

# LOVE PERIOD.

WITH REV. DR.  
JACQUI LEWIS

**Navigating the Fires of Longing and Transformation  
with Mirabai Starr**

Jacqui Lewis: Hey, everyone. I'm Jacqui Lewis. Welcome to the third season of Love Period. In this season, we're exploring what fierce love looks like in a time of trauma, when all around the globe, folks are trying to figure out how to be the best version of human they can be in these difficult and traumatic times.

Jacqui Lewis: Today, my guest on Love Period is Mirabai Starr. She is an author, a teacher, a theologian, who works at the intersection often of the sacred feminine and grief. Today we talked about fire. We talked about fire, not only as it relates to the lands burning in New Mexico, the fire that stole my sanctuary, but the fire in our traditions, our spiritual traditions, a symbol. You're going to love this conversation. Mirabai Starr, I'm so glad to see you today.

Mirabai Starr: Thank you, Jacqui. It's such a joy to be able to play with you. I hope you don't mind my using the word play in these dire times, but I think that's part of the way we thrive is that these heart connections just fill us and keep us going.

Jacqui Lewis: Absolutely, and just somewhere in my life, when I know you're over there in the Southwest doing amazing things, and all over the world, putting beautiful love in the world, it makes it a safer place to be when the world feels crazy. Mirabai, thank you so much for that.

Mirabai Starr: Oh, thank you, Jacqui. What a beautiful thing to say.

Jacqui Lewis: Tell me how you've been, I mean, since we saw each other. Was that like six months ago? It feels like it was longer.

Mirabai Starr: Yeah, it seems like it was late summer maybe or early fall.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, right? We were there with Richard Rohr.

Mirabai Starr: Yes, dear Richard.

Jacqui Lewis: I know. Do you get to see him more than I do?

Mirabai Starr: Not as much as you would think, but yes, definitely, there's this thread of connection all the time with Richard.

Jacqui Lewis: Wonderful.

Mirabai Starr: He just wrote the foreword to a new book of mine, and I'm writing a foreword to a new book of his.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh, great.

Mirabai Starr: It's all this beautiful flow between all of us, Jacqui, including you, and that keeps me going in such a serious way. Serious, maybe, is the wrong word, in such a powerful way.

Jacqui Lewis: No, I think both serious and powerful. I think we are tethered to each other, aren't we?

Mirabai Starr: Mm-hmm.

Jacqui Lewis: Tell me, from your corner in the world, from your place in the world, your body, your lived

experience, what are you seeing right now, and how is it impacting you?

Mirabai Starr: Here in New Mexico, there are terrible fires raging all around. I go outside for my daily walk, which is really a hike, because I go into National Forest. We live on the edge of National Forest, and it's so beautiful to be here in the high desert, the magical high desert of New Mexico. There's a reason that this land is called the Land of Enchantment, and that artists and spiritual practitioners of every tradition have always gravitated to this place. There is a holiness, a sacredness to this land that seems to transcend any religious or tribal affiliation.

Mirabai Starr: Here I am on my walk, and I look to the East, to the Southeast, and the sky is filled with billowing clouds of smoke, and it's tinged with pink, so the flames are just behind it. It's that close. I always feel like I have a little cough these last couple of weeks, because the air is just filled with particulates. I think about not only the people who have been displaced. Thank God, nobody has been injured or, God forbid, killed, but the animals... I've been asking my friends in the Forestry Service, where do they go? Where do the animals go? The answer is something like they know how to run. They know how to fly. They know how to burrow. They know how to get away, for the most part, but some of them don't, and for some reason, that's just been haunting me in these weeks of fire. But fire is such a metaphor across the spiritual traditions, isn't it?

Jacqui Lewis: Yes. Yes, it is.

Mirabai Starr: We see it in mystical Judaism, in Christian mysticism, in Sufism, which is the mystical branch of Islam, in Hinduism in the form of Shiva and even Kali, and in all the spiritual traditions that I love so much. As you know, I'm kind of spiritually promiscuous.

Jacqui Lewis: I love it when you say that.

