

# THE HUMAN HEART—**Broken Spirit**

*“A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.” (15:13)*

**INTRODUCTION**—Most people are motivated—either for good or bad—more from their emotions than their intellect—not because emotion is **stronger** than intellect, but because such motivation is the **easier** of the two. Emotional motivation is not necessarily a good thing (cf. 28:26).

The complexities of life are so great and the problems so heavy that the more we face them, the more ‘mixed-up’ we become. Therefore, it is **imperative** to keep our hearts and emotions under control rather than being ruled by them (4:23).

## I. A BROKEN SPIRIT

- A. People Can Become Exasperated and Give Up (15:13; 17:22; cf. Colossians 3:21). The heart is overly sorrowful and the spirit broken. If a person’s spirit (will, desire, and vitality) is broken, what positive things is he capable of doing?
  - 1. He cannot help himself (18:14).
  - 2. Others cannot help him (18:14).
    - a. Difficult to share in (14:10,13). Because a man’s most inward feelings are known only to himself and God, and sometimes he camouflages those feelings.
    - b. Difficult to cheer up (25:20). Attempts to help often make things worse.

## II. WHAT CAN BREAK ONE’S SPIRIT?

- A. Fear (29:25; 28:1). Fear cripples our confidence, enthusiasm, and optimism. Our own phobias (fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of inadequacy, etc.) become stronger than our fear of God (cf. 3:21,24-26). A guilty conscience sometimes causes fear (28:1). It can result in great emotional distress, paranoia, and produce one’s own fantasy world.
- B. Anxiety (12:25). Constant fretfulness produces a depressing anxiety that eats away at the spirit and consumes it (cf. Psalm 37:1-11). Worries and troubles weigh us down until they break us (cf. Matthew 6:25-34; 1 Peter 5:7).
- C. Depression (12:25; 15:15). Depression (which is often self-inflicted, then worsened by neglecting responsibilities, resentment, self-pity, etc.) is a downward spiral that ultimately causes a person to break his own spirit (15:13).

## III. PUTTING THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER AGAIN

- A. Trust in God (16:3; 29:25; 23:26; 28:26).
- B. Wisdom (3:21-26).
- C. Hope, Faith, and Love (13:12,19).
- D. Positive Mental Outlook (14:30; 15:15,30; 17:22).
- E. Talk and Listen to Friends (27:9). Don’t just make it a ‘pity party’.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- 1) *What do we mean when talking about a “broken spirit”?*
- 2) *What kinds of things can break one’s spirit?*
- 3) *What things will help cast out fear (1 John 4:17-18; Matthew 8:26)?*
- 4) *“The fear of God is the one fear that removes all others”. True or false? Why?*
- 5) *In what ways are love and fear mutually opposed (cf. 1 John 4:17-18)?*
- 6) *How can anxiety wear us down?*
- 7) *How does Cain effectively illustrate the downward spiral of depression (Genesis 4:1-15)? Show how his actions degenerated from his first to his last.*
- 8) *Do the sorrows of the mind contribute to the sickliness of the body (17:22)?*
- 9) *Does this kind of person have very many ‘good days’ (15:15)?*
- 10) *Why don’t others always fully understand our problems (14:10)? Are they, therefore, incapable of helping us (27:9)?*
- 11) *How difficult is it to heal the bruised spirit (18:14; 25:20)? Who can heal **your** crushed spirit (cf. Matthew 12:18-21)?*