



REFLECTIONS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

For the Love of MAGA: Learning to Love Your Enemies

Some days the hardest command in the Bible is the plainest one. Anchored in Matthew 5:44 (NLT), this reflection turns the mirror inward and asks what my anger at the MAGA movement, and at people I once trusted, reveals about my own heart. It draws a line between righteous anger and contempt, keeps conviction intact, and makes room to grieve broken friendships. With Scripture, honest confession, and prayer prompts for the days love won't come easily.



For everyone who wanders and feels far from home.

*For the ones who left when the noise got too loud, and the ones still
sitting in the back row wondering if they belong.*

*For the solo believer, the doubter, the tired, and the ones who feel
alone in a crowded church.*

**You are not lost. You are on your way home.
You are not the only one. This is for you.**

About Faith Over Factions

Faith Over Factions is a place for the spiritually homeless: people who still love Jesus but can't find Him in the noise of institutional religion or partisan faith. Everything here is free. No email address, no paywall, no algorithm deciding what you see.

You'll find reflections, portraits of Christians who resisted when it cost them something, devotionals for unsteady days, and a private Faith Journal for the questions you're not ready to say out loud. We don't take sides in the culture war. We take Jesus at His word and try to follow Him with honesty, humility, and a lot of grace for the stumbling.

Pull up a chair. You're welcome here.

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REFLECTIONS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

For the Love of MAGA: Learning to Love Your Enemies

There are days when I find it almost impossible to love the people Jesus told me to love. That hard lesson about learning to love your enemies. The one that gets ignored and justified away a lot these days.

There. I've said it.

Last month I asked [what our reaction to transgender people reveals about us](#). I meant it. But a mirror that only points one direction isn't a mirror. It's a weapon. So this time I'm turning it on myself. You can put lipstick on a pig and it's still a pig. My vibe here includes brutal honesty. I am not going to put lipstick on my own pig and call it holy.

For years, I've struggled with the anger, disappointment, and sometimes outright disgust that the Make America Great Again movement and its principal evoke in me. I've watched what I can only call political cruelty become entertainment, compassion dismissed as weakness, and policies celebrated by people who don't seem to understand the consequences of those policies on the well-being of other people. Up to and including physical and economic oppression, war that violates every aspect of "just war" and unjustifiable killings by federal immigration officers.

But the deepest wounds haven't come from politicians or strangers on social media. They've come from people I thought I knew. People whose kindness I had experienced, whose character I respected, and whose sense of right and wrong I believed was not so different from my own.

Discovering otherwise has been painful.

I've lost friendships. I've questioned relationships. I've wondered how people who speak so freely about loving Jesus can embrace ideals and actions that seem so far removed from his example and his command.

And honestly? I've been less than charitable about them.

Much less.

At times I've been downright hostile.

I could dress that up in righteous language. I could explain that my anger comes from concern for vulnerable people and from my conviction that cruelty and oppression should never be normalized.

All of that would be true.

It wouldn't be the whole truth.

Because somewhere in the middle of all that righteous anger, something else takes hold.

Contempt.

And contempt, however justified it feels, is a dangerous companion for someone trying to follow Jesus. Or just trying to be a decent human being.

The People We Find Hardest to Love

Dorothy Day spent her life among the poor and in open confrontation with injustice. One line followed her through all of it. She received it from her retreat director, Father John Hugo, and repeated it so often it became part of her creed:

We love God as much as the one we love the least.

It sounds beautiful until you start considering its implications to one's own self.

Because I know who I find difficult to love.

I can love the stranger who is hungry. I can feel compassion for the immigrant living in fear, the family struggling to survive, the person rejected for not fitting someone else's expectations of who and what they should be.

But ask me to love someone who openly celebrates the policies that bring more suffering to those people, and the command becomes much harder.

Ask me to love someone who uses the name of Jesus to justify those policies and that suffering, and I struggle even more.

Yet Jesus never qualified the command.

"But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!" (Matthew 5:44, NLT)

I've read those words countless times. I've taught them. I've written about them.

And still, there are days when I wish Jesus had said something easier. Something that left a little room for an exclusion clause.

He didn't.

When Righteous Anger Becomes Something Else

Anger isn't necessarily contrary to following Jesus.

Children going hungry in a nation of extraordinary wealth should trouble us. The exploitation of vulnerable people should provoke a response. Indifference to suffering is not a virtue.

Jesus confronted hypocrisy, exploitation, and the misuse of religious authority. His compassion never made him passive in the presence of injustice.

So the answer to my struggle isn't to care less about what is happening around me. Nor does loving someone require pretending their actions are harmless.

But there is a distinction I can't ignore.

Righteous anger confronts what is wrong. Contempt dismisses the person doing wrong as no longer worthy of compassion.

