

Chapter 11 - Pressing Past Rejection

And whoever will not receive and accept and welcome you nor listen to your message, as you leave that house or town, *shake the dust [of it] from your feet.* (Matthew 10:14, emphasis mine)

Jesus gave instructions to His disciples regarding the handling of rejection. He told them to "shake it off." Basically He was saying, "Don't let it bother you. Don't let it keep you from doing what I have called you to do."

Jesus was despised and rejected (See Isaiah 53:3), and yet He never seemed to let it bother Him. I am sure He felt pain just as you and I do when we experience rejection, but He did not let it prevent Him from fulfilling His purpose.

Jesus told His disciples not to be concerned about rejection because in reality, people who rejected them were really rejecting Him:

He who hears and heeds you [disciples] hears and heeds Me; and he who slights and rejects you slights and rejects Me; and he who slights and rejects Me slights and rejects Him who sent Me. (Luke 10:16)

The Lord loves His children, and He takes it personally when anyone rejects them or treats them contemptibly. If you are a parent, you know how you feel when anyone mistreats your children. If you are like me, you actually feel their pain and will do anything possible to prevent it.

I recall when my daughter Laura changed schools in about the third grade. She had been attending a Christian school and was transferred to a public school. She experienced major rejection from the children at her new school. I drove by the playground one day about recess time and saw her sitting on a bench all by herself while all the other children were playing. She looked so sad and lonely that it broke my heart to see her.

She would cry in the evenings because she didn't understand why nobody liked her. There was no reason for the children not to like her. Rejection was something Satan used to make her feel bad about herself as a person. Laura was a Christian child, and she talked about Jesus freely. The devil did not like it, so he attacked her.

Rejection is one of Satan's favorite tools to use against people. The pain of rejection often causes people to function in fear rather than boldness. Laura soon learned that when she talked about Jesus, the other children made fun of her, and it adversely affected her for a long time.

A SOLID FOUNDATION

If we start our life rooted in rejection, it is equivalent to having a crack in the foundation of our house. The first home Dave and I built had a crack in the basement, and it caused periodic problems for years. Each time there were storms or heavy rains, the basement

Page 2 leaked, and anything in the path of the water flow got wet. We tried three or four different methods before we were finally successful in getting the crack totally repaired.

People who have experienced rejection in their life are somewhat like our house. Each time there is a storm in their life, everything is a mess, including them. They try different methods to find security, but nothing ever works. They may try people-pleasing to find acceptance. Often they become approval addicts. They live with the emotional pain of rejection—or the fear of being rejected, which is often worse than rejection itself.

A solid foundation is the most important part of a building. Without a solid foundation, the building won't last long. Everything else concerning the building is built on the foundation. If the foundation is weak or cracked, nothing that is built on it is safe. It could crumble or fall apart at any time, especially if stress is placed on it by something like a storm or an earthquake.

The Bible encourages people to build their lives on solid rock, not sand. The person who hears the Word of God and does it is like the man who, in building his house, dug down deep and laid a foundation upon the rock. When the flood waters rose up, the torrent broke against that house and could not shake it or move it, because it had been *securely* built or founded on a rock (See Matthew 7:24-27).

If we try to build our lives on what people say and think of us— how they treat us, how we feel, or our past mistakes—we are building on sinking sand. Before I experienced the healing power of Jesus Christ, my life was like a house built on shifting sand rather than solid rock. My foundation was weak. I was not secure, I did not like myself, and I was filled with guilt and shame from abuse. I was rooted in rejection, and every relationship I tried to build and every decision I tried to make was affected by it. I feared the pain of rejection and needed to learn that I could survive it if necessary.

By the grace and mercy of God, I traded that old cracked foundation for a solid foundation, one based on Christ and His love. I am now rooted securely in Him.

The apostle Paul prayed for the church that they would be rooted deep in God's love:

May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love. (Ephesians 3:17)

Think about your beginning in life, because it represents your roots. Did you get a good start in life? If not, thank God you can be uprooted and replanted in Christ. You may not have had a good beginning, but you can definitely have a good finish!

