. The patrilineality decision altered the boundaries of Jewish identity and solved the issue of validation for interfaith families and their children. It also changed the boundaries of who might participate in the rituals of Judaism.

Responses to intermarriage: Blended cultures

Secular Jewish authorities approach the religious and identity problems of intermarriage by trying to avoid the cultural frontiers. Books, web-sites and social networks have formed to help intermarried couples find a blended way of life. Couples are urged to resolve the December dilemma by celebrating both Hanukkah and Christmas or by taking part in the best of Easter and Passover practices. Rather than fighting over truth about God, the attempt is to blend traditions apart from the meaning of rituals and symbols while seeking what feels good for the family. The goal is a blending of both cultures without dominance of either and without choosing between competing truth claims.

Jewish community center education and discussion programs also aim to help interfaith couples make decisions about how they want to relate to Jewish life. The goal is exploration instead of advocacy in order to help couples feel positive about relating to Jewishness without judging them for the decision to intermarry that has already been made.

However, ambiguous inclusion misses a fundamental reality. By definition, the majority of interfaith families have already broken with the standards for normative Jewish identification. A 1990's study by sociologist Bruce Phillips showed that interfaith families do not appear to want their children to have identification with Judaism, unambiguous or otherwise. They do not want contact with the Jewish social institutions except on their own terms.³¹

Responses to intermarriage: Literature

Guidance is available for interfaith couples and their families from a number of authors. They are generally intermarried couples offering advice and support resources from their own experiences raising children and negotiating relationships with in-laws. The books are often prefaced or salted with quotes from clergy, usually a rabbi and a Christian pastor or priest.

An analysis of all the literature available is beyond the scope of this paper. However, patterns of at least two lines of thinking are evident. One approach suggests that couples or families choose between one faith or the other, Judaism or Christianity.³² The family identity becomes the basis for educating children and celebrating a set of appropriate holidays and life cycle events. The rationale is that parents need to give clear direction where it would otherwise be unreasonable to expect children to sort out the profound differences between Christianity and Judaism. It is suggested that it is the responsibility of parents to provide an authentic religious background for

³¹ Phillips, Bruce A. *Reexamining Intermarriage: Trends, Textures, and Strategies*. American Jewish Committee, William Petschek National Jewish Family Center and the Susan and David Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, 1997.

³² Petsonk, J. & Remsen, J. *The intermarriage handbook: a guide for Jews and Christians*. New York:Quill/William Morrow. 1988.

Gordon, A. *Intermarriage: interfaith, interracial, interethnic*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1964.

Klein, D. & Vuijst, F. *The half-Jewish book: a celebration*. New York: Villard/ Random House. 2000.

Prager, D. "Prager's thirteen principles of intermarriage." *MOMENT*. February 18, 1993.

their children. No surprise that most of the literature written advocates a tilt toward Judaism, in light of the need for Jewish survival.

The second approach promotes the idea of raising children exposed to the faiths and traditions of both parents. Literature is oriented to aid in raising children more than with helping intermarried adults to work out their differences. The children are exposed to “the best of both worlds” and encouraged to choose for themselves or at least maintain an appreciation and mutual respect for the best of both religions.³³ The argument against this method is that it does not provide for a synthesis that leads to integration and clear identity. In favor of this idea the notion that a home, which promotes tolerance, diversity and the mutual respect for a dual heritage, will produce healthy children with a worldly-wise outlook.

Web sites

A growing list of web-sites and materials are available from various Jewish sources. The “Outreach Department” of the UAHC that seeks to reconnect Jews and their Gentiles partners to Judaism with classes and a web page. It exemplifies those advocating Jewish continuity through outreach.³⁴ Resources for the blended cultures approach are found through agencies like the Dovetail Institute for Interfaith Family Resources which produces book, a newsletter, offers conferences and maintains a web site.³⁵

Jewish Lifeline to Interfaith Families offers a series of “Interfaith Survival Kits” on line.³⁶ Jewish Family & Life!, a non-profit publishing firm, and the Jewish Outreach Institute at the Center for Jewish Studies at City University of New York also offer on line resources with an emphasis on interfaith family continuity that includes a connection to Judaism.³⁷

Christian responses and resources

“missionary dating”

The imprudent practice of “missionary dating” seems to be a normative “pre -evangelistic” Christian idea. It is a faulty pre-evangelistic understanding that would hope in the conversion of Jews through the course of pre-marital courting with a Christian. The widespread practice raises a question if the consequences of being “unequally yoked” are taught from the Bible as part of Christian discipleship.³⁸ I have encountered ample evidence those children of evangelical Christians who intermarry with Jewish people do so to the detriment of the spiritual welfare of both partners.

