

Dancing With Wolves: Struggling with the Words of Jesus • How Do We Love Our Enemies?

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MAIN VERSES

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A Trip to Pennsylvania

Shabbat Shalom everybody. Four or five, maybe six years ago, Jenny and I went to Pennsylvania, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. While we were up there, we had to stop by Hershey, Pennsylvania and check out that chocolate factory. It was pretty cool. You make your own chocolate, you put your stuff in it. It's such a gimmick, but it's fun. We got our chocolate. We wanted to see all the beautiful places as well. We visited the Amish community that's up there and took some tours around the farms, got to meet a lot of really cool people, saw cows and chickens, and learned a lot about the Amish way of life. Amish are really neat folks. Really neat. Milking a cow and whatnot.

One guy with us was about 19 or 20. He was telling us about how they only go to school until eighth grade, and then they go out and learn practical farm work and community work. They're not intent on advanced education, but they're extremely intelligent, and they learn all this stuff about agriculture and how to have a way of life without modern technology, because one of their big tenets as Anabaptists is they don't conform to the way of the world and technology. That's one thing that they separate from. He didn't get the reference I was humming. He thought that was pretty neat. He'd never heard that before. Amish are a bit strange compared to what we normally are used to, though, obviously. Different traditions, a completely different lifestyle, different values—that's what they're known for. Not allowed to watch TV or have dolls that have faces on them, right? Sporting the 32-inch rims with the disc brakes and the horse. And that was a joke by the guy we were with. They have one-room schools as well for all ages, right? Pretty cool. Old school.

The Nickel Mines Shooting

One of those is in a very small town known as Nickel Mines. And Nickel Mines is just south of Fertility and Burdenhand and Intercourse, Pennsylvania, and just north of Pete's Bottom. There's a school there called West Nickel Mines School. In 2006, a milkman who, apparently 20 years earlier, had lost his daughter because she was born prematurely went into the school with a spring-filled pistol and shot 10 little girls ages 6 through 13, killing five of them and then killing himself. A lot of people gathered around the church. The Amish community coming out. It's just devastating. This is not something you're used to seeing at all.

There was a pastor there, a friend of the community, and he was standing beside the grandfather of the 13-year-old as she lay. And the grandfather was in that moment tutoring the young boys around him and the community around him, making the point to say that we must not speak evil of this man. They felt sorry for him because he had a mother and a wife, a widow now. The community to which the girls belonged took a meal train to the man's wife that afternoon to comfort her at her loss. A week after the children were buried, many of the community attended the shooter's funeral so that they could be there with his grieving mother and his grieving widow.

Forgiveness as a Choice

When asked how they could do this, one member of the community said: "For the families here, forgiveness is the only good thing that can possibly come out of this event. There's a vacuum that can be filled by something good, so we feel obligated to fill it because that's what Jesus taught us to do." When asked, they said they must forgive. They said these are the words of Jesus, and if we claim to follow Jesus, then we're going to do the things that Jesus told us to do. He says we have to forgive, and we cannot hold hatred in our hearts because it's corrosive. Many admired them for their quick forgiveness of a man that did something so evil. I mean, anyone who kills kids is just monstrous. And many admired their quick forgiveness, but there was a good amount of criticism that came as well.

People got upset at them because of their choice to forgive the murderer of their own small children. How could you? How could you just flippantly—are you just stuffing down your emotions like a stoic? And to be honest, I find myself a bit upset with it too for some reason. When I attempt to figure that out, to dissect why I'm irritated, why I have this kind of hesitation to admire them, I realize it's because I'm not sure I could ever do it. I'm not sure I could ever do that like they did it. So maybe I'm just mad or agitated or irritated because they

had some level of faithfulness towards Jesus and some sort of level of dependence on God that I want to claim to have, but would never actually hold to in a situation like that. And maybe I'm agitated because I feel a little called out. Maybe.

That's been my struggle. This happened a long time ago, but it's been my struggle. The words of Jesus, the words of Yeshua—words that I've meditated on for years since the event happened—and I still struggle with even until today. The calling to not be conformed to the world.

Love Your Enemies

In the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua says: "You have heard it said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good. He sends rain, blessing, to both the evil and the good. If you love only those who love you, what reward do you have? Are you not like the rest of the world? You're just like everyone else. Don't even the pagans do that?" Got to throw the pagan word in there, doesn't he? "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect. Be perfect in raining down blessing indiscriminately on everybody."

