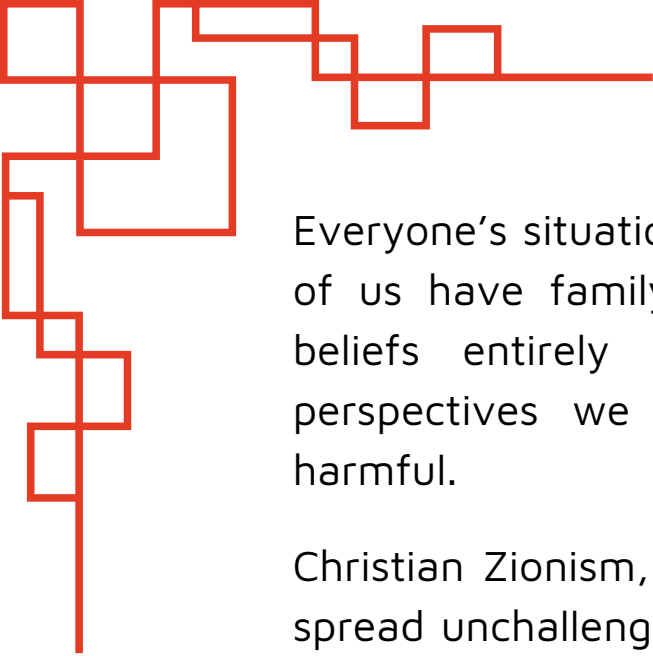




FOSNAs Guide to Difficult Conversations about CHRISTIAN ZIONISM



Everyone's situation is different, but the truth is that many of us have family, friends, and even faith leaders with beliefs entirely at odds with our own—beliefs and perspectives we know to be destructive and actively harmful.

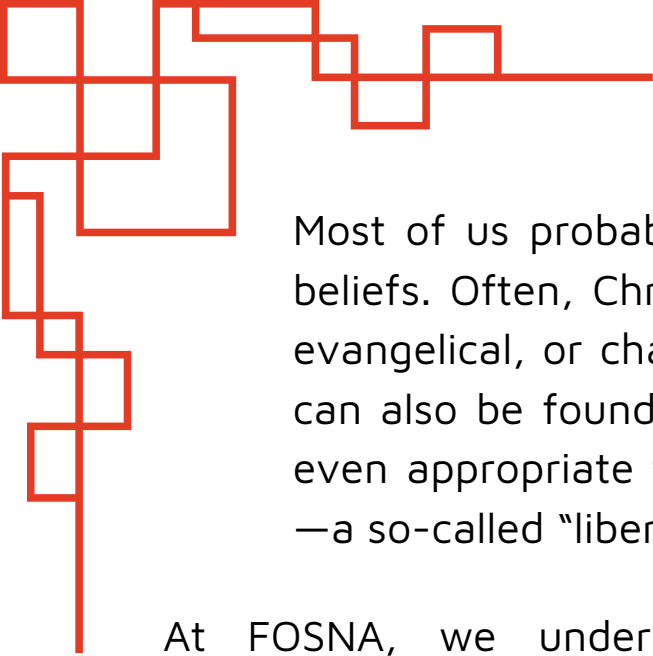
Christian Zionism, for instance, has often been allowed to spread unchallenged, in part because people have found it easier to ignore rather than engage or confront.

Yet, as the holiday season approaches, the prospect of post-meal conversations erupting into an all-out verbal brawl can be for many a source of great anxiety and fear, resignation and avoidance, or anger and rage, perhaps all of the above.

To help, FOSNA has put together the following "Guide to Difficult Conversations about Christian Zionism."



