

# *Fill Your Cup*

*By Lori Schaffer*

How full is your cup? We have all heard the saying, "Is your cup half empty or half full?" If you are an optimist, you would say your cup is half full. Pessimists will believe their cup is half empty. I have ALWAYS viewed my cup as half empty. I have even been known to say on numerous occasions that I don't even think I have a cup. I've always struggled with seeing the good in things but have no difficulty in seeing the bad. I am excellent at envisioning everything that can go wrong. My mind has always been this way. It's time for a change in my mind, my perspective, and my outlook on life.

Why have I always looked at the negative? I think it stems from the trauma I faced as a child. Some people know my story, others do not. Growing up, my home was filled with anger, abuse, fighting, and screaming. I lived in fear as a child. I could never have friends over and sleepovers were completely out of the question. My father was physically and mentally abusive to my mother. I witnessed this from a very young age. Someone who suffers from abuse has a very hard time breaking free. My father would not allow my mother to just leave him. I can still remember that day: November 15, 1985. My parents were having a huge fight. It already began in the morning before I got on the bus for school. When I came home, they were still fighting. My dad was drunk and had smashed everything. My mother was beaten. The floor was covered in broken glass. I was trying to help my mother, by distracting my father away from her. I screamed and cursed at my father, something I would never dare do. He immediately turned his attention to me and came after me. I tried to hide in my bedroom closet. Trying my best as a twelve-year old little girl to hold the sliding doors shut so he couldn't get me. My mother yelled, drawing his attention back to her, and I was able to escape out of the house. I ran about a quarter mile down the road to my grandparent's house for help. My grandfather called the police. My next memory is of me running back home. Darkness had set in. The driveway was filled with flashing lights from the emergency vehicles. Fear filled me. I remember crying uncontrollably. I was certain my mother was dead. I can still remember being outside, screaming, trying to get in, when a police officer held me back and told me my mom was okay. My mother chose to stand up that day, to protect herself and her children. She shot and killed my father in an effort to save her own life. The sense of relief I felt in that moment, when I found out he was gone, is indescribable. It was over! I know in my heart that if she didn't defend herself, she would have died that day. My mother was charged with 1st and 3rd degree murder. She spent a short time in prison before being released on bail. She stood trial, and to this day I can still remember testifying in that big courtroom. My mother was acquitted of all charges. She was the first woman in the state of Pennsylvania to be acquitted using the Battered Woman Syndrome defense. *(Please do not view my story as being insensitive. If anyone from my dad's side of the family is reading this, my intention is not to cause hurt. I understand a life was lost that day. A day I wish never happened. A day that forever changed me.)*

How does my story affect my cup? I guess, in my mind, bad things always happen, so I have always looked at what could be the next bad thing to happen to me. Boy, have I allowed the devil to use my story for his benefit. For nearly thirty-eight years, I have allowed the first twelve years of my life to shape my thinking. Well, I am changing that right now! Somehow, I completely overlooked all the “good” things that have happened in my life. I met my husband at the age of eighteen and first came to this church with him. I got saved and was baptized here on my twentieth birthday. God provided me with the family I never had growing up; a stable home, and two children who have parents that love each other and them. This right here is all God. I often think: “Wow, my children have no idea just how good they have it.” We will be celebrating our thirtieth wedding anniversary this year. God has blessed me immensely.

So why was my cup half empty? Here’s why... I wasn’t filling it. I knew God, but I wasn’t consistent in spending time with him. Let me repeat that: I wasn’t consistent with spending time with God. I served, I went to church on Sunday, I led ministries, and listened to praise music. Guess what? All these things are great, but if you aren’t digging into God’s word on a consistent, daily basis, your cup will dry out. Plus, think about how you pour out of your cup. Sometimes our cup can be empty because we just keep pouring out. You pour into your family, your children, and your work. There are so many things that require your attention. You need to be filling yourself back up. If we are not filling our cup with God’s goodness, how can we overflow with His joy? The number one thing you can do to fill your cup is to establish a daily time with God. This is the BEST thing you can do for yourself, for your life, for your peace of mind, and for your family. If you take the time to spend with Him, reading His Word, praying, journaling, everything else in your life will begin to fall into place. I know all the excuses you have. “I don’t have time in the morning.” “My schedule is too busy.” “I get up so early for work” and “I need to exercise.” “I don’t have time to read my Bible.” “I don’t even understand what it says.” “I hate reading.” “My kids require all my time.” Excuses, excuses. I had them all. You will never have time for God’s Word if you don’t make Him a priority. Nowadays, I will not even come down from my bedroom in the morning until I spend time in the Word. You wouldn’t dare leave your house without brushing your teeth or combing your hair. Well, you shouldn’t dare run off and start your day without spending some time with God. Since I committed to starting my mornings with God, I have not missed a day. And better yet, I now yearn for my time with the Lord. I look forward to studying His Word and hearing His voice. I spend time with Him now, not just in the morning, but throughout my entire day. You know what they say, practice makes perfect. It takes practice to develop a routine.

