

II. Biblical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues “What the Bible Says About War”

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Psalm 18 is one of the Psalms that describe the Lord as a warrior. I'm going to read selected verses one and two, 17 and 19, and then 33 to 42, to give us a sense of the way the Lord describes himself as a mighty God who wages war against his adversaries and strengthens his people when they need to do the same.

I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my rock, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge. Then it shifts a little bit - my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. So we're moving toward strength. Verse 17. He rescued me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me. For they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity. But the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a broad place. He rescued me because he delighted in me. And then verse 33, he made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. He trains my hands for war so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You've given me the shield of your salvation. And your right hand supported me. And your gentleness made me great. You gave me a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip. I pursued my enemies. The Psalm of David. When he was facing his enemies, I pursued my enemies and overtook them, and did not turn back till they were consumed. I thrust them through so that they were not able to rise. They fell under my feet. For you equipped me with strength for the battle you made. Those who rise against me sink under me. You made my enemies turn their backs to me. And those who hated me, I destroyed. They cried for help. But there was none to save. They cried to the Lord but did not answer them. The idea is it's a false cry. Of course I beat them. Finest dust before the wind. I cast them out like the mire of the streets. So the Lord delivers his people. And David is noticing, saying that the Lord delivered his people in the time of war, when they were attacked by people bent on destroying them, like the Philistines, like the Amalekites and others, and he defeated them.

That's the broadest biblical context for a theology of war.

Let's pray. Heavenly father, I do pray that you give us ears to hear what you have to say to us. Give us perspectives in this world. There are many battles, many wars, just an unjust and it can be deeply confusing. I pray that we would, draw on your word and on the wisdom of the ages so that we can be wise people as we discuss, as we pray, and even as we learn how we might live in some measure in the face of conflict, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

You might agree with me that war and just war and the complexities of war are among the most difficult matters people discuss. They're not as difficult, experiential or existential in

America as they are in some other places because America has never been invaded. There are very few countries you can say that never been invaded. We have basically a 3000 mile border with Canada and we're just friends. The Canadians are not going to invade us for any foreseeable future, nor are we going to invade them. And although we have certain troubles on our southern border with Mexico, we're not at war with Mexico. They're not going to invade us, and we're not going to invade them. And we have on the other side, you know, North is Canada, South is Mexico not meaning to give you a geography lesson, but, you know, there's an ocean on the other sides, east and west. And so we're safe. And it doesn't it doesn't feel like an existential threat to America the way it has felt to most people. At most times I look out of no, you know, I just saw a Hungarian over there. I used to see USD, and Hungary is a country with a long, very flat border that makes it easy to invade if you're a strong nation, especially off to the east. Many countries would say that. Now, the fact that it's not an existential threat for us does not mean it's a non-issue. The truth is, America has had to be mindful of war for a long time, at least for 80 plus years, America has had a role. Our countries had a role of as the protector of the free world, or protector of democracy, or many, many nations.

This is most obvious and we celebrate it not many days ago at all. In the 80th anniversary of D-Day, 1944. And it's not clear that Europe would have cast off the yoke of Nazi ism if the force of America had not been brought to bear. And then, of course, as soon as World War Two ended, a Cold War broke out and there was an Iron curtain, and there was enormous and still is some high level of tension with the Communist nations.

But in the beginning, not only were they bound on conquering the world according to their own ideology, stated clearly many times, they're also profoundly atheistic and very interested in destroying the church. If they possibly could, because they thought Christianity and all religion is a delusion of the people, the opiate of the masses that befuddles people's minds. And then, of course, beyond that, we have the fact that we're allies of nations that depend on us and are friendly to us.

And some of them are very weak, like Taiwan and Singapore and Israel have connections to places like Ukraine and Poland and Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. And these are small countries that we have pledged ourselves to, and they depend on us, of course. Also in the news, two big wars in October, I believe, was October 7th of last year.

Hamas invaded Israel from the Gaza Strip and murdered is probably only the best way to put it. But and entered the country and slaughtered mostly civilians indiscriminately but 1200 and took another 250 captive, many of whom have died. Now, if you follow the news, and I do not urge you to do so, but if you follow the news, if you look at certain news outlets, Israel is now viewed in many places as an abominable nation because, you know, Hamas only killed 1500 or so Israelis, and now Israel has killed 25,000 or 27,000 people in the Gaza Strip.

