

10 Suggestions for the First Conversation With Your Pastor About Israel

More of you read my last post than anything else I've written here. That was a surprise.

Here is part 2, with 10 suggestions (not commandments) for the first conversation with your pastor about Israel:

1. Rather than preach at him/her, engage in a friendly dialogue. I doubt that you can out-preach your pastor anyway. So instead, be ready to listen and learn, as well as share your view. (See Romans 12:16: "Do not be wise in your own opinion" [NKJV].)

2. Focus on just a few passages of Scripture that relate directly to the subject. I suggest that you ask your pastor about his view on Romans 11. There's a chance he's studied the chapter in-depth, but many pastors have never preached on the passage, let alone studied it thoroughly.

Even many evangelical commentators who believe God has cast away Israel once and for all get stumped when they read Romans 11. Their explanations sound confusing, or they simply contradict what they have written elsewhere on other passages related to Israel. You may want to look at some of these Bible commentaries, especially those your pastor consults with.

3. Suggest reliable resources. These include books, articles, recordings, etc., that present biblically sound teaching on Israel. Your pastor probably has particular authors or pastors he likes, so you might want to ask him who those people are and then look up what they say about Israel. A simple Google search with the author's name in quotes, plus search terms such as "Israel," "Jews," "theology" or "eschatology" will

turn up a lot of interesting material written by those authors.

In addition to teachers your pastor may mention, you can also search for materials from respected leaders, such as Jack Hayford, Chuck Smith, John MacArthur, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Don Finto and Dan Juster, to name several. On our own website, , there are several articles and sermons on Israel. But remember, not everything you read on the Internet is fact.

If your pastor would be interested in my perspective, having lived in Israel for 30 years, you could suggest that he have a look at my message "The Role of the Jewish People in God's Purposes." I gave this talk at the Christ at the Checkpoint Conference, held in Bethlehem in March of 2012. You can find it here.

4. Avoid political debate as much as possible. Politics is a controversial subject in general, let alone the sensitive subject of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

5. If the issue of Israel's "unjust" treatment of Arabs arises, I suggest you leave that subject for a possible follow-up meeting. For now, I would humbly mention that God doesn't save us based on our righteousness: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Paul also says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9) There is also a passage that specifically speaks about God's plan to bring his people back to the land without them having earned that right, nor does God bless them in this way because they met the prerequisite of saving faith. We find this in Ezekiel 36:23-27:

"And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take

you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

6. If your pastor doesn't agree with you on Israel, don't threaten to leave. The Lord might have you in that congregation for many purposes other than changing the congregation's view of Israel.

7. If possible, help make a way for your pastor to visit Israel. It would be great if he could join a tour led by a Christian leader who has a solid understanding of Israel.

8. Be supportive, and do not share with others your conversation without his permission. He may become defensive if he feels you will speak to people who are judgmental. If you are part of a group of fellow Israel-supporters, make sure you don't talk negatively about your pastor in conversation or in “prayer.” Affirm your pastor when possible. And if he mentions something enlightening about Israel in a message, mention that you appreciate what he shared.

9. Be patient. See Ecclesiastes 7:8: “The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.”

10. Follow up. If you feel that there is openness for a follow-up conversation, suggest another meeting at his convenience. Perhaps waiting another month will give your pastor enough time to pray and look at the materials you've provided. (Others in the congregation likely have given him other materials also, and he may have a stack of them on his desk!)

One final thing: Paul writes concerning the subject of Israel,

“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery” (Rom. 11:25, NIV). So don’t pretend that you’ve got it all figured out. And knowing this, don’t expect your pastor to have complete clarity on Israel either. “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Cor. 13:12, NKJV).

Ultimately, it’s God’s Spirit who reveals all truth. We are only His instruments. As you prepare to speak with your pastor, pray for the Holy Spirit to download supernatural insight.

I’m sure I’ve missed some other ways to have a constructive conversation with your pastor about Israel. Have you had such a conversation? Did it go well? Were there things you would do differently if you could have that conversation all over again? What suggestions would you make to the readers of my blog? Leave your comments.

For the original article, visit .