



Fill My Cup Lord....

A weekly devotional provided through the Women's
Ministry of
First Congregational Church of Hopkinton, MA

I raised my voice at my younger son when he was having a stubborn moment and I was operating in a heightened state of frustration. Then I walked out of the room, leaving him standing there. A few minutes later, I walked back in. He had moved across the room, but stood motionless in his new spot. Tears were pooling in his eyes and cascading over his lower lids. I was cut to the quick.

I knelt before my son, cupped his face in my hands, and apologized. I told him that I was sorry for being so impatient and that even mommies make mistakes and deserve to be sent to "time out" sometimes (an admission that brought a grin to his face). I then asked him to forgive me. He did. "Do you know why I'm crying, Mom?" he asked. I ran my hands through his hair and said, "No, honey, why? Tell me." "Because I just stubbed my toe."

I laughed and laughed and laughed. And I was grateful for that stubbed toe. If not for that toe, my frustration might have festered and my heart may have remained hard. But that stubbed toe brought forth the tears that got through to me. They took me by surprise. I thought I had broken my little boy's heart – that I had grieved his little spirit. And no matter how angry or frustrated I was, I couldn't bear that thought. I simply love him too much.

When we love someone, it's hard to hurt him or her and walk away unscathed ourselves. I know that's true for me. Either I operate with a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach or I put up my defenses and harden my heart. When that happens, it often takes a jolt to my system to get through to me and force me to acknowledge the sin I'm harboring.

Unfortunately, when we hurt others, the hurt goes even deeper than the grief we cause them and the pain we cause ourselves. The Bible let's us know that we also hurt God's spirit. In Ephesians 4, Paul warns against this:

*"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**"* (Ephesians 4:29-32)

These verses come at the end of a passage where Paul exhorts the Ephesians to stop living like nonbelievers - in ignorance and with hardened hearts. He tells them to do away with their old selves, to embrace their new selves, and to be made new in the attitudes of their minds. He tells them to speak truthfully, to be productive, to keep from stealing, and to keep a check on their anger. He doesn't just ask them to do all this. He insists on it.

But it's in verses 29-32 that Paul adds the admonition that we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit. He sandwiches that directive between an instruction on building people up instead of tearing them down and a command to get rid of bitterness, rage, and anger. He then tells the Ephesians to be kind and compassionate to each other.

When we sin, we grieve the Holy Spirit. We cause Him to suffer. We cause Him sorrow. We may as well imagine tears pooling in His eyes and cascading down His cheeks. Can we bear the thought? Or do we love Him too much? And it seems, from the passages in Ephesians 4, that when we harden our hearts, tear others down, and allow anger to fester and rage, our behavior is particularly injurious to Him. He loves us too much to watch us hurt each other. It's a heavy load for Him to bear.

So the question to us today is this: Do we love God? Do we love Him so much that it hurts us to hurt Him? Does it pain us to grieve His Spirit? If it does, what does it usually take to get our attention and make us stop? Is this something that you need to ask forgiveness for today?