

1 Tim 6:12 Fight the Good Fight of the Faith

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Introduction

In the Scriptures, the Christian life is frequently portrayed as a battle or fierce competition. Yet, oddly, Christians often live as though it is peacetime and not wartime, particularly in Seattle. We can all imagine the outcome if one were to mistakenly think that it was peacetime amidst a battle or if a US soldier in Baghdad mistakenly thought he was on vacation. When we engage in a battle or competition there are two primary things we need to be well acquainted with – our enemies and ourselves. What strengths, weaknesses, resources, tactics, goals and desires does the enemy have? Similarly, what are my own strengths, weaknesses, resources, tactics, goals and desires? What am I playing for? What is my motivation? In some Greek wrestling matches the loser had his eyes gouged out. Roman boxers' often sewed iron and lead into their gloves to maximize the damage left behind after impact. The stakes with war are even greater, requiring careful planning, preparation and strategy. This is the intensity and intentionality which we are called to live with as Christians.

Scripture speaks of our ultimate desires and motivations as our affections. The Bible uses words like passion, thirsting, satisfaction, delight, pleasure, happiness, contentment, longing, and joy to describe the affections. Affections are important because it is from them that spring forth our every day actions. Jonathan Edwards, perhaps the greatest theologian America has ever produced, argues in his well known volume, Religious Affections, that all of our actions proceed from deep affections and if affections were to cease so would the action of all mankind. In other words, whoever you are, whatever you believe, we're most motivated by what we most desire, love and long for, whether that's Jesus Christ or personal success, pleasure, comfort or control.

It's vitally important that we keep a close pulse on where our affections lie because they point directly to what we worship. In other words, our deepest hopes, joys, longings and aspirations all indicate what we hold to be of preeminent value in our lives, namely what we worship. This applies whether you're a Christian or not, we all worship something. This is the primary reason that it is important that we're not only concerned with proper actions, but that our actions proceed from deep worshipful affections for Jesus. Otherwise, our actions degenerate into mere duty and it's only a matter of time before our actions will properly align themselves with our deepest affections. This is why the 10 commandments and Jesus' restatement of them all begin with absolute love towards God. What we worship is at stake and what we worship determines how we live our lives here and our eternal destiny.

This is where I'm going this morning. Fighting the good fight includes how we deal with temptation, how we interact with others, how we deal with our dead end job, how we handle money, how we drive, how we love our spouses, how we discipline our kids, how we handle being let down, how we deal with loss, how we cope with difficulty and hardship, and how we handle stress (i.e. how we live life). Yet, how we live our life and handle each day springs from our deepest affections – or what we worship – which must be with Jesus Christ if we are to fight the good fight. What does it mean to fight the good fight? Fighting the good fight is primarily a fight for deep affections for Jesus, from which spring Jesus-centered obedience. Again, fighting the good fight is ultimately a fight for deep affections for Jesus. That said, I have 10 observations regarding fighting the good fight for the faith.

OBSERVATIONS

#1. In the Scriptures the Christian life is compared to a battle or fierce competition

My aim as we begin is to simply demonstrate that what we're talking about here is biblical, so I'll allow the Bible to develop the argument.

1 Ti 6.12 ¹² Fight the good **fight of the faith**.

1 Timothy 1:18 ¹⁸ This charge ^mI entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with ⁿthe prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may ^owage the good warfare,

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ⁴ For ^mthe weapons of ⁿour warfare are not of the flesh but have ^odivine power ^pto destroy strongholds.

Ephesians 6:10-18 ^{11g}Put on ^hthe whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against ^tthe schemes of the devil.

Php 3:14 ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for ^othe prize of the upward ^pcall of God in Christ Jesus.

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us **run with endurance the race that is set before us...**

1 Pet 5:8-9 ⁸ Be sober-minded; **be watchful. Your adversary** the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ **Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing** that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

2 Ti 4:7 ⁷ ^wI have **fought the good fight**, ^xI have **finished the race**, I have kept the faith.

Quotes:

Ed Welch (author and counselor part of CCEF) quote:

The only possible attitude toward out-of-control desire is a declaration of all-out war...there is something about war that sharpens the senses...you hear a twig snap or the rustling of leaves and you are in attack mode. Someone coughs and you are ready to pull the trigger. Even after days of little or no sleep, war keeps us vigilant.