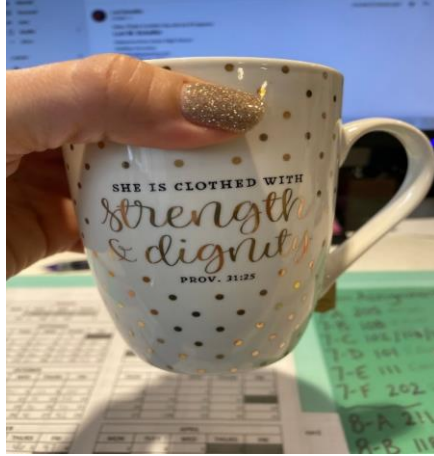
Now, back to my cup. It is no longer half empty and it is not half full; and yes, I do have a cup. Guess what happened? My cup is now overflowing. Doesn’t that sound amazing? Who doesn’t want their life to overflow with God’s goodness and joy. God did that! As I pour into his Word, He is pouring into me. I am no longer thinking of all the bad things that can happen. When a bad thought pops into my mind, I immediately rebuke it in Jesus’ name. God has changed me. I look to the future with anticipation of what God is going to do next. Philippians 4:8 says, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is

lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything, worthy of praise, think about these things.” It doesn’t mean to dwell on all the bad things in your life. The good far outweighs the bad, yet we tend to overlook it. The enemy has a way of doing this to us. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” God will transform you, as you dig into His word. Each day, pray for God to renew your mind. He will.

If you haven’t committed to a daily time with God, I challenge you today. In fact, I double-dog dare you. You need to fill your cup. American author, John C. Maxwell says, “You will never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret to success is found in your daily routine.” I encourage you to make yourself a designated area in your home specifically for spending time with God. For me, I have a nice comfy leather chair with an ottoman in my bedroom, with a reading lamp. All my tools are right next to me: my bible, journal, devotions, books I’m reading, pens, and highlighters. Think of this sort of like the coffee station you may have set up in your kitchen. You have your Keurig with a carousel of assorted coffee flavors and your best coffee cups. You can set up your station in a bedroom, dining room, office, or study. It needs to be a place where you can have some quiet time with the Lord. The kid’s playroom will not do. Make it cozy and comfortable. This is where you and God are going to get real!

Allow God’s word to fill you. He can transform your mind, your heart, and your life. God wants us to have an abundant life. Romans 15:13 says, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” I don’t know anyone who would say “no” to being filled with joy and peace and overflowing in hope. To overflow, think about that. God wants us to be overflowing. When we overflow, people will take notice. They will notice that there is something different about you. That overflow will lead to opportunities, opportunities you may have never thought possible. If you would have told me six months ago that I would be writing devotions, I would have said you were absolutely CRAZY. You know why, because six months ago I was empty; and today I am overflowing. Allow God to fill your cup. Take the step in obedience and see for yourself how He can pour in your life.

One final thought: all this talk about your cup, maybe treat yourself to a new coffee or teacup. One with a beautiful scripture verse on it and use it as a reminder that your cup needs to be filled. A friend gave me this beautiful cup for Christmas. Little did she know the impact this cup would have on me.



### **REFLECTION**

How is your cup? Are you filled, running on empty, or are you overflowing. Evaluate the time you spend with God. Is there room for improvement?

### **APPLICATION**

What steps can you take today to begin filling your cup? Make a commitment today to spend 15 minutes each morning with God. Commit to doing this for the next 30 days. At the end of the 30 days, ask yourself: "How is your cup now?"

### **VERSE TO REMEMBER**

*Romans 15:13*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*