

# Maple Springs Baptist Church

**Series: Searching for a Better Life**

**Week 4: Declare WAR**

INTRO: Aren't we all looking for a better life?

**Context of Ephesians 5 is that the world we live in is not a friendly one for growing spiritually...** **Ephesians 5:8**, the world is dark; **Ephesians 5:14**, the world is a grave; **Ephesians 5:16**, the age is evil. Because of this, we get a number of commands that tell us to fight against the current ... to struggle, ... do things that almost feel unnatural ... if you just coast, you're going to drown.

In the midst of a dark world ... **Ephesians 5:8**—".... *Live as children of light...*" **Ephesians 5:10**—"and *find out what pleases the Lord.*" Almost get the image here of trying to read in the dark... really got to focus. The only place you can see is where you focus the light.

**Ephesians 5:14-17. The tempo and rhythms of the world are not in line with God's purposes.** Different values; agendas; priorities; desires. **If the rhythms of your life are set by the world, you're going to completely waste your life.**

**The Christian Life is a Struggle.** If we are going to "make it," we must declare war on the pull of the world, a world which is sleeping, in the dark, and in the grave.

In **Ephesians 2:2**, Paul talked about "*the ways of this world.*" That course is completely anti-God. It prioritizes the lusts of the flesh (bodily pleasures); the lust of the eyes (materialism); and the pride of life (self > God). Not only that, but our own flesh is still saturated with these things. Paul tells us that the spirit of the world is at work in our flesh and we gravitate toward it.

We have to declare war, **because if you're not fighting, you're losing.** You won't coast your way to spiritual victory... If you don't have a plan, not setting priorities, choosing relationships & growing intentionally... you're dead. **We are either killing sin or being killed by it.**

**How do we engage in warfare?**

**(1) Contemplate your moves. Ephesians 5:15**

**Ephesians 5:10**—Try to Discern **Ephesians 5:17**—Strive to Understand. It won't come naturally. Parable of the seeds & sower, the only seeds to survive are those driven deep. Drive the Gospel deep until you learn to see all your life ... your success, your failures, your joys, your pains, your hopes, your fears ... through the Gospel.

**(2) Be intentional. Ephesians 5:16**

If you are going to grow with God, you have to set the priorities. To develop something, you must decide to make it a priority: God; Marriage; Church; Getting to know unbelievers. If you don't control & make use of your time, the course of your life will be directed by the world. If you don't carve out time to grow in God ... you will lose.

**(3) Choose the Spirit, not “the spirits,” to deal with life. Ephesians 5:18.** Life is hard—lots of pressures and disappointments. Paul identifies 2 ways people deal with life’s pressures & anxieties. The 1<sup>st</sup> is alcohol (self-medicate), the 2<sup>nd</sup> is the Holy Spirit.

Alcohol and the Spirit of God both produce some of the same things in you. But they do it in entirely different ways:

- Alcohol is a depressant that dulls your senses to reality... The Holy Spirit gives you a way to cope by opening your eyes to the reality of God.
- Alcohol gets rid of worry by making you forget...the Spirit gets rid of worry by helping you remember!
- Alcohol gives you courage by making you unaware of the dangers around you... the Spirit gives you courage by showing you how God is greater than your fears.
- Alcohol adds excitement to your life by giving you a cheap thrill ... the Spirit adds excitement to your life by reminding you of the overflowing promises of God and his goodness to you.

**Ephesians 5:18–20** and **Colossians 3:16–17** are parallel passages. They 2 are almost identical except for that 1st phrase... in Ephesians 5 **“be filled with the Spirit”**—in Colossians 3 it is **“let the message [Word] of Christ dwell among you richly,”** In Paul’s mind **“being filled with the spirit”** is the same as **“letting the message [Word] of Christ dwell among you richly.”**

**Ephesians 3:18-19**... When the Word dwells in you richly, and you know the depth of the love of Christ, and the Spirit fills you, you can “cope” with life’s difficulties.

**(4) Sing a new song constantly in our hearts. Ephesians 5:19**— Remind yourself, constantly of God’s great work on your behalf. He tells you to do it through music. Not through quoting Scripture or listening to sermons but he chose music. Why?

A theology of music: **Creation started in a song.** That song has gone bad. Romans 8 “it is groaning.” **Salvation is a new song.** Hebrews 2:12 Jesus describes salvation as a new song he has put in the hearts of God’s people. We are commanded to **“... Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord”** (Ephesians 5:19). This changes how we live life. In your heart the beauty of God should constantly be dancing around... **Only when that music is dancing in your heart will you be able to say no to sin.**

Life is war. If you coast, you die. And what most needs to happen to you is the beauty of God needs to come alive in your heart. That song needs to come alive... **Psalm 22:1** ... song of abandonment. Jesus was forsaken by God. **Psalm 22:22.** Because He sang a song of abandonment, we could sing a song of rejoicing in God.

You want to know where to start? That’s where. You want to know how the power of sin will be broken in your life? It is when you realize that your sin caused Him to sing that song of abandonment for you.

Start there... hearing that song of abandonment is what puts the new song in your heart. Receive what He did for you, in your place, and the power of God itself will come alive in your heart.

For the Christ-follower: Worship is a choice... **only by delighting in Christ can we drive out our affections for sin!** Thinking often on the goodness of God.