John Piper (pastor, author) quote:

A wartime mindset includes "violence against all the impulses in our own selves that would make peace with our own sin and settle in with a peacetime mentality. It's violence against all lust in ourselves and all enslaving desires for food or caffeine or sugar or chocolate or alcohol or pornography or money or the praise of men and the approval of others or power or fame. It's violence against the impulses in our own soul toward racism and sluggish indifference to injustice and poverty and abortion." (When I Don't Desire God, p102-103)

Matthew Henry (puritan commentator): "Those who will get to heaven must fight their way there."

If you're tracking with the argument so far, you're probably asking, "I thought I was saved by grace through faith, apart from anything that I do?" Yes, that is absolutely true. When you become a Christian, God gives you a supernatural desire for him. But that desire must be stoked, fed, and fought for because we have a number of enemies that want to do everything they can to discourage, distract, distort, and disqualify us from fighting the good fight. We're saved freely by God's grace, but saved to battle through life leaning and depending on Jesus for everything by finding our deepest affections in him.

This means that if you don't have deep affections for God, but want them, you cry out to him and pray for them. When you're facing difficulty and opposition, you're on guard against the myriad of ways in which your joy in Jesus may be stolen. When you're helping others, you ask "How can I be like Jesus here? How can I help stoke their deepest affections for Jesus?" When you're facing temptation you cry out, "Lord give me a greater desire for you than for any silly temporal pleasure!"

What can we do to be able to say with the apostle Paul at the end our days, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race."? That's where we're going this morning.

#2. We are blind enemies of God in the battle before we become Christians

The battle that we are speaking about includes everyone, even non-Christians, whether people realize it or not. The Bible tells us that outside of Jesus we are blind, dead, children of wrath, walking with Satan, and God's enemies. I lived as a blind enemy of God for the first 18 years of my life, not because I was particularly immoral but because my deepest joy and love was not in Jesus Christ, but in myself. This is sobering to consider. Let's just say that if you have a blind enemy you have the upper hand. The point here is simply that it is important to realize those around you that are not yet Christians are spiritually blind, so don't be surprised if they don't understand. Pray that God would enlighten the eyes of their hearts. The following scripture passages speak to this...

1 Cor 1:18 ¹⁸For the word of the **cross is folly to those who are perishing**, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

2 Cor 4:3-4 ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has **blinded the minds of the unbelievers**, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...

Eph 2:1-3 And you were **dead** in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once **walked [dead men walking]**, following the course of this world, **following the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom **we all once lived** in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath [i.e. enemies of God], like the rest of mankind.**

Rom 3:9-18

For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are **under sin**, ¹⁰ as it is written:

“ None is righteous, no, not one;
¹¹ no one understands;
 no one seeks for God.
¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
 no one does good,
 not even one.”
¹³ “ Their throat is an open grave;
 they use their tongues to deceive.”
“ The venom of asps is under their lips.”
¹⁴ “ Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”
¹⁵ “ Their feet are swift to shed blood;
¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,
¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.”
¹⁸ “ **There is no fear of God before their eyes.**”

Ezek 12:1-2 The word of the LORD came to me: ² “Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, **but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not**, for they are a rebellious house.

Jer 5:21-22

²¹ “ Hear this, O foolish and senseless people,
 who have eyes, but see not,
 who have ears, but hear not.
²² Do you not fear me? declares the LORD;
 Do you not tremble before me?