If you only love people in the world that the world says to love or the media says to love or X, Y, Z, you are of the world. Be like God in how he gives to all. Be perfect like God. I think that's how Luke puts it, or Matthew. And the struggle comes in when we ask ourselves: Did Jesus really mean it? I mean, did he really mean it? Someone didn't like my post on Facebook and they said something mean and I'll love them anyway. But we all say, "Yes, of course he meant it," but would we really put it into action? Did Jesus really mean it? Man, he really meant it.

The American Struggle

It's a struggle, I think, because I'm American. And this is my journey. You're being subjected to my struggle for years now, many years of meditation on this. Thank you for being the audience. I struggle because I'm American and we celebrate war. We celebrate on a national level, maybe not at an individual level, but we mourn people on a national level. Yes, we bombed them all, overcome, right? We celebrate killing our enemies. We celebrate winning through military victory. It's part of our culture. It's how our nation was birthed. It's also why and how we now have 850 military bases on 75 different countries in the world. It's who our nation is.

Growing up, elder millennial, we relied on Hollywood to really tell us who was bad in the world, who our enemy was, right? And who was bad during the 80s? We still had the Cold War

going on, and we were involved in another Cold War in the Middle East, gearing up for an actual war in the Middle East. So Russians and Arabs, Muslims in Hollywood were always the bad guys, right? Red Dawn. Oh yeah, I gotcha. Even Bullwinkle—Natasha and Boris. Bad guys. It's good Cold War propaganda right there. He snuck that one in on us. Iron Eagle. Even Back to the Future. The Muslims, stereotypical Muslim Libyans with the AK-47 mowing down old Doc. And it only got worse post-9/11. Because we love knowing who to hate. Because who are we if we don't know who we're not?

The Agrabah Poll

In 2015, there was a poll taken on whether or not we should bomb Agrabah. And 30% of Republicans voted yes, we should bomb Agrabah. And 19% of Democrats in this study voted yes, we should go and bomb Agrabah. And so we did. And Jasmine and Abu, sadly, were the collateral in that bombing. But Aladdin ended up becoming a freedom fighter against the U.S. Agrabah is the fictional city that Aladdin was from. The consensus is that whoever they asked may have just said yes because it may have sounded Arabic. It must be an enemy. It must be a country, Agrabah.

On a serious note, though, what am I supposed to believe? As a person that wants to follow the teachings of Jesus that I claim to follow, what am I supposed to believe? Am I supposed to believe that Jesus or Yeshua would never condone violence against any violent people? No. I mean, that's a little naive if it's true. Like, Jesus, really? Have you lived in this world? I mean, sure, turn the other cheek, but if they really do you harm, shoot them. And so in my journey, my struggle, I have to figure this out.

Two Thousand Years of Christendom

Because throughout the 2,000 years of Christianity, violence has always been acceptable in certain scenarios. The church led armies for most of Christianity. Where are these Amish getting their history from that makes them so zealous about loving their enemy, forgiving their enemy? Because it's one thing to read the words of Yeshua, but it's another to actually see how the earliest Christians interpreted them, right? And so I'm going to go back and study. What did the earliest Christians believe about nonviolence or nonviolent resistance or forgiving their enemies?

And the truth is, when I began to take that journey years ago, man, the early church was not organized. Early believers didn't—man, they were trying to figure out what they believed, right?

