

# 33. FIGHT IN YOUR OWN ARMOR

A knight in full plate armor stands in a stone archway. The knight is wearing a silver helmet with a visor, a chainmail collar, and a red surcoat with a white cross. The knight holds a red banner in their right hand and a shield with a red and white design in their left hand. The background is a stone wall with a large archway.

*Do not try and mold and  
fashion the experience of others  
to conform to your own ideas.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

## FIGHTING IN YOUR OWN ARMOUR

*Psalms 139:13-14: "You alone created my inner being (thoughts, feelings), you knitted me together inside my mother. I will give thanks to You because I have been so miraculously made."*

There is a quote by Isabelle Briggs that says: 'We cannot safely assume that other people's minds work on the same principle as our own. All too often, others with whom we come in contact, do not reason the way we reason, or do not value the things we value, or are not interested in what interests us.'

The reason for this is because God created every single one of us extremely unique. God loves uniqueness. Do you know why I say this? Have you ever had time to look at a snowflake under a microscope? Each snowflake has a different pattern, a different shape. God has made them so unique and so complex and yet they are not humans.

The Bible tells us that God also made you and me very unique and complex, just as the snowflakes. Your looks are unique; the sound of your voice is unique; the way you walk is unique. Even something as small as your fingerprint, something that seems insignificant, is unique. Why is it important for me to have different fingerprints from somebody else? I don't think God intended that we should use it to find criminals, but there is no one in the world that has the same fingerprint as you.

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I believe very strongly God is into uniqueness and He loves uniqueness and He loves every single one of his unique creations. We look different, we think different, we feel different and we act different, each within our own unique capabilities.

Have you picked up that some of these differences we have as people are coming to the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic? Is it becoming more exposed than before, especially within your family circle? If there has been more than the normal conflict of late, it is probably because of these unique and complex differences God has built into humans. There could be various reasons for the conflict, but I do believe it is because of our uniqueness. The uniqueness that draws us to each other may at times become our Achilles' heel and cause us to be in more fights than we want to be.

I am sure you are familiar with the saying, '*opposites attract*'. We often tend to go for people who complete us. When a man and a woman meet each other for the first time and they fall in love, it is the other person's unique qualities that attract them. The qualities of the other person that you don't have, attract you because they complete you. According to you, the circle is then complete because of the 'where I lack, you are strong' concept. As time goes by, their love for each other grows, they get married and then for the next 40 years they are going to irritate one another because of these differences. It is interesting because those things that initially attracted you to each other, may now irritate you and especially when you are in lockdown.

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When you're not in lockdown, you can still claim your space by going out and do your thing, but with lockdown you are moving closer into each other's space. These differences and uniquenesses will now come to the forefront even more.

*There is a story of two porcupines that lived together in the freezing North. They huddled together to keep each other warm, but when they got too close to each other, they stabbed each other with their quills, so they had to move apart again. These porcupines needed each other for warmth, but they needed each other with their quills when they got too close to one another.*

I think we are often like porcupines. We need each other, but the closer we come to each other, the more we poke each other. I believe the lockdown has caused a lot of this to happen and many families are at the place where they poke each other. I hope this article will help you to understand how to navigate these differences.

Has lockdown caused you to needle those you need? Thinking about this, two thoughts come to my mind. In Genesis 2:24 the Bible says the two (Adam and Eve), shall become one. If you are in a family unit, the Bible tells us that you are **unified** and you should **stay close** to one another despite your differences.

The differences we have are not only on the outside, they are also on the inside. David understood this when he noted in the Psalms that God has created his inner being. I am sure he wasn't talking about his intestines.

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He was talking about God who created him and gave him unique thoughts and unique feelings and also the ability to act on those unique thoughts and feelings. This is true for you and for your family members as well. God is giving you unique thoughts and feelings and together all these differences are supposed to come together in a unified way of living. It is not always going to be easy, because the way you think and feel and act, is completely unique and very complex in every single way. If, however, you understand yourself and your differences and use them appropriately, you can be like the Bible says, more than conquerors in your family unit. Together you can overcome life's difficulties and you can use the uniquenesses to form a good bond with one another.

If you take the time to understand your family's unique differences and similarities, you can learn to embrace them. You can learn how to navigate them and how to use them to be a successful family unit – where the one lacks, the other one will complement the family unit. A unit where you are not trying to tell somebody else who to be or not to be and how to act or not to act and how to think or not to think.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 tells us the unique differences we have are there to **complement** each other. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other." The Good News Bible says: "... because together they can work more effectively." I think this is talking specifically about our differences.

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Where I am weak, my husband is strong, where I am strong in some areas, he might be struggling. Our differences can be used to our benefit if we understand and embrace them. This is why we often end up marrying the opposite type of person. If we however don't take the time to get to know each other and to embrace and use the uniquenesses of each member of the family, the blessing of being different becomes a problem.

