

Freedom From the Deep Hurts of Rejection

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Rejection is a very common problem. In fact, nearly everyone has suffered rejection at one time or another during their 'growing up' years from family, friends or authority figures at school. Some have even felt rejected by God. God, of course, does not reject anyone, but that doesn't keep some from feeling' rejected by God. In fact, Christ Himself felt rejected by God when He cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Rejection means to deny someone acceptance, care, or love. The word 'rejection' comes from the old Latin word 'rajacere' which means 'to throw back.' Imagine a fisherman going through a big haul of fish picking out the best and tossing the rest. He's rejecting the bad fish. That's what the word 'rajacere' literally means: to deny or toss aside acceptance or care. Let's consider a verse in the Psalms that shows us how rejection works in a person's soul: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree." (Psalm 37:35)

This verse describes what believers unfortunately too often experience: a spiritual walk overcome with some wicked thing that's spreading, rooting and enveloping their life. But the promise of the very next verse is: "Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." (Psalm 37:36)

God Gives Serious Freedom

Such is the power of the Holy Spirit to set people free! However, most settle for so much less. The idea that you can be permanently delivered from rejection is totally foreign to many, most of whom cope with their rejection using the latest pop-psychology solution. However, rarely does anyone find real freedom that way. Total deliverance comes only in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, this freedom is described earlier in the same Psalm: "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." (Psalm 37:10)

Imagine coming to the place where you can't even remember how you were in bondage, and find it hard to recall the areas of hurt in your life. Now that's deliverance! The problem is, so many today have believed a lie. In many ways, the church has embraced the world's solutions for the problems and struggles of the saints. One of the primary reasons for this is that so many Christian leaders have, for whatever reasons, rejected the 'hidden third' of Christ's ministry – the ministry of casting out evil spirits. It's the silent, never-mentioned part of what He did.

Why is that? Primarily, it's due to an over-reaction. In the past few decades, many different ministries have gone overboard in the ministry of deliverance in teaching that every problem is the result of a demonic activity. In so doing they have (often unintentionally) de-emphasized the responsibilities of an individual's personal choices.

Unfortunately, when one over-reacts to such imbalanced teaching, there's often a tendency to go too far the other way. By ignoring or de-emphasizing the legitimacy of the ministry of deliverance from evil spirits, many ministries today have become guilty of ignoring what's true because of what's over-stated. In other words, they have "thrown the baby out with the bath water."

Leaves, Branches or Roots

Jesus promises to set the captives free, and open the prison doors to those who are bound. This is particularly true for those who suffer from rejection, which is a root problem with crippling and devastating results.

Consider for a moment a tree. On every tree there are parts you can see and parts that you can't see. You can see the branches and the leaves. But you can't see the roots. In fact, you'd need 'x-ray eyes' to see the root structure of a tree. Now, believe it or not, there is a way to see the root structure of hurts,

wounds, and rejections in a person's life — through 'discernment.' To 'discern' means to 'see through.' It takes discernment to see that the root problem in many lives is not what you see, but what you don't see.

Consider the different things believers often struggle with: gossip, judgmentalism, fears and anxieties, lusts, addictive behavior; etc. But these things are really only LEAVES. Then there's pride, insecurity, anger, self-pity, unbelief and bitterness. These are like the BRANCHES — more strongly entrenched in the personality than the others, yet still not the 'roots.' All of these areas are really 'soulish' problems. And, unfortunately, many believers tend to focus much of their time and energy trying to find victory over these repetitive and compulsive areas.

However, the real problems are down at the ROOT level — things like rejection, buried hurts, hidden wounds, and generational curses and sins. True and lasting freedom from the 'leaves' and 'branches' comes only when you discover and really begin to deal with the 'roots.'

In Mark 11:21 we're told that when Jesus cursed the fig tree 'down to the roots,' the whole tree withered away. So it is with you. The Lord really doesn't want you to spend years and years struggling with leaves and branches that grow right back. He wants to set you free from that area of bondage 'right down to the roots!'

