

Good Will for the Common Good: Nurturing Baptists' Relationships with Jews

Leaders Guide



Four online adult Sunday school lessons

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Approaching Wisdom Leaders Guide

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A DVD and Students Guide for *Good Will for the Common Good: Nurturing Baptists' Relationships with Jews* are also available from Acacia Resources (www.acaciaresources.com).

Theme: Wise thoughts frame wise words and actions.

**Texts: Proverbs 1:2-7
Matthew 7:24-27
James 1:5-8; 3:13-18**

Before You Lead

- ▶ Read the scripture texts listed above, the Preface and “Approaching Wisdom” from the Students Guide and the following suggestions.
- ▶ Preview the Introduction and Wisdom chapters from the DVD.
- ▶ Arrange to have a television monitor and DVD player in your meeting area.
- ▶ For additional insight and information, you may want to read the following articles on EthicsDaily.com:

“Fostering Good Will for the Common Good,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=4385);

“SBC President’s Anti-Jewish Remark Helped Spark Conservative Revolution,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=6311);

“SBC Leader Compares Judaism to ‘Deadly Tumor’,”
(www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=2707);

“Rabbi Warns Against ‘Christocrats’ in Book,”
(www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=7031);

“All of Us Seek the Same God,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=3944);

“Why Baptists Need to Dialogue with Jews,”
(www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=4433);

“Fogging the Difference: Southern Baptists and Strategies of Jewish Evangelism,” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=4478).

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

► Begin by asking adults to respond to two questions:

- *How do you define anti-Semitism?*
- *What are some examples of anti-Semitism?*

► Next, play the Introduction and the Wisdom chapters from the DVD. Then ask:

- *How do you think a Jewish person’s understandings of and experiences with anti-Semitism differ from yours?*

- *How could the perspective of a Jewish person enable you to better understand and recognize anti-Semitism both historically and today?*
- *Why is this understanding important as we consider ways Baptists and Jews can work together for the common good?*

► Ask adults to recall examples from the history of Baptists’ relationship with Jews that show both wisdom and the absence of wisdom. Supplement their comments with information from the Students Guide.

► Remind adults of the cardinal virtues in addition to wisdom: temperance (balance), courage and justice. Note that these are considered “cardinal,” or central, because all other virtues hang on these four. Point out that these four virtues will help frame these Bible studies and discussions designed to move you into new avenues of dialogue, relationship and cooperation with Jewish neighbors.

Explore the Bible

► Use an incident from the early history of the Hebrew people to help adults to begin thinking about wisdom from a biblical perspective. Call attention to 1 Chronicles 12 and explain that it is part of a lengthy passage describing the coronation of David to Israel’s throne. Point out the telephone-book-type listing of the various groups who attended the coronation events such as Benjamites, Gadites, Judahites and Manassites, and note some of the different attributes ascribed to each group.

Remind adults that David’s daunting task was to unite the many and diverse tribes of Israel into one community of

faith. If they became a united community, God would lead them into a new and bright future. But first they had to learn what unity and community meant. They had to learn to think in terms of “the common good.”

Ask someone to read aloud verse 32. Then ask: *What set apart the men of Issachar?*

Point out their distinction of having “understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” Explain that their wisdom would be critical to David and to the nation as it struggled to return from the failure of exile and judgment to a new way of living. The men of Issachar had the wisdom required to facilitate the understanding among these various groups that would enable them to unite around a common purpose.

Suggest that in terms of Baptists’ relationships with Jews, we need wisdom similar to that of the men of Issachar. We need to understand the times and discern what we ought to do. Stress that the virtue of wisdom enables us to respond and relate with appropriate words and actions that result in good for everyone. Wisdom enables us to unite with our Jewish neighbors on values and issues we share that can advance the common good.

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud Proverbs 1:2-7 and lead adults to develop some principles for gaining wisdom by asking such questions as:

- *What is wisdom?*
- *How do we acquire wisdom?*
- *How do we show that we have wisdom?*

- *How does wisdom affect the way we view ourselves, God and others?*
- *How does lack of wisdom adversely affect relationships?*
- *How does the presence of wisdom enhance relationships?*
- *How is wisdom foundational in establishing new and positive relationships between Baptists and Jews?*

As adults respond to questions and identify principles, list these on a board or poster.

