

REFLECTION | *Love Your Enemies*

You can grab that pen & paper Kelly mentioned earlier now, and I want to put an image up on the screen and just have you take it in for a moment. Contemplate the symbolism (and whatever feelings that evokes). Then try to come up with one word that you would use to describe this image, and jot that down on your paper. [Full Screen of image – 15-20 seconds]



This sculpture by Ukrainian artist Alexander Milov is titled “Love.” Honestly the first word I thought when I saw it was not “love” but “conflict.” Maybe “pain” or “misunderstanding”...

There’s no small amount of conflict going on in the world right now. Probably always true but it feels especially loud right now.

So I want to ask: how many places is there a back-to-back dynamic going on in your life right now? On your social media feed, in your home. Even if it’s just in your mind, your heart. Whether caused by politics,

spirituality, or just personal stuff. Be gut-wrenchingly honest. And try to jot those ALL down on that same paper.

ON SCREEN: **Where are you at odds with others?** [30-40 seconds reflection]

I don’t know about yours, but this [MINE] is way too big a list for a Jesus-follower.

And in every situation, I pretty much feel like the innocent child: bright, blameless, right, just reaching out in honesty... but to the other side, I’m not. I’m the stubborn adult with my back turned, causing the problem. But here’s the thing: what if it doesn’t matter? What if it matters not one iota whether you are right or wrong in any conflict situation, your call is the same: to be brave enough and humble enough to reach. out. in. love. ...?

In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus says:

You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that. In a word, what I’m saying

is, Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you. (MSG)

As we sing this next song, I'm going to invite you to re-consider the list in your hand. Whether you feel you're right or wrong, innocent or guilty, back turned because you're angry **or** because you're hurt... let's recognize that our call as Jesus-people is to "grow up" into becoming the one who reaches out in love – even when we want to turn our backs, even when someone's back is turned towards us.

And so to start making that real, right now, as we sing, use the words of this song to become your prayer for the people on your list (like Jesus said). Pray for them as you sing, one by one, from the heart.