And certainly if you see the pictures there, they're deeply discouraging. And we groan at the thought of the war and children and women noncombat and dying in Gaza. Don't judge me yet,

because there's much more to be said. I do follow the media, although it's not good for my soul in order to be a good pastor, to be honest.

And I listen to everybody and by which I mean conservatives and liberals and everybody in between as best I can. And there's a news outlet that we would probably call left leaning that had a string of interviews until I couldn't stand them anymore, of Palestinians who said over and over again, what have we done to deserve this?

Why is this happening to us? And the answer is because you voted for Hamas, which is an organization that pledged itself to destroy every last person living in Israel, if they possibly could, that that's why it's happening. You voted for them, you voted for this, and you voted for it over and over again. And then they did what they said they would do.

And so that's what's happening. And Israel fought back. And nations have a right to defend their borders. I'm grieved when I see the pictures of the rubble in the Gaza Strip. But a nation has a right to defend its borders. According to the Bible. Now, there's more to it than that. But that has to be said. There's also war in Ukraine, and the Russians just decided they wanted to take Ukraine.

Ukrainians didn't really do anything except possess land and a desire for freedom, and the Russians decided to take them. Now, as a personal note, I probably should tell you now that half of my family came over to America hundreds of years ago, and as some members of my family tell it, we came over on the Mayflower. So that's pretty long ago, you know, way back to the beginning.

But the other half of my family are Russian Jews who escaped from Russia under, you know, extreme pressure and, deprivation and mistreatment of every possible kind for a number of years. So, a Jew living in Russia is going to tend to be empathetic with Ukrainians and Poles and other people who are in threat of being taken over by Russia.

So we need to hear this. I mean, it's a very real issue, even though America has never been invaded. I mean, we need to have a word. And the word from the Bible begins with the doctrine of sin. People are sinful. That's where wars come from. The book of James is not actually talking necessarily about military war, but about war in a broader sense, but includes military war.

When James says, what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? And that means they fight within? And it's talk about battles in places like the the home or the workplace or in other places that we live our lives. But he goes on to say, you desire and do not have, so you murder, you covet and cannot obtain.

So you fight and quarrel. Now, desiring and murdering is actually what starts an enormous number of wars. Russia invaded Ukraine because they desire to control the land of Ukraine. And so they have murdered many people. They murder civilians, they bomb schools and hospitals on purpose. That's what they do. And for years and years and years, that's been the

way you go back to the through the, Huns and the Mongols sweeping across Asia and sweeping across Europe.

They just wanted wealth and power. And so they killed. They threatened people. They were the original terrorists. They said, if you don't submit to us and surrender and let us plunder, we'll kill everyone in your town, your city, your village. And they would do that, and then they would keep the skulls up outside the village, big heaps so people could see what happens if you resist.

When, people came to America, this is maybe anticipating a tiny bit what we'll hear next week. But when people came to America 500 years ago or thereabouts, some people came most definitely to share the gospel, and other people came most definitely to plunder the wealth of the New World. One of the Spanish conquistadors was asked, have you no regard for the people of this land?

Do you not know that they're made in God's image? And he said, we have not come to convert them. We have come to take from them their gold. That's why we're here now. They're missionaries. At the same time doing good and saying we repudiate what our own people are doing. But there were people who came with the desire to conquer.

Now the Bible describes this desire to conquer, the desire to kill as something that emerges from the pit of hell itself. If you read revelation chapter 12 and 13, there is a beast that arises following the dragon, which is Satan, and that beast wages war and has horns and has power and destroys ultimately, the force behind wars is Satan himself and wants to kill and slay and destroy. And then people who indulge their sins carry out Satan's work by attacking innocent people and plundering them. That's where war comes from. Now, that doesn't mean all wars are evil. That's where the assaults of war come from. If you look at the Bible and you, I hope you've gotten the hand up by now, because it's going to get dense a little bit if you want to follow along.

If you look at the Bible, the Bible actually repeatedly says defensive wars are permissible and the Bible also regulates wars. There's basically one chapter of the Bible mostly is about a war that Abraham fought to deliver. His nephew Lot, who was carried off along with his household by an alien power. And for most of a chapter of the Bible, Genesis 14, there is a defensive war to liberate people who are taking captive.