Mirabai Starr: All the mystical traditions use the element of fire as a metaphor for transformation. That's not comfortable. In so many ways, Jacqui, tell me if you see it too, I see that these are times of fire that we're in, and fire is transformation. That doesn't mean we can spiritually bypass, or should, or are allowed to, frankly, the pain of it.

Mirabai Starr: There are little animals that are going to not be able to escape these forest fires here in New Mexico. There are aspects of our humanity that are suffering and crumbling under the weight of the flames of injustice that are raging across the planet right now.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes. When you speak that truth, it just feels so deeply true to me that we actually are not going to escape being scorched, singed, made hot, uncomfortable, and sometimes, aspects of us, destroyed by the fires that are burning. Part of the reason fire transforms is it does take us down to something elemental, to the ashes, if you will. God, I don't love the way I said that, but it's true. Mirabai, you are spiritually, I'm going to say dexterous, not promiscuous.

Mirabai Starr: Okay.

Jacqui Lewis: But both flexible, nimble. You know these things. Can you say a little more about the way fire shows up in these traditions that many of our listeners won't know about as much as you do? Can you say... Just pull a couple of those threads of fire transforming out for us some.

Mirabai Starr: Well, one of the ways it shows up in the mystical traditions, fire, is the fire of longing for God. The burning yearning for union with the Beloved. We see that especially in the so-called Abrahamic traditions of Judaism and Christianity and Islam, but mostly in the Sufi aspect of Islam. That's what I relate to so much, that... My name sake, Mirabai, was a 16th century South Asian Bhakti poet from India. Bhakti is the path in Hinduism of devotion.

Mirabai Starr: There are these different yogas in Hinduism. Karma yoga is the path of action. Bhakti yoga is the path of love and devotion. Yana yoga is the path of contemplation and philosophy and study, studying the sacred scriptures. It's said in Hinduism that each of us is temperamentally oriented primarily toward one of the yogas more than the others, but that they're all paths. Yoga means path to union. They're all alive in all of us. In the Bhakti path, Mirabai was a poet. It's interesting, to me anyway, that Mirabai was a contemporary of Teresa of Avila.

Jacqui Lewis: Ooh, that is interesting. I didn't know that.

Mirabai Starr: Yeah. They didn't know each other, and they didn't know of each other.

Jacqui Lewis: Wow.

Mirabai Starr: But one was in Spain and one was in India, and they are the two... They're my two girls. They are the ones that guide me and hold my hand as I walk through this world. Teresa of Avila had the great privilege of translating from 16th century Spanish to, I hope, a contemporary accessible English, and Mirabai was the person I was named after, not by my parents, by the way, but by Ramdas, the great contemporary American spiritual teacher, who died just a few years ago and has been my lifelong friend and mentor.

Mirabai Starr: When I was 14, Ramdas gave me that name after I was the lead in a play, written by students, kids, about the story of the life of Mirabai from a comic book from India. I identified so much with Mirabai, and that fire of Mirabai's yearning for Krishna, who is the God of love in the Hindu tradition, really resonated with me. I think that the reason that fire of longing, that burning yearning for union with God was so real for me was that when I did that play, when I was Mirabai in this musical dance/drama that we created here in Taos, New Mexico, when I was 14, I had just experienced the sudden death in a gun accident of my first love, my boyfriend, Philip. You know, 14, your first love. It was not bearable.

Mirabai Starr: Well, you know, I live here in a rural part of the world, and people have guns for various reasons. It was a rifle. It was a .22 rifle that Philip and his brother were using to shoot at coyotes that were chasing their chickens.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh, my goodness.

Mirabai Starr: His brother dropped the gun. It was a freak accident, so I couldn't bear it, and I had to bear it. Stepping into the role of Mirabai, who was on fire with longing for God, when I was burning with grief and trauma in the loss of my love, it just came together in that moment, in such a way that the space that Mirabai opened, of the broken,

open heart, the shattered heart that becomes boundless, has boundless capacity for holding what is. What is sometimes includes the unbearable.