Talking to Christian Zionists: Person to Person



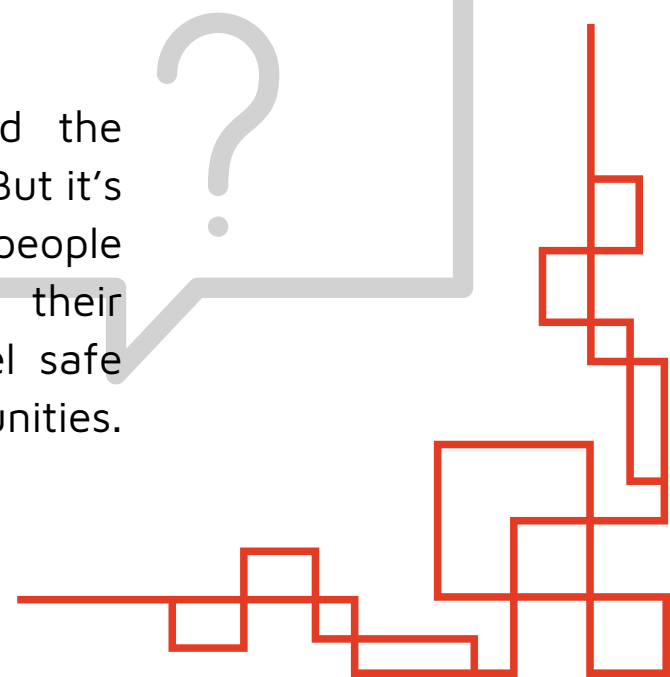
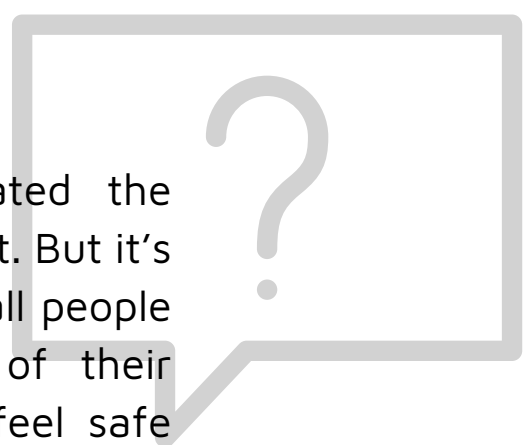
Most of us probably know someone with Christian Zionist beliefs. Often, Christian Zionists belong to fundamentalist, evangelical, or charismatic traditions. However, such ideas can also be found within mainline congregations, and it is even appropriate to speak of—and necessary to challenge—a so-called “liberal” Christian Zionism.

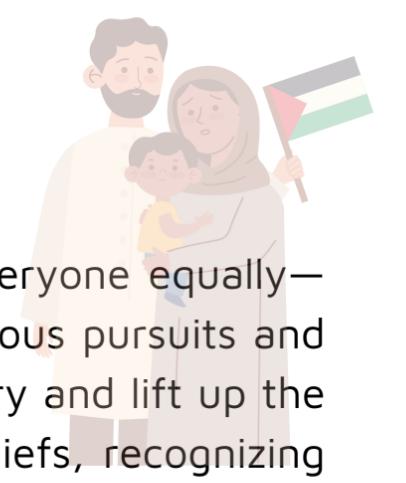
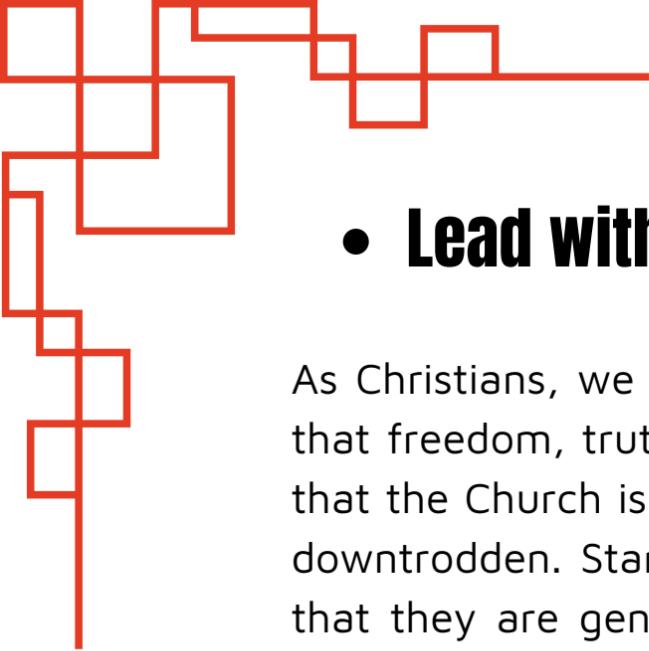
At FOSNA, we understand the power of individual transformation. In fact, many of our most ardent supporters formerly held Christian Zionist beliefs and can describe a process of conversion to a new way of thinking. **We want to offer some tips we have learned from doing this work at the interpersonal level.**

For many Christian Zionists, such commitments are central to their identity as a Christian. For the vast majority, however, Christian Zionism is actually quite marginal to their belief system. It’s just never been strongly challenged.

- **Keep It Simple**

People love to say how complicated the situation is as a way to not deal with it. But it’s very simple. Palestinians want what all people want: the freedom to take care of their families, pursue their dreams, and feel safe and secure in their homes and communities. It’s that simple.