Anger can move us to defend the vulnerable. Contempt persuades us that certain people are beyond redemption.

Anger can demand accountability. Contempt can make us secretly enjoy another person's humiliation.

And most dangerously, contempt convinces us that our convictions make us fundamentally better than the people we oppose.

That is where the trouble begins.

When I reduce another human being to a collection of offensive beliefs, I have stopped seeing a neighbor. I've started seeing an enemy.

And although Jesus specifically told me to love my enemies, I've somehow convinced myself that this particular enemy should be an exception.

The Masks We Wear

So much of our public anger is directed at masks.

Political identities. Cultural allegiances. Religious labels. Social media personas. Slogans and symbols.

Those things can reveal genuine convictions, and convictions have consequences. Wrapping harmful behavior in a political identity doesn't make it harmless.

But human beings are more complicated than their public performances.

Behind the anger may be fear. Behind the arrogance, insecurity. Behind the desperate need to belong, loneliness. Behind the certainty, someone who has never felt safe enough to question what they were taught.

Or none of those things. I don't know what lives inside another person's heart. I can judge actions. Sometimes words tell me exactly what someone believes, and those beliefs demand a firm response.

But I cannot know the whole person, or everything that brought them to this moment.

I don't need to invent an excuse for them.

I only need to remember that they are more than the thing about them that angers me.

That remembering may be the first small opening through which compassion can return.

The Pain of Betrayal

This gets harder when the people involved aren't strangers.

Encountering cruelty from someone you've never met is one thing. Encountering what you see as supporting cruelty in someone whose goodness you once trusted is something else entirely.

We can disagree about taxes, budgets, and the proper reach of government. But when disagreements touch the dignity of human beings, the treatment of the vulnerable, or the use of religion to justify domination over others, they become personal.

I've wondered whether I ever really knew certain people. I've questioned whether the kindness I experienced was genuine or reserved for those who belonged to the right group.

I've felt betrayed.

There's no virtue in pretending otherwise. And there's no requirement that every broken relationship be restored.

Paul offers a wonderfully realistic instruction:

"Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone." (Romans 12:18, NLT)

Do all that you can.

Not everything is within our power. Peace requires more than one willing participant. Trust cannot be rebuilt by one person alone. Love does not require us to remain available for manipulation or endless hostility.

Sometimes loving someone means maintaining a boundary. Sometimes it means refusing another argument. Sometimes it means walking away without wishing them harm.

But one thing remains within our responsibility.

What will we allow that loss to do to our hearts?

The Uncomfortable Mirror

This is where the struggle becomes less about MAGA and more about me.

I don't enjoy arriving here.

I can spot hypocrisy in a political speech. I can recognize the misuse of Scripture. I can point to contradictions between professed belief and the treatment of human beings.

But what happens when I turn that attention inward?

What happens when I notice the satisfaction I feel when someone I oppose is humiliated? When I catch myself anticipating the worst from certain people, almost hoping they'll hand me another example? When frustration becomes a habit, and the habit starts shaping how I see the world?

Jesus asks:

"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?" (Matthew 7:3, NLT)

Last month I wrote that disgust can call itself discernment and contempt can call itself righteousness. I believed it when I wrote it about other people.

It turns out the sentence doesn't care whose side I'm on.

Somewhere tonight, a MAGA believer is reading the same Sermon on the Mount and struggling to love people like me. They see contempt where I see conviction. They feel the same betrayal I feel. If I want grace for my blind spots, I can't deny it to theirs.

The injustices that trouble me remain real. The responsibility to confront them remains.

But being right about an injustice does not automatically make me right in how I respond to the people responsible.

That realization has been humbling.

I don't want an identity built around opposition. I don't want my compassion to depend on someone's political affiliation. And I don't want to spend so much time cataloging the failures of others that I neglect the transformation Jesus is inviting me into.

Love Is Not Permission

Let me be clear about something.

Loving people does not mean excusing what they do. Forgiveness does not eliminate accountability. Compassion does not require silence. The command to love our enemies is not an instruction to abandon those who suffer at their hands.

A love that stays silent while the vulnerable are mistreated is incomplete. A peace purchased through the suffering of others is not the peace Jesus calls us to pursue. It is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer warned was complicity with evil.

I will keep saying hard things about those who hold power and use it to wound. Jesus did. But his hardest words went upward. The neighbor across the fence is not a throne.

That is the difficult ground we are called to occupy.

Speak clearly about wrongdoing while refusing to declare the wrongdoer beyond the reach of grace. Resist cruelty without becoming cruel. Defend human dignity without deciding that some human beings have forfeited theirs.

Loving our enemies doesn't always mean liking them, trusting them, or staying in relationship with them.