Mirabai Starr: That marked my spiritual path. I think I really seriously began my spiritual path at that time when I was 14. I began meditating and practicing yoga and studying the sacred scriptures from all the world's traditions. I reclaimed the Judaism that my parents had rejected.

Mirabai Starr: There were many spiritual treasures that entered even in the shattering that I was experiencing. Death has continued to be a source of transformational fire in my life, and it's why I relate to the mystic poets of all traditions, because they unflinchingly, inevitably...

Jacqui Lewis: Unflinchingly.

Mirabai Starr: Well, they use fire as a metaphor in their poems. Living Flame of Love, John of the Cross, and wounds, the metaphors of wounds. For Teresa of Avila, she called it the beautiful wound. For Mirabai, it was the traditional classic, the moth that flies directly into the flame, or sometimes she speaks of the lotus that swallows you whole.

Jacqui Lewis: I'm so glad you put some of that poetry, those images, in our hearts today. I know you lost your daughter, and that's another kind of the wounding, the shattering of your heart, Mirabai, that makes space for holding all the things, all the love. I'm thinking about, can what you're talking about, those experiences, can we resource the nation, the world, a shattered, brokenhearted world... Mirabai, can we bear to even say, we who are human, how brokenhearted we are that the land is burning, New Mexico, Colorado; that the oceans are toxically filled with plastic; that the polar ice caps are melting; that some are saying we have 10 years, 10 years to fix this, and some are saying we can't? That's one grief that just sometimes I can hardly look at it. I promise you, I can hardly look at it.

Jacqui Lewis: Then there's just, have we ever... I mean, I'm sure we have. I'm a woman of a certain age, who's watched Kennedy killed, Kent State, Pettus Memorial Bridge, violence against black folks, the images of Emmett Till and black bodies swinging like strange fruit on trees. I have all of that, like you have all of that in our bones. Can we say, though, that this is a particularly acute, hot mess, crazy time? Can we bear to describe how much we're burning? Can we bear to look at it? Can we name these fires as possibly transformative? What do you think?

Mirabai Starr: You mentioned the death of my daughter, and so, when I say what I'm going to say in response to that question, if you all trust that I'm not just checking out of reality because I haven't suffered.

Jacqui Lewis: She has suffered, you all. She is not checking out, all right? Yeah.

Mirabai Starr: There's something about the sacred feminine, that I think you so beautifully embody, Jacqui, that... You know, it's very interesting to me that the title of your latest book, Fierce Love, is kind of the subtitle of my latest book, Wild Mercy.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes.

Mirabai Starr: The subtitle is *Living the Fierce and Tender Wisdom of the Women Mystics*, and so I feel very connected to you, in that reclamation, that reclaiming of both the fierce and the tender, the broken and the powerful, completely integrated into this moment and into our vast, I'm going to use the term feminine heart, and please know, everyone, that I'm not speaking about women's bodies and men's bodies and nonbinary bodies necessarily. I'm speaking to people of all genders, who carry that fierce and tender feminine wisdom, and that longing for the feminine right now, as a potent antidote to the brokenness of this world.

Mirabai Starr: One of the things about the great mother is that she does not turn away from suffering. She does not run away. She does not excuse it. She doesn't try to put a pretty spin on it. She gathers the brokenness into her arms and leans in and listens. So much of bearing the unbearable right now, globally, collectively, which we're all being invited to do, perhaps as we've never been before, is to first allow ourselves to feel it, feel it individually, and model what it's like to say, "Yes, this is unbearable," and also to model it collectively, to do it collectively, to know that we can't possibly bear it on our own. We have to do it together with each other, with people who are very different from us, and we also have to call upon...

Mirabai Starr: Well, for me, it's now, even if it's in my imagination, Jacqui, I'm calling upon the great mother, like, oh yeah, and not only do I not have to do this myself; I can't do this myself. She's got me. She's got us all. She's got to be the one who enables us to bear the unbearable and energizes us with the exact particulars that are ours to be able to do something. I think we each... Jewish mystical wisdom says that we are each imprinted the day we are born with what is ours to do to mend the broken world. It takes a long time to discover it sometimes, but we each have a particular blueprint for [foreign language 00:17:40], for the repair of the world. Sometimes we need each other to help see what is ours to do, when it may not look at all like somebody else's or like our preconceived notions of what activism, for instance, is supposed to look like.