They had this exposure to and these teachings of this rabbi from Nazareth that ended up subverting the entire Roman and Jewish powers to stand for the kingdom of God, were killed willingly, and rose again. And so they didn't agree on—we're talking about deity, theology, calendars, nothing. Always a fight, always a debate. But there was one thing that seemed to be really consistent across the platform: nonviolent resistance to enemies, enemy love and forgiveness. Frustrating thing for me to find. I have a few quotes here. I'm not going to read them all. There were tons of quotes. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest Christian apologists, writes about Christians concerning the fulfillment of [Isaiah 2.5](#), where it says that in the future kingdom of God, all of the swords will be turned into plowshares, gardening tools. And he says that, yeah, that's been fulfilled in Jesus through Christians. What's the quote we have? "Now we who used to murder one another do not only refrain from making war on our enemies, but also that we may not lie nor deceive any examiners willing to die confessing Christ." Someone says, you believe in Jesus? Yes. We're going to kill you? Fine. Unshakable. What can you take from me? He says, "We have turned our weapons into plowshares so that we can plow and grow." Look at this poetry: "We've turned our swords and weapons into gardening tools so that we can now plow and grow and produce godliness, righteousness, philanthropy, faith, and hope from God." It's really good. We have other quotes here. "We are prohibited to cleave to them, nor sword nor bow, since we follow peace." Or Tertullian: "The Christian does not harm even his foe." Origin: "Christians should never slay their enemies." What's the next slide? "Above all, Christians are not allowed to correct in violence. We would rather shed our own blood than stain our hands and our conscience with that of another." "The Lord, when he disarmed Peter, disarmed every soldier." Many more quotes. I don't think I put any more in. Others speaking about how you should never follow orders in the military to kill. Others pushing back against any type of military involvement because in Rome you're going to be involved in killing. There was one 19-year-old, and it was his time to join the military. He was called to enlist, told he was going to enlist—Maximilian of Tibetha. Sorry, age 21. He was 21 and an officer told him, "Listen, it's time. You're expected to enlist. Let's go get you suited up." And he says, "No, you don't understand. I cannot be a soldier in the military in the Roman Empire." The officer didn't take him seriously. He said, "Listen, we're going to go get you suited up, get your measurements, get you off to some training. You're coming in. It's your duty." "Sir, I don't think you understand. I can't. I am a Christian. We can't do that." He says, "Listen, we're going to take your head off if you don't enlist." So they took him to the senator. The senator gave him one more opportunity. "Listen, you have to enlist." He said, "I am a follower of Jesus Christ and I will not do that." And they pulled a sword out and cut his head off. As you can imagine, this is not the evidence I'm looking for in my struggle of what I want to find. So I changed what I was

searching for on Google, right? We all know that trick, right? When did Christians use violence in the early church? This is where we just rephrase to get the actual truth. I don't want to hear it. And I found what I was looking for. It's beautiful, perfect, kind of.

Violence Became Acceptable with Constantine

Violence did become acceptable in Christianity broadly in the fourth century after Constantine became the emperor of Rome. And Constantine's situation is kind of nuanced. He did a lot of good things for the Christian community. He ended up making Christianity the national religion of Rome. He ended Christian persecution, which was rampant, and it was easy to do because Christians never retaliated, right? The story goes, and I'll be honest, I think this was a political thing that he did, but the story goes that he looked up and he saw a white cross in the sky, something of the like, and he heard a voice that said, "In this symbol, conquer." And then he had a dream that night from Jesus that confirmed it. Essentially, put this symbol of the cross or whatnot on your swords and your shields and go out to battle, go out to war, right? And if you win, then you'll know that God is with you, and essentially your army is now the army of God on earth. It would be extremely convenient for him politically if this happened. So he put the cross on the shields and he went out and he won a great victory at the Battle of Milvian Bridge. And every time you win a big battle, right—after Titus conquered Jerusalem, they go back to Rome and they build the Arch of Titus. It's really cool to see. It's the one where they're carrying the menorah and everything back to Rome, and it's engraved. And the arches, when you walk through them, on one side they have the victors, and they're illustrating how they won, on the other, the losers and what happened to them. And so they went back and they built this huge arch of Constantine outside the Colosseum, where the Colosseum was. And it's funny because when you look at this arch that was won because of God's power and knowledge given to Constantine, nowhere on the arch is a cross or religious icon or nothing at all. I don't know. It's speculative. When I went to Rome to the Vatican Museum, you have a huge room dedicated to him. It's a mural that goes up the wall, and it starts with him having the vision, going to war in the name of Jesus, and then up above, it's the cross now crushing all of the pagan stuff, because now the cross in Christianity has been imperialized over Rome. And I'll be honest, I'm not convinced that was actually something God did. It just seems really politically convenient for Constantine. And our own politicians do the same type of thing today. But throughout history, Christians became violent because they had to in some situations, it seems. And they have a point. Let's get real. If there's a bad guy with a bomb, giving him some bread and some water and giving him a hug and telling him that Jesus loves you may not be the most practical thing to do, right? As I said last time I spoke on September 11th, 2001, I was ready to nuke Agrabah.

That was me at 14 years old. Nuke the whole Middle East. Man, sure there will be casualties, but that's the price we have to pay. Because the only way to stop a guy with a bomb is to what? Be the guy with a bigger bomb. Speaking of which, the United States is proud to announce that we have now designed and created the largest nuclear bomb that we've ever made just a few days ago. I guess as a flex considering the whole world thing going on. So that's great.