- **Lead with Shared Values**

As Christians, we claim that God loves everyone equally—that freedom, truth, and justice are righteous pursuits and that the Church is called to feed the hungry and lift up the downtrodden. Start by affirming these beliefs, recognizing that they are genuinely held. Then, explain how Christian Zionist beliefs actually run counter to their more important calling as followers of Jesus and (particularly among evangelicals) their witness to the gospel. Again, use your own experience to describe how Christian Zionism affects Palestinians in “ways that aren’t Christian.”




- **Tell Stories (your story)**

Stories are much more memorable than statistics. People can’t argue with your personal experiences.



- **Name Palestinians**

Another important way to avoid the reaction trap is to center Palestinians. Rather than arguing about what Israel should and shouldn’t do without much acknowledgement of its impact on Palestinians, center what Palestinians deal with day in and day out.





- **Describe What You Seek, Not What You Oppose**

We can easily get caught in a reaction trap, responding to what we are against rather than naming what we support. One important point is to not repeat opposition talking points; this is especially important when there is an audience.

If someone calls Palestinians “terrorists,” don’t waste your breath saying, “They aren’t terrorists.” Instead say, “Palestinians are using nonviolence to fight for their freedom.”



**Talking about
Christian Zionism**



DON'T simply talk about what's wrong with Christian Zionism.

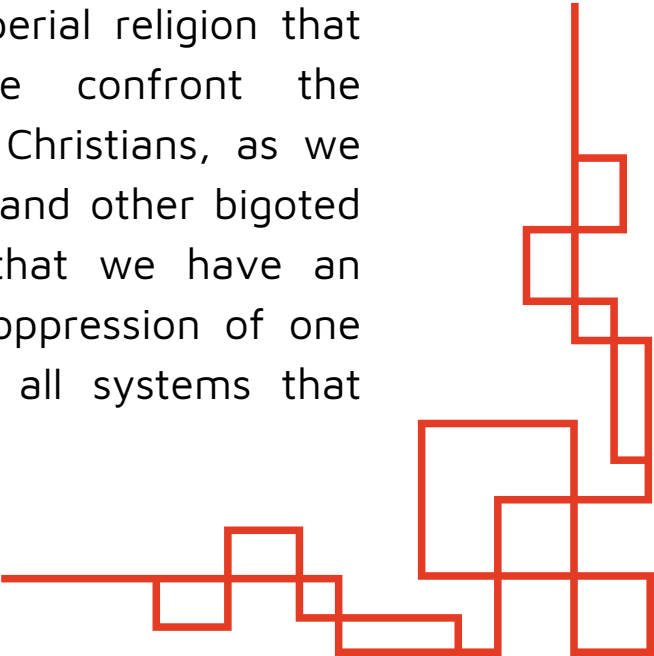
It may be clear to us that Christian Zionism is a problematic ideology. But it's not enough to deconstruct Christian Zionism.

DO clearly articulate liberating theological alternatives.

We also offer an alternative theology that is centered on the liberatory message of Jesus.

Liberation Theology says that all people are loved by God, all lands are holy, and that God is not "a racist real estate agent." Rather, God stands on the side of the poor and oppressed. Liberation Theology calls for the liberation of all people from the forces of oppression.

It critiques colonial Christianity and imperial religion that claims superiority over others. We confront the antisemitism perpetuated by European Christians, as we recognize its connection to anti-Muslim and other bigoted beliefs. Liberation theology demands that we have an intersectional analysis, not pitting the oppression of one group against another, but challenging all systems that cause oppression.





DON'T get caught up in theological debates.

Christian Zionist pastors will often pay lip service to scripture, proof-texting one or two verses but quickly shifting the focus to politics.

DO talk about real-life consequences of beliefs.

The real-world ramifications of such beliefs are destructive for real people all over the world. As such, focus on the real-life effects of the beliefs in question.

The faith of many has been co-opted by an oppressive political ideology. For those who want justice but see supporting Israel as a theological obligation, highlighting the inherent contradiction by showing how Christian Zionism perpetuates injustice is key.