³³ Gruzen, L.F. *Raising your Jewish/Christian child: wise choices for interfaith parents*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1987. Hawxhurst, Joan C. *Interfaith Family GuideBook: Practical Advice for Jewish and Christian Partners*. Kalamazoo: Dovetail Publishing, 1998. Rosenbaum, M. & Rosenbaum, S. *Celebrating our differences: Living two faiths in one marriage*. Shippensburg, PA: Ragged Edge Press, 1994. Schaper, D. *Raising interfaith children: spiritual orphans or spiritual heirs?* New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co. 1999.

³⁴ www.uahc.org/outreach

³⁵ www.dovetailpublishing.com

³⁶ www.ssmartco.com/interfaith/index.htm

³⁷ www.interfaithfamily.com and www.joi.org

³⁸ 2 Corinthians 6:14

Evangelism is the missed opportunity

Christian churches generally do not have a special evangelistic approach for ministry to their intermarried members. There is just not the same concern about survival, as is found in the Jewish community. The percentage of Christians who intermarry is comparatively insignificant when viewed against the ratio of Jewish people who marry “but” of their community. Joan Hawxhurst observed, “...most Christian clergy people do not feel that their faith tradition is threatened by a congregant’s decision to marry out side the fold.”³⁹ So there is not the same perceived need for dramatic action among Christians as there is among American Jewry.

Scarcity of comparable Christian interfaith resources

There is no body of literature from a Christian vantage point for intermarried couples that is anywhere near as comprehensive to the resources available from the Jewish community. Callahan wrote in her doctoral dissertation at USC “There simply is not a comparable literature reflecting the “Christian position” on interfaith marriage.”⁴⁰ She noted that both Gruzen and Silverstein observed that neither Protestants nor Catholics view interfaith marriage as a threat or cause for fear regarding the possible extinction of the faith as do Jewish leaders.⁴¹

If there were a strategy for evangelistic approach to Jewish-Gentiles couples and their families, then it would be safe to say that there is not specialized post-evangelistic follow up material available at this time. I am not aware of any national evangelical network that provides evangelistic or follow up resources specifically for Jewish-Gentile partners.

Michael Rydelnik, Professor of Jewish Studies at Moody Bible Institute reported strategies for outreach already being tested in 1995 at three different Messianic Congregations. The Olive Tree Congregation in Plain View, Long Island, was conducting Jewish community center seminars as outreach to intermarried couples. The Joy of Israel Congregation in Southern Connecticut used direct mail as an approach to invite inter-married couples to their congregation. The Beth Messiah Congregation in Livingston, New Jersey placed advertisements in local newspapers offering services for intermarried couples and congregational resources. Rydelnik also suggested specialized programming: Counseling for intermarried stress, Bible studies, holiday services, children’ s programs and a welcoming atmosphere to intermarried couples.⁴²

The Son of David Messianic Congregation in Rockville, Maryland is doing outreach among intermarried Jews. They use newspaper advertising, public seminars and follow-up meetings by invitation with interested respondents. They promote the same spiritual harmony for Jews and Gentiles.⁴³

One congregation in Chicago has developed an outreach specifically to the children of intermarried couples called the Club Maccabee. Camp Gilgal is a youth ministry of Jews for Jesus

³⁹ Hawxhurst, J. 1998, P.7

⁴⁰ Callahan, M. “Interfaith family process and negotiation of identity and difference” Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Southern California. 2001, p.7.

⁴¹ Silverstein, A. *It all begins with a date: Jewish concerns about intermarriage*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson. 1995. Gruzen, 1990, p. 6.

⁴² Rydelnik, Michael. "Reaching Intermarried Couples: A Marketing Plan For Messianic Congregations" in the *LCJE BULLETIN*, Issue No. 42, November, 1995. Pp. 10-15

⁴³ «www.sonofdavid.org»

that acknowledges, without specializing yet, that their primary constituency is the children of intermarried couples. The Chosen People Ministries in New York produced a 47-minute evangelistic film for interfaith couples titled ‘Joined Together.’