THE ROOT OF REJECTION AND ITS RESULTS

The beginning of any relationship represents its roots. A marriage has roots, a beginning or starting point. Dave and I did not get off to a good start because of all the emotional problems

Page 3 I had at the time. Our first several years were very rough. After I realized I needed help, it took several more years to repair all the damage I had done in the first few years of our marriage. Things got better little by little, but we both had to be patient and refuse to give up.

Dave and I were recently talking about our ministry and what a solid foundation it is built on. From the beginning we made sure we did things with excellence, maintained integrity, and kept the strife out of our life and ministry. We worked patiently with our employees to build into them the same principles that we had adopted and applied to our own lives and ministry. At this time we have our office in the United States, plus offices in South Africa, Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, India, Russia, and the Middle East. How can we possibly keep up with so much? We have a solid foundation, one that is built on God, His Word, and His principles. Had we not taken the time and effort necessary to build a good, strong foundation, we could not maintain such a massive work.

Foundations are extremely important. How is yours?

Are you rooted in shame, or rejection? Were your roots established in fear? It is God's will that you be rooted securely in love and acceptance; if you are not, you need emotional healing.

The word *reject* can be defined as to refuse, to throw away without value. Absolutely none of us want to feel like we are being thrown away as if we have no value. We all want to be noticed and accepted.

The word *root* can be defined as the starting point, the first growth from the seed. Seeds are buried and germinate, and roots develop and burrow down into the ground before the branches **and** fruit are seen above the ground. The quality of all

fruit is affected by the roots that provide them support and nourishment. I have learned that rotten fruit equals rotten roots, and good fruit equals good roots. When we see bad fruit in our own life or other people's lives, we should realize it is coming from a bad root.

When people display bad behavior, rarely do they understand why they behave the way they do. If they cannot understand it, they certainly cannot change it. For many years of my life when I behaved badly, people said to me, "Why do you act that way? Why do you respond that way?" Their questions frustrated me because I did not have the answers. I knew my behavior was odd, confusing, and unstable, but I didn't know what to do about it. Most of the time I just blamed it on someone else or made excuses. I responded defensively to anything that even remotely seemed to be in disagreement with me. I did so because I already felt so wrong about myself that I couldn't face being wrong about anything else.

I responded fearfully to many situations, some of which made no sense at all. For example, if Dave would pull into someone's driveway to turn the car around, I became frantic, especially if he had to wait for other cars to pass by behind us before he could complete his Page 4 turn. I said things like, "You shouldn't turn around in other people's driveways; the homeowners won't like it!" Or, I might say, "Hurry up and get out of here!"

Dave would say in bewilderment, "What is wrong with you? I'm just turning the car around. People use other people's driveways to turn around all the time."

For many years I did not understand why I reacted the way I did until Cod showed me that I was reacting to the situation based on how I thought my father would have felt about someone turning around in his driveway, which would have been angry. I was afraid the homeowners would come out the front door and yell at us the way my father would have done. I had such a deep-seated fear of rejection in my life that it caused me to react fearfully to many situations that seem very ordinary to an emotionally healthy person.

There were other similar situations that I reacted to based on past experience. I had no frame of reference other than the way I was raised. I had rotten, diseased roots, and therefore, I had bad fruit.

Do you have any behavior in your life that seems really weird? If so, have you ever wondered, "Where did that come from?" or "Why do I act that way?" I hope it helps you to realize that your fruit is a product of your roots. If you have bad roots—roots that were sown in rejection—you will need to be uprooted out of that bad soil and replanted in the love of God and the truth in His Word. The good news is, "There is hope." If you feel trapped in behavior that you don't understand, do not despair. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. He will help you stop reacting to old situations

and teach you to act on God's Word. He will give you an entirely new root system, one that will produce good fruit for His kingdom.

