Our Kiev branch leader, Anatoli Emma, reports, “When a contact named Irina came to faith, she asked us to reach out to her Jewish kindergarten teacher, Diana. It’s been more than 10 years since I began visiting Diana. Whenever I visited, Diana’s husband (also Jewish) would leave the room. Their daughter Veronica stayed, though she always appeared indifferent. But Diana was so caught up in our discussions that when I would leave, she often walked out with me to continue our conversation for as long as possible.

“Diana and I had many, many gospel conversations. She even prayed with me to receive the Lord, but though I frequently invited her to visit a church just down the street from her, she always refused. I decided to give her time and space to reflect, without depending on me to bring her attention to spiritual matters. We continued to invite her to events that we organize with the local Messianic congregations, but I didn’t visit her for nearly a year.

“While I paused my personal ministry to Diana, the Holy Spirit did not pause His! Praise God, He is always working!

“Recently I asked my wife Olga (who is also my colleague!) to call and visit Diana and, to our amazement, Diana had begun attending the church down the street on her own! Soon after, she was baptized. Her daughter Veronica has become open, and now Olga visits with her and her children.”

(continued on back cover)
This May will mark 25 years since I was elected executive director of Jews for Jesus, following in the footsteps of our larger-than-life founder, Moishe Rosen. It was daunting, to say the least! I remembered Solomon and how God invited him to request whatever he wished when he became king. Solomon responded, “Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?” (2 Chronicles 1:10).

I’m not the king of Jews for Jesus, but believe me, I was keenly aware of how very much I needed God’s wisdom! That became my number one prayer request, and some of you might recall me asking you to pray for God to grant me wisdom. The truth is, whatever God puts on our plate, we all desperately need His wisdom. Well, guess what? He has given us an entire book of the Bible that is a treasure house of wisdom! So, I committed to reading through the book of Proverbs, a chapter a day to correspond with each day of the month—and beginning again the following month. So far, I’ve read through the book of Proverbs approximately 300 times, and also through some fine commentaries—most recently Proverbs Pathways of Wisdom* by Dominick Hernandez (who serves on our US board of directors).

Proverbs offers essential wisdom and applicable advice for anyone who wants to live a godly life in Messiah Jesus. The difficulties and conflicts we believers struggle with in today’s toxic environment would be much more manageable if we would live out the wisdom of Proverbs every day.

Solomon’s advice can prevent a world of hurt and broken relationships such as we’ve seen in recent conflicts among believers. Likewise, unbelievers who are seeking truth will be attracted to Jesus as they see us living out godly wisdom.

The basis of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, but to sum up Solomon’s advice on what that looks like, I’d say, “Do the right thing and don’t do stupid stuff.” It really isn’t complicated—and Solomon’s words can help us stay on track.

Stop and think about it. What if, every time we got frustrated by something on social media, this verse popped up on our screen: “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1)?

Don’t Do Stupid Stuff: Reflections from 25 Years of Leading Jews for Jesus

BY DAVID BRICKNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

David Brickner early in his tenure as executive director, talking about Jesus on the Larry King Live show
Or imagine someone cut you off in traffic and your car stereo suddenly announced, “The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who keeps his way preserves his soul” (Proverbs 16:17).

And what about the more private temptations? Every year, some well-respected Christian leaders shatter their lives and the lives of countless others through sexual misconduct. None of us are immune to temptation, but having God’s Word in our hearts makes all the difference. Over the years, familiar warnings have turned me from temptation: “For why should you, my son, be enraputured by an immoral woman?” “Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths; for she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men” (see also Proverbs 5:20; 7:25–26; 2:16; 6:28–29).

That’s pretty sobering stuff.

Wouldn’t it be cool if those warnings from Solomon were “pop-ups” to alert every person who starts going to websites they should not be visiting? Well, repeated readings of God’s Word will keep His wisdom “popping up” in our hearts and minds.

Reflecting back on these 25 years, I am so grateful for the godly advice I’ve received through the book of Proverbs, including advice to seek wisdom from godly people.

Reflecting back on these 25 years, I am so grateful for the godly advice I’ve received through the book of Proverbs, including advice to seek wisdom from godly people.

Early in my tenure as executive director, I was interviewed on the Larry King Live show. Proverbs had so shaped my thinking that the words, “Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king” (Proverbs 25:6), popped into my mind as I prepared. And then the words I’ll never forget from my mentor, Moishe Rosen: “David, you can go on Larry King and talk about David Brickner, or about Jews for Jesus, or about Jesus. You better figure out which one you want to talk about before you go on the air.” Between Moishe and Solomon, I think I got it right.

National television aside, every day we each have to decide who or what we will draw attention to. May God grant us all the wisdom to keep Jesus at the center of all we do!

* See enclosed flyer
Also from Kiev, Victoria Negrimovskaya reports, “The first time I called Sonya, she asked me not to call again, as her grandchildren were ‘religious’ and would not approve. I didn’t call her for some time, but I prayed. When autumn came, I called Sonya to wish her a happy and healthy Jewish New Year. God softened her heart, and like a true Jewish mom, she began talking to me about her family. Then she agreed to meet with our intern, Sasha, and me. We had a wonderful visit with Sonya and her daughter Alla, both of whom were very open. Before leaving, we gave them the New Testament.

‘After a while, we couldn’t meet any longer because of the pandemic. But in December, I called Sonya again. ‘Today is the anniversary of my husband’s death,’ Sonya said after the first words of greeting. ‘And I really miss him.’

“Despite her sadness, she was thankful to God for giving her such a husband and family. When I invited her to repent and receive forgiveness through Jesus, she was quick to respond. ‘Yes!’ she said, ‘I am a sinner!’ We prayed with her to receive Jesus into her heart. Praise God for His love and mercy! Please pray for salvation for Sonya’s family.”

Thank you so much for your partnership which reaches all around the world. Even if you never get a chance to visit Kiev, you have Jewish brothers and sisters there who are grateful to you for helping them to know Jesus.

Your Partners in Kiev

Anatoli Emma (also known as Tolik) leads a robust missionary team:

* Olga Emma, Tolik’s wife, loves serving people “heart to heart,” particularly single mothers.
* Victoria Negrimovskaya is great at street outreach (in non-COVID times), and many people give her their contact information to hear more.
* Eduard Granovsky is particularly gifted in ministry to intellectuals and helps with our social media.
* Sasha Vronskaya is an intern who is learning to engage Jewish people with the gospel on the streets and in one-on-one visits.
* Vladimir Lech has a key role in reaching Jewish people online through our website and social networks.
* Alex Karpenko is a gifted web designer and takes part in strategizing how to reach Ukrainian Jewish people online.
* Zhanna Yegorova has excellent accounting and administrative skills and helps keep the branch running smoothly.

Challenges and how our team is meeting them:

* Many Jewish people who grew up during the Soviet regime are uncertain about what it means to be Jewish, and many children of mixed marriages are also uncertain about their Jewish identity. We invite people to Jewish holiday events to affirm their identity in ways that also help them recognize Jesus, the Jewish Messiah.
* Many who receive aid from Jewish agencies are afraid to associate with us because they might lose the financial relief. We try to help financially to alleviate that fear and meet physical as well as spiritual needs.

Thank you again, for partnering with us in Kiev!