

How to Rule Your Emotions

I know I'm not alone when I say that raising sons was easier than bringing up daughters. As the mother of two married sons, I now have six grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Six of these are girls, and I love every one of them. Although I don't mean to imply that daughters are problems and sons are not, daughters do tend to come with emotional drama that sons do not. It seems to be the way God wired us as women.

Truth be told, I have struggled to eliminate emotional drama from my own life. As a Christian, I have learned how to resist the devil, bind the devil and cast out the devil. But as a human being, emotions are part of our triune makeup—body, soul and spirit. There have been days when I wished I could resist, bind and cast out my emotions, but God created me to be emotional, and I have had to learn how to be emotional in a godly way.

Feeling our Way to Forbidden Fruit

Emotions have a voice that we call “feeling.” The voice of feeling is very powerful in our lives. Most of us know how we feel. We make decisions motivated by feeling. Relationships are formed or broken because of feeling. Even in our spiritual lives we want to feel God's presence. We tend to judge His anointing by our feelings. God made us capable of being emotional by giving us feelings, and He never wants us to become hardened, insensitive or beyond feeling. But He never intended that feelings would dominate our character.

Sin came into this world because a woman named Eve was motivated and dominated by emotions. Eve ate the forbidden fruit because she believed it was “good for food ... pleasing to the eyes and a tree desirable to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6). Seeking what was good, pleasant and desired was what led Eve to disobedience. She wasn't hungry when she ate. If she were

hungry, she could have eaten of any other tree in the Garden of Eden. Eve ate emotionally, but her hunger was not satisfied by eating. Instead, she satisfied her emotions. Emotional drama in the first woman on Earth opened the door to emotional drama in us all.

Emotions demand satisfaction. Anger wants to be satisfied. Hurt wants to be satisfied. Love wants to be satisfied. If we do not govern ourselves, we live in the drama of emotions gone bad. It is not enough to be born-again Christians whose emotions have not been touched by God. God has to do a work in us called "transformation." Emotions have to be renewed so that hate becomes love, cursing becomes blessing, resentment becomes forgiveness, anger becomes peace, and heaviness becomes praise. Transformation releases us from the drama and chaos that our emotions can cause.

If we are to be freed from the drama of our emotions, we must be led by the Holy Spirit. Emotions cannot be our motivators in life. When we are motivated by our emotions, we aim for a "feel good" mentality. Eve teaches us that the feel good mentality is a bad motivator. Rather, our lives must be motivated by the Holy Spirit, and His motivation is not merely to produce good feelings. Rather, His end is to produce obedience. Obedience will always trump emotion, and obedience will always satisfy in ways that emotions never can.

Facing crucifixion, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He felt strong emotions. "And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:44). So powerful were these emotions that He prayed the cup of crucifixion might pass, but in Gethsemane, Jesus broke the tyranny of emotions by His obedience to the will of His Father. Obedience overcomes emotions.

Not only can emotions be governed by obedience, but they will obey faith. Emotions will do what we, in faith, command them

to do. King David wrote about emotions in Psalm 103:1: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." David commanded his soul, the seat of emotions, and all that was in him to bless the Lord. He believed his soul and all that was in him would do as he commanded. Emotions can be transformed from drama to blessing.

The apostle Paul believed that bad emotions can be put off, and good emotions can be put on. He wrote: "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, outbursts, and blasphemies, with all malice, be taken away from you" (Eph. 4:31). He also wrote: "So embrace ... a spirit of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering. Bear with one another and forgive one another. ... Embrace love. ... Let the peace of God, to which also you are called in one body, rule in your hearts" (Col. 3:12-15). It is clear that emotions can be governed and will respond to God's power and faith.

Living as a Closet Drama Queen

I have to add my own testimony to this truth about emotions. As a child, I developed a hot temper and an angry attitude. My father was hot-tempered and angry, and I followed in his footsteps. I liked the emotional drama of a good fight, saying what I thought and erupting when people and God did not do as I liked. As I grew up, it was apparent people did not enjoy emotional drama as much as I did. So I learned to manage my temper, only erupting behind closed doors in my home and with my husband. Most people thought me sweet and charming, and my husband did too—as long as my temper was quiet. When my temper exploded, my husband would call me "Sammy June," recalling my father whose name was Sam. When he did this, I became even angrier. While I was not a "drama queen" in public, I was one behind the doors of my home. I was born again, Spirit filled and in full-time ministry but was still a "closet drama queen."

One day in prayer God spoke to me that "Sammy June" had to be

put off. I could no longer hide her in my closet. I had to put on the true character of God so I would be an authentic Christian who lived what I preached. Truth be told, I wasn't sure this was possible. Temper had been in my life so long it had become part of my personality. But I did know what God told me to do I could do, so I obeyed and began putting off the bad and putting on the good. Obedience trumped bad temper. Spirit was greater than flesh. It was slow, sometimes hard, but I was freed from emotional drama and sin. Through the Holy Spirit and His power, godly character overcame emotional chaos in my life.

About three years after I buried "Sammy June," my husband and I were having dinner with a pastor and his wife in whose church we had ministered. The pastor encouraged us to end our meal by dividing a piece of coconut cream pie. He said this restaurant was world famous for its coconut cream pie. The waitress brought a large piece of pie, placing it between my husband and me. My first bite convinced me that it was true—this pie was world famous. The pastor asked me a couple of questions about our family, which I answered. As I turned to take my second bite of pie, I saw the last bite disappearing into my husband's mouth. He had eaten the entire slice in less than two minutes. As soon as I saw the pie disappearing, I felt "Sammy June" rising from her grave. I was furious my husband had eaten my pie, and I opened my mouth to explode—until I remembered the pastor and wife sitting across from us. I knew they would not like the drama of Sammy June and probably would not let her preach in their church, so I put her off in that moment and put on the authentic June. I did not let temper rule my life. My husband declares this is the greatest demonstration of Holy Spirit power he has ever witnessed. You know what? I think he may be right!

Can emotions be handled with victory? Will emotions do what we tell them to do? Can emotions be transformed? Can godly character replace emotional chaos? King David wrote that it

can. The apostle Paul says it can. I know that godly character can prevail over out-of-control emotions, and my husband likes life a lot better since no drama queen lives in our home.

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