

More Than a Promise: A Commitment to Stand With Israel

It was late on a Wednesday night. I was exhausted and still jet-lagged. But I was amazed by what my eyes were witnessing.

Less than three weeks after one of the ugliest conflicts in Israeli history had ended, I saw something that is almost impossible to understand. As I stood on the stage and looked out into the audience, I saw Jewish pastors, Arab pastors and Gentile pastors from all over the world embracing in love.

Last month, several, large Christian groups visited Israel with a purpose to make a statement to the world: that they stand with Israel. The largest of these groups has a history of standing with Israel, but only in a general sense.

However, Promise Keepers and its sister ministry, One Message, made the trip with one purpose in mind: to stand with an often-overlooked, neglected and sometimes even rejected group. Promise Keepers and One Message sponsored 100 pastors from around the world on an incredible journey to Israel to stand with our Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters.

These sponsored pastors, along with an additional 100 passengers from their congregations, came to Israel to make a lifelong commitment to develop a relationship with a Messianic pastor and congregation—something that had never been done before at this level.

So, why were these pastors embracing in love? From the same stage, only moments before the embrace, Jonathan Bernis (chairman of the board for Promise Keepers) made an impassioned plea to the Gentiles to stand with their Jewish brothers and sisters “NO MATTER WHAT.” He asked anyone who was

willing to stand with their Jewish brothers and sisters—even at risk of their life—to come down and accept a blue star from one of the Israeli Messianic Jewish pastors.

What happened next astonished everyone. The lines to receive a star were backed up around the building. We nearly ran out of the stars, because so many people had come forward.

Coach Bill McCartney (founder of Promise Keepers) challenged the pastors to be fed and led by the Spirit each day of their lives. Tommy Barnett (founder of Dream Centers Across America) challenged the pastors, on the basis of this obedience, to share with the poor. He gave the illustration of how he started with a bus ministry picking up kids that grew from one bus to 40 buses only to learn that the wife of one of the sponsored pastors had been one of the little girls who got on one of his buses and gave her life to the Lord as a result of his ministry. Not only that, but her dad gave his life to the Lord and later became one of the bus drivers for Tommy's ministry.

That was only the beginning. This tour of Israel was a prototype for what we believe God has called us to do in 2016. Over the next two years, we will be following up with the pastors in Israel as well as the pastors around the world to ensure that they are actively engaged in developing relationships.

We envision mission trips returning from these churches to minister to the poor, oppressed and needy in Israel. In 2016, Lord willing, we will sponsor hundreds of pastors to make this same kind of commitment on a similar event and tour.

A Jewish believer who made *aliyah* (Jews who immigrate to Israel) shared a concern with several members of our team. With tears streaming down her face, she said that many people who come to Israel make promises to come back or commit to carry out magnanimous things but do not follow through on

those promises.

However, what Promise Keepers and One Message did during this journey was not a promise but rather an action that will change many lives forever.

And, to continue our support, I encourage not only pastors but also every believer to participate in the Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem on Sunday, Oct. 5. Spread the word to your social-media followers and members of your church to be a part of this special day and let your voice intercede on behalf of Israel.

Dr. Raleigh Washington *is the president and CEO of Promise Keepers.*