The doctoral research that I completed while at Western Seminary sought to find the challenges of the Jewish-Gentile couples. After that I have been applying strategic approaches for evangelistic ministry to Jewish-Gentile couples and their families.

V. SUGGESTED STRATEGIC APPROACH

Research observations – qualitative study

Qualitative Research

In the fall of 2001 I interviewed 23 interfaith couples in order to develop an ethnographic description. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, then coded and re-coded for domain analysis. Taxonomy of terms, using the grounded theory examination of material that was available from participants' own words, provided keys to the types of challenges. Two specific junctures of cross-cultural tension were revealed by this qualitative analysis.

Figure 1 shows four of the major themes that surfaced from domain analysis of transcribed interviews. The four developmental stages in their relationships showed where cross-cultural tensions were reported. The relational stages are listed across the top of Table 1. Under each domain are terms that were associated with specific challenges within the stages of relationships.

Figure 1 • Relational domains and cross-cultural tension

	Dating	Wedding	Without kids	Family
Associated terms	Ethnic identity	Family comfort	Ethnic blend & religious identity	Children's identity: ethnic v. religious
	Family expectations	Symbols	Spiritual harmony	Life cycle rituals
	Culture shock	Location	Cultural signal systems	Holidays Passover/Easter
	Religious identity Judaism vs. Christianity	Officiant(s)	Life cycles	December dilemma: Hanukkah or Christmas
	'Interfaith' Taboo	Tone: secular or sacred	In-law relations	
	Children			

Figure 2 is about the cultural categories of tension points that were expressed by Jews and Gentile partners. Under each domain are questions that surfaced in the interviews from partners of different cultural backgrounds. The questions are the ways that people of the different cultures expressed the cross-cultural tensions. These questions are some specific entry points where strategic evangelistic ministry might be applied and appreciated.

Figure 2 • Cultural categories and differing tensions

	Identity	Religion	Life Cycles	Family	Children
Associated terms	Ethnic identity	How important?	Jewish or Christian, neither or both?	Integration skills	Blended ethnic identity
	Ethnocentrism	Who is Jesus?		Religious identity	Religious training
	Religious beliefs	unequally yoked?	Symbols: one, blend or none?	Spiritually intimacy	Heritage and legacy
	Family expectations and taboos	Issues of shame or guilt	Signal systems	Children	Holidays
	Dreams for children	Spiritual harmony	Secular or religious?	Cross cultural Skills	

Discussion

My research actually found five key cultural challenges. The first thematic group was around identity issues. The first was the confusion over identity differences. Often it manifested in an inability to comprehend simple terminology related to defining identity. This uncovered the difficulty in understanding the relationship between ethnicity and religion.

Second, were the tensions over religious differences. Here again the problem was often rooted in ethnocentrism. Cultural traditions came to bear about what Jews in particular ought and could believe. Often the tensions developed simply over the name or person of Jesus.

Third, were the disagreements over life-cycle celebrations. The first experience was often in planning the wedding ceremony. It was the first occasion to be navigated with many significant opportunities for cross-cultural and family tensions. Cultural symbols and the signal systems in use were important to affirming identity in the rituals, traditions and holiday celebrations. Donald K. Smith's twelve factors in cultural signal systems brought out many subtle misunderstandings within different value systems, beliefs or symbol associations.⁴⁴

The fourth challenge noted was in family harmony. Establishing a mutually comfortable family identity, especially in the enculturation of children, was often the basis for contention. The failure of a couple to find spiritual harmony was among the most threatening factor to marital stability.

The fifth challenge was in the discord over training children. It started with trouble arriving at an agreed upon identity for the children. Then the tension extended to the manner in which the training and identity would be learned.

These five key challenges provide insight for those who want to acquire a cultural understanding of Jewish-Gentile couples. Knowing the challenges that are present, as the couples see them, will aid mission workers in strategically planning communication of the Good News at those entry points for evangelistic ministry. In the Gospel is the hope for personal renewal and spiritual

⁴⁴ Smith, Donald K., *Creating Understanding*: Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.1992

regeneration. In it is the possibility for spiritual harmony in marriage and in a family. Without it, that harmony is unavailable to Jewish-Gentile interfaith couples.