Have you ever run a lawnmower over crab grass? What happens the following week? It comes back up, right? Then, you have to do it again. There is however a better way to get rid of those pesky weeds. It may take more time at first, but later, your crab grass problem will be over. What should you do? Just get down on your hands and knees and pull those weeds up from the roots.

That's exactly what the Holy Spirit wants to do in your life. He wants to go deep to root out the rejection, buried hurts and generational sins. Then those tormenting familiar spirits that are attached to the roots will be forever silenced in your mind. That's how a believer comes into the 'peace that passes all understanding.'

Rejection Comes Early in Life

Rejection often comes in at an early age. It can enter a person's life in various ways at different stages of their development. Let's consider some examples:

Rejection in the womb: A woman finds out she's pregnant. Perhaps the first thing she says is, "Oh no! That's the last thing I wanted now!" So, she begins to resent the little one in her womb. Did you know that her bitterness can adversely affect the child, particularly later in life? Unfortunately, our culture today sees abortion as an acceptable solution to this woman's dilemma. Perhaps in the years to come there won't be as much rejection-in-the-womb because, tragically, many babies will never have even had the chance to be born.

Wrong-sex rejection: "Oh my God, it's a boy!" a couple might say, "We wanted a girl!" If not dealt with, such feelings can bring much rejection to the child through unspoken attitudes and actions. One of the worst things to tell a child is that you wished they had been the opposite sex. Remember, God never makes mistakes!

First-born rejection: The first born child almost always receives much attention from the parents. He or she becomes accustomed to being the center of mom and dad's world. So, when the second born comes along, what happens? Because they've been eclipsed by another, the first born often develops a deep sense of rejection. This is why parents must go to great lengths to avoid any favoritism when a new baby arrives. Look at Cain and Abel. There was resentment in Cain (the first born) against Abel (the second born). What did he do? Ultimately, he murdered his brother. Among other things, it's possible that a first-born rejection contributed to his sense of desolation and rejection.

Child abuse: Child abuse ranges from the most severe (physical violence or perverted, sexual abuse) to the tendency to administer needed correction with rejection. The latter being the most common type of abuse. When a parent corrects with anger, it invariably backfires. The child will think that correction is equivalent to rejection. As a result, they'll spend a lifetime resenting authority.

In addition, they may never develop a healthy relationship with God. They'll think He's rejecting them when adverse situations arise. Why? Because they never understood that corrections are really the outworking of love.

Neglect or abandonment: Over the years I've found, with few exceptions, that men who struggle with homosexuality had an absent father either emotionally or physically during their growing-up years. Either dad was there but ignored them, or he wasn't there at all. As a result, they identified emotionally too much with their mother, thus opening themselves to perversion.

Opposite-sex rejection: This usually happens at puberty. A child is doing fine and then "whamo!" he hits puberty! He or she suddenly discovers that those playmates are the opposite sex! They become self-conscious and awkward because of all the body changes. In all my life, I think I've only met a handful of people who didn't have a rough time at this stage of their life. Without loving, understanding authorities, a child can develop serious tendencies of self-rejection during this time.

How People Cope With Rejection

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity. But a wounded spirit, who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14)

People are generally motivated to do what they do because of the deep and hidden hurts in their lives. Choices are often made primarily to avoid further hurt and pain, and to find ways and means to cope with the pain they already have. When you understand this, then the reasons people do certain things begin to make sense. Because rejection hurts, people will often go to extreme lengths to avoid the possibilities of further rejection.

Over the years I've noticed that people tend to cope with rejection in one of two ways: inwardly or outwardly. Let me explain. Those who respond 'INWARDLY' to the hurts of rejection in their lives tend to live behind walls and masks, hiding from others and themselves. Since they don't know how to just 'be themselves,' they're always trying to be what others want them to be. Having been hurt and rejected in the early, formidable years, they tend to live life behind facades and fronts, going to great lengths to hide their true feelings.

