

Heading Into 2024, Here Are 6 Biblical Truths Evangelicals Need to Embrace When It Comes to Israel and the Arab/Muslim World

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL – What a tragic and painful year 2023 turned out to be for Israelis, Palestinians and much of the Middle East.

Many of us hoped Israel and Saudi Arabia would forge an historic and transformative peace and normalization treaty.

Instead, the forces of Iranian-backed evil were unleashed.

More Jews were murdered on Oct. 7 than at any other time in the modern era since the Holocaust.

And so many Palestinians have died in the ensuing war, as well.

I wish I could tell you that 2024 will be better.

But few in our neighborhood believe that.

I have no doubt that Israel will eventually vanquish the Hamas terror regime and completely destroy its terror machinery in the Gaza Strip.

But the cost in blood and treasure for people on both sides has already proven terribly high – and it will get worse before it gets better.

Then, the Israeli Defense Forces will be forced to turn their attention towards Lebanon.

The mission: To push Hezbollah north of the Litani River.

Why?

Because Hezbollah has launched more than 1,000 attacks on Israel over the past few months.

Until Hezbollah is punished severely, they will keep attacking.

Indeed, unless Hezbollah is punished and pushed back, the 100,000 or so Israelis who normally live along the Lebanese border but have had to be evacuated will never be able to move back to their homes without fearing a sudden genocidal Hezbollah invasion, such as what Hamas perpetrated against Israelis near Gaza on Oct. 7.

In 2006, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1701 which stated that Hezbollah cannot operate south of the Litani River, which is about 18 miles north of the Israeli border.

But the United Nations never enforced its own decision.

Today, Hezbollah operates right on the border with Israel – and is attacking Israel every single day.

The IDF is fighting back but much more is needed.

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The challenge is that because Hezbollah has a much bigger army of terrorists – and has 150,000 powerful missiles aimed at Israel (many of which are precision-guided) – every Israeli believes the next phase of this war will be much bigger, much deadlier and much more tragic.

So, please don't get lulled into thinking that once the war in Gaza is over, things will get quiet again.

That is unlikely the case.

How, then, are Evangelical Christians who care about what's happening in this region I call the Epicenter supposed to respond to all that's happening?

What should be our attitude?

What should be our practical responses?

Don't bother looking to the United Nations for answers.

Or to Washington.

Or to the geniuses that dominate social media.

As we head into 2024, we need to study our Bibles very, very carefully.

We need to stop thinking like the world thinks and instead embrace biblical thinking.

Let me, then, take a moment to lay out six biblical principles for you to read, process, and pray over – and then we can discuss them at length in the new year.

PRINCIPLE #1: Evangelical followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are called to love Israel *and* her neighbors – not just one or the other.

Here is what the Bible tells us:

- “‘At that time,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.’ This is what the Lord says . . . [to Israel]: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you out with kindness.’” (Jeremiah 31:1-3)
- “I say then, God has not rejected His [Jewish/Israeli] people, has He? Far from it! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God

has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.” (Romans 11:1-2)

- “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31)
- Jesus commanded his disciples to love their neighbors *and* love their enemies, and His call left no one out. (Matthew 5:43-48; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 6:27-36; 10:25-37)

PRINCIPLE #2: Evangelicals are called to be peacemakers.

- “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they prosper who love you.” (Psalm 122:6)
- “Seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalm 34:14)
- Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)
- The apostle Paul added, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Romans 12:18)

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PRINCIPLE #3: Evangelicals are called to oppose injustice and care for those who are suffering.

- “He has shown you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you. To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)
- “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. . . . Defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8-9)
- Jesus inaugurated his public ministry by citing the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set

the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

Then Jesus practiced exactly what He preached.

He fed the hungry, healed the sick, honored women, denounced religious extremism and hypocrisy and preached a powerful message of forgiveness and hope, not only to those in the land of Israel but in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, as well.

PRINCIPLE #4: Evangelicals are called to strengthen our Gentile Christian and Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters, including providing financial support when the Lord directs.

- "Be constantly alert, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die. (Revelation 3:2)
- "All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need." (Acts 2:44-45, NIV)
- "I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way." (Romans 15:25-28, NIV)

PRINCIPLE #5: Evangelicals are called to make sure that everyone, everywhere has the opportunity to at least hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, understand it, and make a definitive decision either to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, or to reject Him.

- Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20)
- The Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man [the apostle Paul] is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.” (Acts 9:15)
- “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, ‘Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.’ For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’ (Romans 10:9-15)

PRINCIPLE #6: Evangelicals are called to never stop praying.

- “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.” (Romans 12:12)
- “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
- “I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who

persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44)

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Is any of this easy to do?

No, even if we are followers of Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

But God hasn't called us to easy lives.

He has called us to love Him and thus to serve Him by love and serving others in the name of Jesus.

Let's resolve that in 2024 we will fall in love with the Lord more deeply than ever before, and follow Him and His Word more faithfully than ever before, including in the war-torn Epicenter.

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