

How God Used a Trip to Israel to Burden This Young Man to Advocate for Persecuted Middle-Eastern Christians

Peter Burns works hard in Washington, D.C., to advocate for Christians in the Middle East, including those in Israel. But Burns had no idea as a young man that he would one day be an advocate for Christian minorities—until a trip to Israel opened his eyes.

He tells the “Charisma News” podcast that in college, he began to get involved with local politics. He founded the College Republicans chapter at Southern Illinois University and even worked on Marco Rubio’s presidential campaign in 2015. While in college, Burns got involved with Passages, an organization that takes Christian students to Israel at a reasonable price and provides lasting leadership lessons.

“That opened up a whole new world and led to a lot of the work I do now,” Burns says.

His first trip to Israel gave him a burden for the Middle East and the Holy Land. He says there are many Christian communities in the Middle East that don’t have a voice, don’t have money, don’t have oil and don’t even have guns to defend themselves from violent extremists.

Through In Defense of Christians, Burns works to be a voice for Christians in the Middle East who often go unnoticed and advocate for their needs to U.S. policymakers.

“[Middle Eastern Christians] tend not to be heard often in the halls of power,” Burns says. “... It’s a tough time for Christians in the Middle East. If you go back 100 years ago,

Christians in the Middle East made up 20% of the population. That really started to change when you had the Armenian genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire at the time. The Armenian genocide was really just against Christians as a whole.

“Today, Christians in the region are a little less than 5%, so it’s been a steep decline and it continues to decline. So we see there to be an urgency around the work we do to try and preserve these communities that are ancient.”

Thankfully, in Israel, Christians can live in freedom and practice their faith.

“Compared to other countries in the region like Egypt, Lebanon and so forth, we see Israel as really a standout place where we’re not terribly concerned about the future of the Christian community there,” Burns says. “I will say, there are challenges. There are challenges when it comes to being Christian in Israel. It really centers around some of the politics that go on in Jerusalem and around some of the Christian holy sites.”

Listen to the podcast to hear more about how Burns advocates for Christians in Israel. {eo}