

Breaking Free from Rejection

Just because people have mistreated or abused you doesn't mean you must be controlled by their words or your feelings. Jesus can free you from the pain.

In the early 1980s I heard a gifted pastor challenge his listeners on the subject of rejection. Using many convincing proofs from the Scriptures, he made the point that rejection is sin. Virtually everyone in the congregation went forward to repent.

So masterful and inclusive was the sermon that only rebellion, denial or spiritual blindness could have caused one to refrain from responding. It was so good I actually wanted to feel guilty and wondered why I did not. I had certainly suffered more than my share of rejection.

I was raised in an alcoholic, abusive home and was horribly disfigured in a fiery airplane crash. Consequently, I had become accustomed to having people look the other way when they encountered me. After the sermon, God began to reveal to me how the soul's emotional suffering from rejection can lead to sin and how quickly and with what tremendous destruction this can occur.

The open wounds of rejection become common ground with the enemy of our soul that is vulnerable to spiritual attack. If not healed they can become a perilous emotional pitfall.

Ephesians 4:27 admonishes us not to give place to the devil. The Greek word for "place" (topos) means a particular spot, not a region, and denotes that people can give ground to satanic influences.

But to consider rejection as sin would bring judgment against victims of child abuse, broken marriages and racial prejudice; the physically or mentally handicapped; and recipients of practically every type of uninvited social injustice ever suffered. It can also lead to a guilt-driven, often powerless religious struggle to be set free by human efforts.

People caught in circumstances that can result in rejection are not guilty of sin because of their feelings or perceptions, yet the opportunity to respond destructively can seem inviting. Genesis 4 shows how rejection can lead to destructive emotions and subsequent severe actions. It tells the story of Cain, a farmer and the firstborn son of Adam.

Cain brought to God as an offering and sacrifice some of the harvest of the fields. Abel, his brother, brought fat portions of some of the firstborn sheep from his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering but not on Cain and his offering, so Cain was angry and downcast.

The Lord warned Cain, saying: “‘If you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it’” (Gen. 4:7, NKJV). Cain had a choice about how to respond, but he ignored God’s warning and allowed his feelings of rejection to propel him into murdering his brother.

Open Wounds

As a victim of severe burns I’m vividly aware of the pain and danger of exposed sores on a human body. Our skin shields us from potential contamination by ordinary elements that cannot enter our bloodstreams without access.

Open wounds in our souls are similarly dangerous. They can spread spiritual and emotional infections throughout our inner beings. Thankfully the Holy Spirit offers us the ministries of inner healing and deliverance to set us free from these infections.

Though I believe that every person will experience rejection, I resist the fatalistic view that we must necessarily succumb to its destructiveness. We each have a choice to respond in the right way.

Joseph is a good example. His father, Jacob, showed his favoritism for Joseph by giving him a fancy multicolored coat. Out of jealousy, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery and convinced their father that he was dead.

Disappointment, rejection and hopelessness surely must have passed through Joseph's heart as a result of the betrayal. But he endured the hardships forced upon him, worked hard, operated in the gifts God had given him and remained faithful.

His response brought deliverance for him and for his family. By pressing through the adversity, he obtained his prophetic destiny in spite of the injustices.

Much of our culture, including our church culture, breeds an atmosphere in which rejection can readily occur. Selfish ambition, jealousy and competition under the guise of zeal for God emit a signal that disturbs the soul. The dynamics of relationship and our response to them have much to do with the course of our lives.

In my case, my biological father never said, "I love you," and

never complimented me on my accomplishments. Instead, he criticized me when I tried to excel in ways in which I was gifted. Not knowing how to lovingly correct or administer discipline, he physically abused me.

The result was that I disdained my dad's image and aggressively pursued a different kind of life. I yearned for image, adventure and hedonistic pleasures.

In retrospect I can see that my open wounds of rejection on the shared common ground with the enemy of my soul were a setup. Through a series of events, a major shift took place deep within me to seek the truth and to reconcile the love and glory of God with the conflict in the world.

The truth is that we were created for God's good pleasure, not our own. What pleases God is also what is best for us.

Jesus said concerning His own pursuits, "'I always do those things that please Him'" (John 8:29). Yet His obedience caused Him to suffer tremendous rejection.

Isaiah 53:3 describes Him this way: "He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."

After Jesus quoted a prophecy about Himself in His home synagogue, the people tried to throw him off a cliff (see Luke 4:29). The spiritual leaders of the day constantly resisted Him and tried to accuse Him of heresy (see John 10:33).

His own family thought He'd gone over the edge (see John 7:2-4), and in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He was facing the greatest agony of His life, His disciples deserted Him (see Matt. 26:36-46). How was He able to not only withstand but also overcome the greatest conflict of the ages?

He said, "'Not as I will, but as You will'" (Matt. 26:39). He was willing to do only what would please the Father.

All the rejection every one of us would ever experience was placed on Him. In addition, He was completely cut off from the Father. We can never comprehend the crushing weight of rejection He endured.

The Cure

The cure for rejection is twofold. First, forgive everyone who has ever hurt you in any way. Forgiveness releases you from the bondage of the enemy and prevents you from becoming ensnared in sin.

Second, receive and abide in the revelation that you are accepted in the beloved (see Eph. 1:6). We are not only received; we are also adopted, sincerely wanted and highly favored by the Father.

When we find pleasure in doing what pleases God and become energized by what causes God to rejoice, we have a wall separating us from the common ground of caring what others think of us. Being in true communion with God brings liberty from the expectations of self and others.

Jesus gave us a key to the kingdom when He said, “‘Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven’” (Luke 10:20). Freedom from the fear of man and from performance orientation comes when we discover that the joy of the Lord is our strength.

It is time to “bind up the brokenhearted” (Is. 61:1) and find our well-being in the power of pure love. My prayer is that the hand of the Lord will close the open wounds of rejection in your soul, wash your mind with the truth of His Word and restore you to wholeness.

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