**More than a few evangelicals have Jewish friends and family**

By Bob Smietana

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.—** American evangelicals are known for their support of the nation of Israel—believing God promised that land to the Jewish people. But they also have some more personal motivations.

One in 3 has Jewish friends.

And a few have Jewish ethnicity.

Two percent of Americans with evangelical beliefs—an estimated 871,000 adult Americans—also have a Jewish parent or grandparent, according to a recent study by Nashville-based LifeWay Research.

“For some evangelicals, the Jewish community is family,” says Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

Lifeway Research’s finding is bolstered by an earlier study by Pew Research.

That [2013 study](http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/) found that about 1.6 million Americans who have a Jewish parent or were raised Jewish say they are Christians. The recent Lifeway Research study suggests that a sizable number of this group have evangelical beliefs.

The LifeWay Research study also found 30 percent of Americans with evangelical beliefs have Jewish friends—and of those, about a third (35 percent) have prayed for their Jewish friend’s salvation in the past week.

“Evangelicals say it’s important to share their faith with their Jewish friends,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “But most evangelicals find this to be difficult for one reason or another.”

And evangelicals who do share their faith with their Jewish friends may find a reluctant audience.

While many Americans are open to changing their faith, American Jews are more reluctant. Only a quarter of those who were raised Jewish no longer identify with that faith, according to a [study](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/chapter-2-religious-switching-and-intermarriage/) from Pew Research. By comparison, 34 percent of all Americans have changed their childhood faith group, according to Pew. That figure jumps to 42 percent after taking into account those who switch to a different Christian tradition.

Some Jewish people feel distant from evangelicals. When asked to rate how warmly they felt about other faiths, American Jews were lukewarm toward evangelicals, rating them only slightly above Muslims and below atheists, [according](http://www.pewforum.org/2017/02/15/americans-express-increasingly-warm-feelings-toward-religious-groups/) to Pew Research. Jews have warmer feelings about Catholics and mainline Protestants.

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Still, among Americans who identify as Jews, a third (34 percent) say that someone can believe Jesus is the Messiah and still be considered Jewish, according to Pew Research.

**Uncertain relationships**

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Another complicating factor in the relations between evangelicals and Jews: Evangelicals seem unclear about the relationship between Jews and Christians and how Jews fit into God’s plan, according to the survey, which was underwritten by Chosen People Ministries and author Joel C. Rosenberg.

Just over a quarter (28 percent) embrace “supersessionism” or replacement theology—the claim that the Christian church “has fulfilled or replaced the nation of Israel in God’s plan.” A greater percentage, 41 percent reject that idea, while 32 percent are not sure.

Younger evangelical believers—those between 18 and 34—are more likely to say Christians have replaced Jews in God’s plan. Thirty-four percent agree, while 30 percent disagree. Thirty-six percent are not sure.

By contrast, 48 percent of evangelicals 65 and older disagree with replacement theology. Twenty-three percent agree, while 29 percent are not sure.

Americans with evangelical beliefs also are uncertain whether many Jews will become believers in Jesus sometime in the future.

About half (55 percent) believe “the Bible teaches that one day, most or all Jewish people, alive at that time, will believe in Jesus.” Sixteen percent disagree, and 29 percent are unsure.

While evangelicals see a clear tie between Bible prophecy and the rebirth of the nation of Israel, they’re less certain whether Jewish people play a role in the return of Jesus.

About half (47 percent) agree with the statement, “Jewish people continue to be significant for the history of redemption as Jesus will return when the Jewish people accept Jesus.” Twenty-three percent disagree, while 31 percent are not sure.

“Many evangelicals believe the gospel will be spread to all people in the world before Jesus returns,” McConnell said. “But they aren’t sure if Jewish people have a special place in God’s plan anymore --this is especially true of young evangelicals.”

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*Bob Smietana is senior writer for* Facts & Trends.

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Methodology:

*LifeWay Research conducted the study Sept. 20-28, 2017. The survey, underwritten by Chosen People Ministries and author Joel C. Rosenberg was conducted using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. People in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate but do not already have internet access, GfK provides at no cost a laptop and ISP connection.*

*Sample stratification and weights were used for gender by age, ethnicity, region, education and household income to reflect the most recent U.S. Census data. The completed sample is 2,002 surveys. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 2.7 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.*

*Respondents were screened to include only adults with evangelical beliefs. Evangelical beliefs are defined using the NAE LifeWay Research Evangelical Beliefs Research Definition based on respondent beliefs. Respondents are asked their level of agreement with four separate statements using a four-point, forced-choice scale (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). Respondents are categorized as having evangelical beliefs if they strongly agree with all four statements:*

* *The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.*
* *It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.*
* *Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.*
* *Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation.*

 *LifeWay Research is a Nashville-based, evangelical research firm that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and matters that affect churches.*