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I Rode a Runaway Horse

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I was eight years old and riding a quarter horse across some land my family owned outside of Roswell, New Mexico. As I headed the horse away from the stables he repeatedly resisted my lead and tried to reverse direction. After we had gone a couple hundred yards he suddenly turned toward the stables and darted away at full speed. I tugged on the reins to control him. Nothing worked. I felt as helpless as a fly on his tail trying to control him with its antennas. Finally, I gave up and held on for my life as we raced toward the one thing he wanted . . . food.

The Chariot of My Life

Of course, a skilled rider would have maintained control. As I think about that experience it reminds me of the times the horses that pull the chariot of my life have run away, out of control, pulling me with them. The good news is it's possible to rein in run-away emotions and thoughts by imagining yourself driving a chariot with Jesus at your side. As a negative emotion darts off like a runaway horse, rein it in by asking Jesus, who stands at your side, to wrap his hands around yours, infusing you with his strength.

Expose the Lie

You may discover this exercise doesn't immediately help. That's because you must strip the emotion of its power by exposing the lie that feeds it. You do this by prayerfully asking the Holy Spirit, *what thought triggered this emotion?* I've found with fear, the triggering thought is often a lie.

These toxic lies cause the brain to signal the release of chemicals that produce negative and destructive emotions. By destructive, I mean when excessive and out of control they poison you and produce depression, anxiety, loss of appetite, loss of sleep, impotency, loss of motivation and suicidal thoughts.

Every emotion is based on a thought. That thought is either true or false. Once you identify the lie you've only got seconds to dispel it. If you do, it will vanish. So will the accompanying toxic emotions it's feeding. Did you catch that last sentence? When we stop toxic thinking by exposing the lies they tell, the toxic emotions also disappear.

A Second Question

But you must ask a second question: *What purpose is this thought serving?* Eight years ago, bound by fear, I imagined the worst possible outcome to prepare for the inevitable. I dragged tomorrow's clouds into the present to prepare for a storm that never appeared.

After I identified the purpose the lying thoughts served, I knew such thinking didn't prepare me for tomorrow's disaster. Indeed, it depressed me, fogged my thinking, and robbed me, and those around me, of the Lord's joy and confidence. Once I realized the thoughts that fed my fear were lies and the purpose they served was bogus, I

determined in the Lord, not to think them. The relief I felt from fear was immediate. Once I sopped the toxic thinking, the toxic emotions faded.

This way of thinking has changed my life and triggered a spiritual revival that continues to this day.

A Review of the Three Steps

First, when you feel a negative emotion running away with you, view yourself in a chariot holding the reins of the horses with Jesus at your side, his hands wrapped around yours. In his power, rein in your fear, or other negative emotions.

Second, ask yourself what thought triggered the emotion and determine if the thought is a lie or the truth. If it's a lie, reject it immediately and don't let it settle in your mind.

Third, ask what purpose the thought serves. If its purpose is based on a lie, reject it too.

What If It Does Work?

About now you may be thinking, *what if this doesn't work?* I think a more important question would be, *what if it does work*? What if Christ can deliver you from toxic emotions and thoughts so you'll experience his abundant life?

I realize this will take effort on your part, but it will be worth it. Jesus promised, "I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly." This life is there for those who will take it.