Heroism, Violence, and Scripture

But heroes are the ones that kill the bad guys. Red Dawn, Iron Eagle, true laws, nonviolent folks, pacifists. I mean, there's a reason why pacifist and pansy both start with a P, right? That's what weak people who can't fight do. Just a bunch of hippie liberals, right? This is my internal dialogue struggling, if you didn't catch the sarcasm. And so I'm at this point, I'm like, all right, let me just start reflecting on the words of Yeshua. The words that we all know. And I realized that when Yeshua was referring to these things, he's referring to the biblical story of human autonomy from God and the cycle of violence stemming from the desire to always rule over other people. That's the story of the Bible. It highlights how violence first came into play when Adam and Eve became autonomous from God and wanted to rule in their own way. And violence broke out in the world. And that's why God flooded the world. He said, "This is ridiculous. Violence—I'm going to use violence to destroy the violence of the world and bring about a new creation with peace back to the garden." So God unleashed divine level violence onto humans to destroy violence. And it didn't work. We just kept going. The story of the Bible highlights how Israel, once freed from oppressive empires, eventually became an oppressor, suppressor, oppressor, all of the above. Eventually became the thing they were freed from under King Solomon moving forward. The cycle of domination and exile for Israel continued until, of course, the Messiah. And even, it would be argued, continues today.

Daniel 7 and the Upside-Down Kingdom

That's what [Daniel 7](#) is all about. [Daniel 7](#) is a beautiful prophecy. And this theme—the theme of [Daniel 7](#)—culminates here. [Matthew 26](#), where Yeshua, during his confrontation with Caiaphas, the high priest, he identifies himself as the Son of Man. He says, "Listen, the Son of Man is about to be lifted up. You'll see him coming in the clouds of heaven." That's why Caiaphas was so upset, because Yeshua was essentially saying, "Everything that was crushing humanity and wrong with the world in [Daniel 7](#) is you. You. And by you destroying me, you're going to be defeated along with all the powers of evil that are working through you." And my kingdom will be unleashed. Caiaphas didn't like that. And so he was high and lifted up on the

cross. This presented the radical upside-down nature of the kingdom of God where the king sacrifices himself rather than perpetuating violence. This narrative underscores the unique role of Yeshua in the whole divine plan in the Bible, differentiating his path from what was always expected from everyone around him. Jesus dies willingly at the hand of evildoers so that the pureness of God can be reflected. I'm cool with that, right? We're all good with that. Yes, Jesus did something radical: the upside-down kingdom.

His Job, Not Mine

He died for me. He died for me on the cross. That's his job, not my job, his job. Happy with that. Until we get to [Matthew 16](#). And Peter says, Jesus proclaims Yeshua the Messiah, the revelation that he's the Messiah. And then Jesus says, okay, I got to go to Jerusalem and die, but I'll be raised back up. And then Peter, right after he says, you're the Messiah, you're it, turns to him and says, no, you're not going to do that. And that's when Yeshua turns and says, get away from me, Satan. Get away from me. Why are you trying to think that I'm not going to, that's just my purpose.

And then right after that, Yeshua says these words. We love, we love the idea and the reality that Yeshua died on the cross for us. But I don't like it that I'm called to pick up a cross and follow him. Follow him where? Well, where was he going with the cross? To Calvary.

We're called to manifest the kingdom of God the same way he did. Being willing to embrace the knowledge and the reality that nothing can be taken from us. If we have our allegiance and faith in God, not even our lives. What's our lives? What are they going to take? Are you going to kill us? [Philippians 1.21](#), to die is to gain, Paul says.

Yeshua invites us to follow his example to the world. He invites us to be so subversive and resistant and defiant toward the kingdoms of the world and the mindset of the world so that we can be an example of what it looks like to be totally focused on God to the point where not even our life is valuable enough for us to deny the power of God. Sounds so good, doesn't it? Preaches well, right? Yes. And we go outside—oh, I don't have to experience that. The message of the gospel is a calling to die to yourself and not let your life get in the way of producing that. It's a hard message. It's a radical message. I don't like it.

Sitting on His Throne

[Revelation 3.21](#). It's one of my favorite verses because it bothers me so much. Yeshua is speaking. And of course, Revelation is a theopolitical letter of resistance to the church during

the Roman Empire, right? Resist in a way that the Romans don't expect. Do not give in and hold on forever, even unto death. Hold out in your faith and the way of Yeshua. And Yeshua is speaking here and he says, to the one who is victorious, who conquers, Nike, right? I will give the right to sit with me on my throne. What? What? What?