The primary question for Jewish-Gentile couples is not about which religion to follow: Judaism versus Christianity or whether it is best to forge some sort of synthesis out of both. The prime question is about how to jointly find spiritual harmony. It is possible only when both partners seek God through a personal spiritual quest. Both Jews and Gentiles can discover the unique and singularly effective hope that is in Jesus Christ, Y'shua the Messiah. That can occur when the Gospel is presented in a culturally appropriate manner for both partners.

This has been a very simple introduction to the challenges of Jewish-Gentile couples. A more extensive presentation and evaluation is presented in the book to be published by William Carey Library publishers as *Jewish-Gentile Couples: Trends, Challenges and Hopes*. In the remaining section are some suggestions for evangelistic ministry to Jewish-Gentile couples and their families based on the material presented thus far. This is no more than a starting point for thinking in this specialized field.

Suggested strategies for evangelistic ministry

The broad outline for an appropriate strategy is one that features an evangelical, egalitarian and an educational approach. It is to these three topics that this paper now turns.

Evangelical

First, Bible based investigation of truth in the Scriptures is the foundation of the presentation to Jewish-Gentile couples. An objective resource is needed to mediate between the differing historical and cultural traditions. Jewish people will find much comforting material from their own Biblical heritage. Gentiles and Jews will benefit from the universal spiritual message of salvation revealed throughout the Bible.

Second, a sensitive approach is needed that is Gospel centered. In the themes of sin, salvation and savior are found the hope of regenerative life. The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes – Jews and Gentiles alike. In it is the humbling power that overcomes ethnocentrism and an understanding of human nature that transcend cross-cultural tensions. The Evangel is the core message and the basis of evangelistic ministry to these couples.

Third, evangelistic ministry to Jewish–Gentile couples ought to affirm the uniqueness of Christ for salvation for everyone.⁴⁵ There is no other covenant for Jews or Gentiles except the blessing of the new covenant relationship in Jesus the Messiah. Jews are not saved in a manner that is different from Gentiles.

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile --the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’⁴⁶

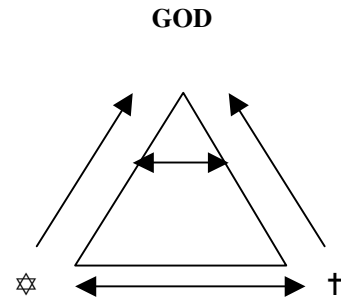
Fourth, evangelistic ministry among Jewish-Gentile couples could be spiritually transforming. Couples interviewed for this research spoke of the longing for spiritual harmony and family unity.

⁴⁵ Acts 4:12 & John 14:6

⁴⁶ Romans 10:12-13

Without a mutually satisfying faith in God, spiritual unity is impossible. Ministry that encourages intimacy with God enables interpersonal intimacy between partners. I do not know who authored the idea depicted in Figure 3, but it is not mine. It is included as a helpful illustration. As marriage partners grow more intimate in their individual knowledge of God, they are able to find a more intimate relationship with one another.

Figure 3 Developing spiritual intimacy



Egalitarian

One hindrance to effectiveness in other approaches to interfaith ministry was the tendency to hold one vantage point above the other. The Jewish survival instinct within Judaism tends to negate consideration of the culture and beliefs associated with faith in Christ. Often Gentile spouses are much more open to learning about Jewish history, culture and beliefs than were Jewish partners in learning the beliefs or practices of their Christian companions.

A bi-cultural approach is needed. Evangelistic ministry ought to be humble as it approaches the different cultures present in an Jewish-Gentile couples. Christian partners often need an interpreter who can help them understand and communicate across the cross-cultural divide in their marriage. The goal is to help them learn to be cross-cultural in their relationship and eventually bi-cultural in the family. The mission worker then must model and engender mutual respect for both cultures of the Jewish and Gentile partners.

The Addenda of this paper provides a small compendium of suggestions, which taken together might offer some methodological direction for effective evangelistic ministry among Jewish-Gentiles couples and their families. These are suggestions for getting started.

In an effort to be contextually sensitive, one normative structure within the Jewish social setting has worked well for creating an egalitarian environment for study. It is the havurah, or small social group that gathers specifically for the purpose of learning. It has been a useful format in which Jews and Gentiles can seek to know spiritual truth in a culturally appropriate place for everyone. The egalitarian standard enables safety for partners as they explore truth along new frontiers. I have been working with just such a group since the spring of this year. See the Addendum A for the actual list of discussion topics that the group developed for itself. It has been a wonderful opportunity for Gospel ministry to the whole group. Addendum B is a suggested list of other culturally appropriate social structures or methods that could be utilized for extending Gospel ministry to interfaith couples.

