

Something to Pray About

May 2014 – Cindy Sears

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 NKJV

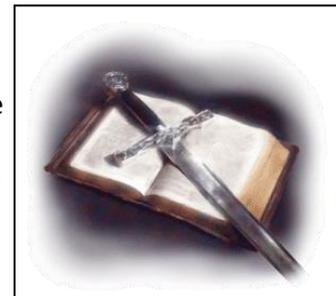
Swords

I am reading in the book of Joshua now about the conquest of Canaan. The details involve much slaughter. Much blood was shed by the swords of war. I don't know why God chose to have His people act in history this way, but these words do help me to me more grateful that I was born after Christ first coming, rather than before it.

I am no "peacenik," nor a pacifist that believes that war is never justified. I know that, even after Christ coming, we continue to live in a fallen world, and that means that sometimes our only valid recourse is to take up arms against evil and injustice—it may even happen again in our country.

Yet, Jesus our Lord never commanded us to go and conquer and force people to believe in Him. His command was to "make disciples" (see Matthew 28:19) and "be witnesses" to Him (see Acts 1:8) throughout the world. And above all, we are to show love to one another and to those who have not yet entered into the fold of God (see John 15, et al). We are also told to be able to explain why we believe what we believe in reasoned discourse (not in shouting matches): "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..." (1 Peter 3:15). In this endeavor, we have several strong weapons at our disposal. One of the main ones is the Sword of the Word—God's Word—Holy Scripture.

Keep in mind, that, though we are no longer called to shed blood in our quest to conquer the world for Jesus, this does not mean that our use of the Sword of the Word will not cause pain and death. God's Word is Truth and it is "sharper than a double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). "God's word is alive and active," and dangerous to those who deny God; therefore, His word is continuously under attack.



So, to be able to stand against evil, we cannot just carry a Bible around with us or listen to a sermon once in a while or even every Sunday of our lives. We must know what the Bible says. We must read it and understand it. This will help us to discern when people are twisting the Word to their own agendas by using verses out of context or misquoting verses. But, we must go even further today and enter into the world of apologetics and into the study of history of biblical times and Church history. Otherwise, we will fall for Satan's lies exemplified by such books as *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown, which tries to prove that much of the Bible and Christianity is fake, or *The Good Book* by Peter J. Gomes, which attempts to gloss over passages about sexual sin (including homosexual sin) and deny what the Bible really says. Not knowing what the Bible says also leads us to fall for gnostic-style misrepresentations of Christ, heaven, hell, sin, salvation, etc., also known as "New Age" heresies (prominent in the popular

book, *The Shack* by William Young).

In my grandparent's day, when Christianity was more prominent and accepted in the larger culture (at least its principles or morals were), it was easier to live a Christ-like life. There was less need to defend one's faith or to discern between right and wrong, true or false ideas. Now, our culture is permeated with deceptions and lies and outright denials of the existence of God and of Jesus Christ in particular. All warriors need training in the use of their weapons. To wield a sword well, you must practice using it and learn all about it. It must become a second hand or arm to you, as natural as your own arm of flesh and blood. Pick up your Sword of the Word—learn it, use it in your daily walk with the Lord, understand what it says about God, about God working in and through history, about Jesus, about sin, about the ONE WAY to salvation. As you practice with this weapon, you may cut yourself on the edges of its truth; but this will help you to be more discerning in how you wield it in warfare against Satan and his followers. But always keep in mind, that we wield the Sword of God in love. Our goal is to help God conquer and win the hearts of men and women—not just to destroy evil, but to overcome it. Put on the whole armor of God (see Ephesians 6:10-18) and fight for what is right and true according to God's Word—not according to the present culture.

And be prepared for persecution and ridicule. A small price to pay considering the price paid by the Lord Jesus for our salvation. †