

A resource of Christian Witness to Israel (N. America)  
to challenge, assist and equip in local Jewish evangelism.

# THE AC COURSE



Awakening  
the  
Conscience  
of the  
Christian  
Church

**CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS**

**2B THE WISDOM OF WORDS**

**(Un)common language**

# COMPLETE COURSE OUTLINE

## The Biblical Burden for Jewish Mission The Hope throughout History for Jewish Redemption Contemporary Connections for Jewish Salvation

### THE BIBLICAL BURDEN

<i>The MOTIVE</i>	<i>Psalm 67</i>	<i>The Praying patriarchs</i>
	<i>Romans 9-11</i>	<i>The Praying apostle</i>
<i>The METHODOLOGY</i>	<i>Isaiah 63</i>	<i>The Longing of the prophet</i>
	<i>Luke 4</i>	<i>The Liberation of The Prophet</i>
<i>The MISSIONOLOGY</i>	<i>2Cor 3&amp;4</i>	<i>The Ministry that is glorious</i>
	<i>Acts 20-22</i>	<i>The Ministry that is blessed</i>
<i>The MANDATE</i>	<i>Psalm 150</i>	<i>The Holy hallelujahs</i>
	<i>Rev 4&amp;5</i>	<i>The Cosmic chorus</i>

### THE HOPE OF HISTORY

<i>PROTECTIVE PROVIDENCE</i>	- <i>Past, Present, Future</i>
<i>PIRATES OF PROVIDENCE</i>	- <i>Expulsion and Expansion</i>
<i>REPLACEMENT AND DEFACEMENT</i>	- <i>Forgotten and Forsaken</i>
<i>REFORMATION AND RE-EMBRACEMENT</i>	- <i>The Puritan Hope</i>
<i>The LIE OF THE LAND</i>	- <i>Too much love will kill you</i>
<i>REWRITING THE RAPTURE</i>	- <i>Confusion and correction</i>

### CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

<i>The CHALLENGES TO CONNECTING</i>	<i>The separated and the assimilated</i>
	<i>The atheist and the evangelical</i>
<i>The FRAGRANCE OF FRIENDSHIP</i>	<i>The aroma of Christ</i>
<i>The WISDOM OF WORDS</i>	<i>(Un)common language</i>
<i>RABBINIC REINTERPRETATIONS</i>	<i>Jewish objections</i>
	<i>Peter and Pentecost</i>

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

1. As you begin each study, pray for the Lord's grace and wisdom.
2. Discipline yourself to set aside one hour for each paper.
3. Keep a personal 'physical' notebook.
4. Begin with the questions and in your own notebook, answer each question in one sentence, prior to engaging in the study.
5. Read through the paper in one sitting, with note-taking.
6. Answer the questions again; this time, a paragraph each.

Feel free to send your answers to me, ask further questions, or simply make appropriate comments.

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## **CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS**

### **2B: THE WISDOM OF WORDS (UN)COMMON LANGUAGE**

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. *'Preach the gospel, if necessary, use words'* What's wrong with this catchphrase?
2. How would you verbally engage with empathy and sensitivity in Jewish evangelism?
3. Are there Christian-ese terms to be avoided or adjusted? If so, which ones, and what should we use instead?
4. Why shouldn't 'they' just use Christian terms as we do?

## 2b (UN)COMMON LANGUAGE

### INTRODUCTION

We have already made comment about our manner of interaction and friendship, that we need tender empathy, a right understanding of fears and mistrust. One area we lightly touched on, to which we now return with a bit more detail is that of 'clarifying conversations'.

Our evangelism will obviously use words. The old adage '*Preach the gospel; if necessary, use words*', may be a fun and useful comment but it is not entirely correct, otherwise Jesus was mistaken in his preaching and teaching ministry. He should've just 'done things' and said nothing. No, we WILL have conversations and therefore it is important that we have 'clear' conversations; that the things we say, the terms we use and the way we say them, are clearly understood.

One of the sad realities of 21st century life is that our words are often written in an email or a social media post, and so come to the recipient in two dimensional form, rather than three. We read that text and with our imperfect understanding we then make an assessment of what the person meant to say. While I am happy to engage in online discussion groups or even one on one by digital conversation, it is not me simply being old school to say that evangelism is primarily to be done in person, with words.