► Read aloud Matthew 7:24-27 and ask: *How did Jesus describe wisdom?*

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud James 1:5-8 and ask: *How did James say we could acquire wisdom?*

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud James 3:13-18. Then ask:

- *How did James describe the difference between godly wisdom and earthly wisdom?*
- *How did he say that a person with godly wisdom will relate to others?*

Apply Biblical Truth

► Ask adults to recall the relationship of Congregation Ohabai Shalom and Immanuel Baptist Church from the DVD you viewed earlier. Guide them to name specific things the congregations do that reflect wisdom.

► Guide adults to review the comments and principles they have suggested related to wisdom and develop a concise list of 3-5 principle statements based on your discussion and their understanding of scripture. Then ask:

- *What opportunities have you had personally to establish relationships with persons of the Jewish faith?*
- *How can wisdom enable us to create new and improved relationships with our Jewish neighbors?*
- *What will happen if we fail to develop wisdom and apply it to our relationships?*
- *What is the beginning point for establishing new relationships and creating a climate in which we can work together with our Jewish neighbors for the common good?*

► Note the example from the Students Guide of Glenn Hinson's response to the controversial Bailey Smith letter and ask:

- *How did Hinson's response reflect wisdom?*
- *What did Hinson risk by his actions?*

► Review the concluding statements in the Students Guide about the importance of dialogue between Baptists and Jews. Stress that dialogue:

- teaches us how to live more authentically as Christians;

- demands that we live toward the future, rather than looking backward;
- requires that we act with humility; and
- is instrumental in creating a new future.

Wisdom is the quality or perspective that enables us to make right judgments and moral decisions, using the knowledge and information available to us.

Achieving Balance Leaders Guide

Theme: Balance results from self-control.

Texts: Exodus 20:8-10
Proverbs 25:28
Matthew 7:12
James 1:19-21
James 2:8-10

Before You Lead

- ▶ Read the scripture texts listed above, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following suggestions.
- ▶ Preview the Balance chapter from the DVD.
- ▶ Arrange to have a television monitor and DVD player in your meeting area.
- ▶ For additional insight and information, read the following articles at EthicsDaily.com:

“Telling the Gospel Story Without Defaming Jews,”
http://ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=4011;

“A Model For Christian And Jewish Relations”
http://ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=4384.

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

▶ Illustrate the value of balance by reading aloud a list of ingredients from a recipe, omitting one key ingredient or significantly altering a required ingredient’s amount. Ask adults to try to identify the recipe, as well as what is wrong with the way you read it.

Suggest that in life, as in cooking, the right “amount” makes all the difference. Too much of something can be disastrous; not enough can be disappointing or ineffective. Moderation or balance in thought, speech and actions enable us to forge healthy and productive relationships in which we can work with others for the common good.

▶ Remind adults that foundational to this four-part study are the four cardinal virtues: wisdom, temperance (balance), courage and justice. Then ask volunteers to suggest what first comes to mind when they hear the word *temperance*.

Call attention to Webster’s definition: “moderation in action, thought or feeling,” and point out C.S. Lewis’s description of it as “going the right length and no further.”

Then ask:

- *What ingredients do we need to combine in order to create a balanced life?*
- *In what areas of life is moderation or balance essential? What happens when it is missing?*

- *Why is the virtue of temperance or balance essential in establishing and maintaining positive relationships with our Jewish neighbors?*

Stress that the history between Baptists and Jews would look markedly different had more Baptists exercised the self-control necessary for moderation and restraint in speech and actions.

▶ Play the Balance chapter of the DVD and allow adults the opportunity to respond to it with comments and questions.

Explore the Bible

▶ Offer an overview of biblical themes related to balance by using the introduction to The Biblical Witness from the Students Guide. Suggest that the scriptural portrait of a balanced life is one that exercises self-control and displays love.

▶ Read aloud Exodus 20:8-10. Then ask:

- *What concepts related to balance can you conclude from the commandment to keep sabbath?*
- *How does achieving balance affect us personally? Our families? Our communities?*

▶ Ask a volunteer to read aloud Proverbs 25:28. Then ask: *What is the relationship between self-control and achieving balance?*

▶ Read aloud Matthew 7:12; then ask:

- *What was Jesus' intention in giving what we've come to call the Golden Rule? How do we often apply it? Why is this wrong?*
- *How does following Jesus' teaching and example here affect how we relate to people of Jewish faith?*

▶ Read aloud James 1:19-21. Ask: *What did James advise in order to live a disciplined, godly life?*

▶ Read aloud Leviticus 19:18; then read James 2:8-10 and note James's reference to "royal law." Point out that the instructions in Leviticus 19 played a key role in shaping the early church. Some biblical scholars believe that James's letter was something of a sermon based on Leviticus 19:12-18.