Jacqui Lewis: The expression [foreign language 00:17:58], I don't remember which... Maybe it was Rabbi Kushner's *How Good Do We Have to Be?* Maybe that book... I don't know when in seminary, I got like, oh my goodness, that's the whole ballgame right there. That's it, to heal the world.

Jacqui Lewis: I think, in my particular writing, I've prepared to heal the soul and the world. Maybe when I was younger, Mirabai, I'd think, well this and this, but now I'm like my soul is the world, and the world is in my soul, so it's one project. When I say that to you right now, I force back tears of how, when you know that, when we lean into how we're inseparable from the great mother, the universe, the land, the stuff, the trees... Shug Avery says, "I knew then, when I cut a tree, that I would bleed," which is Alice Walker's way of talking about what we're talking about.

Jacqui Lewis: I feel so brokenhearted, friend. I feel so sad about feeling like things are kind of falling apart. Can we find a way? My grandson, Octavius, is two. We were all together for Mother's Day for a little while, and he was just standing, kind of talking to us as we were saying goodbye, and something happened. I still don't know exactly what it was now. I think he pinched his finger on something that he could reach, and he looked so afraid, and then he came to me

and cried. Then he reached out for my husband John and cried. Then he went to his mom and cried. I mean, it was just... It was like this beautiful boy binding us all together, like, “Comfort me, damn it.”

Jacqui Lewis: I wonder if there’s this place in our humanity where we could all be a two-year-old learning for the love, for the... Lean in, dudes. Lean in, women. Lean in, you all. Lean in, everybody, to the love we know we need, and see if it heals us. Is that it? When I saw him moving among us, I was like, I cannot wait to preach that boy’s story. Am I...

Mirabai Starr: See. You couldn’t wait to preach that boy’s story. That’s it, Jacqui. It’s those moments when we reveal our vulnerability to each other. The world is burning, and I can’t stand it. How about you? You know? Where we just tell the truth about it. That becomes the transformational energy to actually change it. I don’t know. It sounds like magic, but I see it happening.

Mirabai Starr: Even your telling us all that story about your grandson, Octavius, right in this moment, is shifting something in us. I have to believe that our truth telling about our pain and about the silly, wonderful, ridiculous things that happen against all odds bring us joy, these are the things that actually make a difference.

Mirabai Starr: I think our mechanistic, teleological world model has taught us to think that if we’re not engineering specific solutions at every moment, we’re failing. That is denying the feminine, the creative, the generative, the power of not knowing, mystical power of not knowing, and the practical power of dismantling our opinions on the matter and allowing ourselves to just show up with what is.

Mirabai Starr: I’ll share a story with you that just happened, my Octavius story, which is that a couple of weeks ago, maybe three or four weeks ago now, some friends of ours were going to Poland to help Ukrainian refugees at the border, and they asked me for a copy of my book, *Wild Mercy*, in Russian.

Jacqui Lewis: Wow.

Mirabai Starr: You know, I have all the different, on my shelf, just different translations in different languages that I don’t speak. I was like, “Yes, of course, take it,” because one of the couple read Russian, that was her first language, so she wanted to read it on the plane, so she did.

Mirabai Starr: When they got to Poland, and they were at the border, they were at a train station. They were at a McDonald’s at a train station in Poland, and she had the book with her. There was a young woman there, who was a refugee from the Ukraine, who was alone. It was cold, and she had her little backpack and not very much. She looked like she was in her 20s. She was in her 20s, bright, dyed, pink hair. They got to talking, and they had a very deep soul conversation. She spoke English, but her first language was Russian, so they said, “Hey, maybe you’d like to read this book that we just read on,” the woman had just read on the plane. She said, “Thank you.”

