



Educator's Guide

Jews for Jesus

Jews for Jesus and other Jewish messianic movements claim people can believe in core Christian tenets and still be Jewish. Their followers use this assertion to lure Jews to Christianity. However, the Christian theological concepts promoted by such movements, like belief in Jesus as God, the son of God, and the Messiah, Man as created in Sin, the Christian conception of Hell, and the New Testament as divinely inspired, categorically run counter to Jewish beliefs.

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Link to video: <https://unpacked.education/video/jews-for-jesus/>

Big Ideas

1. Many of the basic tenets of belief of Judaism and Christianity are not compatible with each other.
2. Messianic movements promise relief from difficult conditions.
3. Evangelical attempts to convert Jews to Christianity undermine the progress of Judeo-Christian relations.

Essential Questions

1. Can one be Jewish and believe in Jesus?
2. What conditions tend to underlie messianic movements?
3. Can religious groups accept each other's differences without undermining their own belief systems?

Review Questions

1. Honi the Circle-Maker, Judas of Galilee and Theudas were all:
 - Romans
 - **Would-be messiahs**
 - Scholars
 - Soldiers



2. Which ruling nation persecuted the Jews during the time of Jesus:
 - Greeks
 - Babylonians
 - **Romans**
 - Turks
3. True or false: Jesus' followers started a new sect of Judaism which eventually branched off into the Christian religion.
 - **True**
 - False
4. Until the 20th century, the relationship between Jews and Christians had been largely characterized by:
 - Common religious practice
 - Mutual respect
 - **Distrust and antisemitism**
 - Loyalty and communication
5. Messianic Judaism was born in the:
 - Middle ages
 - 1800s
 - **1970s**
 - 2010s
6. Jews for Jesus missionaries attract Jews to their ideology by using:
 - Jewish religious symbols
 - Hebrew phrases and prayers
 - Jewish customs and rituals
 - **All of the above**
7. Which of the following is **not** a tenet of Christianity:
 - **The Old Testament is the only relevant part of the Bible**
 - Jesus is the Messiah
 - Jesus is both God and the son of God
 - Only Jesus can save you from going to hell
8. Messianic Judaism in general aims to convince Jews that they can be Jewish and:
 - Accept the New Testament



- Believe in Jesus
- Practice Christianity
- **All of the above**

Discussion Questions

- 1. Strings attached?** Evangelical Christians have been consistent supporters of Israel, donating substantial sums to Israeli causes over the years. Though some such groups take an altruistic approach towards supporting Israel, others believe that supporting Israel is a step towards the final redemption, which will include the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity. You can read more about these ideologies in [this Times of Israel article](#), which describes the aid given to Israel by evangelical groups during the conflict following the October 7, 2023 massacre in Israel.
 - Do you think Jewish groups should be wary of accepting financial contributions from evangelical groups?
 - What factors should Jewish groups consider in determining whether or not to accept these funds?
 - What ramifications might accepting or rejecting financial donations from evangelical groups have on the relationship between Jews and Christians in general?
- 2. Easy targets:** What types of people do you think Jews for Jesus missionaries are hoping to target? What do you think would compel a Jewish person to consider Jews for Jesus and to take their pitch seriously? In general, what leads people towards messianic movements? Read [this Q&A](#) regarding someone who is concerned about his friend's interest in Jews for Jesus. Is there anything you would add to the author's response?
- 3. Religious tolerance:** Historically, Jews and Christians have had a difficult relationship. While there were periods of calm coexistence, there were also lengthy bouts of intolerance resulting in violence, forced conversions, and even national [expulsions](#). Today, Jewish-Christian relationships seem to be in a good place (read more about this [here](#)).
 - What factors do you think have contributed to this status quo?
 - In what ways do evangelical groups like Jews for Jesus contribute to the state of tolerant coexistence between Jews and Christians?
 - In what ways do they undermine it?



