

Grieve not the Holy Spirit

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Bible Text: Ephesians 4:30; Acts 6:1-7
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I know and you realize that this service that we're a part of, this is advertised as what we know as our contemporary service. Can I go old school on y'all today? Is that alright? If that didn't light your fire, your wood is wet. I know that's old school but it's true and maybe you're that person going, "It didn't light my fire." I've got great news for you because we have an instrument that can dry out the wood today. We have an instrument through the Holy Spirit who can penetrate our heart of wherever it is, wherever we find ourselves, whatever struggle we have, and so maybe you're that person today who said, "I wasn't celebrating. I'm struggling." I've got good news for you: you can celebrate through the message you just heard through the truth of God's word.

Let's pray together.

Lord, as we come to this time, God, it's been so good to celebrate your power, your authority, your goodness and your grace but, God, now we need to be challenged, Lord, we need to be challenged to take the next step; we need to be challenged to trust a little bit more; God, we need to be challenged to be more like you and less like us. Help us, O God. We hear so many voices, so many competing voices that tell us there's a better way, a different way but, God, help us to realize that your way is not just the best but at the end of the day it's the only. Lord, take your word through the power and the presence of your Holy Spirit, change us today from the inside out. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to two specific places in the New Testament, the book of Ephesians 4 and the book of Acts 6. And if you're a guest or a visitor with us this morning, we as a family of faith, we've been on a journey for the last few weeks going, as I've teased, where very few Baptist churches have ever gone studying the person of the role, the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and we began this journey primarily through the book of Acts about talking about who the Holy Spirit was and what he desires to do in our lives. We've talked about the gifts of the Spirit. We've talked about what does it look like to be filled with the Spirit? But we continue today much in the same tone as last week. As much as we love to get excited about the movement, the activity and the filling of the Holy Spirit, there is a proverbial other side of the coin.

Last week, we addressed the fact that there can come a time in our life where we quench the Spirit of God, today we're going to talk about what does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit in our lives? As you turn to Ephesians 4, allow me just to give a brief summary here. The book of Ephesians in its most simplistic form, six chapters in length. The first three chapters are doctrine and theology and the basis for our faith and our belief. The last three chapters beginning in chapter 4 are really how do we put our faith into practice, and as you come toward the end of chapter 4, it says that we should not give any place to the devil; we should not let any unwholesome or poor communication come out of our mouth. In other words, before we begin in verse 30, there has been a string of, there has been communication of things that have no place in our life, but when you get to verse 30, there's a conjunction there, "and," almost as if the Lord is saying, "Even though that should not have any part in your life, we need to take it to the next step, we need to take it to the next level." It says,

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Now last week we addressed what did it mean to quench the Spirit of God, today grieving the Spirit of God, and next week, let me give you a foreshadowing, what does it look like to resist the Spirit of God in our life. Allow me to encourage you: don't make all those words mean the same thing. In fact, what we see today much like last week is that each of these terminologies, each of these concepts are very particular in nature.

Now I want to kind of come on the heels of last week with quenching the Spirit of God and I want to share with you what are some similarities and what are some differences. Notice the last statement of verse 30, such as against the day of redemption. Last week we dealt with believers in Jesus Christ who were quenching the Spirit of God, today we're going to deal with believers in Jesus Christ who are grieving the Holy Spirit in their life. Do not fall into the trap that quenching or grieving somehow negates, voids or allows you to lose your salvation. Just because your standing with the Lord differs does not mean your state with your relationship to the Lord has been altered. It makes it very clear, against the day of redemption, so in other words, even though you can grieve the Holy Spirit of God, as a child of God, as a person of faith in Jesus Christ, do not somehow think this negates your relationship with the Lord.

Now that's the same whether it be quenching or grieving. Here are the differences. As we discussed last week, to quench and every time it's used in the New Testament it involves fire, is to extinguish or to take that which is burning, or as we discussed to take that which is in momentum or going the right direction and to find yourself in a place or to make a decision where we extinguish the movement of God or where we extinguish the power of God or the authority of God in our life, we put the brakes on, we put cold water on it, whatever analogy you want to use, today grieving the Holy Spirit is particularly different than quenching the Holy Spirit.