Sometimes love is simply the refusal to wish another person destroyed.

Sometimes it is a prayer offered through clenched teeth.

Sometimes it is choosing not to answer a hateful remark with another one.

Sometimes it is remembering that the person whose behavior disgusts me is still someone for whom Christ gave his life.

That last thought has a way of silencing me.

Because whatever else I believe about someone, I cannot honestly claim that Jesus loves me more than he loves them.

The Grace I Cannot Manufacture

For a long time, I treated the command to love my enemies as one more obligation I was failing to fulfill.

So I tried harder. I reminded myself to be patient. I tried to replace anger with understanding.

Sometimes it worked.

Often it didn't.

Eventually I began to wonder whether I had misunderstood the invitation.

Perhaps Jesus wasn't asking me to manufacture feelings I don't possess. Perhaps he was inviting me to receive the grace to love beyond my own limits.

The first places the entire burden on my ability to improve myself. The second begins by admitting I need help.

I can't command myself to feel compassion. I can't reason my way out of every resentment.

But I can bring those feelings honestly before God. I can acknowledge the anger without letting it become my master. I can recognize contempt when it shows up and refuse to make a home for it. I can pray for someone even when I don't feel charitable toward them.

Not because the conflict was imaginary. Not because the suffering was unimportant.

Because I don't want the things I oppose to determine the person I become.

"Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good." (Romans 12:21, NLT)

For me, that has become less about winning a confrontation and more about preserving the capacity to love.

I've also begun to see the struggle itself differently. I used to think I had to overcome my anger before I could become who Jesus wanted me to be. Now I wonder whether the struggle is where that becoming happens.

It exposes where my compassion has limits. Where my convictions have tangled with my ego. How easily my desire for justice slides into a desire for vindication.

And how much I still need grace.

I hope I never grow comfortable with cruelty. I hope suffering always disturbs me. But I hope my response is shaped more by the character of Jesus than by the behavior of those who anger me.

Some days I manage it. Some days I fail miserably.

On those days, I'm reminded that grace isn't a reward for having finally mastered the teachings of Jesus. It's what meets us in the middle of our unfinished becoming.

Especially then.

For the Love of MAGA

I chose this title deliberately.

I know how it sounds. Some readers will expect an endorsement. Others will expect an angry denunciation.

Neither is what I want to offer.

After years of wrestling with my reactions to this movement and the people in it, the question has changed.

The most important question is no longer what I think about MAGA. It is what my response to MAGA reveals about the condition of my own heart.

That doesn't mean I've abandoned my convictions or become indifferent to policies I believe cause massive harm.

It means my responsibility as a follower of Jesus extends beyond identifying what is wrong in the world. It includes letting God confront what is wrong in me.

I haven't arrived. There are people whose words still make my blood boil. There are relationships whose fractures still hurt. There are days when praying for the people responsible is the last thing I want to do.

But perhaps the measure of growth isn't how little anger we feel. Perhaps it's how much love we can preserve in the presence of that anger.

I've stopped believing that the struggle means I'm failing. Sometimes the struggle is simply what it feels like to follow Jesus into places our hearts would rather avoid.

And when I can't find the love, the most faithful prayer I know is also the simplest:

Lord, I cannot find the love within myself today. But I know you love this person. Help me see what you see. Help me confront what is wrong without surrendering to hatred. And please, don't let my anger close the door to your grace.

Tomorrow, I may need to pray it again.

And the day after that.

Loving our enemies isn't a destination we finally reach. It's a way of living that asks us, again and again, to choose the heart of Christ over the impulses of our wounded egos.

Not the absence of struggle. Not the surrender of conviction. Not a comfortable peace built on looking away.

The quiet, persistent work of learning to love people we would much rather condemn.

For the love of MAGA?

Not exactly.

For the love of Christ, who has never stopped loving any of us.

Including the people I struggle to love.

Including me.

Check-In Questions and Prayer Prompts

Take these slowly. Write in the Faith Journal or on the lines below. What matters is that each question gets an honest answer somewhere.

1 Who is the person you find hardest to love right now?

Write down a name, not a group. Then write one true thing about them that has nothing to do with politics.

PRAYER PROMPT

"Lord, I know exactly who came to mind. You love them already. Help me get at least as far as remembering they're a person."

2 Where has your anger turned into contempt?

Look for the tells: enjoying someone's humiliation, expecting the worst, almost hoping they'll prove you right. Name one place you've caught yourself doing it.

PRAYER PROMPT

"God, it's easier to be angry than honest about what's underneath. Show me where I've started enjoying this, and take that part away."

3 What would it sound like if someone on the other side prayed about you?

Write the prayer they might pray, in their words rather than yours. Read it slowly and ask what they might see that you can't.

