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HUFF
POST

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Three Ways Synagogues Can Learn From Churches

I grew up with a synagogue inside my house and a church across the street. My dad and most of my family were converted Christians. Not to mention I spent a year going to both churches.

I've seen some of the best and worst houses of worship (both Jewish and Christian) and, in my opinion, that synagogues can learn from churches. Indeed, the list could go on and on. To get started, I've compiled a list of three ways synagogues can learn from churches.

1. First-time visitor parking

When I visited the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Lithonia, Georgia, I didn't plan ahead, but I was surprised to find that not all of the mega-church's 22,000 members could park in their (albeit sprawling) parking lot. There was plenty of "off-site" parking where people hopped on shuttle buses to bring them to the church.

But, luckily for me, New Birth is a church that has mastered the fine art of welcoming newcomers. In the church sanctuary and right next to the handicap parking were spots that were painted for "First-time visitor parking." I've seen at some grocery stores.

It's an overall theme of welcoming and customer service, which leads me to the next item...

2. Customer service

I once heard Bernie Marcus speak to a roomful of rabbis. Marcus is the co-founder of the Home Depot, a philanthropist. What he was telling the clergy gathered was as follows: when a customer walks into a store, they can go up to anyone in a bright orange apron and ask them any question. Where can I find nuts? Do you sell the paint color Evening Peruvian Lily here? There is no stupid question you can ask an employee, Marcus explained. Those in orange aprons are there for one reason and one reason only: to help the customer. It's not surprising that Home Depot's competitor Lowe's is launching a new campaign highlighting the helpfulness of its associates.)

So, too, Marcus continued, synagogues are in the customer service business. "In many respects, synagogues are thinking like a scholar and start thinking like a retailer." With their Hebrew prayers and insular culture, synagogues can be a very intimidating place. There are lots of options for "customers" (other synagogues, outright converts, etc.) to stand out and rise to the occasion by offering great customer service, in very much the same way that Home Depot does: greet you, show you to your seat, and so on.

Synagogues can even improve with something as simple as proper signage. For example, when I visited Home Depot, you know exactly where the restrooms are located. At most synagogues, it would take someone asking for directions. I discussed this with a rabbi once and he said his synagogue was different. His synagogue had

congregants where the restrooms, sanctuary, and clergy's office was. I looked around; he was I were in Hebrew. Enough said.

3. Study the work of Synagogue 3000

A national non-profit organization called Synagogue 3000 has a singular mission: to revitalize s efforts cross over into many categories, everything from more inspiring prayer services to ways What's more interesting to me is that one of the ways it seeks to learn how to better a synagogi see what techniques can be brought back to the Jewish world.

For example, a few years ago it invited Rick Warren (the mega-pastor who gave the invocation give a workshop to a group of rabbis on how they can do better outreach at their synagogues. I one of the biggest churches in America, sitting in a room with a bunch of rabbis, giving them ad synagogues. Everything from member retention to community outreach to fund-raising was disc

"Jews need to be more quote-unquote evangelical," Ron Wolfson, the co-founder of the Synagog professor at the American Jewish University, told me. "We need to do a better job of presenting

Synagogue 3000 has lots of resources on its website and was also kind enough to post some v Warren intervention. I've posted one below:

So those are just three ideas to get the conversation going. Nothing on this list is against Jewis should bring Jesus in the synagogue. But what I am saying is that it wouldn't hurt a synagogue where the restrooms are or grab a bucket of paint and mark a few spots in their parking lot for r way.

Over time, I'll post more suggestions on other ways synagogues can learn from churches. Feel in the comments section below.

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