Notice here in verse 31 the words that are used to describe what happens when you grieve the Holy Spirit: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking. The last time I checked, bitterness doesn't creep in overnight. In fact, bitterness doesn't happen because of an event last night. Clamor, which means to gather a group of people around you and get them to voice the same opinion you do, that doesn't happen in just a couple of days. In other words, what we see happening here, we grieve the Holy Spirit of God – hear me clearly – when there is a constant repetitive quenching of the Spirit of God in our lives. Bitterness happens sometimes over years. Clamoring happens over years. Malice happens over years.

So what we're discussing today when it says we should not grieve the Holy Spirit, quenching the Spirit of God, that happens often in our life. The Lord is moving in our life, things are going great in our life and we make a decision, we do this, we do that, and all of a sudden we realize that we have quenched the momentum and the movement of God in our lives. We studied last week in Acts 5 of how that happened in a couple's life. In a few moments, we're going to go to Acts 6 and discover that the church of Jesus Christ made a very important decision not to grieve the Holy Spirit and continue to quench.

Now I know this is a particular word in relationship too, but I want you to hear the picture that is so important. Did you know that in your Bible even though we're called the sons of God, even though it says in Romans 8 that when we believe on Jesus Christ, we're adopted as children into his family, the one single solitary relationship that is given to us as an example of our relationship to the Lord is the earthly relationship of marriage. In fact, in the very next chapter of your Bible, Ephesians 5, it says this is a great mystery of the church: as Christ is to the church, so the husband is to the wife. I know there are many of you here today that you've been married, you've experienced marriage, you have all kinds of stories when it comes to marriage. There are some of you that are anticipating marriage. But one thing that I will share with you this morning is this: that relationship known as marriage was and has been and always pictured the intent and the design for Jesus Christ to work in our life. There is a relationship that is established. There are vows that are given and I've got news for you, there are highs, there are lows, there are ups, there are downs, but even though there are struggles in the marriage, even though there are problems in the marriage, it does not void the vows of the marriage.

You know, one of the things I'm very proud of today is I anticipate just a slew of weddings in the near future in my life as far as officiating. One thing that I am so proud of and what we might call this generation of marriages and weddings is there is a return to what we call the traditional wedding vows. There's a return to that. We used to get all creative and fancy and such, but do you know what the beauty of the traditional wedding vows are? Till death do us part. Not until it's not convenient anymore or just got difficult or whatever it may be. That's important. That is why the enemy wants to wreck your marriage. If he can wreck your marriage, he wrecks the picture of Christ's love for the church. If he wrecks your marriage, then he wrecks the one picture we've got to show the

world the goodness and the grace and the relationship that we can have through Jesus Christ.

But back to grieving. If that is the case and that is the picture we have, bitterness, clamor, wrath, how does that happen because it does not happen overnight? Let me share with you the process by which we grieve the Holy Spirit using the illustration of the picture of marriage. I have the privilege of having couples all the time in my life, intersecting my life who are looking at, investigating or have already committed to get married and we go through that pre-marital conversation, discussions, etc. One of the things that I share with them, I can't make them do it, I can't mandate they do it, but I do highly encourage it, is I say that once you've been married about 12 or 18 months, I encourage them to go ahead and sign up for, enlist and commit and, you know, jump off the proverbial deep end into full-blown, biblical, Christian, marriage counseling right from the beginning. In other words, why wait for the problems to manifest, let's cut them off at the beginning.