PRAYER PROMPT

"Jesus, I have blind spots and I don't like hearing about them. Let me hear anyway. Give me the grace I keep asking You to give them."

4 Is there a broken friendship you need to grieve, release, or try again?

Romans 12:18 says to do all that you can, which admits some of it isn't up to you. Decide which of the three this one needs, and what a single step would look like.

PRAYER PROMPT

"Father, I miss who I thought they were. Show me what's mine to do here, and help me set the rest down."

5 What would love look like toward this person this week, even if you can't feel it?

Maybe a prayer through clenched teeth, a reply you don't send, or simply refusing to wish them harm. Pick one small, concrete thing.

PRAYER PROMPT

"Lord, I can't find the love on my own today. Help me do the one small thing anyway, and leave the feelings to You."

A Blessing for the Road

May the God who sees the wanderer find you wherever you are tonight.

May Christ, who never needed you to have it all together, meet you in the questions you're still carrying.

May the Spirit steady your feet when the noise gets loud, and quiet your heart when the world won't.

Go gently. Tell the truth. Love the ones in front of you.

And when you fall, and you will, may grace be the first thing you find when you get back up.

You're Always Welcome Here

If this helped, don't carry it alone. Write your answers in the [Faith Journal](#), free and private. Share this with someone who's wandering. And come find us at [faithoverfactions.com](#), on [Substack](#), [Facebook](#), [Bluesky](#), and [Instagram](#).



Faith Journal



This piece online

The porch light is always on.

Take Something for the Road

You don't have to walk this alone, and you don't have to pay to keep going. Here are a few companions for the journey. The four Guides are free. No email address, no catch.

THE BELEAGUERED BELIEVER'S GUIDES



The Path of the Beleaguered Believer

"You are not losing your faith, you are finding it under the noise." For the one who keeps getting up.



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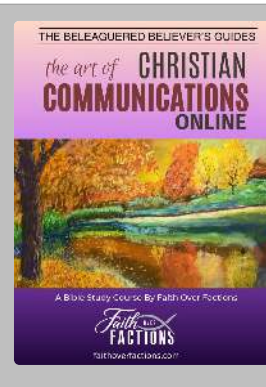


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Walking every day with Jesus: a six-week workbook for becoming a stronger disciple.



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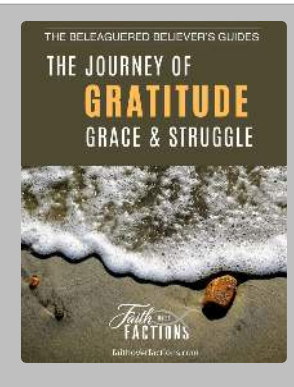


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You don't have to feel grateful to begin. You only have to turn toward the One who hasn't left.



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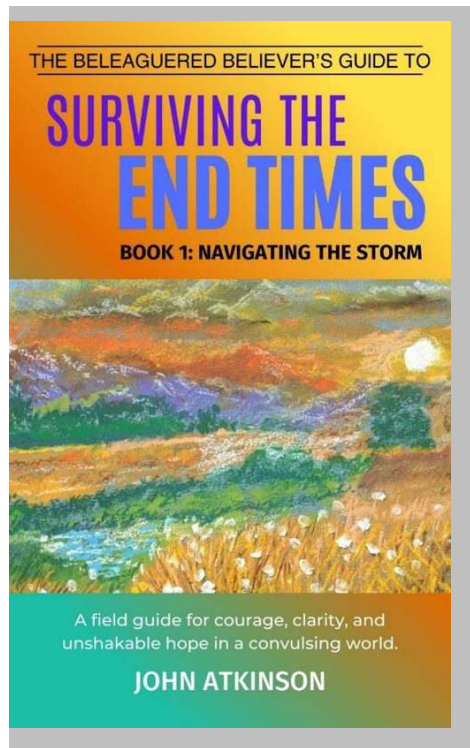
And a Quiet Place to Write It All Down

The [Faith Journal](#) is a private space for the questions in these pages, the prayers you mean, and the faith that doesn't fit neatly anymore. Write honestly. Share prayer requests only when you're ready. Free, private by default, no comment threads, no algorithm.



When You're Ready to Go Deeper

If something in these pages stirred you, you don't have to walk the rest of the way alone.



The Beleaguered Believer's Survival Guide to the End Times, Book 1: Navigating the Storm is a field guide for weary disciples trying to follow Jesus with a clear head and a steady heart while the world gets loud and cruel. It isn't a prophecy chart or a book of fear. It's teaching, reflection, and practice to help you:

- See challenges through Kingdom eyes
- Discern truth in an age of deception
- Endure hardship without losing heart
- Love fiercely when love grows cold
- Stand firm in Christ when the world convulses

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Grace and peace for the road.

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