

Your Real Worst Enemy Is Closer Than You Think

“Give me the reins.” I’ll always remember when the Holy Spirit spoke those four words to my heart. It was clear He wasn’t asking for one “rein” he wanted all my “reins.”

Of course, I immediately thought of a horse’s reins. The rider uses the reins as a restraining influence to control the animal with his guiding power. That example coupled with Scripture offered me insight into what the Holy Spirit meant—and delivered me into a new level of freedom in Christ.

When David invited Jehovah to, “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Ps. 26:2 KJV), he was speaking of his emotions. The Hebrew word translated *reins* in this verse means “seat of emotion and affection.”

David, the man who asked one thing from the Lord—to dwell in His house all the days of his life and to gaze on His beauty and seek Him in His temple (see Ps. 27:4)—was confident in who he was in God. Despite the warfare, despite the betrayal, despite the rejection—despite it all—David submitted his emotions to God.

When Emotion Is Our God

We are all emotional beings. God gave us emotions—and God Himself has emotions. Think about it for a minute. Sometimes we feel joyful; sometimes we grieve. Sometimes we feel bold; sometimes intimidated. Sometimes we feel triumphant; sometimes completely and utterly physically and emotionally exhausted.

Our emotions can be a great motivator at times and a great enemy at other times. In fact, Watchman Nee, author of books like *Spiritual Discernment*, *Secrets to Spiritual Power* and *Let Us Pray*, once said that emotions are the believer’s number one

enemy—not the devil, but our emotions. That’s why we need to give Him our reins.

If we give God the reins of our heart, we’ll find stability—but we have to give Him all the reins or we are in danger of pulling in the wrong direction as we run our races. If we pick and choose which emotions we will submit to God and which ones we’ll allow free reign in our souls, we’ll wind up unstable—and wound up. We’ll find ourselves holding on tight as the emotional roller coaster turns us upside down and leaves us spinning in circles.

We need to align our emotions to the Word of God. Yes, I know. That’s easier said than done. But if David did it so can we. It’s not a matter of putting on a soldier face and keeping a stiff upper lip. David poured out his emotions to God—the anger, the disappointments, the hurt, the confusion—but he didn’t wallow in those emotions. He submitted them to the one who could stabilize his soul.

Give God the Reins

Along with emotions, God gave us a free will—and it takes an act of our will to consistently submit our emotions to God. Job had to submit his emotions to God in the midst of a trial that caused his wife to encourage him to curse God and die. Job had to decide to trust God despite facing a trial like few of us will ever see “though my reins be consumed within me” (see Job 19:27).

God tries the hearts and reins (see Ps. 7:9) not because He doesn’t know how mature we are but so that we can see how mature we are—or aren’t. God knows when we’re saying the right things out of our mouths but our hearts are actually far from him (see Jer. 12:2). God knows when we’re suppressing emotions that lead to resentment, unforgiveness and bitterness. He wants us to give Him the reins.

Yes, there is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to

mourn and a time to dance, a time to love and a time to hate, as Solomon shares in Ecclesiastes 3. But it's *always* time to rejoice in the Lord—not in our circumstances but in the Lord. I believe choosing to rejoice in Him as an act of our will is one of the most strategic ways to submit our emotions to Him—to give Him the reins of our hearts.

A soulish life is dangerous, but if we give God the reins of our heart we will mature and we can use our emotions to glorify Him rather than allowing them to lead us away from our purpose in Him. David put it this way, “I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Ps. 16:7-8, KJV). Amen.

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