Now, let me share with you two things that happens when somebody participates in what I've just shared with you and my wife went through the same thing some years ago. The moment you enter into that marriage counseling, the honeymoon is over. It's over because you discover things you didn't know. You find out things you didn't want to find out and all of a sudden things are verbalized that you had no idea about and that's why it's so critical. You see, when it comes to our earthly marriage, let me tell you what we're bad about: sweeping things under the rug. Ladies, I've got news for you, he's not gonna change. Guys, I've got news for you, she's not gonna change. But what do we say? "Oh, it's early in the relationship. It's going to be fine." You think it's fine now, you're not going to think it's fine in 10 years. It's not that big a deal today, it's going to be in 10 years. In fact, the picture, the illustration that I give to those couples that I encourage goes a little something like this. I say I want you to imagine that as you walk through your relationship with each other, you're just sweeping things under the rug. He'll change. She'll change. It's not that big a deal. It's not a big issue. I say, but what happens is eventually that rug begins to get piled up with the dirt of life and the illustration I usually gives goes a little something like this. I say, and I'm typically talking to the wife or the soon-to-be bride, I say I want you to imagine in a certain amount of time that you've got a baby on your hip, you've got a toddler on your side, you're running late, there's a problem in life, you run across the living room, you trip over the proverbial rug of life. I said both babies, both children are upset, they're crying. You've got tears in your eyes and you're upset. You're angry. I said when you look at that rug, is it just the last problem that caused the fall? No. Do you know what you see? You see all of it.

Do you know what happens when marriages are in distress? Do you know what happens when marriages are on the brink? I'm going to tell you what happens: they're in a state of grieving. Why? Because grieving doesn't happen overnight. Grieving is an emotional response of despair and disdain that builds up over days and weeks and months and years and guess what, ladies? When he left the socks out the first time, it may have quenched the love, but eight years later it grieves it because there's no change and it just keeps building.

That, my friends, is the story, that is the picture of our relationship with the Lord. We all have times where we quench the Spirit. We all have times where the Lord says go and we decide to stay. We all have times where the Lord says no and we say go. The question is do we continue in that stream of thought and behavior or do we repent and "get our act together"? I know so far it's pretty much been bad news but here comes the good news. What we know as grieving the Holy Spirit, what we know as getting into that place where there's this pile of mess in our spiritual lives, it can be prevented.

I want to encourage you to go to Acts 6 and I want you to see a passage of Scripture where the church of Jesus Christ does not allow the grieving of the Holy Spirit. Now remember in chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira come and they had quenched the Spirit in their life but it did not translate into the church body as a whole's life. Here in chapter 6, the church of Jesus Christ, they have an option, they have a choice: they can either continue from what they saw in Acts 4 which was basically momentum and revival, or they can observe what Ananias and Sapphira did and say, "You know, that might not be such a bad idea to feed my flesh rather than my soul."

Chapter 6 in the book of Acts, it says,

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. 8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. [Listen to verse 10] 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

So how do we prevent grieving the Holy Spirit? The first thing that we see in Acts 6 that the body of Christ came together around is they had their priorities in order. Now let me qualify what I'm about to say. In Matthew 6, Jesus made this statement in verse 33, he said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you." Now all of those things in Matthew 6 were food, shelter, clothing and material needs of life.

Jesus wasn't saying it's bad to have those things or to possess those things, he said, "Let's just make sure that we put our desire for them in the proper order."

Now, here in Acts 6 there is a group of women, there is a group in the body of Christ who are struggling. Their husbands are deceased, most likely based on the context. They didn't have any children or particularly sons that could assist them in what the Bible calls the daily ministrations or the daily needs. These individuals needed food, they needed shelter and they needed clothing and yet the apostles said, "It's more important to focus on the word of God than even those things." Now before you get all upset, hear me very clearly: this was not a decision between good and evil, this was a decision between better and best. And hear me clearly this morning: do we, the body of Christ in the example of Acts 6, should we provide physical needs? Absolutely. Should we provide shelter? Yes. Clothing? Yes. Food? Yes. Should we support physical needs of those who are struggling and in need? You've got it, but not in replacement of or in extent of the word of God.

What good does it do to clothe and feed somebody and send them to hell? It doesn't do any good at all. In fact, Jesus gave two examples. He said it's better to go to heaven with one arm than hell with two. He said it is better to lose the things of this world than to lose your soul. And I think one of the reasons that as individuals and even as the body of Christ we fall into grieving the Holy Spirit, is we so desire and rightly so want to meet physical needs, we forget that clothing people and sheltering people and feeding people is not the end of itself, it is the means by which the Gospel and the message of Jesus Christ will then be greatly received by them who were struggling. It's not good and evil, it's better and best and the Holy Spirit was fervent because as they met physical needs, they made sure to meet the most important need. Folks, more than clothing, more than food, more than shelter, we need the grace of Jesus Christ in our lives.

