“Student-Motivated Activity for Change”

A CONTEMPORARY STUDENT PROGRAM GUIDE FOR INTERFAITH LIVING

WHAT IS THIS?

This is a ready-to-use, no-other-materials-needed resource for Jewish-Christian programming on campus.

Why and how should a relationship that has existed since the first century be relevant for any college student? How would one become so connected and enthused about this dynamic bond as to decide to act differently? This resource is an answer to these questions, offering guides and the necessary materials for the encounter.

Each topic packet includes suggestions for group dynamics; a ready-to-run program activity; discussion questions that correlate with that activity; ready-to-read presentations; a bridge-the-gap activity; pledge-for-change suggestions and resources for further exploration of each subject.

WHY STUDENT-MOTIVATED ACTIVITY?

The uniqueness and originality in this sourcebook lie in the emphasis on student-motivated activity. When students are interested, they will pursue an activity for its own sake and learn more readily. More than an abstract understanding of religious concepts or simple religious awareness, this resource offers a guide to an engaged encounter. The intention is to present programs with participatory activities for clubs, organizations, groups, friends and classmates to have step-by-step programs they can undertake that will inspire in the student a choice for change of action.

Topics focus on the choices students make consciously and unconsciously and aim for a better plan for action.

WHY THE WEB?

- The most up-to-date, most widely viewed and most relevant information can be found on the Internet.

- Young adults are more likely to further explore information that can be easily found by “clicking.”
WHO AM I?

If asked this question as a high school student, I would have sung my answer, “who am I? A BBG (a B’nai B’rith Girl), I am one, though only one, there’s so much I can do.” I am no longer a high school student and therefore no longer a B’nai B’rith Girl; I no longer believe “there is so much I can do” alone. I am committed to the betterment of the Jewish-Christian relationship, but as only one Jew, there is just so much that I can do.

The majority of Muhlenberg College students, totaling 86% in 2007, coexist in a communal relationship that began in the first century, and yet most are unaware or apathetic regarding their role in this significant continuing link. How to engage Muhlenberg students and students nationwide in “actions for actions” programming to improve Jewish-Christian understanding is a pressing question. A promising and innovative answer is the creation and implementation of this user-friendly program manual for students, by a student.

Inspired as valedictorian of my Hebrew school class in childhood, I continued to follow my passion for Judaism through high school as a member of the B’nai B’rith Youth Organization (BBYO) and eventually as president of the Greater Jersey Hudson River Region BBYO. Throughout that time, I attended and conducted more than 21 weekend programs and six partial-summer volunteer and educational seminars. I have cultivated this fervor at Muhlenberg College as: the Holocaust Remembrance Day Committee chairperson; Star-Crossed Students vice-president and president; recruiter and participant of a Birthright trip to Israel; participant in curriculum planning for Muhlenberg’s Jewish Studies Program; student representative of the selection committee for Muhlenberg Religion Studies professors; adult advisor for B’nai B’rith Conventions; and youth mentor for middle school students in the Youth and Prejudice: Reducing Hatred Conference of Muhlenberg’s Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding. Additionally, I participated in a four-month academic study of the history, culture and literature of Central and Eastern European Jewry in Prague and a two-week intensive study program in Poland. In Warsaw, I met with an Israeli Embassy member to help plan a new Jewish museum. Moreover, I was academically prepared for the challenge of researching how to educate and motivate students who have minimal experience with the Jewish-Christian encounter.

I am proud of those accomplishments and they have helped to mold my approach to these issues. Yet, first and foremost I am a student — a student who wants to have fun and be with her friends. I am a student who wants to participate, be active and involved. I am a student who knows that relationships take time to develop and that the classroom isn’t always where the most growth occurs. I truly believe that when you participate in an activity and you are the focus of the action, the lesson makes an impact on you. It is my goal that you will learn by acting and choose to continue that action into the community.

From a student, to a student,
I know there is so much we can do.

In good faith,
Melissa Berman
Muhlenberg College ’09
WHO AM I?
I have been teaching at Muhlenberg College since 1999, when I came to lead the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding after nine years as a parish pastor in southern California (Hope Lutheran ELCA, Riverside). My academic training focused on the interpretation of the Bible in early Judaism, while the work of the IJCU has broadened my focus to the whole range of issues involved in the Jewish-Christian relationship. I have studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and have taught at both American Jewish University and Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, as well as many other colleges and seminaries in southern California and eastern Pennsylvania. My work in Christian-Jewish understanding has been shaped by helping to lead the Intersem program of NCCJ in southern California and the international theology conference of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, and by extensive contact with Jews and Christians in their congregations.

The work that Melissa and I have done here is very much an outgrowth of the Star-Crossed Students at Muhlenberg College, whose logo graces the cover of each session folder. Melissa’s experience in leadership and background in religion studies came together ideally to make her the principal writer of this resource. Her insights express a key focus of the Institute’s work – that understanding among Jews and Christians is as much a matter of interpersonal encounter as it is of intellectual learning.

WHAT IS THE IJCU?
Founded in 1989, the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding of Muhlenberg College bridges the worlds of academia and the public square, clergy and laity, synagogue and church, religion and a pluralistic society. Living-room dialogue has been a staple of the Institute’s work from the beginning, for which this resource provides a focused, contemporary development for college-age participants. Other resources produced by the IJCU include a study guide to films portraying the Passion of Jesus, a drama-based 5-session curriculum on prejudice reduction that includes an original one-act Holocaust-era play, and a 9-hour catechetical unit on the Jewish heritage of Christianity.

The Institute’s work enjoys the partnership and support of many academic and community colleagues. We extend our particular thanks to Rabbi Allen Juda, Congregation Brith Sholom, Bethlehem, PA, and to Dr. William Gruen, Religion Studies, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA, for their assistance in development of this resource. All errors and infelicities remain the authors’ responsibility, of course, while credit for the absence of those no longer present goes to Rabbi Juda and Dr. Gruen.
We see religious symbols every day on jewelry, in store windows, on religious buildings, in dorm rooms, in classrooms and on each other. Often, the symbols go unnoticed, unrecognized or unacknowledged. As these images are truly symbols, they hold another meaning in addition to decoration. Learning what these symbols represent to the person displaying them can give you insight into the beliefs, fears and hopes of an entire community. Understanding your own symbols and the symbols used by “the other” can help you predict how a group may respond to a given situation, what they value, what literature they read, etc. Therefore, the symbol you choose to represent yourself is saying a lot more than you might have thought. This exercise will help you to be acquainted with the symbols used in your religion and the religion of “the other.” The similarities and differences in your symbolisms should help to build a mutual understanding and respect.

GROUP DYNAMICS

Everyone is welcome!

It does not matter whether or not a student has previously participated in Jewish-Christian programming BUT all must desire to learn about their own religion and the religion of others.

They must be willing to listen and to cooperate.

Although no previous programming experience is necessary for the participants, it is helpful if they have some knowledge of the Jewish-Christian encounter over the past 2,000 years. If not, perhaps a short teaching session (in addition to this resource) is necessary prior to the program.

No missionizing is acceptable!

For the Leaders

You set the tone for the program! Therefore, you too must listen to others.

At the start of the program, present your participants with an outline of what to expect. This can be verbal or written.

Make sure you move through the entire outline efficiently.

Be concerned with the progress in the conversation as much as the progress for each individual.

Be willing to share your own experiences and be able to express yourself clearly.

Ice-Breakers

You should do some form of an activity so the participants begin to feel comfortable with one another. This activity could be topic-related, but it need not be.

Non-Topic-Related Ice – Breaker Example:

Inflate many balloons and place a slip of paper in each one. On each slip is one general-interest question. The members are then asked to pop as many balloons as possible and answer the questions on the slips.

Topic-Related Ice-Breaker Example:

Show many logos/images (ex. above) and ask the participants what they see.
GROUP ACTIVITY

The uniqueness and originality in this guidebook lie in the emphasis on student-motivated activity. When students are interested, they will pursue an activity for its own sake and learn more readily. Therefore, the following activity will engage students and capture their attention and enthusiasm. The activity will help them to draw their own conclusions rather than be told why symbolism is significant.

**Take It Off**

Direct all participants to sit in a circle. Tell them that they must remove all religious symbols one at a time from their bodies and place them in the center in two sections: Jewish symbols and Christian symbols. This includes but is not limited to: crosses, crucifixes, Jewish stars, *ICHTHUSes*, doves, angels, *chais*, *hamsas*, menorahs, *tallitot*, mezuzahs, yarmulkes, clerical collars, etc. This may also include any item given to them as a gift for a First Communion, Bar/Bat mitzvah, or Confirmation, as tradition is a valued aspect of religion. As participants remove the symbols have them say what they are (cross, star, etc.) but not yet what they mean to them. If a participant has a religious tattoo, it can simply be covered.

**Symbol Swap**

Redistribute all symbols. Assure that a Christian’s symbol is given to a Jew and a Jewish person’s symbol is given to a Christian. As students receive their new symbols ask them to put them on. Ask the students not to speak or respond as they receive their new symbols because this may insult participants and will also ruin the question portion of the activity.

You may want to provide extra symbols for the group if there is an unequal number of Jews and Christians.

**Why This Is Done**

Students are asked to remove all symbols so that they feel stripped of something meaningful. Students will begin to think silently about their loss and why this symbol may be important to them.

Students are asked to swap symbols so they begin to think about what “the other” may feel when wearing their symbol. The wearing of someone else’s symbol will help them to think silently about what displaying a symbol says to onlookers.
To begin discussion, ask these questions of the students. The discussion will draw insight from the interactive activity. Pose the questions to the entire group and have individuals answer. Remember that this should be different from a classroom environment, and a pattern should be formed where students speak when they feel motivated. Use these questions to frame a discussion that engages as many participants as possible.

1-Can you say one word that describes how you felt removing/covering your symbol? Explain your choice.
Some words may be: naked, lonely, scared, persecuted, indifferent, etc.