Genesis 14 and when the Lord anticipates the people of God entering into Jerusalem, he saw into the Promised Land. He describes the way they should conduct themselves in war. And he says, you're not going to do what pagan people do with what people today call total war. He said. This in Deuteronomy chapter 20 when you draw near a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it.

Verse 11, when it responds, and if it responds to you peaceably and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor to you and shall serve you. And then we have

the book of judges. In the Book of Judges, the Israelites are attacked repeatedly from Midianites and Amalekites and other, nations that are nearby.

And the Lord raises up people like Gideon to fight against their adversaries and deliver the people from those who would conquer them. David is also a shepherd of Israel. He fought against the Philistines, who were, I don't I'm just going to say it this way. You know the story of David and Goliath. It's a Sunday School story, right? But, you know, it says that, David met the Philistines in the valley of Elah. When he meets him in the Valley of Elah, the Philistines are slightly more than halfway across the country by then so the battle with Goliath is a case of somebody depending on the Lord to deliver his people. But it's also a case of a of a nation invading. Imagine that Mexico attacks America, and we finally meet them in Kansas City. In case you don't know, that's pretty far into the country. They've gone way past Atlanta and Birmingham and they're past Nashville. They're most of the way across the country. So the Lord has David and calls David. In fact, David defends his people in chapter 17 after being anointed in chapter 16, David is presented to the land of Israel as a warrior who says the battle is the Lord's.

David sings of it, I love you, oh my Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress. He rescued me from my powerful enemy. He made my arm strong. That's the Old Testament. In the New Testament, when John the Baptist announces that the son of God is coming, the Messiah is coming, soldiers come to him and they say to him, what shall we do?

And his answer is, do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation. Be content with your wages. You know what he doesn't say? He doesn't say, get out of the military. He says, be content with your wages. Don't extort. Don't use false force. Now, of course we know that Jesus blesses the peacemakers. And he says to us, turn the other cheek.

And so there are Christians over the years who said, we turn the other cheek. We take we, we take our anger and we turn it over to God and we say, I'm not going to strike anybody back. But, you know, the Bible does distinguish between personal acts and national acts. Somebody strikes me in the cheek. I am supposed to turn the other cheek.

There's no question about that. I should not retaliate as a person. But it's also true that in Romans 13 the Lord says, through the mouth of his apostle Paul, rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of those who are in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive approval, for he is God's servant for your good.

But if you do wrong, be afraid, because he does not bear the sword in vain. That is to say, there is still a place for force by those who are entrusted with protection of innocent people, protection of those who are attacked, those who are assaulted. So just war has a place now in the Bible. Certainly today there's no place for war that is fought as a matter of, advance in the gospel.

When we read about armor, which we did in Psalm 18 a little while ago, that is, moved from the realm of physical force or the people of Israel to spiritual force in the family of God. Let me read it to you from Ephesians chapter six. It says, put on the whole armor of God or kids. Study this in VBS this year, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, authorities and cosmic powers over this present darkness, against spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places.

That is to say, that is to say, we do not advance the cause of God. We don't advance the gospel by force. We use spiritual weapons against spiritual forces. But if God calls you to the military and your nation is invaded, then you want to fight. Now there's a man named Martin Luther that most of you have heard of.

And Martin Luther wrote a book called Can Soldiers Be Saved? And in it he said this about soldiers. He said, when the war is over and you're done defending your people, you may find that you had a gift from God. You had the knack of killing, in which case you should move around and look for a town that needs an executioner.

Now, why did he say that? He said it, of course, in an age when capital punishment was, reasonably commonplace. But he was saying something very profound. He was saying that there is a place in the secular life not in advance in the gospel. You don't say, believe in Jesus, or I'm going to put you to death. You never say that.

But in the secular world, there are people who do things that are so dire, so evil individually that they deserve the death penalty. I'm not trying to give a talk about that right now. And there are there are nations that attack peaceful people and slaughter women and children, the aged, and they must be stopped by force. And it is legitimate for a Christian to do that.

One of my best friends in the world is an engineer that works for the defense industry and his life's work. He's 61 years old. His life's work has been on an airplane called the F-15. Now, you may not know this, but the F-15 is almost certainly the finest, strongest, best military weapon ever conceived on the Earth. They've been around for 50 some years and never has one been shot down. Never in combat, never. Not one. So much so that, one time, you know, these, you know, these sites that capture the best live conversations. You know what I'm talking about?