Inevitably, such people will build within themselves a rigid set of codes to live by, resulting in a legalistic personality. These types of folks are not hard to spot. When threatened in any way, they tend to hide and withdraw within themselves like a turtle. Such personality types are often hard to approach, tough to get to know, quite stiff in their demeanor, and are generally 'untouchable.'

On the other hand, those who respond 'OUTWARDLY' to the hurts of rejection tend to live life with a defiant or even a rebellious type attitude. They tend to have angry or manipulative type personalities. In effect, they're daring anybody to reject them. These types of folks are generally easier to get along with than the others, as long as you don't threaten their turf. Interestingly, underneath, these two personality types are fairly similar. In both cases, the root problem underlying their responses to the things of life is the same: rejection and hurt.

Rejection Can Make You Sick

"A merry heart does good like a medicine. But a broken spirit dries the bones." (Prov 17:22)

Did you know that rejection can affect you physically? It can dry up your bones. Generally, it's the 'internalizers' that tend to get sick from their rejection. Why is that? It's because rejection often produces anger. And you have to do something with your anger. If you bury it inside, it'll find a way to the surface. If you live in denial concerning your anger, then you'll be resentful and bitter. These attitudes can bring physical problems.

I've often seen people healed on the spot when they forgave those that had hurt them, and when they renounced the bitterness and resentment in their heart. It's amazing how quickly the Holy Spirit will heal and bring life to the dried bones. Many sicknesses and physical maladies tend to be rooted in rejection and

bitterness: skin problems, headaches, allergies, neck or back aches, stiffness of joints, arthritis, pains, stress, nervousness, and various diseases.

I once knew a sweet lady back in the mid 1970's. She was an 'internalizer' who stuffed the rejections and hurts of her past. She had had an abusive husband, whom she divorced. Interestingly, her husband's abuse was similar to her father's. Often, a woman who grows up under abuse and rejection tends to marry a man with similar traits, repeating the pattern. Why is that?

Well, when all you've known is mistreatment from those around you, it's not surprising that you'll gravitate to that which is most familiar. I lost contact with her, but in the early 1980's I saw her again. At that time, she was crippled by arthritis. She was in agony. She would take a handful of aspirins every morning just to move. Finally, she died.

Sadly, it was then that I was beginning to understand these things about rejection, forgiveness and healing. I remember thinking, "Lord, if I'd only known!" Her illness was plainly the result of her internalized hurt and rejection. In the end, it all became so twisted in her mind that she blamed everything on herself, even the rejection and abuse. Though she's with the Lord now (Praise God!), it was a shame that her life ended so tragically. If only she were around today to hear the message I'm sharing with you!

How Rejection Affects Others

"The words of a talebearer are as wounds that go down to the innermost parts of the belly." (Prov 18:8)

Rejection that has never been dealt with has a way of transferring to others. Someone who's hurting inside because of rejection often finds security in putting others down. Why is that? Because rejection doesn't hurt quite as bad when you're doing the rejecting. This is the primary motivation behind gossip. Gossip is, in effect, transferred rejection. When the one gossiped about gets wind of what's being said, then he or she feels rejected, and the pattern sets itself up again to be repeated.

Rejection can also cause someone to operate in a 'BLAME MODE.' That goes something like this, "Lord, the problem in my life is him, her, or them. It's my husband, my wife, my boss, my dog, and my kids — I'm sure not to blame! Lord, if you'll only straighten them out, I'll be fine." Such a judgmental, accusing attitude that focuses on the faults of others almost always comes from root rejection. Ironically, such judgmental people are the very easiest to reject, which only exacerbates the problem! When you fall into the trap of rejecting those who reject, you're actually throwing gasoline on the fire. Someone once said, "People need loving the most when they deserve it the least." The very thing they need is usually the hardest thing to give them — kindness, forgiveness and mercy. That's what will set them free!

