

Two by Two: Developing a Lifestyle of Personal Outreach

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I'm going to come right to the point. This message is an appeal to each member of Ohev to adjust his or her life and priorities, wherever necessary, in order to adopt a lifestyle of personal *kiruv* or "outreach." I wouldn't be urging this if it were just my idea or the idea of the elders. Performing outreach is a biblical mandate we have all known about since we began reading Scripture and became believers. Some of us have embraced it more than others, but all of us can improve in it.

An early example (in Scripture) of an individual known for his lifestyle of personal outreach is Abraham. His principle form of outreach was hospitality, and we read in Genesis 18:1-8:

"Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, 'My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.' They said, 'Do as you have said.'" So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate."

In his paper "Abraham, Hospitality Man," referring to early Jewish sources, Dr. David Rudolph writes:¹

"While Abraham was praised for many and various things, it was striking to see how united these texts were in emphasizing one particular characteristic of Abraham above the rest. Abraham was hospitality man."

There is another form of outreach taught in Scripture, one that was modeled by Yeshua Himself; it is providing for the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. Here are two Scriptures that illustrate it:

Matthew 25:37-40: *"Then the righteous will answer Him [i.e. Yeshua], saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in*

¹ D. Rudolph, Abraham, Hospitality Man, Keshet, #21, UMJC.

prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'"

Acts 20:35: *"I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Yeshua, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

Probably the best known kind of outreach is evangelism. Evangelism is carrying the truth about Yeshua to those who do not know him. It is no doubt so well known because it is specifically commanded by Yeshua to His disciples, whereas other forms of outreach in Scripture are taught by example and inference. One of Yeshua's commandments is found in Matthew 10:5-8 which reads:

"These twelve Yeshua sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

This was Yeshua's directive to bring word of His Messiahship to the Jewish People, and we read, in Mark 16:14-20, how later He also directed His disciples to preach His Messiahship to the entire world:

"Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is immersed will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

Yeshua did not send His disciples out to witness without provision. Before He left the earth to return to His Father in Heaven, He promised that power would come to His disciples through the Holy Spirit. We read this in Acts 1:8:

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

We who are Yeshua's 21st century disciples have that Holy Spirit power available to us as well and, in fact, we have a head start on Yeshua's contemporary disciples because we are already in the world, and therefore do not have to venture out into it as they did. What I mean by that is that we are not living, as they were, in an almost homogeneous Jewish community. When we go

to school, to work, or to the market, we touch all kinds of people – Jews and non-Jews alike. And yes, we have access to the same Holy Spirit power as they; it is for us to but grab hold of it, and use it.

Some of us do personal outreach more than others, so let us receive this message as it may be apply to each of us individually. For those of us who do not consciously and consistently look for ways to serve unbelievers through hospitality, physical provisions, or through engaging them about God and Yeshua, let's look at what things may be standing in our way. Offhand, there are six that I can think of; some may apply and others not, but let's consider each of them:

The first and perhaps the most universal one, is that our minds are set on other things. We do not wake each morning aware that we are disciples on a mission.

The second is that we don't want to be on a mission because we are self-absorbed and don't want to be diverted from things we deem more immediately important or more enjoyable.

The third is that we do not adequately think of ourselves as Yeshua's disciples. We have a *de minimis* opinion of our identity as disciples, and of our knowledge and capability to contribute to others through the impartation of biblical knowledge.

The fourth is that we have been taught that outreach is what congregations do – not what we do privately.

The fifth is that we have too narrow and stereotypical a concept of what outreach is. We think of outreach as only evangelism that involves such things as pamphleteering at Metro stations, door-to-door visiting, and carrying signs with slogans such as: "Jesus loves you!" We mistakenly do not associate it with serving our neighbors in more general ways.

The sixth is fear; we fear engaging unbelievers. If the unbelievers are family, friends, or co-workers, we fear that urging them toward things of God will garner rejection or reprisal, and interfere with our relationship. If the unbelievers are strangers, we fear their rejection, and making ourselves vulnerable to verbal or physical abuse, or perhaps theft of our possessions if we open our homes to them in hospitality.

There are no doubt things we could add, but let's go back to the list we already have, and talk briefly about each item in turn.

First on the list is awareness. Not only must we be aware, we must be convicted that God wants our lifestyle to be one of personal outreach. If we are not convicted, we will not do it. Do we truly believe that the Bible's examples of outreach and Yeshua's directives to His disciples to preach His *Besorah* are meant for us as well? Each of us has to receive his or her own conviction about it directly from God, so if any of us are not yet convicted, I ask that we pray. When we receive conviction that God indeed wants our lifestyle to be one of personal outreach, it will be natural to arise each morning with a conscious expectation that divine encounters await us.

