

*Rays of Life Encouragement*  
*January 31, 2016*

**A Kingdom Force in 2016**

Every day we face a myriad of choices. Each one is like a sword in our hand. The question becomes how will I use my sword, i.e. my choice. Will I use it to protect myself, wounding everything that threatens my selfish ambitions and comforts? Or, will I use it to pierce and cut away the lies that try to separate me from my true identity as given by God Himself? Will I also use it to fight for others, cutting away every falsehood surrounding their own identity and destiny?

Surrounding us daily, life comes at us with a force that we likely find ourselves unprepared for. Misunderstanding, hurt, pain, rejection, betrayal, dissatisfaction, etc....take your pick. In these moments, and they can be often, we stand before what seems like an overwhelming power wanting to crush us to powder. In truth, they can represent a designed attack aimed at striking us in our weak places, or worse, areas where our former wounds have yet to fully heal. Sound familiar?

Still, however true this may be, may we remember well and with increasing confidence the promise of God for these very times..." The weapons of our warfare are not carnal (of our realm) but mighty to the pulling down (or destruction) of strongholds..." (2 Corinthians 10:4, paraphrased). Put another way, we all are called to be warriors of God's Kingdom. However, His warriors are very different than what we may imagine. How so? Let's consider the weapons He gives His warriors (You and Me!!).

He calls them "mighty" and they can pull down "strongholds". Well that sounds awesome! So, what are they? Forgiveness, encouragement, kindness, love, joy, peace, faithfulness, hope and so on. These are His "weapons"? Absolutely. When you are wronged, the sword of forgiveness is a weapon of destruction to the enemy's plans to tear you and others apart. When hopelessness seems to be piercing the heart of someone around you, the sword of encouragement can cut it away and restore life and vision. The counterstrike of these weapons are powerful and restorative. What's more, they are grounded in relational power. As the enemy is desirous of killing relationships, God's virtues heal, rebuild and establish relationships stronger than ever.

Beyond counterstriking, though, there is another thought to consider. These "weapons" are equally powerful when used proactively as a way of building God's kingdom to prevent strongholds from forming. While we certainly want to win battles that come, the Lord also wants us to walk as a kingdom force of God's character so evident and operating that certain battle lies cannot even enter the picture. Put another way, we should want our lives to be more than just responding to our environment. Our aspiration should also include "creating" the environment of God's kingdom in our realm of influence. Jesus said it this way (in my words) ..." Ask my Father for how you can best create the character of heaven's environment on earth during your day. Each of you have a portion to build...build well and with all your might" (Matthew 6:10).

The kingdom swords God offers to equip us with are vast, powerful, timeless, and life-giving. Contrary to this world's approach to difficulty or even normalcy, these weapons represent choices to manifest the new spiritual DNA we possess as adopted sons and daughters of God Himself. As 2016 unfolds in all its glory, may we each not only fight well the good fight of faith with God's virtues guiding our choices, but

also look for ways to be freedom fighters for others as well as kingdom builders in our world. You have all that you need through the grace given us by Jesus Himself. Let us be a force to be reckoned with!

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