- 4. Education or Indoctrination?** When missionaries approach potential targets, they often employ techniques of indoctrination. What is the difference between education and indoctrination? Is there any overlap between the two? Who do you think will have a stronger foundation of belief: someone who is indoctrinated or someone who is educated? Why do you think missionaries tend to use indoctrination?

Learning Activities

1. Lesson plan

Use our ready made lesson plan on Jews for Jesus [HERE](#).

- 2. Case study:** In April 2021, the Jerusalem-based Elk family were exposed as Christian missionaries. More information about their story and the steps that it took to uncover their double identity can be found in this [video](#) and this [article](#). The couple had built a life for themselves in their religious Jewish community, and had many friends who were shocked to find out their true identities. Imagine that you are a friend of this couple, and you are struggling with this development. You have been advised to write them a letter to help yourself process this situation. In your letter, consider the following:

- What was the nature of your imagined relationship with this couple?
- Were you surprised at their exposure?
- Were there things that, in hindsight, made sense about their dual identity?
- How did their actions affect you directly and indirectly?
- What would you like them to know about the effects of their actions on you and on your community?

- 3. Drama:** University campuses are often sites of missionary activity. Read more about how campus missionaries operate and the strategies they use [here](#). Working with a partner or in a small group, stage a short skit that depicts an encounter between a Jewish student and a Christian missionary. Your skit should include an introduction as well as two or three questions and responses between the two characters. While preparing your skit, consider the following:

- Where is this encounter likely to take place?
- How would the missionary engage the student?
- How might the student respond?



4. **Allocating money:** There are many issues that affect the safety and security of the Jewish people, and there are many organizations that work hard to combat antisemitism, support Israel, and address assimilation, among others. You have been tasked with writing a pitch to raise funds for an organization that combats missionary activity targeted at converting Jews to Christianity. In your pitch, consider the following:
 - What are the dangers of missionary activity?
 - Where does missionary activity often occur? Who are the targets?
 - Why is it important to support young Jews faced with missionary activities?
 - If you were to raise the funds you are asking for, what would they be used for?
5. **Tenets of belief:** The video addresses five of the tenets of Christian theology that are in conflict with Jewish beliefs. Pick three of the tenets listed below and design a visual presentation that demonstrates how these beliefs are not only different from Jewish theology, but are incompatible with it. This [article](#) may be useful in your preparation.
 - Jesus is the Messiah
 - Man was created in sin and Jesus died to atone for those sins
 - The only way to avoid hell is to accept Jesus as your savior
 - Jesus is both God and the son of God
 - Like the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament is divinely inspired
6. **Kahoot:** Play our [Kahoot](#) about Jew for Jesus!

Reflection Questions

1. **Self-awareness:** Missionaries often prey upon their target's insecurities and lack of knowledge. How can we help ourselves become more resistant to this manipulation technique? Would you feel prepared to encounter a missionary? Are there any aspects of your Jewish identity or knowledge that you would like to strengthen? How might you go about doing so?
2. **Relationships:** Missionary activity is predicated on the belief that converting people to your religion is saving them from the "wrong" life. Think about your relationships with people whose beliefs are different from your own. In what



ways can the existence of other belief systems enrich our worldview? In what ways can it complicate it?

- 3. Fresh Perspectives:** What are three things that you learned about Jews for Jesus and other missionary groups that you didn't know before? Is there anything that you found surprising? What would you like to learn more about?

Further Learning

- 1.** My Jewish Learning resources:
 - [What Do Jews Believe About Jesus?](#) (article)
 - [Ask the Expert: Jews for Jesus](#) (article)
 - [Jewish-Christian relations](#) (article)
- 2.** [Jews for Judaism](#) website offers articles and videos on topics relating to missionaries who target Jews (website)
 - This [article](#) discusses responding to missionaries
 - This [article](#) outlines major theological differences between Judaism and Christianity
- 3.** Jewish Virtual Library
 - [Overview of Christian-Jewish relations and evangelizing](#) (articles)
- 4.** Groups that respond to missionary activity:
 - [Beyneynu](#) (website)
 - [Jews for Judaism](#) (website)
 - [Outreach Judaism](#) (website)