2-Does your symbol offer comfort or protection? If yes, how? If no, why not?
Both “yes” and “no” are important answers because they will help the student shape why they wear their symbol. If yes, they will hear some reasons for this in the next section. If no, perhaps they will recognize another reason during this program.

3-Can you say one word that describes how you felt wearing “the other” symbol? Explain your choice.
“Uncomfortable,” “sinning,” “fine,” etc., are expected answers. They will receive validation of these feelings in the next section.

4-What kind of statement (if any) are you making to “the other” by wearing your symbol?
“No one,” “religious pride,” etc., are likely answers.

5-What statement do you think “the other” is saying by wearing their symbol?
“They are proud,” “they feel safe,” “lucky,” “connection with others,” etc., are predictable answers. They may not know why “the other” wears their symbol but they will learn in the next section.

6-What do you think “the other” is feeling by wearing their symbol?
“They are proud,” “they feel safe,” “lucky,” “connection with others,” etc., are predictable answers. They may not know why “the other” wears their symbol but they will learn in the next section.

7-How would you feel wearing a symbol that is a cross and a star?
“I would not feel comfortable,” “I have no problem with it,” “It matters whether the cross or star is bigger,” etc., are all possible answers.
CONVERSATION POINTS

After the activity and activity discussion, explain to the group that it’s time for some informed conversation. Two leaders (one Jewish and one Christian) should run this section. It is suggested that the leaders are familiar with the following selections prior to reading them aloud. This will involve some role-playing, so it is important that the leaders feel comfortable with the role they will play and be expected to verbalize.

**Christian: The Cross I Wear**

The cross I wear is actually the Latin cross. The image of Christ is not shown on my cross, but if it were, it would be called a crucifix. For the Latin cross and the crucifix, the shape represents the cross used in Jesus’ crucifixion. Like most Protestant Christians, I do not wear a crucifix for a few reasons. The first is that Protestants may choose to emphasize Jesus’ resurrection, therefore having an “empty cross.” Protestants also value Jesus as our savior and focus on the new life that he gives us. Those who wear a crucifix (probably Catholic) stress Jesus’ suffering for the sins of all humanity. Protestants and Catholics both think Jesus has saving significance; we just stress different aspects of that significance. Some Christians may also understand the cross to be symbolic of their relationships. In this approach, the horizontal cross-bar is one’s relationship with others and the vertical pole is one’s relationship with God.

You may wonder if there is any reference to crosses in literature. The gospels, which were originally written in Greek, use the word "*stauros*" to refer to the apparatus used in Jesus’ death (see Mark 15:21, Mark 15:32, Matthew 27:32, Luke 23:26, John 19:17).

The US national emergency response organization, the Red Cross, uses a cross with equal length cross bars as its symbol. Although this is to mirror the cross on the ‘neutral country’ Switzerland’s flag, the cross used on Switzerland’s flag relates to the country’s founding Christian confederation.

**Jew: The Star I Wear**

The star I wear is actually the Magen David (shield of David). The name suggests that it has the shape of King David's shield (or the emblem on it). King David was King of Israel between 1010 and 970 B.C.E. He is known and honored as a warrior and writer of psalms. Scholars such as Franz Rosenzweig have attributed other significance to the symbol. The top triangle points upward, toward God, while the lower triangle points downward, toward the earthly world. The intertwining makes the triangles inseparable, like the Jewish people. Such a theory may not help to understand the origin of the symbol, but it may help in understanding why some find this symbol significant.

For some, the star is representative of the Zionist movement which adopted it as its emblem in 1897. The *Magen David Adom* (Red Shield of David) is the name of the Israeli national emergency response organization, which serves its country under this symbol.

Other Jews may wear a *Magen David* to show their pride in being free. In the Middle Ages, some Jews were forced to wear badges to identify themselves as Jews, similar to what was done in Nazi Germany. In Nazi Germany, these badges identifying Jews facilitated organized persecution during the Holocaust.
SYMBOLS

CONVERSATION POINTS CONTINUED

Jew: The Cross You Wear

Jewish law says that I can wear a cross if I want to! The law is: "As far as it is made an object of worship by Christians, it is to be treated as an idol and prohibited for use; if, however, it is worn as an ornament without any religious object, its use is permitted to the Jews" (Isserles, Shulhan ‘Aruk, Yore De'ah, 141, 1: R. Mordecai to ‘Ab. Zarah iii. in the name of R. Eleazar b. Jacob of Worms).

Although this is permitted, some Jews may fear the cross because the Roman Emperor Constantine conquered “under the sign of the cross.” His adoption of Christianity as the imperial religion reinforced that Jews were second-class citizens and Jews continued to suffer persecution until modern times. The cross also marked particular episodes of persecution such as the Crusades and the Inquisition. The cross can be understood as a symbol of all that suffering.

Some Jews feel uncomfortable at the sight of a cross for the association it has with the death of Jesus and the long-held accusation that the Jews killed the Christian savior. This discredited view is sometimes dredged up in the media, as in the 2004 movie, The Passion of The Christ.

Christian: The Star You Wear

The six-pointed star is the Creator's Star or Star of Creation. Its six points stand for the six days of creation and also represent the six attributes of God: power, wisdom, majesty, love, mercy and justice.

Some Christians may feel uncomfortable at the sight of a Jewish star because of the stars the Jews were forced to wear in the Middle Ages or in Nazi Germany.

This section can be monotonous if YOU do not make it exciting! The success of the program depends on YOU!

Bridge the Gap

After each leader has presented, and each point is discussed, have the group sit in a circle and pose the following question:

The cross, the crucifix and the Jewish star help some believers to feel safer when wearing them. Whether it is knowing you will achieve salvation, your sins have been suffered for, or remembering the strength of your ancestors, the wearer may feel more secure when possessing or displaying their symbol.

Are there non-religious symbols that would help you feel safe? Could you design one?

An example may be a picture of your grandmother.
PLEDGE FOR CHANGE

After completing the group activity, the students may want to change their activity in their lives.

Let the students know that a pledge for change can help the person they are become the person they want to be. They can use small steps to promote better Jewish-Christian relations where they are.

Each student should write down his/her own pledge and agree to keep true to it.

PLEDGE SUGGESTIONS

❖ Every time I wear my religious symbol, I will remember what it means to me and tell someone about it if they compliment it.

❖ If I see someone wearing their religious symbol, I will compliment them and ask them where they got it/what it means.

❖ When there is a death or celebration, I will offer the proper symbol of the other religion. Visit http://www.beliefnet.com/story/45/story_4549_1.html for suggestions.

FURTHER EXPLORATION: OTHER SYMBOLS

Christian:  
ICHTHUS

The Greek work for fish is Ichthus (Iota Chi Theta Upsilon Sigma) It can be thought of as an acrostic with many translations. One suggestion is "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior," giving rise to its popularity in “Jesus communities.”

Downward Facing Dove

The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, because of Matthew 3:16, "And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. " This may more often be seen in Christian communities that stress the importance of the Holy Spirit, which are often termed “Pentecostal.”

Jewish:  
Chai

The symbol is built from two Hebrew letters (Chet and Yud) attached to each other. Together, they spell the Hebrew word Chai, meaning “living” or “life” in English. One wearing this symbol may be expressing the importance of life or referring to the idea that God is living.

Hamsa

Believed to offer its wearer happiness, peace and prosperity, the five fingers are said to represent the five books in the Torah and the fifth letter in the Hebrew alphabet (Hay), which helps to spell one of God’s names. Superstitiously, it is often associated with warding off the evil eye. Arab cultures often call it the hand of Fatima, the prophet Mohammed’s daughter.
For More on Jewish and Christian Symbols


For More on Christian Symbols


The dove is the symbol of peace, as well as the Holy Spirit. 27 May 2008 <http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/Dove_symbol_of_HS.html>.

More sources/resources on Jewish symbols continued on next page
For More on Jewish Symbols


For Other Programs:


For Better Presentations and/or Teaching Philosophies:


**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**

When we were younger, many of us were “forced” by adults to attend church or synagogue prayer services every week, on holidays and on special occasions. We went because we were told to, whether or not it would have been our choice. Now that we are the adults, are prayer services something we feel the need or desire to attend? Can prayer be meaningful, relevant and, most importantly, worth giving up part of your weekend? This resource will help you think about these questions and help you to understand why prayer has stood the test of time.

**MEANINGFUL PRAYER**

**GROUP DYNAMICS**

Everyone is welcome!

- It does not matter whether or not a student has previously participated in Jewish-Christian programming but all must desire to learn about their own religion and the religion of others.
- They must be willing to listen and to cooperate.
- Although no previous programming experience is necessary for the participants, it is helpful if they have some knowledge of the Jewish-Christian encounter over the past 2,000 years. If not, perhaps a short teaching session (in addition to this resource) is necessary prior to the program.
- No missionizing is acceptable!

**For the Leaders**

- You set the tone for the program! Therefore, you too must listen to others.
- At the start of the program, present your participants with an outline of what to expect. This can be verbal or written.
- Make sure you move through the entire outline efficiently.
- Be concerned with the progress in the conversation as much as the progress for each individual.
- Be willing to share your own experiences and be able to express yourself clearly.

**Ice-Breakers**

- You should do some form of an activity so the participants begin to feel comfortable with one another. This activity could be topic-related, but it need not be.

**Non-Topic-Related Ice-Breaker Example:**

One participant should share one personal fact (a hobby, etc.). Another participant who has that fact/hobby in common should link arms with the first participant. The newly linked participant should share a personal fact and another participant should join the link and continue this pattern until all students are connected.