Mt 13:13 ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables, because **seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.**

#3. Through the Gospel we change sides of the battle, receive our sight to see Jesus, and begin to fight the “good fight”

Why is the Gospel important in the good fight? The Gospel is central to the battle for by it we changes sides in the war, receive our spiritual hearing and sight and begin to fight the good fight. The Gospel tells us that we are sinners, separated from God, enemies of God, children of wrath, dead in our sins, and blinded by hardness of heart. Yet, even while we were yet sinners, God came in the God-Man Jesus Christ to forgive our sin through his work on the cross. On the cross God’s wrath for the sin of all that would believe in him was placed on Jesus Christ and in return we receive Jesus’ perfect righteous record and eternal fellowship with God in Christ. In Christ, our spiritual blindness is removed which allows us to see the truth and work of Jesus for what it is. In Christ our hearts of stone are replaced with hearts of flesh. In Christ we are given new godly desires, we are filled with the Holy Spirit and called to begin the “good fight” becoming more and more like him until we see him face to face. The fact that we were once enemies should move us to extend extra grace, love and patience to those that aren’t yet Christians.

2 Cor 3:14-18 ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened... ¹⁶ But **when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed...** ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

2 Cor 4:5-6 ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. ⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” **has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

Eph 1:17-18 ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ **having the eyes of your hearts enlightened**, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

The centrality of the gospel in the fight for faith is also why Paul says things such as...

Phil 3.8 ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the **surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

Phil 1.21 ¹ For to me **to live is Christ**, and to die is gain.

Gal 6.14 ¹⁴ But far be it from me to boast **except in the cross** of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

1 Tim 6:19 That they may take hold of that which is **truly life**...

#4. The Christian fight is FOR joy in Jesus

Joy is central to the fight for joy because what we most chiefly desire is what we worship. What we worship determines our eternal destiny. If we don't find our primary joy and deepest affections in God we don't worship him. Our deepest affections say more about our true beliefs than what we "know". Satan knows a lot and could be an excellent theology teacher, but has no affections for Jesus. God is more concerned with our affections towards him than our knowledge of him. Thoughts and deeds are manageable but our deepest affections are not. The fact that God demands that delight in him more than anything else humbles us and makes us desperate for real Christianity. This is also why we see, throughout the scriptures, commands to rejoice in the Lord. Deep joy is part of our duty because it is directly connected to worship. This doesn't mean that we are always happy externally, but it does mean that our deepest joy is to be found in God as it was for Jesus even while enduring the cross (Heb 12:2).

Php 4:4 ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Ps 32:11 ¹¹ Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Ps 37:4 ⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Ps 97:12 ¹² Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

Joel 2:23 ²³ "Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God,

Ps 100:1 ¹ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

1 Thess 5:16 ¹⁶ Rejoice always

What's interesting to point out is that suffering and difficulty only seems to *increase* joy in the NT.

Rom 5.3 ³ More than that, we **rejoice in our sufferings**

Mt 5.11-12 ¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Jas 1.2-3 ² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of **various kinds**

Acts 5.41 ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

Heb 10.34 ³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

Heb 12.2 ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Why is that? Because the joy spoken of goes beyond circumstances and persecution, even the plundering of all your property. The object of joy (Jesus) is worth going and selling all that you have to get, it is the treasure of all treasures, joy of all joys, and the most valuable of all things (Mt 13:44-45). This is why Jesus says difficult things to understand like...

Mt 10:37-38

³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

He's not saying "don't love your parents" or "don't love your children", but what he is saying is that your love for him should exceed your love for your parents and children.

CS Lewis has a great quote in one of his books, Surprised by Joy, where he says "God threatens terrible things if we will not be happy in him" when speaking of Dt. 28:47-48. How can God be upset if people aren't deeply happy in him? Because deep joy is directly connected to who/what we worship, so it is worth fighting for.

#5. Therefore, the Christian battle is AGAINST everything that opposes our joy in Jesus, namely the world, the flesh, and Satan, which makes it the "good" fight

Who are our enemies? We have three primary enemies. First, the World, which includes: "lust of the eyes" (wanting beautiful externals – people, things, objects), "lust of the flesh" (wanting physical desires – pleasure, comfort, happiness, contentment), and the "boastful pride of life (pride – putting self interests above Jesus-interests). Second, the Flesh, which is our internal resistance towards obeying God, also known as our indwelling sin. Third, Satan, who tempts, accuses, and lies to the saints.