Educational

Materials are needed that could be the basis for discussions within the havurah setting. Topics could be developed along biblical and cultural tracks. Addendum C is a list of Biblical truths that could be developed as a curriculum for ministry to Jewish-Gentile partners and their families.

Rituals or life cycle events are opportunities for communicating Gospel truth. Appropriate methods within Jewish and interfaith cultural events for Gospel ministry are relatively easy to identify. Addendum D is a list of suggested cultural events that might be appropriate venues for evangelistic ministry to Jewish-Gentile couples and their families.

VI. MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Following are a few observations about ministry to Jewish-Gentile couples that have become apparent during the course of research into their challenges. They are random thoughts that may be useful in formulating strategy for evangelistic ministry in the future.

1. The importance of affirming the uniqueness of Christ for salvation for all “other religions” is keenly evident in ministry to Jewish-Gentile couples. In August 2002 the American Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Association of Christians and Jews issued similar statements regarding the alleged sufficient means of Jewish salvation without Jesus Christ. Evangelistic ministry that is rooted in the uniqueness of Christ for salvation of all people will help to affirm this watershed evangelical doctrine for all people.

2. Understanding of the challenges of Jewish-Gentile couples will stimulate development of specific Christian resources for interfaith couples. This project was intended to discover the areas where interfaith marriages come under tensions that can lead to the threat of dissolution. It should stimulate strategic approaches to evangelistic ministry among interfaith couples. The methods by which those strategies are pursued should produce many more valuable resources.

3. Ministry to Jewish-Gentile couples should heighten awareness to current opportunities for Jewish evangelism: The purpose is to rally others to the significant opportunity now presented for evangelistic ministry among Jewish people who are intermarried or moving in that direction.

4. Ministry to Jewish-Gentile couples will provide a better understanding of cross-cultural issues in evangelistic ministry to Jewish people. This paper is an introduction to the ethnographic description of the challenges involved. Cross-cultural understanding will aid couples to communicate more effectively. The issues described will be an aid to mission workers who are looking for meaningful avenues for Gospel ministry to Jews who are intermarried.

5. More Christian information and warning is needed about the negative impact of “missionary dating” and being “unequally yoked.” Perhaps this will stimulate discussion and teaching on these subjects among Christians and especially evangelicals. The mission pitfall of “missionary dating” can be counter-productive and lead to emotional harm and sociological damage to families. The subject of being unequally yoked should be a warning to Christians who may put their faith in jeopardy.

6. Thoughtful strategies for ministry to Jewish-Gentile couples will effectively meet the challenge of traditional Jewish proselytizing to Judaism. Some Jewish community leaders have taken the “outreach” and “conversion” approaches to interfaith couples. Such attempts at conversion of Gentile spouses have not been limited to the “unchurched” in spite of the disclaimers. Gentile

Christians who are intermarried need support and resources to preserve and communicate their own faith.

7. Interfaith families need help to move from marginal status to find a new community. The discovery of a sub-community might bring Jewish-Gentile couples into an identity of their own. Missiologically they might be more readily accessible for evangelistic ministry.

VII. FURTHER READING

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VIII. ADDENDA – A METHODOLOGICAL GUIDEBOOK

Addendum A. Intermarried Couples' Havurah

The following were proposed discussion topics that came from an actual havurah group that met for one year between 2002-2003.

1. Identity Issues – What do these mean?
Jewish/Israel (Chosen people concept)
Gentile
Christian
What are the children?
2. Christian Distinctions
Fundamentalists
Evangelicals
Denominations
Catholics
‘Christian’ offshoot groups – Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses
Jewish views of Christian world (Christians and Jews)
Christian history and the Jewish people
3. Jesus
Traditional Jewish views and sensibilities
Christian understanding
Biblical materiel
4. Salvation
Christina understanding (sin, repentance and conversion)
Jewish perspectives (sin repentance and t’shuva)
5. The problem of evil (What’s the point of believing anything?)
6. Intermarriage
Jewish community issues (outreach and spousal conversion)
Christian community issues (unequally yoked)
Guilt, fear and shame
7. Heaven and hell
8. Sovereignty of God and fee will of humanity