I've always read that, but the first time I actually read it years ago—so Yeshua, which is actually, this is referring back symbolically to [Daniel 7](#). Yeshua calls us to overcome like he overcame. To be victorious like he is victorious. And if we do that... We get to sit on his throne with him and rule and reign. Isn't that what the [Genesis 1](#) mandate was for the images of God? To rule alongside God over creation?

His Example

Jesus calls us to overcome like he overcame. How did he overcome? He treated people real nice. He healed some folks. He ate with the sinners and the prostitutes and was nice to all the bad folks. We know that. He made thousands of fish sandwiches and gave them all away for free. And he loved his enemies. Remember, the same people that ate those fish sandwiches were the same people that abandoned him and were likely there screaming 'Crucify him!' The same people who, after he died, walked away disappointed because they felt he let them down. These are the same people that want God to act the way that they want him to act because it's the way they want to act.

Yeshua lived a radical life and it wasn't simply so that we could say a prayer and get into heaven one day after we die. It was so that, moving forward, we would have a different spirit and a different heart. We would be filled with something that would scream newness of humanity, newness of creation, and that he would live through us. In other words, his ministry and his work would not stop impacting people in the very same manner that it impacted people when he was walking around, which includes loving your enemy.

Loving Your Enemy

Loving your enemy. Yeah, so it was my struggle. Okay, so is Jesus just saying, if an enemy comes to hurt you, you do nothing, right? You just don't act. You just sit there and let evil happen. That caused me to jump into [Matthew 5](#) a little bit more, where it says, do not resist the evildoer. What? The Greek word there doesn't necessarily indicate nothing, absence of action, but the whole context of that section is not to repay in like manner. When someone comes against you to do evil, whatever it is, you don't mimic it. You don't reflect it back, right? You act

in a way where evil is absorbed and stops. You're supposed to find a third way. Not do nothing, but not be like them. You're always supposed to stand in the face of evil. You're supposed to be stronger. You're supposed to have more courage than it takes to respond in a way that is evil. You're supposed to have a way of responding that shows the power of God. And that shows evil as being weak and inadequate for showing its face in the way that it did.

To What End

But to what end? To what end? To change it. To change the world. If we stop acting like the world knows how to act and expects to act, if it's radical enough, maybe it'll change the world. Because if we bomb Agrabah and we take out Jasmine, then Aladdin is going to have a new mission in life to bomb us. It's the story of our nation. And we all know this. It's a cycle of violence. We all know this. Jesus said it. Peter uses the sword to protect Jesus. Of all people, Yeshua. I mean, if there's ever a moment to pull a gun out, right?

And Yeshua says, put your sword down. It's the last thing he says to his disciples before he goes into trial and meets his death. Put it down. And he says, if you live by the sword, you will die by the sword. You can do this, but you already know how it's going to end. I like to ignore it, but we all know it. We all know that's the truth. But the thing that Yeshua suggests we do seems foolish. It seems dumb. It does not seem just and it does not seem righteous at all. There's still a line somewhere, somewhere where violence is the answer. Has to be. I don't know exactly where it is, but come on. I mean, if nobody fights back, the evil people will just kill all of us and wipe Christians off the face of the earth, right? We have to. We have to make sure that they don't kill all of us, or else God's plan would be a failure.

These are my arguments, me arguing with my subconscious over the years. They'll just wipe us all out, and then what will be the purpose? And then this voice came into my head. It could be the Holy Spirit. It could just be my subconscious that I frequently argue with. Anyone else? No? Okay, it's me. Yeah, thank you. And it says, why do you think that's your responsibility to worry about? Because if it's God's plan, it's his responsibility. And if these are the things that God said to do to carry out his plan and mission, then it's his fault if it fails. It's not yours. You do as you're told. It's not the satisfying answer. I want to go away, voice in my head.

Dependent on God

It basically showed me that I really wasn't dependent on God's power as much as I said I was. Then I researched. Love my enemy. What does that even mean? I researched the word love.

Love my enemy. Thankfully, there's multiple words in the Greek for love. Thankfully, this word does not mean romantic love. It's the word that means you genuinely seek to produce or give or want the best blessings for someone else's life. Give me romance. Give me the romance. I don't want this. I'll take them out to dinner. That's fine. Want blessing for whoever you would consider labeling an enemy. Want the best for them. It means that you want them to experience the Garden of Eden with you. You want them to be sitting next to you at the table of God's feast in [Isaiah 25](#).