Okay, so there's a military, there's a military conversation that somehow an ordinary person overheard and transcribed, and it goes like this. There's a country that says to a plane, a fighter plane, you're over our borders. You need to get out of our space.

And the plane, the pilot plane says, I am not over your borders, and I'm not going to get out of your space because I'm not in your space. And, the defense industry for, let's say, Lebanon says, no, no, you're over our borders. You need to get out of our space now. And he says, no, I'm not over your space.

You're making a mistake. I'm flying over the ocean and it's all good. And they say you are over our space. If you don't move, we're going to send our jets up -our fighter jets up after you. And the answer was, I'm an F-15. Come on up.

And the plane didn't come up because an F-15 is so powerful that it is a peacemaking device. And I've talked to my friend about this on multiple occasions. This is you're giving your life to a weapon of war that is designed to kill people and to shoot down other planes. And he said yes. He says yes, but it's so good that it actually brings peace in this world.

And that's what I'm doing, because our nation and other nations, because we sell F-15 to other nations, our nation has enemies that want to do us harm, and it is my calling from God to stop them. I said, he's my friend. He's also an elder in the church. He's also a seminary grad. He's the kind of elder that went to seminary just because he wanted to be a really good elder.

He's a man who takes it seriously, and he's learned what it means. Now, of course, we don't delight. We never delight in making war. The Bible says to us, if possible, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone and everybody who's ever talked about war and just war, who's a Christian thinker, has tried to emphasize that.

But war is always a last resort. But when you have to go to war, then you do go to war. And in fact, when God's people, by God's grace, by God's power, defeated the Egyptians. In Exodus 15, there was a song of celebration. It goes like this *I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted.* Exodus 15:1-3 *the horse and its rider is hurled into the sea.*

The Lord is my strength and my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him. The Lord is a warrior. The Lord is his name. The truth of matter is that Jesus, although using spiritual means, is also a warrior. You know that Jesus waged war with him who held the power of death. And Jesus says, I'm going to enter the house of a strong man and plunder him and take away his armor.

Now that's, of course, again spiritual, but you have to fight against the forces of darkness, which in Jesus case, of course, he turned the other cheek. Of course, Jesus fought spiritual battles, but he did fight battles. And in this life, when people are dying, when children and women and the aged are dying because of a hostile force using force and killing people, I am saying it is right, according to Scripture, to resist them.

That's why Christians can and do serve in the military. And we don't celebrate. We don't give thanks for them because they're Americans. We give thanks because they're at best doing justice.

Now, when people talk about war, they divide it up into three categories. How do you. So war is permissible, maybe even necessary at times. But how do you go about conducting yourself.

Three questions.

1. What gives a nation a right to go to war?
2. How do we conduct ourselves with justice in war?
3. How should we understand the problem of moral injury in war?

Now, moral injury of war comes from several things that include watching your friends die. And asking questions like, why did I live while my friends died? I have an uncle who had to ask that question many times. He was a survivor of World War II who fought in a battalion that had far more than 50% casualties. Why did I get to live, number one? Number two, how do you face it after you have killed someone yourself? What happens if you realize you accidentally killed an innocent person? Those are the questions of moral injury in war. Now, one of the hardest things about war in the history of war is if you look at the literature, generally speaking, when people go to war, when nations go to war against each other, there are exceptions. But generally speaking, one army or one people demonizes or dehumanizes the other.

If you look at old posters of the Germans made by, you know, the Allies in World War Two, they look kind of like animals. They look kind of subhuman. And the idea is in order to kill, when people have studied this, in order to kill someone else, you have to stop thinking of them as real people. That's the idea.

Another problem in war is that once war starts, it tends to accelerate. People call that the problem of total war. So, for example, in World War two, which is by far the clearest, most just war ever fought, the Nazis started off in the 40s by bombing London. If you've heard about the Blitz on London, one of the things you need to know is that it was indiscriminate. We will simply drop bombs. We aren't trying to hit military targets. If we hit a bridge, good. If we don't hit a bridge, it's fine. We're just dropping bombs to terrorize and demoralize the people of England and other places. Well, of course, as you know, before too long, air superiority went to the allies. And the allies started with targeted bombing, but then they moved on. This also applies in the Vietnam War. They started with targeted bombing, and then they moved on to what's called carpet bombing, which is you lay down bombs like a carpet. And then they went on to incendiary devices. The Germans started that, too. They drop bombs on London and other places that were meant to set the places on fire and just kill people and burn things up.