Addendum B *Useful Social structures for evangelistic ministry*

1. The Havurah – A “comrade” group, or small group that usually functions alongside a synagogue or a Jewish community center. This is an appropriate vehicle for discussing social and Biblical issues at a practical level. An Intermarriage Havurah would be culturally appropriate and normative within a religious or secular Jewish community setting. In traditional usage, it is slanted toward the perspective of Judaism and Jewish *norms* about intermarriage. A Jewish and Christian Havurah would be a new use of a traditional social structure for evangelistic purposes.
2. Shabbat dinners for interfaith families – This would allow for incarnational ministry and interaction that could lead to deeper discussion and exploration of spiritual issues. I have already been trying this and finding some genuine fruitful results.
3. Advertisements offering resources for interfaith couples. Newspapers that specifically appeal to Jewish community interests like the *Jerusalem Post*, *Jewish Times of New York*, *The Jewish Journal* of Southern California and *Los Angeles Jewish Times* are appropriate venues. Magazines like *MOMENT* or *Commentary* are also available and carry ads from Christian resources. Interfaith resources and support groups could advertise seminars for interfaith couples in the periodicals. The periodicals might not take the ads, but if they do, the buzz about the ads will create other opportunities for evangelistic ministry.
4. Jewish Community Awareness Fairs like the Jerusalem Day, Israel Independence Day, and Jewish Community Awareness Cultural events - A booth could be set up for Intermarriage Resources or literature handed out within or on periphery.
5. City College community resources classes – These are often available as civic support and open to the public.
6. Parents’ Bible reading time with their children – this is not normally done in traditional religious or secular Jewish homes. It can become a valuable time for imparting Biblical truth and prompting discussion of identity and belief issues for parents and the enculturation of the children. A book and parents discussion guide is needed and would be appropriate.
7. Intellectuals’ Discussion Club for Russian Jews in Interfaith marriages - They will want to know Jewish cultural information and Gospel content discussion.
8. Seminars for appropriate for Church and Messianic Congregation religious school, Bible study hour, weekly training class or special focus program. Interfaith marriage issues are not regularly discussed from a practical, Biblical or cultural framework in these structures. They would benefit for ministry from the additional special program focused on interfaith marriage especially addressing the subjects of “missionary dating” and being “unequally yoked.”
9. Local cable access television – This is an interesting possibility for evangelistic ministry to interfaith couples and their families. The only cost is the studio and production time of each program. Media, as a communication tool, is limited, but it might have the effect of drawing out interfaith couples to other ministry opportunities.

10. Advertisements in Christian newspapers and periodicals offering “Support Groups and Resources” for interfaith couples. The focus could be on “An alternative to conversion classes for interfaith couples.”

11. Internet site for interfaith marriage resources from a Jewish Christian perspective for Jewish-Gentile partners.

12. Day camp or weekend camp outings for interfaith children with curriculum focused on dual identity issues from a bicultural approach and Biblical models for resource.

Addendum C *appropriate Biblical truths for evangelistic ministry*

1. The New Covenant – Jeremiah 31:31-34 is not discussed in a traditional religious or secular context in the Jewish community. The terms of the New Covenant (forgiveness of sin, the indwelling spirit and personal knowledge of God) are basically unknown.

2. The prohibition on *exogamy* - Exodus 34:14-16 and Deuteronomy 7:3 - Intermarriage with foreign peoples will lead to idolatry and destruction.

3. Conversion - Ezekiel 14:6, 18:30 are good texts. Acts 3:19 -20 ‘Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you --even Jesus.’ It needs to be presented as a turning TO God rather than as to another people or a foreign faith.

4. Sin – Presented as a problem of the heart, of human nature rather than as evil deeds as in the traditional Jewish view. Ps. 51:5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Matthew 5:20-22

5. The Gospel – It is a message that is foreign to the Jewish community. A basic presupposition of Jewish life is that Jews are not Christians and the Christian Gospel is not for the Jews.

6. Eternal Life – Needs to be presented as a relationship with God – to know God personally is to have life in the image of God. Deuteronomy 30:19-20 and John 17:3.

7. The goodness of God - Knowing God Who is always good, even when we are overwhelmed by the evil of the world - 1Chr. 16:34 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Psalm 107.