Standing and Seeking Good

You don't just not stand up. You don't just not protest. You don't just not call out evil. That's your responsibility. You don't just do everything in your power to stop them from harming other people. That's what you're called to do. But if we love them as our neighbor, we don't want harm to come to them. And the early church refused to allow harm to come to them. And that frustrates me. But what if it doesn't work? What if we get hurt living out the teachings of Jesus in a radical way?

And I think our issue and our struggle is we feel we can be both a Christian and a follower of Yeshua and think that our lives are being more highly regarded than Yeshua's. I think that's where that type of mindset comes from, at least with me. If I catch myself thinking that way, what if I die? I now have more priority of my own life than I did Yeshua's.

Sheep Among Wolves

In Matthew chapter 10, Yeshua is sending his disciples out and he says, guess what? You're going to be oppressed. You will be handed over to the officials just like Maximilian was, right? Your own family will condemn you because of how you live and respond to conflict and follow my teachings. So he's telling his disciples, I paraphrase. He metaphorically refers to this entire conversation, this entire atmosphere he builds for his disciples in which the world is going to respond to how they react to his teachings. He says, I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves. Sheep among wolves. You are not the wolves. You're not the wolves. You don't have teeth to bite and kill.

The Way of the Lamb

And no, you're not the sheep dog either. You're sheep. Why? Because they're harmless when it comes to violence. And that's also how Yeshua chose to illustrate himself on the cross. In

Revelation 5, he's the lion of Judah. But when John turns, he doesn't see a lion. He sees a lamb that has his throat cut, standing in victory.

And because he did this, he now rules over creation. This is how he conquered the devil. This is how he conquered evil. And he calls us to do the same. And that's hard. That's so hard.

The Struggle with Radical Faith

Do we realize what type of faith we signed up for? And I think that's why I'm so agitated at the Amish community and how they responded to their enemies that shot and killed their little girls. Because I don't want real world examples of living out the teachings of Jesus in radical ways. I don't like them because they saw hell on earth and they saw opportunity to push back and bring heaven to fill the void.

And I guess I'm just agitated because I don't know if I could ever do that. I'm mad because if Yeshua was actually serious about flipping the world upside down, about flipping my mindset of what it will take to do that, I don't know.

It's just irritating because I know for a fact there are situations and scenarios that I don't think I would be capable of following Jesus if what he said is actually what he means. I can think of some scenarios right now where I would justify in the moment putting my faithfulness to Jesus on the shelf. Because they would deserve it. And I like to think that it's okay to admit that. I like to think it's okay to admit that we are still growing in our faithfulness to the most radical rabbi ever to live. I like to think it's okay to admit where you struggle with God and theology and justice.

That's what the name Israel means, right? Struggling with God.

Not Manipulating Scripture

But there's one thing I've learned over the past few years of my struggle that I'm no longer comfortable doing, and that's trying to manipulate the Bible to accommodate for my own weakness and faithfulness. Because that's what we like to do, right? We like to cherry pick verses out of the Bible that accommodate me and what I want those verses to mean instead of motivating me to be the person I'm called to be.

Where Is the Line?

So I don't know where the line in the sand is for when our enemies get so evil that we no longer want the best for them. The what if extreme scenarios we build in our minds. I mean, there has to be a line that we can cross where it's acceptable to downplay the radicalness of the words of Yeshua, right? And I say that with all seriousness. There has to be. But wherever we find that line, I think it should be a struggle to set a standard knowing that you have departed from the only sermon that Yeshua ever preached. And the only prayer we're left, if we don't ever want to do that, to pray is, may God give us the strength that we don't want.

A Prayer for the Strength We Don't Want

So please stand as we take some time to meditate on the words that we struggle with from the Master. If you need prayer today, there's a prayer team on either side of the room. We invite you to take part in that. We invite you to sing. We invite you to pray or just meditate during this time.

Our Father, our King, Father, your word is a refining fire. And we thank you for the spirit within us. It's the same spirit of Yeshua that raised him from the dead, that was instilled and would raise new life in all of us. But that your words, the words of Yeshua, would continue to refine our hearts in ways that we don't want it to. That we would have the strength that we don't want to do the things that we never wanted to do. But so that we can become the people you are molding us to be. And that we would have a zeal that would produce bravery, courage, that would produce power and authority in your name, that would rock the very foundation of the world around us in a way that the world is not ready for. We thank you, Father, for your grace as we struggle and your mercy as we admit that. And we thank you for the power of the Holy Spirit to allow us to keep walking forward, to grow in faithfulness and love for you and your kingdom. In the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen.

Hear, O Israel. The Lord is our God. The Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. Now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and grant you his peace. Shabbat shalom, family.

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