**Topic-Related Ice-Breaker Example:**

Have the leader hum the tunes to popular songs and have participants guess the songs. Slowly infuse religious songs that will be familiar from popular culture and from prayer/worship services. Ask what has made these songs/tunes memorable.
GROUP ACTIVITY

The uniqueness and originality in this guidebook lie in the emphasis on student-motivated activity. When students are interested, they will pursue an activity for its own sake and learn more readily. Therefore, the following activity will engage students and capture their attention and enthusiasm. The activity will help them to draw their own conclusions about why prayer holds a significant place in Judaism and Christianity.

This activity is designed to have the students feel slightly uncomfortable and challenge their emotions and thoughts, but not to compromise the students' well-being or ability to participate by forcing them to do anything. Students should feel free to refuse to participate in any activity just by saying so.

Think Outside the Box

Ask the participants to split into small groups of two or three. Preferably, there will be at least one Jew and one Christian in each group. When everyone is situated, ask them to close their eyes and remember a time when they felt completely at peace, free or blissful. This should not be a time when they were in church or synagogue. Have them remember what they saw, smelled, touched, tasted, who was with them, etc. This could be a time when they thought to themselves, “yes, this is what life is all about,” or when they felt an unparalleled sense of awe. Suggest that this could be when listening to music, climbing a mountain, at the beach, exercising, etc. As vividly as they can, have them share their memories with their small group.

Why This is Done

The participants are asked to recall a special memory so that they will be able to learn a lesson by participating in an activity. As these special moments are nearly impossible to recreate, the activity for this topic is remembering something that was done outside of the program. The small groups at the program help the participants to feel more comfortable sharing such a moving, personal moment.

The first situation which the participants remembered was to help them recall elements which create for them a peaceful, awesome, powerful experience — in many ways, a religious experience. The second situation which the participants remembered was to help them recall elements which create a peaceful, awesome, powerful experience — that is, a religious experience in a time when they were practicing religion.

The questions they will be asked that relate to the activity help them draw parallels between the two situations. The aim is that the participants will identify the dynamics that help build a religious experience for them and then bring those dynamics to church or synagogue to create more meaningful prayer for themselves and others. Remember that your lesson for this topic is to help them to make prayer more meaningful for them—not simply teach them what is meaningful for you.

Now, Think Inside the Box

In the same groups of two or three, ask the participants to close their eyes and remember a time when they felt completely at peace, free or blissful. This should be a time when they were in church or synagogue. Have them remember what they saw, smelled, touched, tasted, who was with them, etc. This could be a time when they thought to themselves, “yes, this is what life is all about,” or when they felt an unparalleled sense of awe. Suggest that this could be a time when chanting Haftarah, taking Eucharist, singing in a choir, saying a certain prayer, etc. As vividly as they can, have them share their memories with their small group.
To begin discussion, ask these questions of the students. The discussion will draw insight from the interactive activity. Pose the questions to the entire group and have individuals answer. Remember that this should be different from a school environment, and a pattern should be formed where students speak when they feel motivated. Try to hear from everyone at least once. Use these questions to frame a discussion that engages as many participants as possible.

1-Did your first memory involve something you have done many times? Were there others involved? Had others previously done what you did? Describe to the whole group the dynamics of your situation.

2-Did your church/synagogue memory involve something you have done many times? Were there others involved? Had others previously done what you did? Describe to the whole group the dynamics of your situation.

3-What common dynamics did the experience that was not in church/synagogue have with the experience that was in church/synagogue?

4-What dynamics were present in your first memory that were not in your second? What could you apply to make prayer in church/synagogue more meaningful?

5-Was there something from the experience of “the other” that you could apply to make your experience in church/synagogue more meaningful?

6-If you had trouble remembering a religious experience, what elements did you learn from others that you might incorporate into your worship to make it more meaningful for you?
CONVERSATION POINTS

After the activity and activity discussion, explain to the group that it’s time for some informed conversation. Two leaders (one Jewish and one Christian) should run this section. It is suggested that the leaders are familiar with the following selections prior to reading them aloud. This will involve some role-playing, so it is important that the leaders feel comfortable with the role they will play and be expected to verbalize.

**Jew: How and Why I Pray**

The word prayer in Hebrew is *tefillah* and refers to the whole Jewish worship service. Often, but not always, prayer services are conducted in Hebrew because it is the language in which the covenant with God was formed; it also serves as a link between the Jewish community in Israel and in the Diaspora. Praying together in a community allows me to feel supported in times of need and to celebrate shared successes.

This community is not only one that exists in my town or state, it is also a community that is worldwide and from centuries past, reciting the same prayers each day. As I practice Orthodox Judaism, it is even a custom that there be at least ten Jewish men present to conduct a service to ensure this communal atmosphere. We all pray from prayer books, called *siddurim* in Hebrew, led by a rabbi in the synagogue, in the morning, afternoon and evening. The frequency of my attendance may vary depending on my synagogue, but having a prayer schedule provides structure in my life, teaches me discipline and reminds me constantly of God. Like any sport or playing an instrument, meaningful prayer takes practice and commitment. Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist Jews have adapted traditional forms to the modern era in an effort to make prayer meaningful, but all Jews ground their prayer practices in the same heritage.

Prayer in synagogue became standard after 70CE when offering sacrifice was no longer possible in the Holy Temple. At synagogue, the service includes reciting the *sh’mah* and its blessings, in which I state God is one, speak about my thankfulness for creation and the gift of the Torah, the exodus from Egypt and my love for Israel. I then say the *amidah*, 19 benedictions, which contain praises of God, thanks, blessings, hopes and a petition. On Monday, Thursday and Shabbat, Torah is read. As the Torah was written by God, it helps me to understand God’s love. A *D’var Torah*, or sermon, is given by the rabbi to help apply the Torah portion to something that is happening in our culture. This helps me feel further connected to the literature and the community.

I also use blessings that express my wonder in my home when I wake up, after meals, before drinking and many other times throughout the day. This repetition helps me to memorize the prayers but also helps me enter the act of praying and focus on my relationship with God. It is important that I pray with my whole body, using the proper body movements and bowing at the proper times throughout the service, because entering fully into prayer, both mind and body, is Jewish law. This also states that I wear appropriate clothing for prayer, such as a head covering, *yarmulke* in Yiddish or *Kippah* in Hebrew, and a prayer shawl, *tallit* in Hebrew. Appropriate clothing varies depending upon my denomination and so does whether I can pray with people of the other gender. Having no distractions helps me to fulfill the *mitzvah*, or commandment, of praying. When I pray, I can reach out to God and show, by action, what I believe. Also, I can turn to prayer when I am sad, afraid, angry or happy — prayer often prompts a comforting response. In addition, prayer tells me how I should act when I am unsure or lose perspective. The Jewish scholar Nahmanides said it best when he said that prayer should have a beneficial impact on human character. Prayer leads me to live a life enriched by virtues and brings me closer to perfection, living like God.
Christian: How and Why I Worship

Like most Christians worldwide, I worship in the language I am most familiar with — in my case, English. Originally, the New Testament was written in Greek and the Old Testament in Hebrew, and both were translated into Latin by the 5th century CE. Both the Old and New Testaments are important to Christians because the Old Testament, what Jews may refer to as the Tanakh, includes important stories, characteristics of God, promises and prophecy, while the New Testament focuses on the life of Jesus and his community.

Although the same scripture may be used in most churches, different churches, even within the same denomination, will use different styles of worship. In my church, there are both formal worship services on Sunday and more informal Bible studies; I even pray in my home before I go to sleep. The frequency with which one goes to church may vary, but when I go on Sunday it gives me the opportunity to have a time set aside for when and how I turn to God to strengthen our relationship. The services in my church are led by a pastor (minister, priest) and involve both verbal and physical participation from the congregation.

As I am part of a liturgical church, we use a lectionary which allows my church to read the same lessons on the same day as churches all over the world. This gives me the feeling of being part of a larger community, both in time and space. I feel I am participating in something that is rich in tradition and that binds me to a larger community with common wants, needs and wishes. In a non-liturgical church, the service will be shaped more freely and the leader may be inspired to recite spontaneously what they are told by the Holy Spirit. Unlike such “Spirit-led” services, my church follows a specific order which includes communal confession, scripture readings, a sermon/homily from the pastor (priest or minister), prayers, an offering, the peace, the Eucharist/holy communion/Lord’s Supper/mass and, lastly, blessing.

In our communal confession, we acknowledge Jesus as our lord, we praise God, we recognize our sins both individually and collectively, and we hear God’s declaration of forgiveness. In other churches, confession may be done privately. I find confession to be fulfilling because I feel I have recognized the impact of my sins on myself and others, and thereby strengthened my sense of connection to my community and to its accepted behaviors.

I also find listening to the pastor’s sermon fulfilling because it usually explains what was read in scripture and makes the lessons relevant to my life and the lives of others in the community, connecting me to Christians both past and present. Next, we pray to God, affirming him as our awe-evoking creator and ruler in heaven whom we fear, trust and respect. When we pray, we recognize that we are in God’s kingdom and that God shapes our lives; I feel humbled and an overpowering sense of wonder. Praying teaches me how to give thanks for God and the gifts that I may take for granted at times. Next, peace is offered to me by my pastor and my neighbors, which teaches me love and how to care for others.

Following this is the Eucharist, which will vary in frequency depending on denomination and congregation. Taking the Eucharist is considered a sacrament in which I receive God’s grace. During this ritual I eat bread and drink wine which are representative of Jesus’ body and blood, making him present within the community. Some Christians believe that Jesus is “really present” in the wine and bread, while other Christians perform the ceremony as a memorial to Jesus. The ritual of the Eucharist may help to mark the inclusion of the community members in the church because in some churches, only members may participate. Lastly, the community is blessed so what has been gained in the service can move beyond the church doors and, therefore, prayer gives me personal guidance on how to lead my life. When I worship, my eyes are opened to temptations and I am persuaded to resist them by strengthening myself, my faith in God and my relationship with my family and friends. Prayer marks my belief that I am a child of God.
Christian: Jews, You Also Have Holy Objects

When I take holy communion/the Lord’s Supper/the Eucharist/the mass I do so because Jesus commanded it in the gospels and Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. I eat bread and drink wine which are representative of Jesus' body and blood, making him present within the community. Some Christians believe that Jesus is “really present” in the wine and bread, while other Christians perform the ceremony as a memorial to Jesus.