The second item on the list is not easy to overcome because it is related to the degree to which we are disciplined. Being self-absorbed and therefore not wanting to be diverted from things of our pleasure or concern in order to serve others is a sign that there is sinful flesh within us not yet crucified. Once we realize we have it, the fix for it is repentance and obedience. Sorry, I wish it were easier.

The third item on the list is easier because it results from a mistake that we can easily correct. If we doubt our capability to be disciples, all we need do to dispel our inaccurate perception is to read about the original twelve and compare ourselves to them. One was a traitor (we're already way ahead of him), and the rest were no paragons of knowledge and brilliance either. They were mostly uneducated *am ha-aretz* (men of the earth), yet Yeshua sent them out to teach and preach, so how could they have accomplished it? The answer is, through the power of the Holy Spirit that is available to each of us as it was to them. Besides, it takes little or no biblical knowledge to serve a person in his need, or testify as to how we came to know the Lord and what God means to us.

The fourth item on the list is also the result of a mistake that is easily corrected. Yes, most of us have been taught that "outreach" is some kind of organized congregational activity, but none of the biblical examples show that. On the contrary, the biblical example is disciples being sent out by Yeshua in pairs as we read in Mark 6:7 and Luke 10:1 respectively:

"And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits."

And the Luke passage:

"After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go."

This is not accidental, for their there is power and authority where there are more than one:

Deuteronomy 19:15: *"One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established."*

Matthew 18:20: *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."*

As for the fifth item on the list, I hope that any misunderstanding there may be about it will be corrected by this message. Evangelism is certainly outreach, but outreach is broader than just evangelism. It is any activity that blesses persons outside of our usual sphere of contact by serving their needs. As it pertains to this message, of course, it means serving "unbelievers in Yeshua."

We perceive intuitively how both our witness and relationships formed from serving can lead to unbelievers coming to know Yeshua. There is also a Scripture we can rely on that links the two; it is 1 Corinthians 9:19, in which Paul says:

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;”

It is an important Scripture to keep in mind and utilize.

The sixth item on the list is fear. The antidote for fear is a combination of love and faith because, according to 1 John 4:18:

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”

Not only that. If we trust God with our lives, our possessions, and the lives of those whom we love, fear ceases to have any hold on us whatsoever.

Psalms 56:11: *“In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

Perhaps this item of fear is the most difficult one on the list because when we first became believers, we confessed Yeshua as Lord, and that was the same as testifying that we trusted God. Now that we are believers, we have been acculturated to say that we trust God, and we don't think much about it until God tests us by giving us a real life choice that involves risk. The test comes in a variety of packages, but the choice is always (a) trust God, versus (b) play it safe.

That is the kind of choice we face each time we encounter someone who needs to be witnessed to about God or Yeshua, and we know that he or she does not want to hear it. We perceive it as worse, if that person can, in some way, make life difficult for us if we displease him. Still, we must do what is right, and what we are called to, despite possible consequences. That is, of course, the nature of faith.

Before I close, I want to return to something I touched on earlier, and that is the principle of conducting outreach two-by-two. I showed you two verses of Scripture where Yeshua sent His disciples out in pairs, and two other Scriptures that demonstrate that there is power and authority when persons work together to achieve godly ends.

There are other pairs of men mentioned in the Bible, men like:

- Moses and Aaron
- David and Nathan
- Jeremiah and Baruch
- Paul and Barnabas
- Paul and Timothy
- Timothy and Erastus

I began this message by telling you that I am appealing to each member of Ohev, young and old alike, to adopt a lifestyle of personal *k'ruv* or “outreach.” Let me now be more specific in my exhortation, and challenge each of us to find a partner – men with men, and women with women – with whom we can work, share, pray, and hold each other accountable for consistency in personal outreach. I have seen outreach efforts begin and fizzle several times before, in other congregations, but I have never seen the biblical two-by-two formula tried by a Messianic Jewish congregation. Outreach takes time, energy, and commitment, and that is why the outreach “track record” of most congregations is grim. I believe – and I ask you to confirm and test it – that the two-by-two approach to personal outreach will be the biblical key to its succeeding at Ohev.

I ask everyone who wants to take me up on my challenge to find an outreach partner and let Jean Brown, our Outreach Administrator, know who you are; I want to keep track of your progress and help you where I can. Remember, doing outreach, on some level, is a biblical mandate for all of us. Let us approach it with joy and expectation. I know that God will be pleased.