The Bible states in [John 3:18](#) that for those who believe in Jesus there is no judgment, no condemnation, and no rejection. Jesus gives us freely what we struggle to earn from people and never seem to get: freedom from judgment, condemnation, and rejection!

When I became a student of God's Word, I started really desiring change in my behavior. Sometimes I was successful in cutting off one type of bad fruit (behavior), but another would immediately pop up, which frustrated me even more. I felt that no matter how hard I worked to get rid of one thing, another one took its place. It really helped me when I finally understood that my bad fruit was coming from a bad root. Another way of saying it is that my unacceptable outward behavior was coming from something unacceptable inside me.

My thoughts were wrong: about people, myself, circumstances, my past, my future, [et cetera](#). I was very insecure, but I masked my feelings in a phony, bold approach to life that actually caused me to come across to others as harsh and hard. At that time I didn't understand why most people seemed to be offended by me, but now I do.

Have you ever been around people who outwardly seemed to "have it all together," so to speak, yet you just knew deep down inside that something was not right about them?

I recall a man (I'll call him Joe) who was a slick talker. He could have sold honey to bees. He appeared to be very confident. Actually, he was so confident that he was frequently accused of being haughty and [prideful](#). He could cry crocodile tears at just the right moments, appearing to have tremendous compassion for hurting people. He had great vision and [Page Page 5](#) progressive ideas and was able to motivate people.

Joe became involved in youth ministry, and soon many teenagers admired him and became dependent on him for advice and teaching. Everything about him *appeared* to be right, but something about him *felt* wrong. The young people were almost too attached to him. They bordered on idolizing him.

On the outside, in public, everything seemed to be fine, but at home, behind closed doors, his marriage was in serious trouble. He, of course, always blamed it on his dysfunctional wife. She had deep problems, he said. As it turned out, he became involved with one of the young girls in the youth group, and a trail of lies a mile long was uncovered that had existed for years.

This man's father was one who was difficult to please, so Joe always felt rejected by him. His father [pressured](#) him to be something he did not know how to be. Therefore he had deep-rooted insecurities. He was trying to function in leadership

with a deep root of rejection in his own life.

On the surface he appeared to be anything but insecure, yet he was totally insecure. His security and confidence came from other people's dependence on him, like the youth he oversaw, and from being able to do well in business. Like so many of us, he was deriving all his sense of worth and value from outward things rather than from God.

Many people today have developed phony personalities in which they function. They pretend to be whatever they think people will admire. It is very important to have discernment where these people are concerned. When things *appear* to be right, but *they feel* all wrong down deep inside, I recommend not getting involved too quickly. Take time to see how people act in all kinds of situations. They may talk a good game, but see if their walk matches their talk. People may have problems that are not their fault, but we cannot allow ourselves to be deceived by them. We cannot help them if we merely get into their trap with them.

After Joe fell into sin and was exposed, numerous people said they had realized for a long time that something just wasn't right where he was concerned. They had caught him in lies, but just let it go; they had thought he might be involved with the young girl in question, but they didn't want to accuse him; they had recognized that he fed on being the center of attention, but they overlooked it.

Once again we see a situation in which nobody wanted to be the one to confront a situation, and as a result, in the end many people were devastated emotionally and spiritually. Instead of exposing and confronting the wrongs they saw in Joe, people simply got into his trap with him, and in the process they became trapped themselves. Joe was like a spider weaving a web. Everyone got swept up in his charismatic personality, and before they knew it they were caught.

Page 6 No matter how good things may look outwardly, if they are not right on the inside, sooner or later they will be revealed on the outside. Anything we don't deal with will ultimately deal with us.

THE FEAR OF REJECTION

The fear of rejection is often worse than actual rejection. Fearing rejection all the time is more tormenting than just dealing with it on the occasions when it does occur. Fearing it certainly won't prevent it and may actually open a door for it.