As a Jew, if you come to a Christian worship service you may find this custom foreign, but you too bless bread and wine on Shabbat with the Kiddush. You also hold other objects representing God in high esteem and treat them with respect. During the Torah procession before and after it is read, you reach out to touch the scroll with a siddur or your prayer shawl and then kiss the object that touched the Torah. Additionally, one of the greatest honors in the congregation is the invitation to recite the blessing over the Torah reading.

Torah procession

While reading the Torah, you normally use a yad, Torah pointing-stick, to touch the parchment so that your hands don't come in contact with the sacred words. You bury the scrolls with God’s name when they can no longer be used and you kiss a siddur if it has fallen. If a Torah scroll falls, tradition calls for the community to fast for 40 days (or donate a sizeable amount to charity). This may lead someone to believe that both Jews and Christians worship objects, but these practices can be explained by understanding that the objects are loved and respected because of their closeness with God. Therefore, we treat these objects with the utmost honor.
Jew: Christians, The Psalms You Pray

The psalms you read and sing in church are called *tehillim* in Hebrew and, according to tradition, were written by King David, King Solomon and others. The 150 psalms are part of the "Writings" section of the Jewish Bible and were prayed in the ancient Temple, so it may seem obvious that Jews would find the psalms important. Psalms are used as a study tool for Jewish scholars to reveal attributes their ancestors believed to be true about God. These Jewish ancestors are your ancestors, too, Christians.

The New Testament gives evidence that Jesus prayed the psalms, which have become embedded in Christian liturgy. Martin Luther and many other Christian leaders have taught that all Christians should pray them. So although some readings of the psalms about the afterlife and the vengeful nature of humans may be alarming to the Christian community, psalms continue to be useful in many ways. They let both traditions know they can turn to God in all types of situations. When we want to celebrate life or even when we are angry, upset, or want to complain, they give us the words to do so. This sometimes leads psalms to become prayers for support groups and others that find a specific psalm speaking to them. Psalms help us find the proper words for praise and thanks and are useful in prayer services because they allow us to say or sing with a community what an individual may be thinking. Many of the psalms use “we” phrasing and help to remind the community that we are interconnected.

Our shared history as the “poor” of the psalms helps to remind us all to care for the poor and less fortunate. This suffering is of particular interest to Christians, because the image of the innocent person who suffers underlies the picture of Jesus as savior. For Christians, this suffering may also be a reminder of the hardships of the past and give hopefulness for the future with Jesus as your guide. For Jews, psalms help to recall the covenant relationship the Jewish people have with God. For Christians; this covenant relationship is the one extended to the Gentiles through Jesus. So the psalms I pray and you pray may be the same psalms and be used in similar ways in synagogue and church but they may hold different meanings.
There seem to be commonalities as to why Jews and Christians find prayer meaningful: the relationship one forms with God, the guidelines that prayer offers for faithful living and the way in which prayer binds people to their community. Taking these into consideration, as well as what was learned from the activity and presentations, ask each participant to write a three-sentence (or shorter) “model” prayer. Ask them to contemplate where, when and how often it will be said. In what language will it be? Will it be a call and response? Who will say it? Does it have any basis in scripture or tradition? Are there body movements that go along with the words?

Have participants then share their “model” prayers with the group. After everyone has presented, ask the participants if they see any pattern distinguishing the Jewish participants’ prayers from the Christian participants’ prayers.

After completing the group activity, the students may want to change their activity in their lives.

Let the students know that a pledge for change can help the person they are become the person they want to be. They can use small steps to promote better Jewish-Christian relations where they are.

Each student should write down his/her own pledge and agree to keep true to it.

**PLEDGE SUGGESTIONS**

- I will say a prayer each day that is meaningful to me and know why I am saying it.
- I will go to services once a month, participating in what I understand to be important and asking about what I don’t yet comprehend.
- I will accompany a friend of another religion to a prayer service.
- I will lead a prayer service for my community.
- I will suggest going to a prayer service instead of an alternative activity and explain why to my friends or family.
FURTHER EXPLORATION: HOLIDAY PRAYER

Christian:

The Christian year is not only marked by holidays but times between the holidays as well. Some major holidays are: Christmas, which commemorates the birth of Jesus; Easter, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus; and Pentecost, which marks the sending of the Holy Spirit. Advent is the four-week period of preparation before Christmas, and Lent is the 40 days of preparation before Easter which begins with “Ash Wednesday,” a day of repentance, and includes “Holy Week.” These special days and seasons are a means to carve out a sacred time for the community.

*Triduum* is three days set aside for a special time for prayer. During “Holy Week,” the Easter *Triduum* begins Maundy Thursday evening and ends on Easter Sunday with evening prayers. This period focuses on the last days in Jesus’ life. On Thursday, at a special service, the washing of the feet as Jesus did to his apostles is done to the congregants so that the teachings of Jesus are observed. In many congregations, the Eucharist is celebrated on Thursday night to commemorate Jesus’ last supper. That night, there is no departing procession because prayer continues into the night and into the homes of the community members. On Friday, some Christians fast in commemoration of the death of Jesus. At this time, food is unimportant. Some Christians may also spend a great portion of their day in prayer. The service in church begins with silence. Then it is stated that Jesus died for the sins of all, and then the congregation prays for others in the world. The last unique part of the Friday service is the veneration of the cross. On Saturday evening, there is a vigil to proclaim that Jesus has been raised and there is a special baptism and Eucharist ceremony for those who become new members of the church. Longer stories from creation until resurrection are told in a unique cycle of *Triduum* readings. Just as these days are celebrated as one unit, the church community is to be thought of as one body remembering together.

Jewish:

Jewish holidays switch dates every year because they are based on a lunar calendar. Each year is marked by the weekly holiday of Shabbat, the day of rest, and the High Holy Days (*Rosh Hashanah* — the Jewish new year, and *Yom Kippur* — the day of atonement.) The year is also marked by three major festivals that were originally agricultural markers but are additionally historical holidays. These include *Sukkot*, the remembrance of wandering in the desert for 40 years; Passover, commemorating the exodus from Egypt; and *Shavout*, the celebration of the gift of the Torah.

A minor festival that is celebrated on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of *Adar* is *Purim*, which commemorates the Jews of Persia who were saved from extermination because of a Jewish woman named Esther. On this holiday, The Book of Esther, the last of the *Megillot*, the five small scrolls of the Hebrew Bible, is read in synagogue. This book is unusual as it does not include God’s name, which might mean that God acts even when we are unaware of it. This is a service in which the congregation uses noisemakers to drown out the reading of the villain’s name. The Talmud commands Jews to eat, drink, be joyous and send gifts of food to family, *mishloach manot* in Hebrew. This binds the community in celebration, which often includes the custom of performing a costumed skit of the story or having a carnival.
For More on Jewish and Christian Prayer


For More on Christian Prayer


For More on Jewish Prayer


For More on Holy Objects

For More on Psalms


(While the information about Christian practice can be helpful, the anti-Jewish attitude and interpretation on this site are flawed and problematic)


For More on Holiday Prayer


For Other Programs:

For Better Presentations and/or Teaching Philosophies:


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**PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS**

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**

We have all heard of the Ten Commandments, which include the commandment that begins, “honor your father and your mother.” Such an easy, obvious and simple mandate, right? Wrong! What seems to be theoretically viable for both Christians and Jews is oftentimes not the way circumstances exist in reality. We disobey, disagree and debate with our parents and could feel as if we are violating a holy order, but it may surprise you that there are stories in the Bible and Torah in which parents and their children also had differences. There are even instances in which we are told to obey God instead of our parents! This resource aims to help you explore such issues. You will also be able to identify the points of contention in your parent-child relationship and decide where your values lie in varied situations. This guidebook intends to help parents and children reach greater mutual understanding, to inform and strengthen Christians and Jews and to help participants develop a better plan for action that takes scripture into account in today’s culture.

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**GROUP DYNAMICS**

Everyone is welcome!

- It does not matter whether or not a participant has previously participated in Jewish-Christian programming but all must desire to learn about their own religion and the religion of others.
- They must be willing to listen and to cooperate.
- Although no previous programming experience is necessary for the participants, it is helpful if they have some knowledge of the Jewish-Christian encounter over the past 2,000 years. If not, perhaps a short teaching session (in addition to this resource) is necessary prior to the program.
- No missionizing is acceptable!

For the Leaders

- You set the tone for the program! Therefore, you too must listen to others.
- At the start of the program, present your participants with an outline of what to expect. This can be verbal or written.
- Make sure you move through the entire outline efficiently.
- Be concerned with the progress in the conversation as much as the progress for each individual.
- Be willing to share your own experiences and be able to express yourself clearly.

Ice-Breakers

- You should do some form of an activity so the participants begin to feel comfortable with one another. The ice-breaker could be related to the topic, but it need not be.

**Topic-Related Ice-Breaker Example:**
Tape a random number under 100 on to the back of each participant. One at a time, have each participant stand and have the group try to describe the number using clues about what happens to a person at the age of the number. The person who is standing should try to guess the number according to the clues.

**Top-Related Ice-Breaker Example:**
All participants should sit in a circle alternating parents and young adults. The participant who agrees to start should say, “When I was younger...” The next participant will continue the story using only one word. Each subsequent participant will continue that story with another one word until the story seems to be complete.

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**YOU NEED:**

- 2 hours
- This guidebook
- Tape and papers with numbers for the first ice-breaker
- Enough paper and pens for all participants to write pledges
- A location to hold this program that is nonsectarian
- One Jewish and one Christian leader
- Young adults and parents who want to learn from their encounter with “the other” (even if they are not related to one another)
The uniqueness and originality in this guidebook lie in the emphasis on participant-motivated activity. When people are interested, they will pursue an activity for its own sake and learn more readily. Therefore, the following activity will engage participants and capture their attention and enthusiasm. The activity will help them to draw their own conclusions before telling them about scriptural and traditional Christian and Jewish parent-child relationships.