8. Christology - Mediatorial work of Messiah Jesus between God and man - 1Tim. 2:5 - 6 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men --the testimony given in its proper time. Hebrews 8:6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. (Hebrews 9:15, 12:24)

9. Theology - Knowing the God of Israel as One who is immanent and intimately personal – John 17:3; Jeremiah 12:3, Psalm 139:2,23

10. Intermarriage Issues for Bible Study Presentation

- a. What is marriage from a Biblical perspective Gen. 2:18-24
- b. Family life from the very beginning under the curse – Gen. 4
- c. The origin of the Jews and God’s plan through them – Genesis 12
- d. Marriage issues of the patriarchs – Abram and sons (Isaac, Esau and Jacob)
- e. Intermarriage before Sinai – Dinah (Gen. 34:2 ff.), Joseph (Oznat),
- f. Intermarriage in Torah, why prohibited – Exodus 34:14-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4
- g. Intermarriage: Canaanite conquest and Judges – Joshua 24, Samson, and Rehab.
- h. Intermarriage in times of Kings – Salomon, Naomi’s sons (Ruth)
- i. Yahweh Converts: Ruth the Moabite & Uriah the Hittite Gentiles (Ruth. 2 Sam. 11)

- j. Intermarriage: Exile and return – Esther and leaders – Esther, Ezra 9-10; Neh. 13:23-27
- k. Intermarriage in the intertestamental times – Samaritans
- l. Intermarriages in the New Testament – Timothy
- m. Intermarriage as taught among early Christians – Deut. 22:10; 1 Cor. 6:14 (11-17)

Addendum D *Culture events appropriate for evangelistic ministry*

1. Shabbat dinners: for interfaith couples and their families - This would allow for incarnational ministry and interaction on Friday nights. They could lead to deeper discussion and exploration of spiritual issues. A special time for children could be built into the event.
2. Motzai Shabbat fellowships: for interfaith couples on Saturday evenings – This is a traditional time for informal socializing and especially talking about cultural matters. It would naturally lend itself to incarnational ministry and could easily lead into deeper discussion and exploration of spiritual issues.
3. Interfaith weddings: Appropriate times for Gospel presentation to families and friends of the couple.
4. Interfaith Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Preparation allows a special time to spiritually prepare a young child for an important family ritual. It has a built in platform for discussing spiritual and identity issues and keeping the Lord's commandments (Matthew 22:23 -40 and John 14:15).
5. Children's weekly storytelling and Bible reading club: Many parents in interfaith families actually welcome after school story time and Bible-reading clubs. These might be especially effective for interfaith couples where the threat level in the Jewish community has been reduced by already having overcome intermarriage taboo.
6. Funerals: Are an especially important opportunity to minister to interfaith couples and their families. The issues of eternal life and hope in God for the future are especially critical at these times.
7. Hospital visits: Are a valuable time for evangelistic ministry to interfaith families. Here again there is the opportunity for spiritual ministry while showing the sort of care and compassion that is an ideal of the Jewish community.
8. A Circumcision ceremony: These are most important for the parents of the male children of interfaith couples. It is an appropriate cultural context in which to discuss covenant and introduce the subject of the New Covenant. It is an opportunity for parents to think about their relationship to God and affirming it through the covenant.
9. High Holy Day services: These are valuable for interfaith couples as important times to incorporate the family and enculturate the values of forgiveness and eternal life with God.
10. Jewish Community fairs: The Jerusalem Day, Israel Independence Day, and Jewish Community Awareness Cultural events provide a time for a booth to promote Christian Intermarriage Resources. They are also occasions to be with others in the Jewish community as a fellowship of intermarried couples.
11. Holiday cards: For Passover and Rosh HaShanna would be appropriate times to extend personal care and greetings and build relationships. The content of such cards can be used to acknowledge and support the interfaith nature of the family.

12. Shavuot holiday: The Feast of Weeks in late June is observed with picnics or outings to the beach would be appropriate for the discussion of Biblically related material. These picnics could be a teaching time for interfaith couples and their families as it is a natural holiday for family gathering.

13. Sukkah holiday: Booth building and discussions in the booth are a natural cultural event that lends itself to discussions. It is a natural teaching opportunity rooted in the calendar of Israel. It is perfect for communicating with adults and children.

Editor's Note: Unpublished paper presented at Evangelical Theological Society 2003. For further reading please see recently published dissertation review - [Jewish-Gentile Couples: Trends, Challenges, and Hopes](#).