Why? Because what they're really saying is, "Love me. I'm hurting and I've been rejected. That's why I have this wall up. The truth is, I don't like myself and I don't believe God likes me very much either." When you fail to hear what such a person is really saying, then you'll perpetuate the pain and hurt in their life whenever you reject them.

Believe it or not, that hurting, critical person is in your life to teach you how to truly love. They're a gift to you from God. We've all cried to the Lord and said, "Oh Lord, teach me how to love like you love." What God then says is, "OK, I'll do it!"

The next thing you know, He sends this wounded, self-rejecting, evil-spouting gossip into your life. They may be a co-worker, a boss, a relative who's come for a long visit, or someone else. They are there as an answer to your prayer.

So you pray, "God, take them out of my life." But God says, "No, this is the very thing you asked for!" Then you cry, "Lord, just change their attitude." And the Lord responds, "O.K., I will once you change yours!" Have you ever noticed that the thing that keeps you on your knees more than anything else is people? Most of us can deal fairly adequately with the things of life. It's just those people!

How Rejection Typically Operates

Everyone is familiar with the parable of the "Prodigal Son" found in Luke, chapter 15. After squandering his inheritance, the boy entered hard times. He ran out of money and got a job feeding pigs (not a very nice profession for a Jewish boy). After a while he came to his senses and said,

"How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me one of your hired men." (Luke 15:17-19)

Because of his sins and mistakes, he felt that the only way he could come home to his father was like a whipped puppy. He was convinced his father was angry and waiting to 'let him have it,' so he was going to return begging for mercy. This boy had a problem at least as big as his sin of running away and wasting his inheritance. The problem was his self-rejection and fear of rejection.

The same will be true for you when you dwell on your own sins, failures, and faults. As long as you focus on how unworthy you are because of what you've done, you'll be a target for the accusing spirits of the enemy. Ultimately, you'll wind up convinced that even God has rejected you, just as the boy feared his own father's wrath.

At that point, God will seem like the mythological god Zeus. He rode a chariot of fire and held a lightning bolt, ready to strike anyone who stepped out of line. He'd say, "Aha, another one down there sinned. Whoosh! Zap!"

Then, because of how miserable you feel due to your failures and sense of rejection, you try to find relief in some compulsive or addictive activity. What I've just described is a major reason why so many find themselves addicted to drugs, alcohol, work, sex, or whatever. They are desperately seeking to escape the torments of guilt and rejection. Now, let's see how the boy's father actually did respond:

"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." (Luke 15:20)

The last thing this boy was expecting was for his dad to say, "Welcome home, son, I love you!" Most Christians are the same way. They have very little conception of the love God has for them. They live their lives terrorized that God is not pleased with the things they do. But the truth is, God is never pleased with the things you do, if they're done apart from Jesus. So, relax! Since there's nothing you can really do that will please Him — quit trying!

Honestly, have you ever met anyone who needed to take a course in 'Selfishness' when they were growing up? Is it necessary to teach a child to be self-centered? Of course not. What I'm trying to say is that the only thing you really have going for you in this life is the shed blood of the Lamb, not your abilities or successes or attempts at doing what's right. It doesn't matter whether you've walked with Jesus thirty years. The day after your thirtieth anniversary you can still plunge into sin as deep you ever have. You have a free will and God will never violate it. All that really matters is that you keep coming to God to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. "They overcame the accuser by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony..." (Rev. 12:11)

Overcoming Self-Rejection

When someone is ashamed of the way they look, they'll often make self-rejecting statements like, "Oh, I'm just too fat, too thin, too loud, too quiet, too short, too tall, too unattractive, or too unlovable." They're constantly comparing themselves with others they consider brighter, more attractive, more popular, etc., and are always finding that they fall short.

Few things are as destructive to one's healthy self-esteem as self-rejection. Now, the first thing one must know is that there are some things you simply cannot change. God made you a certain way physically,

emotionally, and intellectually. You can fret and worry and compare for years, but some things will always remain the same. God did not make any mistakes when He made you (believe it or not!).