This activity is designed to have the participants feel slightly uncomfortable and challenge their emotions and thoughts, but not to compromise the participants’ well-being or ability to participate by forcing them to do anything. Participants should feel free to refuse to participate in any activity just by saying so.

**Another One Bites the Dust**

Ask all participants to stand in a circle and hold up three fingers. Let them know that you will pose a series of statements. When the statement is true for them, they are to put a finger down. When all three fingers are down, they are to take a seat.

Leader, recite the following statements allowing enough time between each statement for the participants to lower their fingers and to look around at the responses of other participants.

- I would steal from a store
- I would steal from a family member
- I would steal from a store if a family member said it was okay
- I would lie to my boss
- I would lie to my parent
- I would lie to my child
- I would lie to my boss if my family preapproved my lie
- If my parent wanted my seat I wouldn’t get up
- I would date someone of another religion
- I would date someone of another religion even if I knew my parent or child didn’t approve
- I would cheat on an exam
- I would cheat on an exam only if my family wouldn’t find out
- I would cheat on my taxes
- I would cheat on my taxes even if it put my child’s well-being in danger
- I would cheat on my significant other
- I would cheat on my significant other if it wouldn’t ruin my family
- I would worship another God
- I would worship another God if I knew my family did
- I would break my fast on a holy fast day
- I would break fast on a holy fast day if a family member told me to
- I would use a curse with God’s name
- I would skip a prayer service on a holy day
- I would skip a prayer service on a holy day if my family wasn’t going
- I would take someone else’s life

When all participants are seated, stop reading the statements. If there are no more statements and there are still participants standing, that is all right and will add to the dynamics of your conversation.

**Why This is Done**

Each statement highlights a possible conflict within an individual or between a parent and child. As each participant lowers a finger and eventually sits, this represents compromising a principle that is either scripturally important or traditionally important. All sitting participants will realize that they are not alone in their struggle to decide “right” from “wrong” and that Christian parents, Jewish parents, Christian children and Jewish children wrestle with questions of morality.

It may become obvious that it is common and unavoidable to make decisions that test our loyalty, morals and source of authority, but this does not make us bad Jews and Christians or bad parents or children.

The multiple chances that the participants are given to choose an answer represent the multiple chances we are given in life even if we make a mistake. In a practical sense, the fewer participants you have, the more chances you might want to give each participant so that the program continues for a longer amount of time and more issues get exposed. Participants keep their eyes open because in life, people notice whether you made a “right” or a “wrong” decision. Before making a decision, you may consider what others will think of your choice.

All questions are designed to help the participants realize what issues are important to them and help them to decide where their sources of authority lie. In scripture? In their parents’ suggestions? In their children’s respect?
ACTIVITY QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

To begin discussion, ask these questions of the participants. The discussion will draw insight from the interactive activity. Pose the questions to the entire group and have individuals answer. Remember that this should be different from a classroom environment, and a pattern should be formed where participants speak when they feel motivated. Use these questions to frame a discussion that engages as many participants as possible.

1-Why do you think participants were asked to signal when a statement was true for them?
The intended answer can be found in the “why this is done” section (page 22).

2-Are the sitting participants all bad Jews and Christians? Bad parents/children? Why?
The answer can be both “yes” and “no,” but most likely, “no” will be more common. This might happen because the situations all have factors that force hard choices.

3-Why were you given multiple chances before you were asked to be seated, and why were everyone’s eyes open?
The intended answer can be found in the “why this is done” section (page 22).

4-To which statement was it easiest for you to respond? Why?
It is likely that the “easiest” statements refer to the issues one considers most important and to the clearest standards of morality.

5-To which statement was it toughest for you to respond? Why?
This may result from not yet understanding what is most important. This may be due to confused sources of a standard for morality, embarrassment about how they would be viewed, etc.

6-What did you use as a guide to answer the questions? Past experience? A scriptural story or teaching? A parent’s lesson? How you would be viewed by others?
CONVERSATION POINTS

After the activity and activity discussion, explain to the group that it’s time for some informed conversation. Two leaders (one Jewish and one Christian) should run this section. It is suggested that the leaders are familiar with the following selections prior to reading them aloud. This will involve some role-playing, so it is important that the leaders feel comfortable with the role they will play and be expected to verbalize.

Christian young adult or parent: My Child–Parent Relationship

God made known to the world in Jesus’ baptism that this was God’s “beloved son.” So when I was baptized, my life was joined to God for all time. It was in my baptism that God called me by my name to be God’s child. It was also there that I was called to live “a godly life” with the support of my family and the whole church. That day, I received my godparents, who agreed to guide my spirituality and see that I live a life rich in Jesus’ blessings.

As my parents and godparents were also baptized and fueled by their love for Jesus and the Holy Spirit, they lead by example how to be faithful and compassionate. In Deuteronomy it is said that my parents must educate me and teach me to have discipline. My parents continue to learn discipline themselves and to learn what it means to love wholeheartedly as they worship. They ask God to protect me and for the ability to care for me. Through prayers of intercession, my parents, godparents and the whole church lift up my life to God in the promise of salvation and of Jesus touching my every day life. Similarly, I too can lift up others in prayer and can live as a child of God in keeping with God’s will.

In Genesis I learned that I must obey my parents. Paul notes that this is because God has commanded me to. When I respect my parents’ orders, I am really respecting God’s orders. Echoing the fourth commandment, Paul also says that if I follow this commandment, I will have a long life.

Although it is important to me to honor the wishes of my parents and God, scripture also implies that sometimes it is challenging to do both. In Luke it says that if I do not hate my family, I cannot be Jesus’ disciple; in Matthew it says if I leave home in God’s name I will receive more and live eternally! Earlier in Matthew it says that if I love my father or mother more than Jesus, or they love me more than they love Jesus, we are not worthy of him. So should I choose to abandon my kin in an effort to follow what I think God commands? Ephesians helps to ease this dichotomy as it says that I may leave my parents to start a new family. Therefore, family is central to God’s plans. Furthermore, I may look to Romans as an attempt to clarify this set of intertwined relationships by always honoring someone above myself.

1 Deuteronomy 6:1-9 4 Ephesians 6:1-4 7 Matthew 10:37
2 Genesis 3 5 Luke 14:26 8 Ephesians 5:31
3 Ephesians 6:1 6 Matthew 19:29 9 Romans 12:10
Jewish young adult or parent: My Child–Parent Relationship

Just as Abraham did for his son Isaac, Jewish parents help to mark God’s covenant with a son on his eighth day of life with his circumcision. The ceremony in Hebrew is called Brit Milah, meaning covenant of circumcision, and is commanded in both Genesis¹ and Leviticus². Similarly, daughters are given their names in a ceremony that can be called Brit Banot, meaning covenant of our daughters. Although having a naming ceremony is not a commandment, it has become a Jewish tradition for parents, linking daughters by name to their family lineage and the community of centuries past, binding them to Jewish laws and customs.

One of these laws from Deuteronomy³ is that my parents are responsible for educating me. Not only does this ensure me the privileged opportunity for scholastic learning, it provides me with the blessing to be taught Torah. This helps me to understand that my relationship with my parents also involves my relationship with God and his teachings. The fifth of the Ten Commandments begins, “honor your father and your mother.” In some Jewish traditions, this commandment is counted with the other commandments that relate to God, not the social realm. I must understand that I need to honor my parents to honor God. Honoring involves providing for their physical needs and assuring they are cared for. To show honor, I must grasp that they are not my equals. In a rabbinic story, Abraham asked God for wrinkles to make a characteristic distinction between different-aged adults so that the youth could always display respect. Leviticus⁴ even says that I must revere my parents. To revere them I must not take their place or disagree with what they say.

Although this model may be theoretically ideal and I may love my parents, oftentimes I do disagree with their wishes and don't always do what they suggest, In Leviticus⁵ I am reminded that if I don't obey my parents, I will be punished. I learned this lesson in Genesis⁶ from Adam, who suffered deeply when he didn't obey his creator, God. But there are times when I feel I don't deserve to be punished, because I am right! In Jewish tradition, Abraham also went against the wishes of his parent when he believed his father wasn’t acting properly. Abraham ruined his father’s property and smashed his idols! In this case, Abraham was following his faith in God, and believed his father had swayed from his own faith. So if it was okay for Abraham to disobey his parents, do I always need to listen to mine? Should I have confidence in myself, my faith and my morals or blindly trust my parents? The Mishneh Torah, a medieval code of Torah learning, says that if what I believe contradicts my parent, I must suggest that we study the law together instead of claiming their ignorance. There are other teachings in the Mishneh Torah which speak to specific topics of disagreement. Therefore, if I do disagree with my parents, I should handle the situation in a way that demonstrates my honor for them.

It seems that in Judaism, whoever is right is the one that agrees with the laws of the Torah and that the father and creator, whom my parents and I all need to obey above all, is God.

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¹ Genesis 17:10-11 ² Leviticus 12:3 ³ Deuteronomy 6:1-9 ⁴ Leviticus 19:3 ⁵ Leviticus 20:9 ⁶ Genesis 3
Since I was a young child, I have seen the stereotypical Jewish mother in the television cartoon, *The Rugrats*; when I was a little older, on the television show, *The Nanny*; and most recently, on *Will and Grace*. Didi Pickles, Sylvia Fine and Bobbi Adler (respectively) are overbearing, outspoken, pushy and protective, and seem to limit their children’s independence. Any child-parent relationship would be more complicated if the mother were so present, forceful and controlling in a child’s life. I wonder if Jewish mothers are really that dominating.