They had priorities but it also came down to positions. Now this is one of those passages in the Bible we rarely read unless we're at a deacon ordination which happens once a year and usually it's at night, or maybe something where we're dealing with kind of the make-up or the structure of a local church, and when we come to this place where the deacons are called and they are put in the position of doing what they're doing, we typically make a statement that I've probably made myself, you've probably been excited about, but if you look at it, it really doesn't work with Acts 6. How many times have you heard this statement: God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called? Do you know why we use that statement? It's an excuse for talented and gifted people to be lazy. That's what it is.

We say, "Well, if I'm gifted and I've got all kinds of talents, God's not going to call me. He is going to call you guys who cannot do anything else." That's not what you see in Acts 6. They actually give us the names. They give us names of people who were full of the Holy Spirit, exhibiting power. These were guys that everybody knew. In fact, dare I say this: I do believe that God does equip the called. In other words, when God calls you to be his hands, his feet, whatever that looks like, I do believe he supernaturally through his Holy Spirit, he works in and through you and calls you, but what would it look like in the body of Christ if those who had in the secular perspective the greatest gifts, talents, and abilities, actually yielded them to the work of the Holy Spirit in their life rather than

relegating them to everybody and anybody else? What you see in the early church is those whom everybody knew their name, they put the Lord first and their business second. They put the Lord first, their reputation second. They put the Lord first and their – listen – their time second.

So when we talk about not grieving the Holy Spirit, we've got to get our priorities in line but we've also got to get our position in line. Maybe just maybe the gifts, the talents, the abilities, the education, the resources the Lord gave you is not as an excuse not to but maybe all the more reason to do so. So it is preventable but there are some promises. There are some promises that come. What happens if we're on the right side of this discussion? What happens when we yield to the Holy Spirit? What happens when we do consistently quench the Spirit of God?

Well, the first promise I can give you is found in verse 9. There is going to be a struggle. It says, "there arose certain of the synagogue, they came and they opposed Stephen." Let me tell you something that makes me real nervous, it makes me real nervous when people who claim to be believers in Jesus Christ say, "Everything's fine. There are no problems." Either A, you're a liar, or B, you're walking hand-in-hand with the devil because one guy told me years ago, he said if you don't wake up every day and run into the devil face-to-face, you might be headed the same direction he is.

There was a struggle. Now I know what you're thinking. Man, they're full of the Holy Spirit. They're working powers, miracles. This should be easy. Do you see how many people came against them? There was a struggle but notice what it says, that nobody was able to resist them. It reminds me of Joshua 1. Remember the Israelites have come out Egypt after 400 years, they've come out of the wilderness after 40 years, Moses their leader is dead, Joshua his apprentice, the number two guy is going to lead them into the Jordan. As they're going across the Jordan River, as they're making this process, the spies had come back years ago and said, "They're bigger than we are. They're stronger than we are. They're mightier than we are. They're more numerous than we are." Do you know what the Lord tells him to tell the people in Joshua 1? He says, "Make sure that you keep the book of the law," that's in our terminology the Bible, the word of God, just like they did in Acts 6, "Make sure that it never takes second seat. Make sure it never takes third. It always should have the primacy and as long as you do so, nobody will resist you. Every place you put your foot will prosper." Notice here in Acts 6 it says that nobody could resist them. You see, that's the promise. When we don't grieve the Holy Spirit, when we're faithful to his leading in our lives, the struggle will be there but the "spiritual success" will follow.

But there's a second promise that I want to close on today. Look in verse 10, "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke." Here's the promise out of Acts 6 about not grieving the Holy Spirit that I want you to hold onto today. Something happens in Acts 6 for the very first time in what we know as the history of the church of Jesus Christ. There is a word used, there is a phrase used that had not been used up until this point. I want you to go back to verse 1 of chapter 6. Now remember our context here: the Lord's been moving and working for four chapters, chapter 5 there is the opportunity

to quench the Holy Spirit, they say no to that, they push forward. Verse 1, "in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied." Go over to verse 7, "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied." It's the first time we see a reference to believers in Jesus Christ, to disciples multiplying rather than simply being added. You do not have to be a mathematician to realize the power of multiplication. Any type of analogy you use over time, consistent multiplication always give you a greater "number" than consistent addition.