Mirabai Starr: Well, it turned out, I found out a couple of weeks later, that that book accompanied this young woman on her entire journey to safety in Germany. She ultimately settled in Germany for now. She was scared and alone and cold and guilty, guilty about leaving her family in the

Ukraine. They said, “Go. Go,” but she left them all behind in Kiev. This book was a refuge for her, and ultimately she connected with... They connected us. Now, we’re in communication, and she was telling me how that book accompanied her and how it helped her, well she said saved her, even. You know, Jacqui, what it’s like when people say your work makes a difference. It’s so joyful. Now I’m going to be sharing her with my community. She’s agreed. We’re going to have some kind of social media profile for her and for this story of love between us.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh, wow.

Mirabai Starr: She’s not religious. She’s not at all religious, but somehow, the women mystics across the spiritual traditions and the power of the ordinary as sacred ground spoke to her, the power of beauty and meaning in our human lives. That’s what spoke to her. That makes a difference. It made a difference for her. It makes a difference for me. And I’m hoping it’ll make a difference for my community.

Jacqui Lewis: That’s a very powerful story. I think your book was her transitional object, what a psychology might say. This book represents something. The words in it, and the book, and you now are all connected to, connected to her in that moment. I find myself thinking, there was this book party last night at Middle, lots of people that we love, Valarie Kaur and Wajahat Ali, and folks were all there talking about their books.

Jacqui Lewis: There’s something about the power of stories, right? There’s something about the power of stories that can unlock our imagination for each others’ reality, and also for what’s possible. When I say, “What do you see?” And you start by describing the fires and the soot in the air, I see it, you know? I see it, and my heart is cracked wide open where yours is.

Jacqui Lewis: If someone says, “This Roe v. Wade leak is killing my soul,” I can have my heart cracked wide open. It’s killing my soul, not just because of what it stands for, in terms of abortion rights and body autonomy, but also kind of a wholesale assault on freedoms that just makes me want to just crawl in a hole and cry for hours.

Jacqui Lewis: I’m thinking about, Mirabai, how I hope this podcast, but also just the ways we can have more love talk, more mercy talk. My little bit of Hebrew reminds me that the words for mercy and womb have the same root, right?

Mirabai Starr: That’s right, in both Hebrew and Arabic.

Jacqui Lewis: And Arabic, yeah. Wow, right? Even just that, those kinds of plot points that could help people go, oh wow, womb, mercy, that’s why feminine divine, oh, that’s why the mother... Oh, that’s good. I don’t have to be whatever, all the ways people want to cling the images of God that they grew up with or something, right?

Jacqui Lewis: I’m rambling a little bit to get to, what are some ways, Mirabai, that you and I, in our work, can help more people feel the longing for that sacred love touch, the merciful goodness that resides in the universe, and maybe also how they can see themselves as part of it. I think that’s the movement I want to have happen is for that kid with his pants down, his Doc Martens on, and that older woman who’s afraid and lonely, for them to feel like they’re part of an organism that is a loving, pulsing, merciful reality. Is that too ambitious on my part?

Mirabai Starr: That’s beautiful. No, I think you’ve named it. There’s something inherently feminine about storytelling. It doesn’t have to be for a purpose. It can just be to fill our hearts and make the night less dark around us, as we sit around the fire and tell our stories.