Although I am not Jewish and have never had a child-parent relationship with a Jewish mother, I can understand how she may have been pushed into this pigeonhole. In traditional Judaism, children’s religion is determined by the religion of their mother. As this is the case, a Jewish mother has the scriptural right to define her child from the day of birth. The Torah tells the tales of the fervent foremothers, Sarah, Rachel, Leah and Rebecca, who set the standard for intense Jewish women and mothers. Strong Sarah gave birth to Isaac at the age of 90, while loving Leah was the mother of six of the 12 tribes. Compassionate Rachel cried for her children when they were exiled from Israel. These foremothers have become so impressive and important to some Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative communities that their names are said along with the names of the forefathers in the opening of the *Amidah* prayer. Female synagogue attendees in today's culture might feel their influence as women and mothers is central to their family. This feeling may be confirmed in the home on *Shabbat* when the father recites Proverbs 31:10-31 (*Eshet Chayil*) to his wife. This poem extols “the woman of valor” for being virtuous, nurturing and resourceful, ensuring by every means the well-being of her family.

But this is not the first generation of Jewish women, and it is likely that daughters learn from their mothers that certain character traits are specific to Jewish mothers. In Eastern Europe it was not always safe for Jews to live freely, such as in the Middle Ages when Jews were forced to live in shtetls. Jewish mothers were fearful for their children's physical safety and kept careful track of their whereabouts. Oftentimes the woman was the caretaker and provider for the family so her husband could study Torah. In Europe during World War II, Jewish women were once again in the position to be protective, cautious and defensive. They didn't want to separate from their children and sometimes a forced relocation left them feeling helpless and out of control.

When Jewish families started to immigrate to the United States, a whole new set of character traits were added to the typical profile of a Jewish woman. These hardworking mothers wanted a better life for their children, so they became involved in their children’s affairs, attempting to oversee their relationships and other activities. As the second-generation American Jewish mothers achieved a better financial position, they had more funds and time to spend on the “betterment” of their families.

Now their daughters are my friend’s mothers, and my friends confront the question of whether to follow the wishes of their parent or listen to their own faith. I cannot make that decision for them, but I can say that as the child of a Christian mother, she too is sometimes outspoken, pushy, protective and seems to limit my independence. I try to think of her as honest, assertive, thoughtful and having my best interests in mind. Maybe with that perspective we can all appreciate and honor our mothers.
Jewish young adult or parent: Christian, You Have Two Fathers?

Catholics, it may be confusing to some that you call your religious leader “father.” It is obvious that the man who contributed to your birth, taught you how to drive, corrected your schoolwork or encourages your endeavors deserves the title, but it is difficult for some to understand how you could use it for someone that isn't related to you. I think I comprehend your tradition because I call my religious leader “rabbi,” originally derived from Hebrew and Aramaic meaning master or “to become great.” I truly see my rabbi as my master, leading me in prayer, guiding me in interpreting Jewish law, and as the head of our congregation and community.

Your spiritual leader, your “father,” is also the head of your community. He provides for the physical needs of your neighborhood by sustaining a holy house for worship and supporting food and clothing drives for the hungry and underprivileged. He even spiritually feeds you each time you take the Eucharist. Through anointing and intercession, he cares for you when you or your brothers and sisters are ill. He aids you in honoring a loved one who has passed away and assists you in reaching acceptance. He listens willingly and patiently when you confess and advises you how to repent. He directs you how to live a godly life when you may have made a transgression and, as he leads worship, he serves as your role model, coaching you to live Jesus' lessons. As he is celibate, the parishioners are his children, and he is indeed the father of your church family.

The title “pope” also came from a father-like-name, because until about the year 400CE bishops were called “papa.” Comparably, the word “abbot” is actually derived from the Hebrew word for father that I call my dad, abba. In 547 St. Benedict decided that spiritual leaders needed a distinct label and afterward, in the Middle Ages, the Franciscan and Dominican mendicant friars were termed “father” for the way they attended to God’s children. Therefore, the children of our almighty father in heaven are cared for by ordained earthly fathers.

But there is still one issue about this topic that a non-Catholic Christian may contest. Jesus stated, "Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9). From this, one may conclude that only God can be termed “father.” Another way to interpret this is to say that Jesus does not ban the use of the title father for those who are blood-related or those who are our masters, but he cautions against flattering and lauding those who are not praiseworthy. In fact, the Bible cites many instances in which the title “father” is bestowed on someone other than God. In Matthew,1 Jesus affirms the commandment to honor father and mother. In addition, Job said that he was a father to the poor.2

Insofar as your church leader contributes to your Christian birth, teaches you to have spiritual drive, corrects your errors and encourages your religious endeavors, he is certainly a father and worthy of his title.

1 Matthew 19:19
2 Job 29:16
It seems that the Bible and the Torah agree that a person is making a correct choice if they follow what God commands. For Judaism and Christianity, God is the ultimate parent, the one we could all structure our lives to please and praise. We have learned that sometimes this includes abiding by our earthly families’ rules and regulations but sometimes listening to our own faith.

When will you choose to obey each authority?

Ask participants to create a vision of what honor between parents and children might look like in their homes. Consider situations where the honor of God might also be taken into account. An example, for a Jewish child who keeps a kosher diet when the parent does not, would be that the child agrees to bring kosher food to the parent’s home. An example, for a Christian parent who says grace before meals when the child does not, would be that the parent agrees to say grace prior to sitting with the family at the table. In both situations, the families would be able to dine together and respect one another, and no one would compromise cherished principles.

Ask that, when they go home, participants share their ideas with their parents/children; then all can consider agreeing to a specific structure by which to live together.

After completing the group activity, the students may want to change their activity in their lives.

Let the students know that a pledge for change can help the person they are become the person they want to be. They can use small steps to promote better Jewish-Christian relations where they are.

Each student should write down his/her own pledge and agree to keep true to it.

Pledge Suggestions:

- I will abide by the structure I created in the Bridge the Gap activity after conferring with my family.
- The next time I disagree with my parent or child, I will ask for the source of their reasoning and attempt to understand their position.
- Next time I disagree with my parent or child, I will honor them by explaining why I believe what I do by citing the Torah or Bible.
- Next time someone of “the other” religion disagrees with their parent, I will ask what their respective scripture and tradition says about the topic.
- I will give a gift to my parent/child that will help us explore religion together.
Christian:

When Christians are baptized or christened, they are expected to accept living “a godly life.” As previously discussed, family members and godparents are involved in the ceremony, so it has become a custom for them and others to share gifts with the children to help them grow in their Christian faith.

Some churches have begun to give the baptized child and its family a FaithChest® (a product from The Youth & Family Institute) to help treasure memories of the momentous day. The box may store the baptismal candle, a copy of the liturgy used in the service, etc. By preserving these ritual objects, parents can help their children frequently come into contact with God’s promises and calling. As the children grow, more memorabilia that mark religious maturity can be added. When a child eventually leaves the home, the chest can go along to bring ritual, religion and tradition into a new home for a new family.

Oftentimes, a child who is baptized receives a cross pendant as a constant reminder of Jesus. A Catholic child may also receive a special object with a cross on it, a rosary chaplet. The gift of a rosary chaplet will help Catholic children be properly prepared for worship and encourage them to pray by using their present. The prayers during a rosary service relate to the lives of Jesus and his mother, so a family may find this service to be particularly relevant to attend together.

A baby girl may also receive a baptismal bracelet to wear on the day of her christening and then to wear as a bride on her wedding day. The bracelet serves as a marker of a commitment to a Christian relationship and of God’s abiding love and blessing.

Baptized children may also be given Christian Bible storybooks for their parents to read to them. The narratives become more understandable for a younger audience, and the literature becomes part of the child’s life at an early age. This brings religion into the home life so family can participate together in a godly life every day.

Jewish:

When a Jewish boy becomes a Bar-mitzvah at the age of 13, and a Jewish girl a Bat-mitzvah at the age of 12, they understand what is expected of them as Jewish adults. It has become a popular custom to celebrate this benchmark and to exercise their new rights by participating in a prayer service. To help mark the occasion, gifts are often given to the child and the family.

One such gift is a prayer book, siddur in Hebrew. Prayer may help individuals mold a relationship with God, help them establish a framework for faithful family living, bind them to their present Jewish community and link them to their past. Some Bar- and Bat-mitzvah children have trees planted in their honor in Israel so that they are physically rooted in the Jewish homeland. Sometimes, a tzedakah box (a box used to collect money to promote justice) is given to the young adult because giving tzedakah is a commandment. These gifts help any child and family to live their lives richly in Jewish tradition.

A Bar-mitzvah boy may receive his father’s or grandfather’s tallis (prayer shawl) or Yarmulke/kippah (head covering). These gifts aid the young man in dressing properly for prayer and also intertwine his family and religion. To have religious items that are his own may make him feel more like a responsible member of a community. For these reasons, he may be more inclined to attend prayer services. A symbolic item that a boy may receive is a Chai pendant. The Hebrew word Chai means living or life in English. When the child wears a Chai, he may be expressing his understanding of living a Jewish life, living by the commandments of God.

Oftentimes, a girl will also receive a Jewish star, Magen David (shield of David). When she wears this gift, she is declaring to the world that she is a Jewish woman and upholds the duties and obligations for which a Jewish woman is responsible. One such ritual duty is lighting the Shabbat candles. For this reason, one of the most popular presents for Bat-mitzvah girls are two candlestick holders to use when she becomes a mother. When a mother lights the Shabbat candles, she does so for her whole family, welcoming the Shabbat, the day of rest, into their home. The gift of two candlesticks encourages a Bat-mitzvah to carry these customs forward to future generations.