Now I want to kind of transition using Acts 6, using what we see in the book of Acts and apply it to our lives today. At the end of chapter 4, there were 5,000 people a day coming to know Jesus Christ as a believer and being a part of the body of Christ. That's pretty significant and I know, I know that we live on a planet today that has 7.3+ billion people and I realize the church of Jesus Christ is bigger than what we have in Acts 6 but I just want you to imagine an analogy not only for today but also for then. What would it look like if we added 5,000 people a day to believers in Jesus Christ, what would happen in our world? It would take 15,000 years to reach the world. 15,000. Do the math. Add it up. It takes a long time. We're 2,000 years into what we know as the history of the church and we've still got 13,000 to go and we're not making good progress, folks. You see, in Acts 6 when they decided not to grieve the Holy Spirit all of a sudden supernaturally addition went to multiplication.

Let me use the same analogy with multiplication. Let's just imagine for the sake of argument that myself, you, anybody else, took one individual aside and poured the word of God into them for one year, and after one year each of you poured into one other person, and after that second year each of you poured into one other person. In other words, it never became greater than an audience of one. The first year there would be two, the second year there would be four, the third year there would be eight, etc. It's multiplying, correct? 7.3 billion people would only take 34 years to reach. 34. And I know what some of you are thinking, "Well, why haven't we done it yet?" Because it doesn't make headlines, it's not glamorous, it's not notches on the belt and you don't win a bunch of awards, prizes or trophies that you're going to throw away one day.

Did you know that based on that multiplication analogy that I just gave you, that we would not reach a third of the number of people who come to this church within the first ten years but after that, after 20 years, it would become a million people. Do you know what one of the problems is in terms of grieving the Holy Spirit? You know, I think we grieve the Holy Spirit when we settle on addition rather than striving for multiplication. Addition is easy, multiplication is tough, and the reason we don't multiply is because it requires a consistent faithfulness and obedience and a non-quenching and grieving of the Holy Spirit in our life.

Folks, grieving the Holy Spirit does not have to be your story and it does not have to be our story. 34 years you can turn the world upside down.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe you're here this morning and as we talked about grieving the Holy Spirit, quenching the Holy Spirit and all those

terms and phrases, maybe you're that person today maybe physically here on this campus, maybe on the other side of the cameras saying, "That's great but I don't even possess the Holy Spirit. I'm not even saved. I'm not even born-again. How do we start this relationship thing?" I've got good news for you this morning. You don't have to sign up and complete a bunch of classes, you don't have to take quizzes and tests and mark off boxes. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved and maybe that's you this morning, maybe today you've tried everything else and you've said, "I need a relationship with Jesus Christ." I would encourage you just to have a conversation with the Lord. I know technically we call it prayer. You don't have to have this conversation out loud, in fact you don't even have to say the same words I might say but maybe your conversation would go a little something like this. "God, today I finally want to fess up, I want to come clean, I'm the problem. I'm the problem. I'm the one who's messed up. I'm the one who's sinned. But I believe today that the only answer to my sin problem is Jesus Christ. God, today I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to pay the price for my sin on the cross and three days later, God, I believe he rose from the grave and because he rose and he took my sin, I can be forgiven and I can be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the problems in life but I do know that Jesus Christ is the answer to my sin problem. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe today you're that person who had that conversation with the Lord. We'd love to have a conversation with you. We'd love to just kind of hear how the Lord is moving and how he's been moving and how he desires to move in your life. Or maybe you're that person today, you had that conversation years ago, decades ago, and in light of today's message you realized the Holy Spirit is grieved. There is a consistent pattern of rebellion. It doesn't have to be that way. Get your priorities straight, get your position right and the promises will come.

Lord, as we come to this time in our service, thank you, I thank you that you haven't given up on us. Thank you that you haven't relegated us to a peripheral position in your universe but right now at the center of your will, the center of your focus, is our life and our heart and our relationship with you. Show us, O God, what needs to happen for us to be in that right relationship with you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I want to encourage you to stand with me as our team leads us. Whatever decision, I'll be right here at the front.