

How to Speak With Your Pastor About Israel Without Being a Flake

My last post was titled, *7 Reasons for a Trip to Israel (especially if you're a pastor and/or Bible teacher)*.

This post is a natural follow-up. It's for all of you who believe your pastor(s) don't have enough of a heart for Israel and you want to talk to them about it in the right way.

First of all, I want to commend you for your love for Israel and the Jewish people. All of us need that heart—especially because God has that heart.

We see God's heart for Israel in Deuteronomy 7:6-8: "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you."

Paul had God's heart for Israel: "I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:2, 3). And again: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (10:1).

Paul reveals how Gentile followers of the Messiah have an obligation to the Jewish people, for "salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make Israel jealous." (11:11) And then, Paul gets very practical concerning our need to support the Jewish

people—even materially: “For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.” (15:27)

There are pastors who believe God has cast away the Jews and replaced them with the church—as the “new and true Israel.” This is heresy, and I will write about this in a future post.

But I also meet pastors who have a genuine heart for Israel, but they are very reluctant to openly support Israel for some very natural reasons:

- Many didn’t hear much about Israel where they studied theology and feel ill-equipped to teach on the subject.
- Many worry that if they teach about Israel, they will stir up controversy in their congregations.
- There are also the pastors who have had a bad experience with so-called “Israel freaks.” Such well-meaning folks have a seemingly naive, romantic infatuation with Israel. The stereotypical “Israel lover” is the one wearing puffy sleeved silk tops, playing a tambourine badly (driving the worship leader and drummer crazy), and keeping an oversized shofar strapped to his back, ready for battle. There are pastors who love Israel but get totally *weirded out* by such people. I really *get that*.
- And finally, many pastors have met people who love Israel but their focus is almost entirely on *political* support. They have little concern for the *spiritual* state of Israel.

Because I’m a pastor myself, I think I can offer you some *insider* tips on how speak to your pastor about Israel.

1. Pray for your pastor. If you really care about your pastor you’ll already be praying for him, right?

2. Respect your pastor, recognizing his God-given authority in your life. (Remember David’s attitude of respect toward King

Saul despite their conflict).

3. Submit to your pastor. Good pastors take such people very seriously. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

4. Know and study the Scriptures. When your pastor sees that you have a good knowledge of "the whole counsel of God," he will more readily listen to your theology on Israel. Recognize that your pastor needs to protect the flock from strange teachings, tangents and divisive issues. Your pastor is well aware of the warning in Romans 16:17: "Note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."

5. Be patient. Take into account your pastor's background and training. He may have learned "replacement theology" in college or seminary. Don't expect him to instantly throw out what he absorbed at a formative time in his life.

6. Time your first conversation well. Consider *when is the best time* and *how much time* for the first conversation. Your pastor might be stressed with a load of work and concerns. Don't try to schedule an appointment just before his busy weekend of public ministry. And don't try to talk to your pastor immediately following your attendance at a conference on Israel. Wait until you've had some time to process and pray through the exciting things you've experienced.

In my next blog post, I'll give tips on what you should do the first time you meet with your pastor about Israel.

Do you have a heart for Israel? Have you shared this with your pastor? What kind of response did you get? Can you offer one or two tips of your own on how to speak to your pastor about Israel? My friends and I would love to hear your comments below.

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