2 Cor 2:11

¹¹ so that we would not be *outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.*

Our enemies' main tactic is to make things (objects, acts, thoughts, people, experiences, etc), including gifts of God, look more desirable than God. Their aim is to trick us into thinking that these will be more satisfying and gratifying than God himself. This is why these desires are called "deceitful desires" in Eph 4:22 because they offer something they can't provide. As it says elsewhere, "sin is never satisfied".

So, if you're able, write this out right now. What are the primary things in your life that the enemy uses to lure you into thinking that something else is more desirable than God?

Examples:

Family, children, the idea of just one more kid, spouse you have, spouse you don't have, work, title, car, home, reputation, accomplishments, resume, what you've done, what you will do, the clothes you wear, who you know, what you have, what you don't have, pleasure, sex, drugs, living for the weekend, control, fame, prestige, contentment, peace, security, just want to be "happy"

#6. The Christian fight involves distractions and difficulty on every level of our life

The point here is simply that the "good fight is all encompassing and always raging. Every day distractions and difficulties will do all they can to steal your joy, discourage, distract and disqualify. Scripture describes fighting the fight with words such as: suffering, struggle, conflict, strife, labor, discipline, contention, difficulty, endurance, danger, and opposition. These could be blatant difficulties, such as the loss of a loved one or a car accident. Or, these could be more subtle difficulties, such as wealth and power (equally dangerous though in a different way). You need to know this so that you're prepared, knowing what to expect so that you will not get discouraged along the way. When difficulty comes your way, in whatever form, it means that you have to be ready to fight.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 ²⁵ Every ^u athlete **exercises** self-control in all things...²⁶ So **I do not run aimlessly**; I ^wdo not box as one ^xbeating the air. ²⁷ But I **discipline my body and keep it under control**, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

1 Thess 2.2 ² But though we had already **suffered and been shamefully treated** at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the **midst of much conflict**.

Col 1:29-2:1 (include with 2:1 above?) ²⁹ For this **I toil, struggling with all his energy** that he powerfully works within me. For I want you to know how great a **struggle** I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,

Heb 12:4 ⁴ In your **struggle** against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

1 Ti 4:10 ¹⁰ For to this end **we toil and strive**, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Luke 13:24 ²⁴ **Strive** to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Php 3:12-14 ¹² I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: ⁿforgetting what lies behind and **straining forward** to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for ^othe prize of the upward ^pcall of God in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 6:10-18 ¹⁰ Finally, ^ebe strong in the Lord and in ^fthe strength of his might. ¹¹ ^gPut on ^hthe whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against ^lthe schemes of the devil.
(spiritual, physical)

The Bible describes life and “fighting the good fight” as not only difficult but difficult on every level. Literally, every aspect of our life (spiritual, emotional, physical, relational, etc) is part of the battle, though the battle is likely more fierce on certain fronts than others. What are the battle fronts currently in your life?

Spiritual

Eph 6:12 ¹² For **we do not wrestle against** flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 ³ For though we walk in the flesh, **we are not waging war according to the flesh.** ⁴ For ^mthe weapons of ⁿour warfare are not of the flesh but have ^odivine power ^pto destroy strongholds...

Ex. sin, spiritual hardheartedness, lies and accusations

External (circumstances)

Heb 10:32,36 ³² you endured a hard **struggle with sufferings**, ³³ sometimes being **publicly exposed to reproach and affliction**, and sometimes being **partners with those so treated**...³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

Rom 8:18-21 ¹⁸ For I consider that the **sufferings of this present time** are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Ex. blue screen of death, flat tires, loss of a joy, disappointments

Internal (emotional, mental)

2 Cor 10:5-6 ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take **every thought captive** to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

1 Pe 2:11 ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Jas 4:1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are **at war within you**?

