

Jordan's King Abdullah Urges Evangelicals to Seek Mideast Peace

The monarch told Christians meeting in Washington, D.C., in April that Arabs in the Mideast 'need to hear your voice'

King Abdullah of Jordan asked a group of evangelical leaders in April to urge Christians in the United States to press for peace in the Middle East. Meeting in Washington, D.C., with some 80 leaders whom the Arab monarch called "men and women of peace," he said, "Arabs need to hear your voice."

King Abdullah asked the group—from the United States, Canada and South Korea—to tell members of their constituencies that "the future in the Middle East must be peace."

"It's time to stand up for what we believe in, " he said. "We need courage. The people in America should believe in us. Don't lose hope in us."

Pastor David Yonggi Cho from Seoul, South Korea; Trinity Broadcasting Network's (TBN) Paul Crouch Jr.; and pastors John Hagee of San Antonio, Marilyn Hickey of Denver, and Billy Joe Daugherty of Tulsa, Okla., were among those who attended the meeting hosted by TV evangelist Benny Hinn.

Hinn told the group that evangelicals had "put one arm around the Jews in Israel, and now it was time to put the other arm

around the Arabs since they are God's children, too." His comment was applauded by the group, including King Abdullah, who was in Washington to talk with members of Congress about a free-trade agreement with Jordan. The king said the agreement was vital to his country's economic development.

King Abdullah ascended to the throne in 1999 following the death of his father, King Hussein, noted for his long-running peace efforts in the Middle East. King Abdullah said that Jordan—where the population is 92 percent Muslim—had a history of equality for various religions and that it has a growing evangelical Christian minority. Hinn and fellow evangelist Morris Cerullo both have sponsored meetings in Jordan.

The king spoke about the "difficulties" in the West Bank between Arabs and Jews and talked at length about the need to end the "vicious cycle of violence," saying that "if the violence continues it will only get worse." He also said Jordan's tourist office is actively pursuing Christian tourism and invited the group to visit the country's holy sites.

Earlier this year the Jordan Tourism Board launched a major effort to put the country on the pilgrim map, and labeled its 200 authenticated biblical locations as "probably the best kept secret of the Holy Land." Among the biblical sites in Jordan are the place where Jesus was baptized, Elijah's hill and Mount Nebo.

When Paul Crouch Jr. asked if TBN could build a station in Jordan, the king said even though the nation's newspapers and TV stations are currently a government monopoly, he is pushing for privatization—which might allow for such a station.

King Abdullah told David Mainse, president of Crossroads Christian Communications in Canada, and host of its 100 Huntley Street talk show, that he had watched a Christian television program in Arabic hosted by Mainse's son-in-law and aired for several years from Lebanon. Mainse asked if he could buy time on the Jordanian television network, and the king instructed an aide to inquire about the request with the government.

Claud Bowers, president of WACX-TV SuperChannel 55 in Orlando, Fla., told the group that his wife had just returned from a successful tour of Jordan with a group of tourists.

Don Argue, president of Northwest College of the Assemblies of God in Kirkland, Wash., said the Washington group had been invited by a committee called "Friends of Jordan" and that they wanted to be supportive of the growing number of evangelicals in Jordan.

Hinn told the group that the late King Hussein had asked to meet with evangelical leaders, but died before the meeting could take place.