These gifts help perpetuate a cycle of prayer and learning for a Jewish family by bringing religion into the home and the family into the synagogue.
For More on Christian Child-Parent Relationships


For More on Jewish Child-Parent Relationships


For More on Jewish and Christian Child-Parent Relationships


For More on Jewish Mothers


For More on Christian (Catholic) Fathers


(While the information about Christian practice on the four above sites can be helpful, the anti-Jewish attitude and interpretations on these sites are problematic)
For More on Appropriate Christian Religious Gifts


For More on Appropriate Jewish Religious Gifts


For Other Programs:

Interfaith Circles. Interfaith Resources Inc, 1986.

For Better Presentations and/or Teaching Philosophies:


“Student-Motivated Activity for Change”

TOPIC 4

DATING

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

It is no longer unusual for someone to search for love in space—cyberspace, that is. Although in the 21st century we have not yet achieved speed-dating on the moon, find-a-mate website subscriptions are on the rise. Audience members switch their televisions on each week to watch bachelors and bachelorettes gallivant on private beaches to determine out of 20 or so sexy singles who would be their best companion. What is it about this method of seeking passion that is so attractive? Maybe it is the ability to narrow the selection pool using keywords and only giving a go at grabbing your heart to those that are “your type.” But how do we determine what we are looking for?

In a country where “all men are created equal,” what makes someone better or worse for you? Is it what he challenges you on? What she teaches you? Is it what you have in common? If it is the values, faith and views you share from your upbringing, maybe that is the reason for the popularity of exclusive online dating communities for intra-religious couple-seeking. On the other hand, you may not even think your religion is a factor. This resource aims at helping you determine how religion shapes your pursuit for the “perfect” mate and what “the other” may have to say about your traditions on this topic. With a better understanding of how we decide what it is we are looking for and why, perhaps we can all find what it is we really desire.

GROUP DYNAMICS

Everyone is welcome!

■ It does not matter whether or not a student has previously participated in Jewish-Christian programming BUT all must desire to learn about their own religion and the religion of others.

■ They must be willing to listen and to cooperate.

■ Although no previous programming experience is necessary for the participants, it is helpful if they have some knowledge of the Jewish-Christian encounter over the past 2,000 years. If not, perhaps a short teaching session (in addition to this resource) is necessary prior to the program.

■ No missionizing is acceptable!

For the Leaders

■ You set the tone for the program! Therefore, you too must listen to others.

■ At the start of the program, present your participants with an outline of what to expect. This can be verbal or written.

■ Make sure you move through the entire outline efficiently.

■ Be concerned with the progress in the conversation as much as the progress for each individual.

■ Be willing to share your own experiences and be able to express yourself clearly.

Ice-Breakers

■ You should do some form of an activity so the participants begin to feel comfortable with one another. This activity could be topic-related, but it need not be.

Non-Topic-Related Ice-Breaker Example:

Give each participant a paper plate and ask them to advertise it to the rest of the group as if they were selling a product. Tell them that they should not promote the traditional uses of a paper plate. They should be more creative and pretend the plate is something else, e.g., a baseball glove or a hat.

Topical-Related Ice-Breaker Example:

Tell participants to use the paper plate from the first ice-breaker (or use a new plate) to draw the face of a clock. For each “hour” they should schedule a “date” with one other person. Next, tell them that it is 1 P.M. and it is time to start their “dates.” Have each pair meet consecutively in order of the time they scheduled on their clocks. When the pairs meet, have them share one good and one bad quality about themselves on each “date.”
DATING
GROUP ACTIVITY

This activity is designed to have the students feel slightly uncomfortable and challenge their emotions and thoughts, but not to compromise the students’ well-being or ability to participate by forcing them to do anything. Students should feel free to refuse to participate in any activity just by saying so.

Dating Draft

This activity can be performed in two different ways, depending upon the number of people participating. Both activities should yield similar responses from the participants, so it is only necessary that you run one of the following two activities.

Activity Option A– For a larger group (20-40 participants)
Ask that all participants stand in a line at the front of the room. The two participants at the end of the line will be the team captains. Have those two individuals step forward and face the rest of the group. Next, distribute labels that you have created prior to the program to the remaining participants in line. The labels will have qualities, characteristics or traits that one may find attractive in a potential mate. (A complete list of these attributes can be found below the second activity option.) Once everyone is labeled, have one of the two captains choose a participant from the line whose label seems most important when looking for a possible love connection. After the first captain has chosen, have the second captain select someone from the line. Ask the participants to notice in which order attributes are selected. Continue to alternate between teams. Each time a team picks, the newest member of the team makes the decision of whom they will choose. Continue this process until there is no one left in the line.

Activity Option B– For a smaller group
Ask that participants divide into two teams. If possible, there should be an even number of Jews and Christians mixed in both teams. On the floor, lay the labels of qualities, characteristics or traits that one may find attractive in a potential mate. (A complete list of these attributes can be found below this activity option.) Have one of the members on one team choose an attribute that seems most important when looking for a possible love connection and hold onto the label. Next, have someone from the opposing team make a selection. Ask the participants to notice in which order attributes are selected. Continue to alternate between teams rotating which group member gets to make the decision. Continue this process until there are no attributes left on the floor.

Attribute List

For activity option A, use the first 20 attributes; use the rest if there are more than 20 participants.

For activity option B, use all of the attributes.

- Stylish
- Celebrates the same holidays as I do
- Has the same ideas about having children as I do
- Physically fit
- Hygienic
- Has the same religion as I do
- Strong work ethic
- Is my soul mate
- Creative
- Athletic
- Good sense of humor
- Honest
- Believes in the same God
- I do
- Passionate kisser
- Wealthy
- Lives close to my home
- Achieves high grades
- Respectful
- Gives back to the community
- Follows a similar diet
- Is in a position of power
- Has captivating eyes
- Generous
- Well-mannered
- Enjoys the same entertainment
- Non-smoker
- Romantic
- Passionate about something
- Has a lot of friends
- Street smart
- Sports fan
- Drives an expensive car
- Likes animals
- Cares about the environment
- Politically active
- Doesn’t do drugs
- Technologically savvy
- Loyal

Why This Is Done

This is done so students identify what is most and least important to them in finding a romantic partner. They may or may not choose attributes that will have an effect on a long-term relationship, and this activity will help them to determine if they are looking for a partner to last a lifetime or a temporary squeeze. More importantly, this activity aids the participants in realizing that the way in which someone was raised affects their values. Moreover, participants should realize that religion and tradition played more of a role in their selection of a mate then they may have previously thought. By the conclusion of the activity, the participants may begin to notice common values that they share with the “other,” but may also realize traditions will differ.


**ACTIVITY QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION**

To begin discussion, ask these questions of the students. The discussion will draw insight from the interactive activity. Pose the questions to the entire group and have individuals answer. Remember that this should be different from a classroom environment, and a pattern should be formed where students speak when they feel motivated. Try to hear from everyone at least once. Use these questions to frame a discussion that engages as many participants as possible.

1-What attribute was chosen first? Why did the person make that choice?

2-What was the last attribute that was chosen? Why do you think this was the case?

3-Which attributes relate to more long-term aspects of a relationship? Were these attributes chosen near the beginning or the end of the activity? Why do you think the attributes were drafted in this order?

4-What attributes do you think were determined by the way that people were raised by their families?

5-Were the attributes identified in question 4 chosen closer to first or last? Why do you think they were chosen in this order?

6-Where did the attribute, “has the same religion as I do,” fall in the dating draft? Why do you think this occurred?

7-What connection can you make between religion and the attributes that were determined by the way the person was raised?

8-Do religious values (e.g. respectful) or religious practices (e.g. celebrates the same holidays) seem to be more important to the group?
After the activity and activity discussion, explain to the group that it’s time for some informed conversation. Two leaders (one Jewish and one Christian) should run this section. It is suggested that the leaders are familiar with the following selections prior to reading them aloud. This will involve some role-playing, so it is important that the leaders feel comfortable with the role they will play and be expected to verbalize.

**Christian: The Perfect Date**

Before Priscilla Presley was famous for being Elvis’s wife, there was another woman named Priscilla who is also remembered with her partner, Aquila. They are my favorite biblical couple because of the cooperation they display. I have always craved to have someone in my life with whom I too can collaborate and know that this person will be a gift from God. Although there are scores of other biblical couples to serve as examples in both the Old and New Testaments, I am hard-pressed to find explicit rules for dating. Paul asserts that sexual acts are only moral within marriage, but I know there has to be another reason for choosing to wed. Maybe for love?

John tells me that I know how to love because God loves me. If I strengthen my relationship with God through prayer, I will further learn how to love. I can even pray to God through petitions and ask to be blessed with a companion. I can use tradition and scripture to help me realize when I have found the one the Lord has gifted to me.

I will know I have met the perfect Christian mate when there is someone who will surely support my relationship with God. Therefore, together, we can show our thankfulness for our fortune. From Proverbs I know I need someone who also fears the Lord, and that this is of much higher value than someone who is attractive. Although I hope my companion is indeed good-looking, the ideal woman would be resourceful, generous, strong and wise. Proverbs says that Prince Charming will speak with care, is open-minded and is not defensive. I also know that I need to be with someone who is faithful to me because it is a commandment.

Once I have met the person who fulfills the qualities that God deems as important for me, I will need to assure myself that the love would be true. In Corinthians, I learn that love is patient, hopeful, trusting, protecting, forgiving and kind. It is not envious, boastful, proud, rude, self-seeking or easily angered. Consequently, to truly love another the way God intended me to, I must forgive as God forgives me, know myself well enough to be a good partner for someone else, and let the Lord’s love be my guide in learning how to love.