Using the information in the Students Guide, describe holy living from the perspective of a Jewish person. Stress that "loving neighbor" is central to the teachings of both Christianity and Judaism.

Ask:

- *What did James say we would do if we truly love our neighbors?*
- *What did he say we would avoid doing if we truly love our neighbors?*
- *What does failure to love others as we love ourselves indicate about us?*

Apply Biblical Truth

► Illustrate the concept of loving neighbor by using an example from the history of First Baptist Church, Lumberton, North Carolina. Though the congregation had flourished for many years, it encountered financial disaster in the 1930s in the wake of the Great Depression and faced foreclosure. Help came from a most unlikely source: the local Jewish community. Mr. Weinstein, a Jewish neighbor, loaned the church the money it needed to avoid closing its doors.

► Using the information at the conclusion of the Students Guide lesson, summarize the principles suggested for “going the right length.” Note especially the commentary with the guideline to “act in the spirit of Christ.”

Stress that the virtue of balance enables us to go “the right length and no further,” remaining faithful to our personal beliefs while also respecting the beliefs of our Jewish neighbors.

► Conclude by reading aloud the last paragraph from the Students Guide.

Exhibiting Courage Leaders Guide

Theme: Courage risks forging new alliances with long-term involvement for the common good.

**Texts: Exodus 1:8-10, 15-17, 22
Exodus 2:1-10
Matthew 6:1-7, 16-18
James 1:22-25**

Before You Lead

► Read the scripture texts listed above, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.

► Preview the Courage chapter from the DVD.

► Arrange to have a television monitor and DVD player in your meeting area.

► Prepare small-group discussion guides by copying the first three courage principles and their related scriptures and questions onto note cards or pieces of paper. See the second step in Explore the Bible, below.

► For additional insight and information, read the following article at EthicsDaily.com:

“Rabbi, Pastor Team Up to Write Passover Haggadah for Christians” (www.ethicsdaily.com/article_detail.cfm?AID=5396).

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

► Begin with the following example:

When Suzii Paynter, director of the Texas Christian Life Commission, lived in Jackson, Mississippi, she and her pastor husband led members of their Baptist church to take an unusual and courageous step with some members of the local synagogue and an Episcopal congregation.

“We took 20 folks from our Baptist congregation, 20 from the synagogue and 20 from an Episcopal church,” she recalls, “and those 60 people formed a study group that met once a month for a year.”

Together the group studied both Hebrew and Christian scriptures and talked about their understandings and beliefs. They expressed both points of agreement and disagreement.

One of the most interesting things, Paynter recalls, is that each month as the group of 60 met, another 200-300 people from all three congregations would gather to sit silently and listen to their discussions.

At the end of their year-long study, the group got on a plane together for a memorable trip to Israel. “Many of us Christians had never been to Israel before,” Paynter says, “but for so many of our Jewish friends, it was their 10th or 12th

trip.” In spite of that, she says, they had never visited any of the sites significant to Christians.

The Christians in the group learned a lot about Jesus and his Jewish identity and gained an appreciation for his understanding and application of Hebrew scripture, Paynter says. Their Jewish friends learned more about the Christians’ understanding of Messiah. By talking about what they had in common as well as their differences, members of the group grew in their respect for each other and better understood the importance of religious liberty and freedom of expression.

Paynter believes it’s important to be in informed dialogue and friendship with people, spend time with them and intentionally share experiences. Doing so, however, takes courage and a commitment to long-term involvement for the common good.

► Using information from the Introduction in the Students Guide, lead adults to describe and define *courage*. Then ask:

- *Why is the virtue of courage crucial in establishing positive relationships between Baptists and Jews?*
- *How has lack of courage contributed to the deterioration of relationships between the two faith groups?*
- *What is the role of dialogue in establishing those relationships?*

► Play the Courage chapter of the DVD. Then allow adults the opportunity to make comments and ask questions.

Explore the Bible

► Ask adults to recall examples from scripture of courageous people. Challenge them to identify the circumstances and what made each person courageous. Supplement their examples with those from the introduction to *The Biblical Witness* in the Students Guide.