It is better then that we develop trust, empathy, understanding, so that the words we use will be listened to as coming from a character that evidences the aroma of Christ. Simply preaching from a soapbox (either digital or physical) will be a major turn off. The Incarnate One engaged in incarnate ministry even as he preached from a boat. The common people heard him gladly; the sinners were drawn

to his mercy, and even Gentiles begged him for spiritual crumbs.

Proverbs 18:21 says that *'death and life are in the power of the tongue'*. Proverbs 12:18 speaks of how the tongue of the wise brings healing. And of course James speaks of the tongue as a fire set on fire by hell itself. At the very least those verses should make us full of care in our 'way with words'. There's an anonymous (non-biblical!) verse that says:

*'Be careful of the words you say, keep them short and sweet. You never know from day to day which ones you'll have to eat.'*

By words we speak love to loved ones. By words we teach our kids things of life and eternity. By words we build bridges and by words we tear them down. By words wars begin and by words wars cease. By a word the Creator spoke all things into being, and by a word He will also make all things new.

Well we could open up a whole sermon on words, but for our consideration in this paper, I want to focus generally on our Way with Words and then more specifically on Taming our Terminology.

## **THE WAY WITH WORDS**

*'Let your speech always be gracious, as though seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.'* (Colossians 4:6)

We have previously spoken of the usefulness of asking questions. We are not to be assumptive nor presumptive with our Jewish friends. In any cross-cultural ministry things will get lost in translation. I have already said: Assume nothing, Ask about everything. It is right that we Gentiles do this perhaps more than normal, as we have 'history' pertaining to our interactions with our Jewish neighbors, of not listening,

not understanding, and of arrogantly presuming too much.

This does not mean we have to get everything right, or be ultra-cautious, making sure we know everything about our Jewish friends before we speak (though a course like this will at least give some assistance). It does mean however that we must exercise care and be less loose in our phrases and presumptions. Casually connected relationships that have subsequently developed into real friendships and friendship evangelism, will permit mistakes and perhaps even draw a laugh at some wrongful assumptions, but initial mistakes may make the developing friendship harder to achieve. So be careful, be clear, and be quick to ask.

Communicating Christ cross-culturally with any ethnic people group demands care and sensitivity. Ever since the Apostle Paul set out on his missionary journeys he was sensitive to the people he was speaking to. He didn't speak to the Greeks in the same manner as he spoke to the Jewish people. We find that whenever he went into the synagogue in Acts 17:1-3 he reasoned from the Scriptures demonstrating and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and die and rise from the dead and that Jesus is the Messiah. But in the Areopagus, things went a little differently.

So how do we do this? Let's start at the very beginning; a very good place to start. Paul started where they were; that privileged position of the Jewish people. They were entrusted with the oracles of God. He preached and explained his case from the Hebrew Scriptures. But we later discover that when he came to Athens and was invited to speak to the philosophers at the Areopagus he didn't say, 'Now I want to introduce you to the Bible', or 'In our Jewish Scriptures it speaks about Messiah who is going to suffer and rise from the dead'. In Athens, he also started where they were, but that starting point was different. He recognized that they had

a limited 'Gentile' revelation. For them, that revelation was in the universe around us. Nature speaks of the character of God. So he even quoted from their own philosophers.

If we are communicating with Jewish people, as we have previously said, we may be dealing with people who are as 'far off' as Paul's Gentile audience in Athens. We need to take them to providential history (and God's unfinished business with the Jewish people), or scientific discovery (and its unfinished business at solving the riddle of the world! – think of Einstein's dilemma). Or we may be speaking with religious Jewish people, with whom we may readily open up the prophets or the Torah. Know your audience; know the arena of your conversations and have a gracious way with your words.

Let me illustrate with my own experiences of coming to live in the USA some 9 years ago. Coming from a more socialist system with a greater relaxation of life under the 'government's care', (OK, I'm exaggerating a little!), I come to a land where individuals 'get it done', and big government help and care is neither sought nor expected. Does that mean all US citizens live secure in their own achievements and their own homebuilt security (complete with personal handgun)? No, I find a greater number of people with insecurity, fears and paranoia... most often blaming the government for it.

What feeds this? Most often it is the cable news media and now more than ever the social media. Preaching the certainties of the faith into this uncertain world has its challenges. We need a way with words to develop faith in a sovereign God, and we need to close our eyes and ears to the blatant false testimony and exaggeration of news commentary and social influencers – yes even the Weather Channel would make us scared to go outside!

I could shout at the TV; and put my media posts in ALL CAPS and declare what a messed up country you live in. But then to the Americans I became as an American, by becoming a citizen in 2019. Now your problems are my problems. So, my present longing is to bring my American cousins to see the wonderful security of being in the hands of a Sovereign God and nurture you through those fears by displaying the wondrous true truths of Scripture.

So too then with our Jewish friends; enter their arena, be socially sensitive, accept the history, the sociology, the rabbinic theology, the secular ideology, the Jew-ology! Accept this for what it is, and then... have a way with words. It can pull down barriers, create bridges of hope, and open up conversations of eternal significance concerning the Shalom of God.

However, our wise way with words may mean some specific adjustments in our use of 'terms'. It is to that we now turn.

## **TAMING OUR TERMINOLOGY**

It is often said that Americans and the British are two peoples separated by a common language. American friends have told me certain words that I should and shouldn't use as they have an entirely different meaning across the pond - in both directions. Some British words are deemed more coarse here, and some regular words here would be considered very impolite in Christian company over there. (When the British would speak of a money belt, do not use your American equivalent. Tame your terms!)

Our retired CWI General Secretary Mike Moore was once doing specific outreach among the hasidics. After taking a very early morning walk along the beach where these ultra-orthodox were 'bathing' for morning ceremonial cleansing,



he engaged them in conversation, asking (and knowing) about the specific select synagogue reading at that time (the Haftorah). They asked him how it was that he knew so much about them? His reply was as follows: 'I love Hashem. I love the Tenach. I love the Jewish Scriptures, the Jewish people and the Jewish Messiah.'

Of course when he said that they knew exactly who and what he was! But it didn't stop the conversation because of his way with words which tamed his terminology. He could've said: 'I'm a Christian who loves the Lord and I want you to convert and turn to Christ in the New Testament'. I think their response to that might have been a bit different! As it was he got invited into the synagogue to meet the rabbi; though that only lasted a little while until they discovered he was a missionary, and quickly ushered him out!

So there are a few 'hot potato' terms that I would like to alert you to. This is not an exhaustive list but at least I list a few terms that warrant careful use, or better, non-use.

(i) Jew or Jewish Person?

We Gentiles might use the term 'Jew' simply as an ethnic designation. But what Jewish people hear is a derogatory term of ethnic desecration. 1930s Germany (and indeed many other places before and after 1930!) used such phrases as 'dirty Jew', or 'Judenfrei' (Jew-free). While we may simply be using the term 'Jew' as an ethnic designation, our way with words would suggest a wiser approach would be to make that adjustment in our terminology. Indeed in our ministry, we always use the term 'Jewish person' (well, almost...).

I have illustrated this previously even as people call me an Irishman. I must correct them. I am not an Irishman. I am Scots-Irish or a Northern Irishman from a country called

Northern Ireland (Not simply north Ireland!!). I am British born in one of the four countries of the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. To call me Irish is to place me in that country which lies geographically south and west of British Northern Ireland; that is a European country called Eire or the Republic of Ireland, which uses the Euro not the British Pound and where distances are in kilometers not miles. Tame your terminology when speaking to me – wars have been fought over less! Should we speak of San Antonio as being in Mexico? Ah, now I've got your attention! Ok, let's use the term Jewish person.

### (ii) Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures?

The contrasting terms of Old Testament and New Testament can be interpreted by Jewish people as a kind of insult to their Scriptures. It can appear that we are saying that we've got something new and if new, then obviously better. Now of course, ultimately we are saying that! But for now we want to say that there is a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31), and there were shadows that gave way to the Son-shine (as per the book of Hebrews in the New Testament). So in taming our terms, at least particularly so in our early conversations with our Jewish friends, it is best to use the term, Hebrew Scriptures, or even the term 'The Tenach'.

For religious Jewish people, they will immediately understand what you are talking about when you use their term, Tenach. Indeed in a sense it is the term Jesus used, as he spoke of the Law the Prophets and the Writings. The Tenach or T-N-K, stands for Torah, Neviim and Ketuvim (Law, Prophets, Writings).

Furthermore, while we readily use the term Old 'Testament' in Christian circles, it is better to use the term covenant and then springboard from that into conversations about

Jeremiah's prophecy, particularly chapter 31. 'So there was to be a New Covenant according to Jeremiah? Doesn't that mean a New Testament...?'

A Jewish friend that was searching for the truth had read Isaiah 53 from a 'Christian Bible' but wanted to make sure of the text in the Jewish Bible. So she went into her local Jewish bookstore and asked for an Old Testament. The bookseller replied, 'How old do you want it?'

Let's take care over our terms and it may prolong our conversations!

### (iii) Christ or Messiah?

While not wrong, the term Christ immediately brings up negative connotations in the ears of our Jewish friends. They first think of Christ as a Gentile European; or a Hollywood Jesus, that has no Jewish facial resemblance or significance for Jewish interest. He's that goy-Gentile.

Or, on the other hand, the term 'Christ' may also bring to mind the Christ-ian Crusades. And by the way, do not try to hold an evangelistic 'Crusade' in the hopes that some Jewish people will come along... Tame your terminology!

Messiah is simply the Hebrew term Moshiach for the Greek term Christ. By using Hebrew terms, we are showing sensitivity, and empathy. We are entering their world, instead of summoning them to adopt (in their minds) Gentile terms. So also then when it comes to the term 'Christian', Jewish believers in Jewish are preferring to call themselves 'messianic Jews'; though it needs to be said that naïve Gentiles are also calling themselves messianic, and muddying the waters on that one!

All of these adjustments and adaptations are not a sell-out,

but simply having a wisdom with words, in the missiological cultural context. While the gospel is 'offensive' we don't need to make it more so on account of our loose or even arrogant terminology.

#### (iv) Conversion or Repentance?

We might recoil a little from this one. What's wrong with conversion? Isn't it a solid biblical term and even one the Jewish people use of converting to Judaism! Yes indeed and depending on how strong your friendship has developed it may be that you will be ok using this term. But in the first instance, in the Jewish mind this brings up further memories of forced 'Christian' conversions. (Remember those 'conversos' that we spoke of in Spanish Jewish history?)

So what term can we use to signify that radical U-turn in life, counting all self-worth and good works as rubbish in order to gain Another's righteousness; the righteousness that comes from faith in the Moshiaich and his life and death for sinners? Well can use the word repentance. That's another good word that Jewish people are familiar with but it doesn't carry with it memories of the Crusades and conversion by the sword.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Being wise as serpents and gentle as doves, we are to use our way with words in the same way as our Lord. How did He speak to the Samaritan woman who was clearly living in sin? How did He speak to Nicodemus, or the Rich Young Ruler? How did He deal with that brash fisherman or that meticulous spreadsheet loving Matthew?

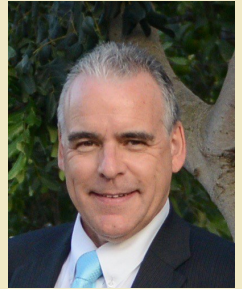
He used words, in grace, coupled with a gracious life he would spend for their eternal good.

Go now... and do likewise.

# WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE DO?

## DIRECTOR: STEPHEN ATKINSON

As **Director of Ministry** and 35 years of preaching experience, Stephen has been engaging with churches on behalf of CWI since 2004. With a Biblical mandate, historical reasoning, and present day missionary urgency, Stephen makes the case that every Church must have Jewish mission on its agenda!



## MISSIONARY: MITCH TEPPER

As a **Jewish believer** Mitch has the apostle's burden for his own 'kindred after the flesh'. A graduate of Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, his Scriptural knowledge and personal passion drive him in his street evangelism, one on one relationships, and household bible studies, with the singular purpose of 'Telling Jewish people about Jesus'.



## International Mission to Jewish People

Internationally we have been sharing Jesus with Jewish people for almost 180 years. Today we have missionaries in the USA, UK, Israel, France, Holland, Hungary, Australia, all faithfully witnessing to Jewish communities across the world.



**CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO ISRAEL (N America)**

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