- Mirabai Starr: If we can lift each other's stories... It's interesting. I read a lot, like you do, and I have gotten to the point, I've actually been here for quite a while, where I can't bear to read books that aren't laden with story. I can't just read theology or social commentary or political commentary, philosophy. I was a philosophy major in graduate school. I can't do it anymore. Abstract concepts just leave me cold. Even science writing that isn't drenched in poetry, because science for me can be so powerfully poetic, I can't do it. Beauty... I guess that's what I'm saying.
- Mirabai Starr: Beauty and the power of authentic truth-telling stories is what feels to me like the life-giving elixir right now, not just for myself, but for the world. There's so much good writing coming out of people's raw, authentic experience right now. I mean, I just finished Somebody's Daughter. I'm reading This Here Flesh.
- Jacqui Lewis: Isn't that beautiful.
- Mirabai Starr: Even that broader... Oh my God, embodied writing. I just heard an interview with Ocean Vuong on Fresh Air. It was just... It's exactly what I'm talking about, the transformational power of our stories. I'm convinced, Jacqui, that this is the healing. This is the medicine that we need right now, and it has everything to do with releasing our preconceived notions of what activism, what helping, what fixing looks like.
- Jacqui Lewis: I know, and I think it's really true. I think stories are the healing balm, and making space for them grows empathy. It changes our minds, stretches our hearts, gives us new worldviews, new energy for each other. I agree with you that there is something inherently feminine about it, and it then just does make me want to ask, can the ones who are male identified embrace their anima? Anima is the feminine. Can they embrace that? Can they embrace the feminineness that is nurture, mercy, kindness. I'll hold you when you're crying. How can we... How does that work, in terms of, one, breaking down our binaries, because I can go there, but also inviting the male identified ones in our world to lean into the softness of that kind of fierce love?
- Mirabai Starr: I will say that I see it happening, and it gives me great heart. So many of the men that I admire and resonate with have been doing that for a while, but I have watched men with privilege and power voluntarily abdicating that advantage and handing, well, just shutting up, and not just handing us the mic, as if they were doing us a favor, but just making space for people of all genders to have a chance to speak.
- Mirabai Starr: I'm seeing that happening, but I'm also seeing a lot of men modeling this beautiful balance of protectiveness and vulnerability. That I see as uniquely feminine. I mean, we are, even those of us who are not biologically mothers, which is in no way a measure of our feminine power, or yes, our legitimacy. For those of us who are not biologically mothers, there's still this way in which we, all female bodied persons, embody fierce protectiveness and tender vulnerability, and so why not male bodied or nonbinary people, as well?
- Mirabai Starr: I think that this comes back, Jacqui, to what we talked about with being exemplars for each other. The more men see other men stepping up in that way as the loving, protective mother, and without sacrificing their authenticity, it's a fire again that will catch.
- Jacqui Lewis: I love that. I'm thinking about this crazy, traumatic time, and thinking about what we need, what we need to survive, to heal, to thrive. When I listen to you, I think, what if we all felt that we were all the mother? What if we all felt that we were the nurturing, mothering presence and just had a piece of it to do? Which I think your work is calling us into. Everybody has a piece to do.

Mirabai Starr: Thank you, Jacqui, and you know, I think it's really important for everyone to just take a breath and remember that this does not require perfectionism and purification and self-flagellation. I remember going to see *Little Women* with my daughters when it first came out, I don't know, 20-something years ago, that new version. I was so mad because they made Marmee, the mom, look like this perfect specimen of womanhood and motherhood, and I knew I could never measure up. Let's banish those patriarchal, boy-shaped models of what pure and perfect means, and the perfect, nurturing mother for all of us is going to be eccentric. She's going to be needy sometimes. She's going to have neuroses, like being selfish sometimes.

Jacqui Lewis: Bad days, yeah.

Mirabai Starr: Yes, that all... We get to be exactly as we are. I think that's the call, Jacqui, is how do we bring exactly what we are to the table? How do we trust that imprinted on our souls is just what is needed? That we are not too much, and we are enough, exactly as we are. Boy, that is the hardest thing, because we are conditioned by all the religious structures to have this concept of what a saint is, what a mystic is, what a perfected human being is, and it's not possible, but what we have is what is needed. What we are is what is wanted.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, oh my gosh, that's such an important thing. When I talk about my book now, *Fierce Love*, and I start it in that section about love yourself, people will say, "Why'd you start there?" I say, "First of all, because we don't."

Jacqui Lewis: How are we going to be of any good to anybody? I mean, I don't understand it. This idea of I am enough. I am enough, and I'm also exactly what's needed. What a beautiful, important starting place that is for the revolution that we need so desperately. You're okay. You're great, and you're not. You're flawed, and that's beautiful. You're gifted, and it's sufficient.