► Suggest that scripture supports at least four principles related to the virtue of courage:

- Courage fuels right actions.
- Courage seizes opportunities.
- Courage acts from proper motives.
- Courage does the will of God.

Point out the sections in the Students Guide that correspond to these ideas. Then divide adults into three small groups and assign one of the first three principles and its supporting scripture to each group. Give each group a copy of the discussion guide you prepared. Ask them to read the assigned scripture and discuss answers to the questions within their small group.

Principle #1: Courage Fuels Right Actions

Read Exodus 1:8-10, 15-17, 22.

- *If courage fuels right actions, is the opposite also true? Does lack of courage cause us to take wrong actions?*
- *Who were Shiphrah and Puah? What did they stand to lose by doing what they did? Why do you think they did it? What was most important to them? What motivated them?*

- *What motivated the king, and what were the results?*

Principle #2: Courage Seizes Opportunities

Read Exodus 2:1-10.

- *Who in this story displayed courage? What did these women have working against them?*
- *What opportunity did they see, and what did they do about it?*
- *How did Pharaoh's daughter display courage?*

Principle #3: Courage Acts from Proper Motives

Read Matthew 6:1-7, 16-18.

- *Given the importance of worship, almsgiving, prayer and fasting in Jewish life and the fact that Jesus was a Jew, what do you think Jesus was saying about them here? What was he not saying?*
- *What do Jesus' statements teach us about motive?*
- *How were Jesus' statements here courageous?*

► After several minutes, ask each group to summarize its assigned scripture and explain how it supports a principle about courage.

Then read aloud James 1:22-25 and note the final principle: Courage does the will of God. Ask:

- *What particular kind of person was James concerned with here?*
- *What distinguishes authentic disciples from inauthentic ones?*
- *How does the virtue of courage enable us to do the will of God?*

Apply Biblical Truth

► Relate the following story from John D. Baker, pastor of First Baptist Church, Columbia, MO:

Congregation Beth Shalom in Columbia had been renting space for their synagogue from the Hillel Center, the Jewish student ministry organization at the University of Missouri. This leased space was adequate for the 50 or so who attended the weekly Shabbat (Sabbath) services, but attendance at High Holy Days like Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) would sometimes swell to 400 or more.

“So what did they do?” Baker recalls. “They asked their spiritual neighbors at First Baptist Church if they could rent our sanctuary for their celebrations. Though with a small gulp, we answered with a hearty ‘Yes,’ but we refused to accept any payment.

“When the Jews come to worship in our sanctuary, they bring with them their tabernacle, Torah scrolls, candles, vestments, altar cloths and worship books. We allow them to remove our altar cross and cover up the cross that is on our chancel table. They cannot cover up our stained glass windows or carved words of witness above our baptistry,” Baker says.

This now eight-year relationship, characterized by friendship, mutual respect and healthy dialogue, was unwelcomed by some in the community.

“The first time that Congregation Beth Shalom worshipped in our sanctuary,” Baker says, “we were vandalized that night. Our outside lights were torn down, and a vandal cut his wrists on a lamp’s glass in the process. Smearred in blood on our dark green front door were a swastika and a few ignorant words.”

Baker and Congregation Beth Shalom’s rabbi, Yossi Feintuch, have developed a deep and abiding friendship. “I have learned much from him,” Baker says, “and I trust so has he from me. We share struggles of faith and profession and have offered each other pastoral care numerous times.”

Baker says, “Just in case we’ve forgotten, I hope we can remember that Jesus was a Jew. His parents were Jews. Jesus denounced certain aspects of Jewish worship, leadership or tradition (who hasn’t done that from time to time about those ‘Some Other Baptists’?), but he never denounced his heritage. Neither should we.”

► Close by reviewing the guidelines for establishing authentic relationships with Jews, found at the conclusion of the lesson in the Students Guide.

Establishing Justice Leaders Guide

Theme: God-centered living compels us to seek justice.

**Texts: Amos 5:10-15
Matthew 5:6, 14-16
James 2:14-26**

Before You Lead

- ▶ Read the scripture texts listed above, the lesson from the Students Guide and the following teaching suggestions.
- ▶ Preview the Justice chapter and the Conclusion from the DVD.
- ▶ Arrange to have a television monitor and DVD player in your meeting area.

As You Lead

Introduce the Lesson

- ▶ Begin by asking adults to make a list of things they consider to be injustices. Encourage them to think beyond themselves and your community and to consider people and situations around the world. Write their suggestions on a board or chart.

