

JEWISH EVANGELISM

Learning Evangelism from Chabad

As I sat down to write this article I had to chuckle “Learning evangelism from the Jews,” that is a novel idea being that the first emissaries were Jews!!! The shelves are full of books on how to evangelize people at the local Christian bookstores most all of which are written from a “Christian perspective.” Who would think about checking the subject out with the people who started the process?

In mid December of last year our synagogue hosted a meeting with Boaz Michael and Daniel Lancaster from *First Fruits of Zion* (www.ffoz.org). After the meeting our shul hosted a dinner in which Boaz and Daniel spoke again on a more personal note. In their presentation Boaz challenged the people to read the book “The Rebbe’s Army” by Sue Fishkoff. Boaz had been so impressed with the book that he had the entire staff of FFOZ read it. This spiked my curiosity so I had to take his advice and read the book.

The book describes the success of the Chabad Lubavitch movement which reaches more Jewish souls than any other group within Judaism and is the greatest competition to Messianic Judaism in reaching out to our own people. Their influence has made it into the White House and politics. What is their secret and how do they get their youth so motivated that they spend their sum-

mers on the streets training to be missionaries?

They are everywhere. In the past fifty years this group, which started two hundred and fifty years ago, has exploded and now they can be found anywhere there is a Jewish presence. The Lubavitch are very evangelistic even more so than most of Christianity, yet it is done in a different manner. In some ways

Chabad Lubavitch movement...is the greatest competition to Messianic Judaism

they remind me of Jews for Jesus in the sense that they can be found on the streets in the very Jewish part of town. Yet instead of asking the people if they know Jesus, they target the Jewish men and try to get them to put on tefillin. During Hanukkah they pass out menorahs and during Pesach they pass out matzah. The girls will pass out Shabbat candles and instruct the women on how to use them on Shabbat. In all cases they try to get the Jewish person

who may not be affiliated with any one group of Judaism to turn and embrace their Jewish heritage. They are not looking at trying to convert all the Jewish people to Chabad or saying that their way is the only right way. Their desire is to lead the people back to G-d and to His Torah. Their desire is that the people would live a Torah based lifestyle which leads to a true repentance.

Part of their success lies in the fact that they give back to the community. They come into the area and start giving classes on Hebrew, Talmud, Torah, and other subjects in many cases free of charge or on a donation basis. They start building schools, synagogues, Chabad Houses, etc. The astonishing thing is that the money that is used to finance the building projects comes mainly from non-Chabad Jews and in some cases even non-Jewish people!

While I disagree with their theology and some of their philosophy, I have to admire them and their dedication. Their form of evangelism is driven more by lifestyle. While they are not liked by a large majority of the Jewish people it is interesting that they also have a warm spot in the hearts of those who dislike them. When the people see them walking down the street they know who they are and what they believe in and in many cases provokes the Jewish heart to jealousy.

While I do not believe we need to embrace their theology, I believe that there is a great deal that we can learn from this group as it relates to sharing what we know to be true to those around us and influence the world with the light of Yeshua.