Ex. internal temptations, hopes, desires, dreams, joys, depression

Relational

Php 1:29,30 ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ **engaged in the same conflict** that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

2 Cor 4:8-11 ⁸ **We are afflicted in every way**, but not crushed; **perplexed**, but not driven to despair; ⁹ **persecuted**, but not forsaken; **struck down**, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For **we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake**, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Ex. relational conflict with others

Again, the point here is that fighting the good fight is all encompassing and always raging. Life is a battlefield and we have to continually be on guard for those things that falsely promise to bring us more joy than Jesus and/or simply discourage us from the fight. This means when we're wrestling with **sin** we're participating in the battle, when we **combat lies** with truth we're in the battle, when we experience **illness** we're in the battle, when we **feel discouraged** we're in the battle, when we're **comfortable** we're in the battle, when we feel **“blah”** we're in the battle, when we

experience **relational friction** with someone we're in the battle, when we **compare ourselves with someone else** we're in the battle, when we **look down on someone else** we're in the battle, when we **look down on ourselves** we're in the battle, when **someone cuts you off in traffic** we're in the battle, when you **don't get the raise** you want you're in the battle, when you **misplace your car keys** you're in the battle, when deciding **whether to pray for and tuck your kids in** you're in the battle, the **refrigerator** is part of the battle, our **daily conversations** are part of the battle, how we **treat our sin** is a HUGE part of the battle, **how we drive** is part of the battle, how we **live out our lives in purity and holiness** is part of the battle...

#7. Christians fight differently than the world fights

World

Independence

1 Cor 2.2 ² For I decided to know nothing among you **except Jesus Christ** and him crucified.

Pride

Phil 2.3 ³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in **humility** count others more significant than yourselves.

Strength

2 Cor 12:10 ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Christianity

Dependence on Jesus

Humility

Weakness

Worldly Christianity focuses on sin management, duty and checking off boxes. Real Christianity focuses on a passionate pursuit of joy in Jesus Christ.

#8. God has equipped us with a number of tools for cultivating deep affections in Jesus Christ.

Part I. Joy in God is from God

There are two parts to this point. First, our joy in God is ultimately from God. Second, though our joy in God is from God, he works through us as we work to cultivate that joy. This is much like a farmer to plows his field, plants the seed, waters the ground, yet does not make the seed actually grow. So we are to cultivate our joy in Jesus, yet know that it is God who makes that joy grow.

Augustine – “Give me the grace O Lord to do as you command, and command me to do what you will! O holy God when your commands are obeyed, it is from you that we received the power to obey them. [Confessions]

Why is understanding that our joy in God ultimately comes from him?

(adapted from John Piper, When I Don't Desire God)

1. If you're proud thinking that you have all of this under control, this will humble you.
2. If you are discouraged and depressed about your inability to produce this joy, this should encourage you.
3. When we realize that the joy we have for God is from God our joy increases all the more.
4. This truth makes us utterly reliant on God. This also helps us understand Jesus when he says, “Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest.” Since our joy in God is from God it is not burdensome – it's not up to us!
5. Lastly, but most importantly, this gives all glory, honor, praise to God because it is all of him.

Where do we see this (i.e. man doing the work, but God making it happen) reflected in the Bible?

Pr. 21.31 ³¹ The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the **victory belongs to the LORD.**

Ps 127.1 ¹ **Unless the LORD** builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. **Unless the LORD** watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

Pr 19.21²¹ Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the **purpose of the LORD** that will stand.

1 Cor 15:10 ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I **worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.**

Part II. Tools for cultivating deep affections in and for Jesus Christ

Q: What are you doing, what strategies are you employing, to fight the good fight?

#1) Take an eye exam

First, take an eye exam, as in the eyes of your heart. Have your eyes been opened? Have they seen the light of Jesus Christ through the gospel (2 Cor 4:4)? Can you **see him, rejoice** in him, **desire** him, **thirst** to know him more fully, **love him** more deeply, **pursue** him more swiftly, **cling** to him more dearly, and **depend** on him more desperately.

#2) Assess Affections and Ask for More

Take an assessment of your every day actions and ask, "What do my actions say about my deepest affections? Ask God to increase your joy in him every day..."

#3) Preach the Gospel to Yourself

Who God is, what he has done, what he will do = ALL IN THE GOSPEL! Colossians 2:6 states, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him..." Just as we enter into relationship with God the Father through God the Son, so we remain in relationship with God through Jesus. By regularly preaching the gospel to ourselves regularly we are reminded of who God is, who we are and what he has saved us from. This is key to maintaining a high view of God, a low view of self before God, a right understanding of your identity in Christ, and proper understanding in how to relate to others (love and serve as Jesus has loved and served you).