Unfortunately, our present day culture bombards us with what's acceptable and attractive. This is particularly true for women. You have to look a certain way, weigh so many pounds, and be a particular type of person to succeed in life.

Let's consider two simple principles that can help you escape those tormenting feelings of self-rejection.

The first principle is found in First Thessalonians: "In everything give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thess 5:18)

If someone asks you what the will of God is for your life, just tell them it's 'giving thanks in everything.' This is God's will for you before anything else. If you'll simply learn to thank and praise Him in things as they are, you'll be amazed at the level of contentment that will come into your life.

The second principle is this: External unchangeables become means for internal transformations.

As you give thanks to God for whatever external thing it is that you feel rejected about, He'll turn that very thing around for your good and will work in you a far better and precious eternal fruit! For all of eternity you'll reap the rewards of patiently enduring external inadequacies. Think of the exquisite beauty of a pearl. How did it get that way? Through irritation! A small grain of sand locked within the oyster's shell "bugs" the poor oyster. Over time, it secretes a substance to cover the sand's rough edges. Ultimately, that little, insignificant, rough-edged grain of sand becomes a priceless gem! What a lovely parable God placed in nature.

Over the years, I've found that people who are (supposedly) perfectly beautiful on the outside rarely have much spiritual refinement. Those with few external inadequacies are often frustrated individuals inside. Have you found this to be true? Those who have what the world may define as physical and personal deficits, however, often have (because of those deficits) deep riches stored up for eternity. Jesus said,

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:25).

The principle stated here holds true wherever there is wealth and abundance: in money, in talents, and in physical features. Oh, that we could obtain eternal eyesight! God so wants you to see and understand the truths of your eternal rewards. Reflecting Jesus through your character is really the only thing in this life of any lasting worth. This happens primarily through suffering, not through prosperity.

Rejection From Real or Imagined Hurts

"Grudge not one against another, brothers, or you will be judged.
The Judge is standing at the door!" (James 5:9)

At times you may experience rejection because of real or imagined hurts from others. Let me explain what I mean. Let's say you're walking across the sanctuary of your church and someone you know gives you an unloving look, or acts a little coldly towards you. Has that ever happened?

Now, it may be that they were indeed being rude to you. Or, it may be they were just 'spacing out' for a moment because of something on their mind. In either case, a hurtful rejection feeling flares up inside. It hits you right in your gut. Your mind begins to remember ways in which they've done that before.

Then, as you give yourself over to these thoughts, the enemy starts to whisper in your mind, "Yes, they are mad at you. Not only that, they don't like you because of the way you've been acting lately. In fact, they're not the only one. Others have been thinking the same thing. In fact, nobody here really likes you. It's just because they're Christians that they have to like you. If they weren't saved, they'd probably all reject you." And you respond in your thoughts with, "Yea, that's probably right."

Now all of this started with just a little look while you were walking across the room. In fact, the whole process just described could occur in about fifteen seconds. And, as you head down the hall under this increasing cloud of gloom, another spirit whispers, "You need to judge them. They're probably doing the same thing to others as well. You need to warn others about their unloving ways."

This is where Satan pulls out his 'big guns' of divisiveness. He makes the suggestion to judge others only after you've swallowed the other self-pity stuff. At this point, though only thirty seconds have gone by, you're probably thinking some pretty unpleasant thoughts about that person.

Later on that same day, let's say you see that person again. When you do, you turn your head and ignore them. And then they think, "What's with him?" Then the 'rejection process' begins with him as well. "Why did he ignore me like that? If I recall, he's done that before." This kind of stuff occurs all the time. It's just that most folks are too spiritually dull to recognize what's happening. Paul tells us:

"Let no one miss God's grace and let no bitter root grow up to cause trouble and defile many." (Heb 12:15)

If unchecked, rejection can spread like wildfire. Because he knows fewer things divide God's people as effectively, Satan stirs up rejection wherever he finds it. So, it's essential that you overcome the rejections that plague your life, not only for your own well-being, but also for the sake of those around you. Now, let's look at how Jesus handled rejection.