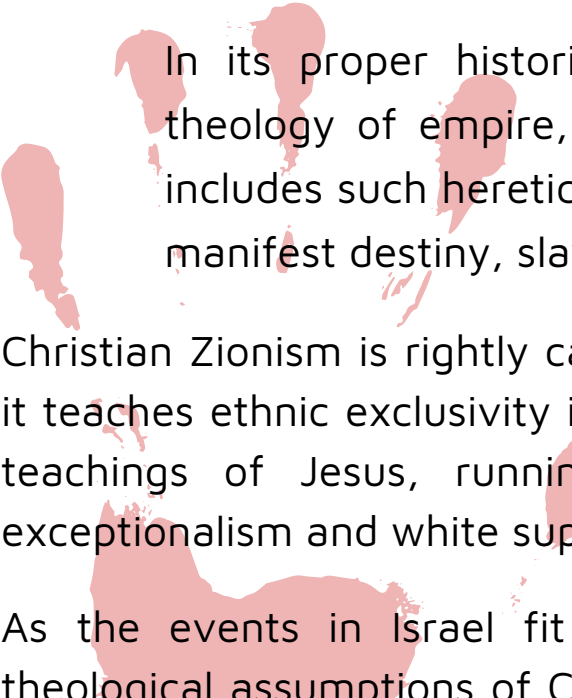
Focus on the real life stories of Palestinians who suffer as a result of the policies being pushed: home demolitions, apartheid, child detention, violence and hostility, genocide. These are manifestations of Christian Zionism's impact on US policy, an ideology that wants Israel to expand its territory, remove all non-Jews from the land, and to protect Israel from any scrutiny by claiming God will curse all who go against the will of the Israeli government!



DON'T take it for granted as a Christian doctrine.

Christian Zionism teaches ethnic exclusivity in direct defiance of the life and teachings of Jesus. Yet, Christian Zionism is often seen as the default belief.

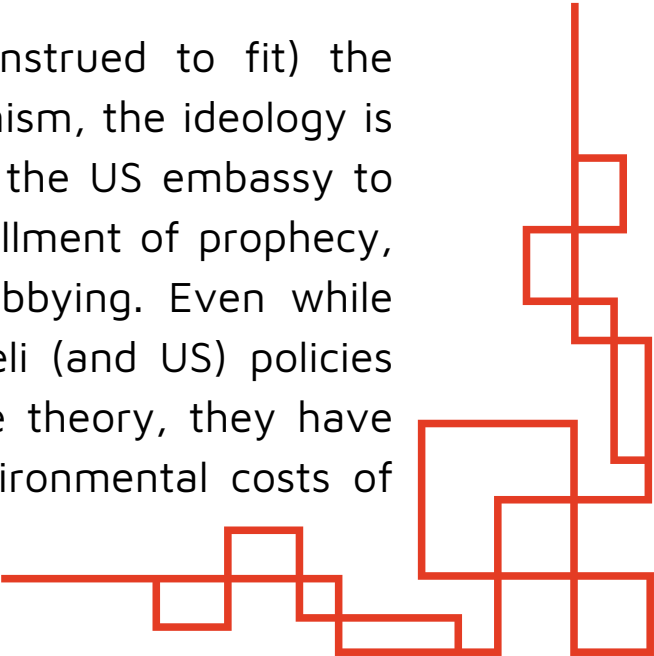
DO contextualize it historically and politically.



In its proper historical context it is revealed to be a theology of empire, a type of imperial Christianity that includes such heretical ideas as the doctrine of discovery, manifest destiny, slaveholder religion, and apartheid.

Christian Zionism is rightly called a Christian heresy because it teaches ethnic exclusivity in direct defiance of the life and teachings of Jesus, running in lockstep with American exceptionalism and white supremacy.

As the events in Israel fit (or are construed to fit) the theological assumptions of Christian Zionism, the ideology is perpetuated. For instance, the move of the US embassy to Jerusalem was praised as being the fulfillment of prophecy, even if just the result of successful lobbying. Even while Christian Zionists invest in specific Israeli (and US) policies that they see as proving their end time theory, they have little knowledge of the human and environmental costs of such policies. Genocide, for instance.





DON'T write it off as a fringe religious ideology.


Christian Zionism is not constrained to fundamentalist circles. Diluted forms of such ideas are widespread.

DO recognize its very real influence on U.S. politics and your community.

Such ideas are prevalent in every Christian denomination and have an effect far beyond Christian circles as well.

The Christian establishment is solidly Zionist, left, right, and center. Or they at least find it more convenient to remain silent than to stand up for the rights and dignity of Palestinians. This silence has allowed a warped ideology to shape the way most Americans think about Palestine. Christians, therefore, have a unique responsibility to speak out against Christian Zionism and support Palestinian freedom.

The struggle against Christian Zionism is not merely an internal Christian battle. It's influence affects all of us. The ideology is infused with ideas of white/western "Christian" supremacy. They are turning this ideology into US policy. We are all affected, and we all have a stake in challenging it.





**To learn more, see FOSNA's Countering
Christian Zionism Toolkit at:**

www.fosna.org/counter-cufi-toolkit

**Or, stay tuned for the upcoming launch of
the Institute for the Study of Christian
Zionism (ISCZ):**

www.StudyChristianZionism.org