Indiscriminate war. And again, they weren't very good at it. And the allies, after suffering this for a while, said, we can do it better. And you may or may not know that the city of Dresden in Germany was firebombed. Now fire bombing means a lot of people die in fire, but actually the real methodology of fire bombing is to drop bombs that start indiscriminate fires that are so hot and so, potent that they burn up all the oxygen in an area and the people in the area suffocate. And the allies did that. It's a matter of historical record. It's a fact. And they did it because the Germans started it, and the Germans did it first, and they did it for a long time and did it over and over again. And so we're going to do back to them.

Some of you know the name Robert McNamara, who is revered as a brilliant tactician and also hated by many people for his leadership of the conduct Vietnam War. He released a documentary. Some people think the finest or at least most complex war documentary of all time called *The Fog of War*, in which he describes how he himself started small with targeted bombs and then went on to carpet bombing and napalm and all the rest.

The end of World War Two in Japan is a similar sort of problem. As you know, it would have been a multi-million dollar person, a life casualty if the allies had invaded Japan, and so they dropped the nuclear weapon instead, probably killed about 200,000 people, probably saved 2 million lives. The problem is that we don't quite know what we unleashed, do we?

And there's always a chance that someone's going to return fire someday. And then many, many more will die. So it's extraordinarily complicated because people are sinners and because they get carried away when once you start hitting somebody, they start hitting back and you just keep on going harder and harder. That's the problem. And so Christians, for hundreds of years, really over a thousand years have address these issues.

Augustine, one of the great theologians of our day, wrote about this because he lived in a day of war. He lived in Northern Africa when, Germanic people, Goths, Visigoths, barbarians generally is the term used for them were constantly attacking Rome, and in fact he died as his city was about to be run over by the barbarians. So what did he say? He said, number one, war is a necessary evil in this world. It's evil, but it's necessary. It is never number two, he said. A tool of the church. And the third thing he said is there must always be a just cause for a war. That's what he said. And then over the next years, and if you don't mind, I'm just going to name some of the names, a variety of people.

Thomas Aquinas, 13th century. One of the great minds in the history of the world, Johannes Gratian and Hugo Grotius, two great Christians and leaders in the field of jurisprudence, weighed in and they came to this conclusion. These are the ways this is the criteria for a war that is just or fair. Or it might even say righteous. Number one, there must be a response to a real injury, not a feigned injury, not an imagined injury like Putin dreamt up against Ukraine, a real injury like invasion and slaughtering people.

Number two, there must be a legitimate authority who declares war. You don't just get to declare war on your own. The government, your leaders, your king, your prime minister, your president must declare that we are now at war. Number three, there must be a right intention, which is just peace. That is to say, the goal in resisting the Nazis is not to kill the Nazis, but to give peace to Europe, meant to kill people along the way.

But that's not the goal. The goal is peace. The goal is to stop the invasion. By the way, the Prime Minister of Germany three weeks ago said on the 80th anniversary of D-Day, essentially, thank you to the allies for stopping us. Thank you. Why? He said, because you liberated the Germans from Hitler.

You helped us. You stopped us. Now, that's a profound truth, because the truth of the matter is it's bad. It's bad for the Germans to have killed the people in Belgium and the Netherlands and France and all the rest. It was bad for them. It was bad for them because they did evil and have to bear the consequences.

And probably more Germans died than anybody else because they were defeated. It would have been better by far if they could have been stopped way earlier. Way at the beginning. Far fewer, you know, English people and Dutch people and French people would have died and far fewer Germans would have died. And the Chancellor of Germany today recognized that and said, thank you for stopping us.

You helped us. That's, of course, the result of a just war. So, right intention, which is a just peace. It must be a last resort. You do everything you can to prevent it. There must be proportion. You don't go to war over minor issues, and you have to have a reasonable hope of success. That is to say, if you're a little town and a giant army is sweeping through, surrender, you're not going to defeat them. You're going to be slaughtered. Just give in and hope for the best.

