

# What It Really Means to 'Grieve the Holy Spirit'

In discussing the person of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul gave one of the clearest commands in Scripture when he wrote to the church in Ephesus. That command was: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you are sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30, MEV). Since the Holy Spirit is God, we should certainly want to give this command careful consideration and obedience.

What does it mean to "grieve the Holy Spirit"? The word "grieve" generally means to make someone sorrowful or to cause them sadness, grief or offense. That the Holy Spirit can be grieved points out in greater degree the reality that the Holy Spirit is a person and not just a power. So what is it that would cause the Holy Spirit to be stricken with sorrow or offense?

To help us understand Paul's concern, we should remember that "grief" is quite often thought of in connection with someone's death or a funeral. Family or friends often "grieve" over the loss or death of a loved one. Anyone who has experienced this kind of loss easily remembers the pain and weight of that sorrow. It isn't something that most would want anyone to endure, let alone the Holy Spirit of God.

That brings us back to the question of what exactly would cause the Holy Spirit to grieve or mourn. Our answer is found in the context of the bible and Paul's letter. Ephesians encourages the believer to actually believe and act on the wonderful truth and power of life in Christ. In Ephesians chapter 3, Paul prayed, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or imagine, according to the power that works in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,

forever and ever. Amen.”

Can you hear the hope and expectation in Paul’s words? Since the Spirit inspired these words, it makes sense that a key part of causing the Spirit grief would be anything that would cause a semblance of death instead of life. In other words, believers behaving as though they were separated from God or in fact behaving as the spiritually “dead.”

From a biblical perspective, it is fair to define “death” as a “separation.” For example, “spiritual death” is actually a separation spiritually from God, a severing of relationship with God. When Adam sinned, he and all mankind died.

Humanity didn’t cease to exist but had their relationship with God severed. Jesus came to restore that relationship and give us new “life” as a result of His work and sending the Holy Spirit to indwell believers, thus reconnecting that which was lost.

Now for a believer to talk or behave so as to be a fountain of anger, hate, malice, unbelief or anything that works to tear down God’s church or God’s children (Eph. 4:29-31) resembles “death” or separation from the way of God. This of course causes the Holy Spirit to be grieved and mourn. The Holy Spirit lives to enable us to reflect the Lord’s presence and facilitate the kingdom’s presence here on Earth. The Holy Spirit is working to bring glory to the Lord and if we, by our words or actions, work against the Holy Spirit then He is rightly offended and grieved. Believers can cause the Holy Spirit grief, sorrow, pain and offense.

But, instead of grief, we can give the Holy Spirit joy. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:10, 15-20: “... proving what is pleasing to the Lord ... See then that you walk carefully, not as fools, but as wise men, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not be drunk with wine, for that is

reckless living. But be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Give thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Don't live as a dead person, giving grief to the Holy Spirit, but live as a child of God, filled with the Spirit and giving pleasure and joy to Him.

*Reprinted with permission from Dustin Smith Ministries: The Lion's Roar. **Tom Trout**, with his wife Diana, has over 30 years of experience pastoring churches. They both serve local churches by traveling as a part of Dustin Smith Ministries, teaching and speaking all over the nation.*