We differ in so many ways. We differ in *gender*; in *age* and *growth speed*; in *personalities* where one is introverted and the other extroverted. We have different *conflict styles*, *relationship styles* and *love languages*. There are so many ways in which we are different, but it doesn't mean that the one is right and the other one is wrong.

I think of my dad who is an introvert and me on the other hand, who is an extrovert. While I was growing up, I often noticed when life started getting a little bit hard for him, he would withdraw and go outside. He would work on his car or would go for a drive to the beach and build sandcastles. During the times when he was alone, he would sit and talk to himself. He would mumble and I would be asking, "What are you doing?" His answer to my question: "Don't worry, I'm talking to myself." Sometimes we get worried when we see people like that, because it is not how we deal with difficulties. We face the troubles and difficulties in life differently. When I go through a tough time, I do not isolate and mumble to myself.

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I want hugs and I want to be around people that I trust and I want to talk to them because I am an extrovert. We really need to realise that we face troubles and trials within a family unit differently.

Right now, COVID-19 is a very troublesome time for every single person within the family unit. Ask yourself how each family member is going to face the difficulties in their very unique way and how you can navigate them so that you all can still live in unity with one another. The problem is that the differences are often not understood. You feel uncomfortable with the other person doing things in a different way to yours or 'you feeling this way and them feeling that way'. You often tend to see these differences as being wrong. You may say your wife is acting very incorrectly right now or your child is behaving in a very wrong manner.

We have to stop calling things that are different, wrong. It may not be wrong, but just different. I am not talking about moral and immoral issues, but the general things in life. We need to ask ourselves **whether something is different or is it wrong**. If it's just different, how can you navigate it? You sometimes try to change those people who are different from you because they are clashing with you. You want to pull out their porcupine needles because they're poking you with their differences. We pull out our spouse's quills so they don't hurt us anymore, but in the process we hurt them.

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Let me demonstrate. Imagine you are a shape. I believe because God created us uniquely, every single one of us is like a shape. Let's imagine you are a circle, your spouse a square, your daughter a heart shape and your son a diamond shape. What are you going to do if you try to change either of these shapes? What will be the outcome? You are a circle and if you are told being a circle is not good enough, you need to be a square, how do you get your circle to become a square? You have to break it. You have to damage the original shape. Instead, you should be willing to perfect your circle by carving away the rough edges yourself and become the best version of you, being the best circle that you can be without destroying the circle in order to become something that you are not, which is a square.

Can you develop some of the characteristics of a square? Possibly. You could try, but you should rather change yourself. Both of these processes, becoming the best circle or being changed into a square, are going to involve pain. When you carve away the edges and become a better circle, it is going to be painful. This is called a **growth pain**. On the other end, if you are trying to become a square, you're going to experience a **destructive pain**. Often enough in the family circle, without realising it, we destroy one another because we want people to think the way we do, feel the way we do, act the way we do, and if they don't, it makes us feel uncomfortable.

We try to be somebody we are not or we try to make others to be somebody they are not. This goes against the biblical principle given to us in 1 Corinthians 12:14: *"We are the body of Christ and the body itself is not made up of only one part, but many parts."* It is the same in our home circle.

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Your home is not just made up of you. Every single person in the home has a uniqueness and a quality they bring to improve the home atmosphere and to overcome difficulties and hardships. The only person who is allowed to control other people's minds, is God. Further, she says, you shouldn't try to be or try to think or try to feel like another person. God gave you unique qualities and a unique personality you need to embrace.

When one person submerges his identity to that of another, it is called **co-dependency** in Psychology. This is when people lose their individuality and cannot think or feel for themselves anymore. They literally become submerged into the other person and lose who they are. The Bible explicitly tells us that the only person we should ever give our will up to, is God. If we do this to somebody else, it is a COLOSSAL sin. Only our Creator should be allowed to control how we think, feel and act.

You can lose your uniqueness by allowing others to change you, or you trying to change yourself to be like others. I remember as I was growing up, becoming an adult, I started questioning who I was. I started asking myself whether I was good enough. Was Nandi, the circle, good enough? Let me explain. I am not an intellectual. I have the ability deep, deep, deep down inside of me, but it is not who I am. I am not an academic. I hate doing research, but I like listening to those who are academics. Although I am not a philosopher, I love listening to (and learn), new theories and ideas. What I've discovered over time, is that I am a storyteller. I am a narrative person. As a professional, I felt inadequate because the world has a standard they want to mould everybody to.

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Something like a 'this is right and that is wrong' principle. I obviously had to be more like those other clever guys to be acceptable. I started believing this lie of one way of doing something is right and any other way of doing it is completely wrong. I thought I had to change myself and I had to become more like those clever people, those pastors who study and speak those fancy words. But that wasn't me and the reason I changed my opinion was because I realised that was not my armour, nor my war to fight. I was trying to fight the battle of life in someone else's armour. I was trying to use something God made for and gave to that person. It wasn't helping me. I remembered the story of David in the Bible where David came to fight Goliath. As he was about to fight Goliath, King Saul called him aside and told him to put on his armour to fight Goliath. David could not. Saul's armour was too big and too heavy for him. He couldn't move, so he took it off.