**Jew: The Perfect Date**

Before Victoria and David Beckham and even before Romeo and Juliet, the first couple I ever read about (in the Hebrew Bible) was Adam and Eve. I learned in Hebrew school that in God’s plan for creation, he created a man, Adam, and a woman, Eve, so human life wouldn’t be lonely. Like Adam, I have always wanted to have a mate and, like Eve, have someone who shares responsibilities. The Talmud tries to calm my anxiety about choosing a partner by saying that God decided who I would marry before I was born. In a clarification in the Midrash (commentaries on the Hebrew Bible), it is said that God has been arranging marriages since he brought the Jews out of Egypt. This predetermined soul-mate is called besheret in Yiddish, and I desperately want to find that person! A young man can look in Genesis and realize that the young lady he finds will be his helper. To find many other references in the Torah as to what a perfect mate would be is complicated because the male-female dynamic is discussed in terms of marriage. The scholar and rabbi Maimonides reminds us that a man (husband) should be gentle, have admiration for his wife and not be angry or fearful. In turn, a woman (wife) should be dutiful and mindful of her companion’s wishes. Both undoubtedly should have respect for their spouse. Despite their cultural assumptions about gender roles, these traits remain valuable as guides for both men and women. In any case, one tradition would have us all relax about choosing a mate, since the one we choose in the end becomes our “besheret.”

So how can I actually find who my match is? The lyrics from the theater production, “Fiddler on the Roof,” sound in my mind: “matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match, find me a find, catch me a catch...” But do I really need some other earthly person’s assistance? Perhaps the first example of matchmaking can be dated to Abraham using Eliezer to find a kind girl from a good family for his son, Isaac. Customarily, a middle-man called a shadchan (in Hebrew) was used to make pairs for families. Most Jews living in America in the 21st century don’t rely on this type of service, but some Orthodox Jewish communities still follow this tradition. A new-age type of matchmaking that has taken Judaism by storm is intra-faith Internet community networks. These sites are attractive because they link singles with similar traditions, customs and upbringings together as fast and as easily as possible. One such site that uses Judaism boldly in its webpage title is www.SawYouAtSinai.com. This company hopes that Jews looking to find love will recall the tradition that all souls were once at Mt. Sinai and seek to rendezvous with someone who was also there. Now that’s a new twist on finding your besheret!
Christian young woman: So I Can’t Date You?

I love someone who is respectful, gentle, industrious, creative, sharp, sensible and faithful. But there is an issue: he warned me that we can’t “get too serious” for just ONE reason—I’m not Jewish! This is truly a conflict for him because I know that Judaism frowns on marriage with outsiders, but we are not yet ready for marriage, so who cares?

Well, it seems that his parents care, a lot. They don’t want their son to lead a more complicated life than necessary. With contemporary couples battling as much as they do, they question why we would purposely choose to enter a relationship with something that could be a source for so much disagreement. If we marry, they wonder if we will argue whether to wed in a church or synagogue, and if a rabbi or pastor will sanction the marriage. Will there be mezuzahs on our doorposts of our home announcing to the world that we are a Jewish family, or will he agree to sleep with a crucifix over our bed? And during Yom Kippur and Holy Week, will we support each other in our fasts? Will he still choose to fast and pray if I don’t? His mother expects a daughter-in-law who can cook latkes, matzah balls and kugel; will I ever be a worthy girlfriend or wife in her eyes? She worries that on Passover we won’t even have a Seder because statistics show that only 41% of intermarried couples do. Or worse, when someone in our family dies, will we bury them the next day or a week later? Burying half a body on each day is not an option!

His parents are most worried that they won’t have Jewish grandchildren because only a third of interfaith couples raise their children Jewish. Would our son be circumcised and have a baptism? Will we force our children to choose between their parents’ religions and decide in adolescence whether or not to have a Bar/Bat-mitzvah ceremony? Some decisions you only get to make once. Though I know some Reform and Conservative synagogues would allow our interfaith family as part of their congregation, I fear we would never be genuinely accepted. It may be this same apprehension that leads only 15% of intermarried Jews to belong to a synagogue. I would also not want to relinquish attending church each Sunday, and I have always dreamed, as a Jewish woman would, that my offspring would praise God with the same words I use.

My boyfriend feels a responsibility to commit to strengthening the Jewish population since the Holocaust stole the lives of six million Jews who deserved to live. Although I do not plan to convert to Judaism for him, I wish he and his family would consider our marriage not as losing him from Judaism but as gaining someone who respects and acknowledges Judaism and Jews as legitimate and worthy of love and appreciation.

Jewish young man: So I Can’t Date You?

I am delighted to finally have a girlfriend who is deeply committed to her family traditions, and I respect her discipline of attending worship services each week. I just wish those traditions included lighting Shabbat candles, and that those prayer services were on Friday and Saturday.

She jokes that she feels blessed because two Jewish men love her (one being me; the other, Jesus). Unfortunately, her religion is concerned about one relationship but strongly encourages the other. She says that she has read in scripture that she should not be together with an unbeliever and that a man should only marry “a believing wife,” or in her case, a believing husband. But aren’t we a little too young to be considering marriage? My girlfriend and her parents don’t seem to think so.

She has confessed that she often dreams of her wedding day, marrying in the church where her parents committed their love to one another and to God. I am sure she would look radiant in her white gown, but all I can imagine is a crucifix dangling from her necklace, Jesus staring me in the face, reminding me of the charge that “my people” took his life. Would I ever feel comfortable saying his name in prayer or in grace before meals? Could I truly understand the joy of celebrating his birth during Christmas or mourning his death during Holy Week? I wouldn’t want to be absent at her central holiday events, but I would never want to pretend to have an emotion or a feeling that isn’t present.

I have always looked forward to my son becoming a Bar-mitzvah and helping him appreciate the Hebrew prayers, but Jewish tradition says my children would not be Jewish because their mother would be Christian. If he doesn’t undergo conversion to become a Jewish man, I would feel awkward trying to be a “Christian” role model, and I wonder whether her parents would consider me worthy if I can’t teach our son the words to traditional hymns.

Even if her Catholic church congregation welcomes me to worship with her community, I won’t be able to participate in the entire service because it won’t be acceptable for me to receive Holy Communion. Because I refuse to convert, her fellow parishioners and parents may even fear that I will weaken her faith. Instead of this apprehension, I wish they would emphasize our shared history, our mutual reverence of the Old Testament, our love of one God, and appreciate that I find her faith in the Lord to be worthy of awe.
PLEDGE FOR CHANGE

After completing the group activity, the students may want to change their activity in their lives.

Let the students know that a pledge for change can help the person they are become the person they want to be. They can use small steps to promote better Jewish-Christian relations where they are.

Each student should write down his/her own pledge and agree to keep true to it.

PLEDGE SUGGESTIONS

◙ I will utilize the list I made in the Bridge the Gap activity to guide me when searching for a romantic partner.
◙ I will decide whether I am looking for a future spouse or Mr. or Mrs. Right Now.
◙ If Christian, I will pray to God with the belief I will be aided in finding a suitable mate.
◙ If Jewish, I will pray to recognize my mate and praise God for his selection of this mate.
◙ Before deciding to date someone of the “other” religion I will consider complications as addressed in the So I Can’t Date You? sections.
◙ If a friend is dating someone of the “other” religion I will try to view it as gaining a supporter of my religion.
◙ I will use one of the suggestions in the Further Exploration section to date someone within my respective religion.

FURTHER EXPLORATION: MEETING YOUR MATCH

If you do choose to date within your respective religion, here are some ways to come into contact with a potential partner.

**Christian:**
- Choose a college that is strongly affiliated with your particular Christian community
- Become a member of an on-campus Christian club
- Go on a religious weekend retreat
- Choose a study-abroad program that concentrates on Christian themes
- Be active in all that a Christian recreation program has to offer
- Play on an intramural sports team at a Christian recreation program
- Lead a community service project for Christians in your neighborhood
- Staff a high school Christian youth group conference
- Work for an organization that is affiliated in some way with the Christian community
- Have a friend introduce you to a Christian friend
- Participate in a Christian speed-dating program
- Participate in a worship service
- Go to church-sponsored activities such as picnics or cooking classes
- Join a Bible study group
- Accept any invitation you get to join in a Sunday dinner
- Attend Christian holiday parties
- Reunite with old classmates from Sunday School
- Browse a Christian bookstore or memorabilia shop
- Go to a gospel concert
- Compliment someone who is wearing an attractive cross or crucifix
- Create a profile on a Christian online dating network like:
  - http://www.christiancafe.com/

**Jewish:**
- Choose a college that is strongly affiliated with Judaism
- Become a member of an on-campus Jewish club or fraternity
- Attend a weekend conference that centers on supporting Israel
- Choose a study-abroad program that concentrates on Jewish themes
- Travel to Israel on a Birthright trip
- Be active in all that a Jewish recreation program has to offer
- Play on an intramural sports team at a Jewish recreation program
- Lead a community service project for Jews in your neighborhood
- Staff a high school Jewish youth group convention
- Work for an organization that is affiliated in some way with the Jewish community
- Have a friend introduce you to a Jewish friend or use a **shadchan**
- Participate in a Jewish speed-dating program
- Participate in a prayer service
- Reflect at a Holocaust Memorial or a Jewish Museum
- Go to synagogue-sponsored activities such as lectures or dance classes
- Accept any invitation you get to join in a Shabbat dinner
- Attend Jewish holiday parties and carnivals
- Reunite with old friends from Jewish summer camps
- Browse a Jewish bookstore or memorabilia shop
- Eat at kosher restaurants
- Compliment someone who is wearing an attractive **Magen David** or **Chai**
- Create a profile on a Jewish online dating network like:
  - http://www.jsoulmate.com/
  - http://www.jewishcafe.com/
  - http://www.jewishpassions.com/
  - http://www.ajewishdatingsite.com/
For More on Christian Views on Finding the Perfect Date


For More on Jewish Views on Finding the Perfect Date


For More on Interfaith Dating


For More on Meeting Your Match


Kornbluth, Doron. 7 Ways to Find Your Jewish Soulmate. 2008. Aish HaTorah. 8 July 2008 <http://www.aish.com/dating/wisdom/Seven_Ways_to_Find_Your_Jewish_Soul_Mate.asp>.

For Other Programs:


Interfaith Circles. Interfaith Resources Inc, 1986.

For Better Presentations and/or Teaching Philosophies:


