

Evangelizing Trusting in God's Word, Not Your Arguments

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But do you ever feel inadequate sharing the Gospel or trying to explain some doctrinal truth? And you talk to somebody - a Jehovah's Witness, they don't know the Bible, but they know their script. These people are trained to do one thing and one thing only and that's know their script. But what we do is we proclaim Christ from the Scriptures. We proclaim truth from the Scriptures.

In my exhortation, I'm going to read quite a bit here. It's from a book named: "The Messianic Hope: Is the Old Testament really Messianic?" It's written by a guy named Michael Rydelnik. Michael Rydelnik was born Jewish in New York City, raised classic Jewish, was converted while he was in high school. And he writes about the time when he was in high school and he had an opportunity to engage the local synagogue leader who was a well-learned Jew. And I want you to be encouraged by the time I get done here, that all you've got to do is proclaim what you know. What else can you proclaim?

He wrote this. They had a question and answer time at a session where they had about 100 people attend. It was a session of the local Hebrew club. And this guy - the leader of the synagogue came and spoke. And Rydelnik writes this. He says, "When the question and answer time arrived, I stood up and identified myself as a Jewish follower of Yeshua. I said that although the church's history of anti-semitism was indeed horrific, the issue really was whether or not Yeshua had fulfilled the Messianic predictions of the Hebrew Bible. And that was when it all came apart. David challenged me to come up with one - just one Messianic prediction that Yeshua had indeed fulfilled. I took out my Bible and began. I started with Genesis 3:15, but David adeptly pointed out that the passage was merely a just so story about how snakes and humans came to attack each other, and had nothing to do with the Messiah. It went downhill from there. I brought up passage after passage, prediction after prediction, and David would spin each passage to show that it without doubt could not be about the Messiah. He took literal words figuratively, and he took figurative words literally. (incomplete thought) He was fast and he was funny. I had never before encountered a speaker as capable as David. And worse, even though I knew I was right, I could not speak as smoothly or skillfully as David. I started to sweat, I became tongue-tied, my hands turned to ice, but I did not quit. Every time he shot me down, I came up with another passage only to have him shoot me down again. It was awful. Finally, mercifully, the meeting ended, but only then did my real misery begin. As I reflected on my interaction with David, I became angry and disappointed. Not at him, but at myself. Here I had been given such an opportunity to represent my Messiah, Yeshua, in a very public way, but because of my lack of preparation, overconfidence, and poor communication skills, I had failed Him. I had let Him down. My sorrow was indescribable."

Ever been there? Feelings of inadequacy after you've tried to communicate truth. We fast forward 32 years. Michael Rydelnik is now a professor. And he says, 'I had just published a book on the Arab-Israeli conflicts, so a congregation in Southern California had asked if I would

do an all-day seminar on that topic. As I set up my computer with the data projector that morning, a Messianic Jewish man about 60 years old with a thick Brooklyn accent just kept talking and talking to me. He seemed familiar and I assumed I had met him the previous year when I had spoken at this congregation. So he kept talking, and frankly, it was a little annoying because I was having a hard time getting the technology to obey me.

Finally, when everything was working and I was less distracted, I had a few minutes before teaching, so we began to chat together in earnest. I asked him how he got that Brooklyn accent, and we both laughed when he said he came by it honestly by living there. He said he had left Brooklyn for Southern California 10 years earlier. Fairly soon, I learned that he had been a high school teacher in Brooklyn. In fact, he had taught at my high school. After learning that fact, it dawned on me he seemed familiar not because I had met him the previous year, but because he had been my very own high school music teacher. My eyes widened in surprise and I burst out: 'You're Vince Salzman! You were my guitar teacher in high school.' We were both so surprised and happy, thumping and hugging each other, even as the rest of the seminar students began to roll into the classroom. I just could not believe it. My Jewish music teacher from high school had become a follower of Yeshua. Class started a minute after I made this discovery, but I could not wait for the break to hear how Vince had come to faith. An hour later, I listened to Vince's story. It seems that more than 30 years before, one of Vince's Jewish colleagues - my former history teacher at the high school, had become a follower of Yeshua and had spoken to Vince about his faith. Vince had been intrigued and began to consider whether Yeshua was indeed the Messiah. Then, Vince related he heard that someone was coming to speak at the Hebrew club about Jews and Jesus. Thinking this might be interesting, Vince decided to attend. At this point, Vince looked at me and said 'you have probably heard of the guy who spoke. Now he's on the radio all over the country. And he told me David's name.' 'Yes,' I said. 'I remember when he spoke at the high school.'

Vince tells the rest of his story this way. 'Well, I really don't remember what the speaker said, but I do remember that there was some kid there with a Bible. And he stood up and said he was Jewish. And he believed in Jesus and began to quote Messianic prophecies. The funny thing is that this guy, this speaker, had an answer for every passage the kid cited. No matter what verse the kid showed, this smart guy knocked it down showing why it absolutely couldn't be speaking of the Messiah. He had an answer for everything. But this kid wouldn't stop. Every time a verse got shot down, he'd bring up some other verse.'

Finally, when the whole thing was over, I got to thinking that those verses sounded pretty Messianic to me. So, I decided to get a Bible and read them for myself. And as I read the Old Testament, I began to see that it really was all about Yeshua. So it took a couple of years of reading the Bible and studying the prophecies, but then I became a believer in Yeshua.' Having told me his story, Vince asked simply, 'Hey, do you know who that kid was?' To which I replied, 'Yes, I do. It was me.' And I was awed by God's grace. 32 years after my horrible failure, I learned that God used it to help someone along the way to faith in Yeshua. Clearly, it was not my unrealistic self-confidence, my persuasive arguments, or my skillful handling of the Scriptures that helped Vince. Rather, it was the power of God's Word alone just as the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah so long ago. 'My Word that comes from My mouth will not return to

Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do.' Isaiah 55:11.

So what does this long convoluted story have to do with a book about Messianic hope? First, this story underscores the power of God's Word in communicating truth. It is not the vessel proclaiming the Word, but the Scriptures themselves that have power. Moreover, Messianic prophecy has the power to convince people that God's Word is true and that Jesus is indeed the Messiah." End of quote. Don't be discouraged. I can vouch for this because this happened with me with a Jewish prisoner in Michigan. The guy was as orthodox as they come. The rabbi's would let him do their meeting because he knew Hebrew better than the rabbis. He attended an evangelistic weekend, and at the end of the evangelistic weekend he was still a Jew. But four months later, after having been told by us, study your Scriptures and see if our claims are true. Four months later, he came to faith in Christ. That was almost fifteen years ago. He's still Christian till this day. Never underestimate the power of the Word of God in spite of our weaknesses. Our adequacy is not in our speaking skills. It's not in our debating skills. It is in the Word of the living God and it is there alone. Jesus Christ is God. And every knee will bow to Him. Every knee. Some are going to bow on the way to glory and some on the way to hell. Every man has a decision to make. Every woman has a decision to make. The power of this Word - the Word that can save you, will also condemn you if you continue in rebellion. Let's pray.