

How To Talk To Your Pastor

By Pastor Seth Troutt, Teaching Pastor - Ironwood Church

Bringing up an issue with your pastor can be difficult for a variety of reasons:

1. Perhaps you don't know where he stands on an issue
2. Perhaps you don't know where he stands on meeting with women
3. Perhaps you don't have a prior relationship with him
4. Perhaps he cares about the particular topic, but you care way more than he does
5. Perhaps you've had negative experiences approaching authority figures in the past

Yet, the whole body, not just pastors and leaders, are supposed to “build itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:16). So, how do we do that? Let's look at the path of Jesus as we consider how to have this conversation.

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. – Philippians 2:2–7

First, you need to check your heart. Is this selfish ambition or am I being conceited? Am I going to posture myself in haughtiness as I bring up this issue to my pastor?

Second, you need to “consider others more significant than yourself.” How might your pastor feel going into this conversation? What insecurities or stress might this conversation cause to flare up in him?

Third, what interests does he have in the issue at hand? How does this issue clearly fit into the role that pastors play in “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” and “making disciples of all nations”?

Fourth, ask how you might take the form of a servant in this discussion. Often when people bring things to pastors, they are bringing problems without solutions; functionally they are trying to assign pastors work. How can you be a servant here? What work are you interested in doing?

Sample Emails

If you don't know your pastor or what he believes well yet:

Hello!

My name is Joe and I've been attending Bible Church for two months. We just moved here from California and I've appreciated the church thus far. As we look to get more involved, I'm curious if you've taught on or have convictions about how and when God's people are called to be "political"? Perhaps there is a resource or sermon you could connect me to or we could connect and talk about it, as I know "Christ and Politics," especially in an election year, can be a touchy subject. I want to understand your convictions and be supportive as a newer church member.

Also, just to put my cards on the table, my personal convictions around the Pro-Life issue are deepening and I'd like some help knowing what to do with those in the context of our community.

In Him,
Joe

If you have a relationship, but haven't discussed Pro-Life issues yet:

Hello!

I've really appreciated your Bible teaching over the past few years at the church.

I do not intend for this email to come across as being critical, but only that I'm genuinely curious. One issue I care deeply about that I don't remember having heard you address is abortion and the pro-life cause in general. I've been assuming that you and I agree on the issue, but I don't want to live in those assumptions, especially as it's an issue I find myself getting increasingly active and passionate about.

Do you have strong opinions about abortion? If so, do you have strong convictions about how our church might engage with the issue? I'd love to serve our local efforts and take the lead on distributing materials and organizing volunteers who might want to help out. Especially with the local initiatives we're facing in AZ (check out [It Goes To Far](#), as I've found this website helpful), I'd like to be more engaged, not less, but I also do not want to undermine any existing strategy or conviction you and the rest of the leadership team might have.

In Him,
Joe

If know he cares about abortion, but hasn't done much about it yet:

Hello!

I've been thinking and praying quite a bit about your comments about abortion a few weeks ago. I don't think this is an accident, but I've felt over the past year a gut feeling (I hope it is a nudge from the Holy Spirit), that I need to get involved in the pro-life issue.

I was wondering if you have any contacts that could help me understand how to get involved, specifically involved with fighting the Arizona right to abortion initiative. They may recommend I work directly with one of the groups working against it, but would love to get some insight.

So far, all I've found is <https://www.itgoestoofar.com/> and <https://arizonapro-lifepastors.org/>, which seem pretty great. If you don't yet have a better plan or a differing conviction, I'd love to help out by promoting some of their materials in our church and in the broader community. Is that something you're open to helping me make happen? If so, what might that look like at our church?

Thank you for caring about all image bearers of God and being willing to confront hot topics like this.

In Him,
Joe