#4) Adopt a Wartime Mentality. Ask yourself, how do I fight the good fight?

- **John Owen**, Mortification of Sin in Believers, "be killing sin or it will be killing you"
- **MLJ** "The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself..."
- **Don't make peace** with the sin in your life. This is why Jesus uses such strong language when speaking about battling sin in your life, such as in...**Mt 5:29-30** ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, **tear it out and throw it away**. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, **cut it off and throw it away**. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.
- View difficulty and hardship as part of God's plan to grow, develop, mature and deepen your dependency on him. We see this in the life of Paul in that he accepted **every calamity as from the disciplining hand of God**. (see 2 Cor 1.8,9)

#5) Who is God calling you to fight the good fight with? Yes, you are called to fight with others.

Church, community group, brothers and sisters in Jesus

#6) Sharpen Your Sword, Which is Your Bible

- Ephesians 6 describes the Bible as the only offensive weapon of the described spiritual armor. No one goes to battle without their weapon and if you do the outcome is inevitable.
- The Bible is essential in that it reveals who God is, who we are, what our problem is (i.e. sin), his solution to that, how we are to fight the good fight, how we can learn from others that have gone before us, etc.
- Yet, many of you are likely saying, "I don't know how to use my sword let alone sharpen it!" Here are some simple practical things you can do to begin.
 - Schedule it in. If you aim for nothing you're sure to hit it and if it doesn't get planned it won't happen. How important this is to you will be reflected by its place on your calendar.
 - Develop a plan for how and what you will read. Will you read the Bible in a year? Two years? Will you read the NT or OT? Focus on a particular book, character, genre? Make a plan.
 - Memorize and meditate (i.e. praying scripture). There are countless references to memorizing scripture, Ps 119:11 being one of them, that we are not able to obey if we don't memorize. The key here, as it is with all of these points, is to remember that these are cultivation tools towards greater, deeper joy in Jesus – not ends in themselves.
 - When you are reading, ask questions. What does this say about God? What does this say about me? Is there a sin to avoid spoken of here? Promise to claim? Example to follow? Command to obey?
 - Talk to others about it. Tell others what you're learning and ask them what they are learning.

#7) Read Biography and other good books

#8) Prayer

The Westminster Confession describes prayer simply as the offering up our desires to God. John Piper describes prayer as our wartime CG radio communication to God. I believe that your prayer life is directly correlated with the degree to which you believe it is wartime. Not praying is a reflection that deep down you believe it is peacetime and

there is not need to use the wartime CB radio. Don't let this cause shame and guilt, but repent and ask God to help you develop a wartime mentality. Talk to others about how they pray. 1 Thess 5:17 says "pray without ceasing." What does this mean? It doesn't mean that we are always in the act of prayer, but we are always in the spirit of prayer, continually connected to God. This means that we are praying often with all types of prayers of various lengths.

#9. Fighting the good fight does not mean that we can't laugh, have fun or that we have to wear a uniform

Ecc 5:19

¹⁹ Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.

#10. Fighting the good fight does not mean that we never stumble, but when we do, we get up and keep going

Ps 37:23-24

²³ The steps of a man are established by the LORD,
when he delights in his way;
²⁴ though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong,
for the LORD upholds his hand.

Php 3:12-14

¹² I **press on to make it my own**, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: ⁿforgetting what lies behind and **straining forward** to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I **press on toward the goal for ^othe prize** of the upward ^pcall of God in Christ Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, press on to make Jesus your own. Worship him by finding your deepest joy, passion, thirst and hunger for God in God. Live your life like it is wartime, because it is. Be quick to repent. Be wary because the devil prowls around like a roaring lion searching for someone to devour. Lean heavily on Jesus by asking him to increase your joy and be willing to wait patiently until he does. Sometimes we are called to being patient worshippers. Repent for not living as though it was peacetime and making peace with your own sin. Repent for not fighting the good fight. Throw it all on Jesus. Love your Bible because it tells you all about Jesus, the pearl of great price. Run with perseverance the race marked out for you so that we may say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race." (2 Tim 4:7)