The reason we often fail, is because we try and fight in someone else's armour. I was trying to become somebody that I wasn't. Now sure, I could develop some of those skills, but I shouldn't suppress the good ones I already have as if the one was right and the other one wrong. When difficulties arise, we need to be able to fall back on those unique skills and strengths only we have because God placed them inside us. Do not try to copy someone else's skills or mannerisms. David understood this. He took off the armour of Saul and fought with what God equipped him with. The reason why David was successful in killing Goliath, apart from the very obvious reason that God was his strength, is because he knew himself. He embraced his uniqueness and he didn't allow other people to dictate to him how he needed to change himself.

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He was a shepherd, not a trained warrior. He was used to a sling and a shepherd's rod, not a spear and a javelin. He had no need for a shield or armour because God was his sword and shield. In Psalms 28:7 David says: *"The Lord is my strength and my shield. I trust in Him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving."* David knew who he was. He embraced being a circle. He knew his uniqueness and he made it through the battle because he used those unique qualities God gave him.

There are so many different examples of warriors in the Bible and how they fought the fight of life using what they had and doing it the way they planned. Each battle was very unique to every single one of them. I think of **Gideon**. His thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions were completely his own. When he went into battle, he used pots, lanterns and rams' horns. When **King David** went against Goliath, he used a sling and a stick and his normal shepherd's clothes. He charged towards Goliath, killed him with a stone from his sling, ran to him and chopped off his head. When the **Israelites** attacked Jericho, they marched around the city in silence. **Samson** had long hair and in the end he used pure brute strength to push over the pillars in the temple. When **Jesus** fought the battles, He used the words: "Thus sayeth the Lord." He used Scripture a lot. There was the time when He went into the temple and again He used the words, "Thus sayeth the Lord', My house will be called a house of prayer." Together with those words, He also used a whip to chase the people out. Imagine if we had to bring all those warriors together and we told them to go and fight, what would be the outcome?

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Now, put all the warriors with their uniquenesses, their complexities and their ways in which they specifically approached the challenges in life together in one room and give them a task to do together without changing any of them or without choosing one person to dictate how the others must think, feel or act. How do you think it is going to turn out? It can either turn out horribly wrong, or it can turn out really good. On the other hand, if we listen to everybody's suggestions from their own perspectives and how they would approach the task, we could take all the beautiful suggestions and try to mix and fit them together so that we get the best possible solution – utilising every warrior's strength, uniqueness and different qualities that he built up in his life. We have the Goliaths, the Samsons, the Israelites, the Davids and the Gideons in our family. We need to learn how to use each person's strength without changing or dictating to them how they must think, feel or act. Let us rather put together each person's strength and let us be the army God wants us to be to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and the other problems we are facing.

Albert Einstein once said that everybody is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, the fish will live his whole life believing that he is stupid because he cannot climb a tree. Some of us have qualities that others don't have. That is why Solomon said in Ecclesiastes where the one is weak, the other one is strong; where the one falls down, the other one picks him/her up. We need to be careful in our families, especially as we are physically closer to each other during the lockdown. Be careful not to poke each other like the porcupines, but rather learn how to navigate and embrace the needles and see them as qualities the family members have to fight the enemy.

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If you are trying to pull the porcupine's needles from your family members, it is going to cause a lot of irreparable problems in your lives. If you try to turn circles into squares, it is going to cause irreparable damage to your family members and they are going to end up hating themselves and thinking they are weak or insufficient or incomplete or a failure. This is not what you want for your families – to tear them apart and tell them that they are not good enough.

Work with the individuality and uniqueness of each member. Individuality or uniqueness means that everybody in your family will respond differently to pressure. Some people are able to handle higher volumes of pressure, while others may respond better to higher intensities. Learn how each member responds to pressure. Don't put the same amount of pressure on everybody during this time. Some may need a little bit of time away, not to be so overwhelmed with everything that's happening, while others can handle higher intensities. Then of course, you know that genetics also play a very big role in how you are going to face challenges. As you face all your problems and all the effects of COVID-19, I want to challenge you today to craft your own uniform with God's help. Like David, tell God what you need in your armour. Whatever it is, God has already given you the armour you need. Use it to fight the battles of life. Embrace each other's uniquenesses, embrace each other's war uniform and embrace each other's swords and shields even though they may be different from yours. One may use a bow and the other one a sword, but see how you can fight this battle together. Your porcupine pokers are not there for one another, they are there to fight the enemy.

Remember that feelings of worth can flourish only in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated and cherished.

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# Podcast



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