Now the next question is conduct in war. War must be conducted with inward love. Even a warrior is bound by the principle love your neighbor as yourself. That's why we don't target civilians. That's why Hamas is so evil. Because they attacked women and children and because they put their artillery in elementary schools and in hospitals. And they make a wager. And the wager is that it'll be so bad for the publicity of Israel to blow up a hospital or an elementary school that that they'll never attack our school.

But if they do, and their internal communications have been discovered and publicized, if they do, if the Israelites do, if the Jews do bomb our schools, it'll be so bad for their publicity. World opinion will turn against them, and that'll be good, too. In other words, they don't care about their own people. You should always care about everyone who could possibly be killed in war.

And so, Augustine was the first one to say, even as you fight, you must fight your enemy with inward love. You must fight him. You lament. You must kill him. You do not celebrate their destruction of life. You grieve, you even pray. You think in your mind, I am stopping these people for our good and for their good.

Think of the Germans. One more time. Governments defend their people, but they also need to defend the people who are attacking you. Look for a just peace. Well, really, just a couple more thoughts. One is we do know that as individuals, the Bible calls upon us to be peacemakers. Jesus said, blessed are the peacemakers. We make peace. If you're in the military or in the government, you make peace above all.

But trying to avoid war when you possibly can. Talk, talk, talk, prevent the war. See if a way forward can be found. See if. See if we can mitigate. If we can stop the violence before it goes too far. Jesus does say an eye for an eye. Know. Forgive those who mistreat you. Forgive those

who strike you on the cheek. And yet the Bible is realistic. And it does say over and over again that there is a time to defend your people, the people of Israel. Above all, when the Assyrians and the Amalekites and the Philistines and all the rest attack still, our goal is to live out the gospel, right? And we live out the gospel by remembering things like God reconciled us to himself when we were enemies.

And so we think about a place like Russia or a place like Gaza. Our hope is to reconcile. We may have to use force to stop them, but the goal is peace with all such peoples, no matter how warlike they may be at the moment. It may change if we are wise and the way we go about our government business.

And again, insofar as it lies with you, if possible, live at peace with all men, then I want to send you out with, just for I beg for ideas about what you can do so this can move out of the realm of theory into practice. And here goes. Number one, is there anything you can do? There is something you can do.

You can pray for just peace. You can pray. You can pray that invaders will be stopped. You can pray that force against innocent civilians will not continue to prevail. You can pray for nations that have been harmed by those who've been attacked. But you can also pray for the people who are attacking and could pray for Hamas, that that the people of Gaza will get new leaders.

You can pray for the Russians that somehow or other they will find a new leader, no longer have Putin as their leader. Number two, although you may not be in government or in the military, the principle of peacemaking applies all through life. Be a peacemaker. Support direct nonviolent action when there's war around you, whether it's war in a family or war in a workplace or squabbling within a county or in some jurisdiction, a school district and so forth, see if you can become a peacemaker. Thinking to yourself, it's good for all sides to stop the hostility. The goal is not for one side to win and the other side to lose. The goal is for everyone to come to peace. We work toward peace. Third, by acknowledging as best we can if we have any responsibility for a war or an injustice that has led to war, we say, this is what I've contributed.

And finally, if I can just say a personal word, see it broadly as you can, the only source of violence toward women and children is not wars. It's also domestic violence. There's also forms. There are many forms of violence in the world. If you're aware of anyone who is suffering violence unjustly. Take on the role of a peacemaker. Do it. You can rise to the defense of those who are being wounded and hurt. Children, women and others so that we live like who we are, followers of the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus. And as we do those things, as we look for peace in our own life, not just in the broader world, we we say to ourselves into the world, we're looking for a day when when swords will be beaten into plowshares and strife and war will cease when the Lord comes and sets all things right.

Let's pray together, shall we?

Lord, I ask that you give us wisdom in the issues that are before us as a as a people, as a nation. Today we ask, Lord that we would think well and as we have opportunity, live well, live wisely, live justly. When we think about the battles, the wars, the conflicts that exist in this world.

Lord, we do want to have clear thinking about what's happening around us. We want to think clearly about the military and not the friends and relatives we have who fought in wars. We also, Lord, want to make sure we examine our own heart to be sure that there is inward love toward physical enemies, toward hostile nations, and Lord toward the people who make us feel we're under assault in this life, day by day.

And so, Lord, we pray for your grace, for your direction, your wisdom, and we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.