Jacqui Lewis: I have done a journey to that Jacqui for my life, my whole life, and I don't think I'm fully there, but I have more days than not where I think, this is all it is, and that's good enough, and I am enough. You all who know me, my next project is, therefore, how do I behave, loving myself better for me, not for you to watch me, but for me to stop talking at the end of the day, to say no sometimes as a holy act of resistance, to lean into all the other people who can do the thing. I'm doing so much better at that, giving things away to my team, who are beautiful.

Jacqui Lewis: I just can't, girl. That's not sustainable. That's what I'm trying to say. It is not sustainable the way we've been wired to be, frantic and frenetic and busy and everywhere and, ugh, all the things.

Mirabai Starr: Yes.

Jacqui Lewis: Can we just all take a breath and tag in and tag out of this river that is in motion? I'm really leaning on that, Mirabai, and you're going to hold me accountable. We said that before to each other, like did you breathe? Did you breathe today?

Mirabai Starr: I was just going to say that, as you're saying that, talking about your project. I'm like, oh, I've got you, Jacqui. I've got you.

Jacqui Lewis: We can do it, right?

Mirabai Starr: Let's do this.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my gosh. Mirabai, what's one thing that you want to make sure that the people who are in our communities, who will hear this, take away for just... A hymn says, "For the living of these hours. A poem I say for the facing of these days. Maybe I would say, just to inhabit this moment, what can we do to more fully live with fire, Mirabai?"

Mirabai Starr: Well, you asked for one thing, but I'm going to cheat and give you two. I have been thinking, as we have been talking, about something that Andrew Harvey says, which is that we may not actually make it through these times, and what does it feel like to just be with that? What he says is, "And if that's the case, our task is to be midwives for the death, and to stand up and lovingly tend and hold each other in the dying." Whether that's a literal dying of our species or not, many species are dying, or just the death of all of our structures and systems, that that's what we're asked to do is to be steady, loving, awake, humorous, creative, gentle people for each other. That really revolutionized my consciousness when he said that.

Mirabai Starr: The other thing I would say is, even if you live in a city, even if you're not able to walk, connecting with nature every day in some way, even if it's just opening a window and feeling the air on your face, some connection with our mother, the earth, on a regular basis is vital, I think, for navigating this wilderness of our times, and resourcing ourselves in each other.

Jacqui Lewis: I love that. There's something in both of the things you're saying that makes me think about surrender. We might not make it. How do we midwife that? Leaning on the stories in my brain, when you're talking about being a little one next to my mom on a pew at church, when I'm going to take Eucharist for the first time, communion for the first time, everybody, that's a little passover meal happening on Sunday morning, okay? But the first time the bread is coming, she goes, "This bread means God will always love you." The cup is coming, and she says, "This cup means God will never leave you." I have...

Mirabai Starr: Oh!

Jacqui Lewis: Right? God will always love you and will never leave you. That's it. The mother will never leave you and will always love you. Though my mom is gone, physically, I've never been surer than I am today about life after death, Mirabai. I can feel her shoulder on my face. I can smell her Wind Song and Ultra Sheen. I can hear her. There's something about surrendering to the truth of the presence of the love, right?

Mirabai Starr: Mm-hmm.

Jacqui Lewis: It's here.

Mirabai Starr: Yes.

Jacqui Lewis: If we want to feel it, I think. I think you're magical.

Mirabai Starr: Oh.

Jacqui Lewis: Does Mirabai mean magical? I don't know, but I think you are. You're so good to talk to and so wise. Thank you.

Mirabai Starr: Thank you. Oh, such a joy to be with you. Even if this is all we get, it's more than enough, and to be with all of you, thank you so much.

Jacqui Lewis: Thank you for playing with me today. I appreciate it.

Mirabai Starr: You're welcome.

Jacqui Lewis: Thank you for listening today. In my conversation with Mirabai Starr, I found myself thinking about what I found in the fire. The fire, literally, that stole my sanctuary, the fire of these last few years in the public square, and the spiritual fire that sometimes drives me into the streets to raise my fist and demand justice and other times causes me to sit quietly and pray. Where are the fires burning in your life, and how are they transforming you?