No One Was Ever Rejected Like Jesus

"He is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isaiah 53:3)

Jesus was incredibly rejected in His life. His family didn't understand Him. They thought He was out of His mind. He was rejected of His colleagues. The religious leaders of the day all spurned Him and His message. He was rejected of His friends. They didn't understand Him half the time and when He was arrested, they ran. The multitudes who one day cried, "Hosanna to the Messiah!" just a few days later cried, "Crucify Him!" Finally, He even experienced rejection from His Father. When Christ bore the world's sins on the cross, His Father looked away. It was at that moment that Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" He experienced the most awful rejection of all: the rejection of God Himself.

Jesus experienced rejection so that we could live a life of love and service, focused on the needs of others and not on selfish concerns. We are loved just as we are by Him, and in Him, through one another. But, as a true believer in Jesus, you, too, will receive rejection. This is particularly true when you stand up for the truth to people who don't want to hear it. I never knew what persecution was until I began to preach the truths of spiritual warfare and deliverance. Only then in my Christian life did I begin to experience serious rejection, persecution, and betrayal. Most believers shy away from standing boldly for the truth. With all the rejection they already have in their life, why should they go looking for more?

This is the real tragedy of rejection. It keeps people from becoming like Jesus, who was willing to suffer the rejection of men for the things that were right. The truth is, until you're substantively freed from rejection, you're not much of a threat to enemy. He is only intimidated when one is willing to stand up for the truth, even at the cost of heavy rejection. Until you are free from self-rejection and the fear of rejection, you won't be able to handle the persecution that comes for righteousness' sake.

Steps To Freedom

"Get rid of all bitterness, anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Eph 4:31-32)

There are three definite things that must be done to find freedom from the deep hurts of rejection:

Step One) FORGIVENESS: Choose to forgive whoever, whenever, for whatever. Quit hanging on to those resentments! You must forgive, if you ever hope to be free from those rejections in your heart. Forgiveness has nothing to do with your feelings. It's a choice of the will. If you choose day after day to

forgive those who have wronged you in your past, the feelings of rejection and hurt will eventually go. If you've harbored resentment a long time, don't be surprised if it takes some time for all of the feelings to disappear. But disappear they will, if you're persistent!

Think of forgiveness as a spiritual weapon. Use it to break the curses of bitterness, resentment, judgment, and hurt out of your heart. I've seen many cases where someone, who experienced emotional wounding in their childhood, found wonderful release when they chose to persistently forgive. Don't be discouraged in the process, as there will be resistance from the enemy. Just press forward with forgiveness as your weapon, and soon the rejection that has ruled you for so long will lose its' power.

Step Two) SEEK DELIVERANCE: Deliverance is necessary when you not only feel the hurt of rejection inside, but are attacked with tormenting thoughts as well. This usually indicates the presence of an unclean spirit, which must be eliminated through spiritual warfare. Deliverance from a deep stronghold of rejection, however, is not going to happen overnight. It's a process. If you're removing a tree from your yard, it will take a while to get all the roots out. But, start! Enter the battle. You'll be amazed at what will happen. When you live offensively with an aggressive determination to get free, you'll soon see the Lord moving mountains that have stood firm for years.

Step Three) ENROLL IN GOD'S AGAPE ACADEMY: Finally, ask God to put "People Gifts" in your life. What am I talking about? "People Gifts" are those special people that tend to be hard to love. You know what I mean. They're the folks that keep you on your knees because of their 'gift' in bringing up all kinds of ungodly stuff in your soul. If you're really serious about overcoming rejection, this is the way to do it! Just ask God to send people into your life that will help you love the way He loves. Few prayers will please Him as much! And, as a by-product, He'll break the power of rejection in your life once and for all!

"I will restore you to health and heal your wounds," declares the Lord, "Because you are called an outcast, Zion, for whom no one cares." (Jer. 30:17)

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