The fear of rejection is rampant, and loneliness is one of the most dangerous and widespread problems in America today. It is well-documented that loneliness has reached epidemic proportions and continues to spread. Lonely people share a

common symptom: a sense of despair at feeling unloved and a fear of being unwanted or unaccepted.

The fear of rejection leads people into superficial relationships or isolation. It affects their ability to give and receive love. The fear of rejection may cause a person to withdraw his love from someone he genuinely cares for. Why? He would rather reject than be rejected. He would rather think that ending the relationship is his choice rather than the other person's. Remembering past rejection, people often fear becoming too close. They think about how they would feel if they were rejected and believe the pain would be too much to bear. They prefer the pain of isolation and loneliness, which only leads them to a greater need for acceptance.

In our own lives, we observe a vicious cycle. We want acceptance, but we fear rejection, so we isolate ourselves. Isolation only increases our need for acceptance, so we try to reach out to others, and end up repeating the same cycle again and again.

The fear of rejection only exists because we base our self-worth on the opinions of others rather than our relationship with God. Most of those who are critical of us are actually people who have a poor self-image themselves. They avoid the pain of how they feel inside by finding things wrong with other people and concentrating on their imperfections. Hurting people hurt people. It may help you to remember this truth when you are experiencing rejection or criticism. No wonder God tells us to pray for our enemies. They are in much worse condition than we are!

When I was growing up, I noticed that my father accused other people of doing things he was doing himself. He especially accused people of being sexually promiscuous. This behavior always amazed me because I knew how he was. Not only was he sexually abusing me, but I was aware of his unfaithfulness to my mother with other women. He also frequently accused people of being phony and hypocritical, while he lived a lie. He was suspicious of everyone and trusted nobody, and it was because he was so deceptive himself. In his thinking Page 7 he transferred all of his own problems onto other people, accusing them of what he was doing while making excuses for himself.

When people cannot feel honorable about themselves they always find fault with other people.

THE RESULTS OF REJECTION

Let's take a look at some of the results of a life that has been rooted in rejection.

INSECURITY - Insecurity is the number one problem caused by a root of rejection.

People who have been rejected do not feel valuable, and that makes them feel vulnerable and unsafe. They fear the pain of being rejected again, so they develop ways to protect themselves from rejection. As we have seen, they may do things like isolate themselves. After all, they cannot get hurt if they don't get involved with anyone. They may become **people-pleasers**, thinking that if they please people all the time, they will avoid the pain of rejection. They may become caretakers. They may think that if they take care of people and are needed, then they will not experience the pain of rejection. Actually they probably don't *consciously think* any of these things, but avoiding the pain of rejection is the motivating factor in many of their decisions.

Insecurity is a psychological disturbance of epidemic proportion in our society today. *Insecure* can be defined as being uncertain, lacking in confidence, or shaky. God wants us to be the exact opposite of all these things. He wants us to be certain, confident, and solid, even when people reject us. Don't let the way other people treat you determine your worth and value.

The Bible teaches us in Isaiah 54:17 that security is part of our inheritance as children of God. It actually says peace, righteousness, security, and triumph over opposition are our heritage from the Lord.

REBELLION

Rebellion is frequently rooted in rejection. Rebellious people have experienced the pain of rejection. These people are angry, and their anger is an inner rage that manifests itself in rebellion. They are fed up with being pushed around, and they aren't going to take it anymore!

It's true: A life of poverty can also be the result of rejection. If people have a poverty image, they do not see themselves as capable of having or enjoying the finer things of life. They admire what others have, but automatically assume they could never have them. They won't even try for the better jobs, because they feel they are not worthy to have them.

I know people who will never have much of anything simply because of the way they feel about themselves. In conversation they say things like, "I will never own my own home," or, "I will never drive a new car," or, "I could never shop there, because it's not a discount store." When I have asked such people why they think they could not have these things if others have them, they respond by saying, "I'm just not in that class; those things are above me."