Review the list by asking:

- *Why do these situations exist?*
- *What can be done to alleviate them?*
- *Can we overcome these injustices on our own? If not, what kind of cooperative efforts are necessary?*
- *Why is it important that we pursue justice in these situations?*

▶ Next, ask adults to define and characterize *justice*. Supplement their comments with ideas from the Introduction in the Students Guide. Stress that commitment to the pursuit of justice is a natural outgrowth of loving God and loving neighbor. Then ask:

- *Why is the virtue of justice important for individuals? for communities?*
- *What values do Baptists and Jews hold in common that call for cooperative efforts to establish justice?*
- *Why do you think that we have failed to work cooperatively together in the past on these issues?*
- *What will it take for us to begin working together?*

▶ Play the Justice chapter of the DVD. Then allow adults the opportunity to make comments and ask questions.

Explore the Bible

- ▶ Summarize the biblical mandate for pursuing justice using comments at the beginning of The Biblical Witness section of the Students Guide. Then introduce Amos by reading aloud Amos 5:10-15. Ask:

- *What had Israel done that led to God’s complaint against them?*
- *What indications did Amos give that justice had been perverted?*
- *Which among Israel’s citizens had become most vulnerable as a result?*
- *Who today are among the first to suffer when justice is perverted or not guarded for everyone?*
- *What was Amos’s message for the people of Israel?*
- *What is Amos’s message for us?*

Call specific attention to verse 15 again and point out the admonition to “hate evil and love good.” Note that in Hebrew, *love* and *hate* refer not simply to feelings but also to choices and decisions. Stress that Amos issued a clear call to deliberate actions of rejecting evil, choosing goodness and pursuing justice.

► Remind adults that following Jesus means making a commitment to active engagement in the world, including the pursuit of justice.

Read aloud Matthew 5:6, 14-16; then ask:

- *What was Jesus’ message here?*
- *To what was Jesus calling his followers?*

- *What will it require of us to become like salt, light and a city on a hill? How does doing so relate to the pursuit of justice?*

► Ask a volunteer to read aloud James 2:14-26. Then lead adults to discuss it and apply it to the concept of justice by asking such questions as:

- *What constitutes living or authentic faith, according to James?*
- *How are beliefs and actions connected or related? Why aren’t the “right” beliefs enough?*
- *Why did James quote from Deuteronomy 6 here?*
- *In what ways are Abraham and Rahab examples of authentic faith?*
- *What is the only response of authentic faith to someone in need?*

Apply Biblical Truth

► Remind adults that Jesus, speaking in the synagogue in Nazareth near the beginning of his public ministry, read from the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19).

True to his word, Jesus then spent most of his time not among the wealthy and the powerful but among the poor,

sick, hungry and marginalized. He instructed his followers to do the same.

Stress scripture's clear message that our identity as God's people means that we will pursue justice for everyone.

► Remind adults of some of the values Baptists and Jews hold in common, such as civil rights, separation of church and state, care for the environment and stewardship of the earth, a commitment to fighting poverty. Then ask adults to identify individuals who are most affected when justice is absent in situations touched by these values (the poor, the homeless, minorities, children, the elderly, minorities, etc.).

Lead adults to brainstorm ways Baptists and Jews can work together to seek justice in areas such as:

- Housing
- Health care
- Employment
- Education
- Immigration
- Elder care
- Foster care and child care

Ask them to offer specific ideas in each area and suggest steps they would take to engage your congregation with the Jewish community in your area in addressing the associated issues and problems.

► Close by playing the Conclusion from the DVD.

Check out these other undated adult Bible study curricula from Acacia Resources!



- *Being Doers of the Word: 13 Lessons from James*
- *Courageous Churches*
- *Doing the Will of God: Studies in Matthew*
- *Genesis: The Creation of Relationships*
- *Honoring the Ten Commandments: Monument or Movement?*
- *In the Beginning God: 13 Lessons from Genesis*
- *Leading Churches into 21st Century Missions: 13 Lessons in Acts*
- *Living Wisely, Living Well: Lessons from The Proverbs*
- *Looking at Leadership: Lessons from 1 and 2 Kings*
- *The Practice of Living Faithfully*
- *Questions Jesus Asked*
- *Walk His Way: Discipleship Lessons from Mark's Gospel*