This type of thinking is all wrong. We are all just people; if we are in a certain class, it is because we have relegated ourselves to it or allowed someone else to do so. God has not assigned His children to an upper class, a middle class, and a lower class. The world may think like that, but God does not, and we should not either. The promises of God are for "whosoever will." Whoever will believe in God and serve Him wholeheartedly can be blessed in any way that anyone else can be blessed. With God there are no distinctions, and He is not a respecter of persons (See [Galatians 2:6](#); [Acts 10:34](#)).

ESCAPISM

Escapism is another result we see among people with a fear of rejection. They create their own pleasant world through daydreaming. There is nothing wrong with a healthy daydream or two, but living in a pretend world to escape from the real one is a sign of real mental and emotional problems.

WORKAHOLISM

I once heard that 75 percent of all world leaders have been abused and have experienced severe rejection.¹ When I heard that statistic, I was amazed. It is simply because those who have been abused and rejected work harder than most people to accomplish something important so they will be accepted. Their abuse and rejection may not have been from their parents; it may have come from a teacher, their peers, or a relationship that was important to them. But whatever its source, it drives them to accomplish something in life for which they hope to be admired and applauded. They feel that they have to prove something, and they spend their life trying to do so.

I can relate to this scenario very well because I was a workaholic. I can still hear

my father's voice yelling at me, telling me that I would never be any good and that I would never amount to anything. The more he yelled, the more determined I became to prove him wrong.

I will probably always be a hard worker, because I am motivated by accomplishment. Once Page 9 I needed it to feel good about myself; now I just want to be fruitful in God's kingdom and for His glory. I don't like to waste my time. I have lived more of my life than I have left, so I want to make the rest of it count.

People with a painful past are often driven by a need to feel important, to gain acceptance, to attain a sense of security. We may succeed if we work hard, but it will never satisfy us unless God is behind our success. Ultimately we must know who we are in Him. We must be rooted and grounded securely in Christ and in His love (See [Ephesians 3:17](#) and [Colossians 2:7 KJV](#)). We are made acceptable to God through the Beloved (Jesus) (See [Ephesians 1:6 KJV](#)). True acceptance is not found in our accomplishments, but in what Jesus has accomplished on our behalf.

If we do not know this truth, we may well be in danger of working ourselves to death. I believe there are people who die much earlier than they should because they live under so much stress that it wears out their body. In general we are a driven people. Very few of us actually live balanced, healthy lives.

We are driven by many things that we will find in the end won't matter after all. The Bible teaches us that we brought nothing into the world, and we will take nothing out of it (See [1 Timothy 6:7](#)). Nobody on his deathbed has ever said, "I wish I had spent more 4 time at the office." I believe in working hard, but if we are addicted to work, or if we derive our sense of worth and value from it, we need help.

The writers of the Bible were led by the Holy Spirit to repeatedly tell us that our works will not gain us right standing with God. When we try to do right in life, it should be the result of knowing that we are loved, not an effort to gain love. We should do what we do for God, but not to get Him to do something for us.

People who derive their sense of worth and value from their accomplishments frequently talk about all they are "doing." They of course never take vacations, and even if they do, they work while on them. They even have a critical attitude toward those folks who like to enjoy life: they view them as lazy do-nothings, people who merely take up space and add very little to life.

They may have a martyr complex and become greatly offended when people don't notice and applaud all their efforts. The very fact that they seek recognition proves their motives are wrong. I truly pity workaholics. They have very little ability to enjoy life. As I have mentioned, more than likely they will make themselves sick or even shorten their life span. They don't take time to develop close relationships, and as a

result they frequently end up lonely and burned out. The saddest thing I have ever seen is an old man in his eighties, knowing that he does not have long to live, and when he looks back at the life he has lived, all he has is regrets.

Actually, the list of possible results from a root of rejection is endless, so I won't detail Page 10 anymore. But in the interest of jogging your conscience, here are a few I am aware of: self-pity, guilt, inferiority complex and poor self-image, fears of all types, hopelessness, depression, defensiveness, hardness, distrust, and disrespect, competition and jealousy, and perfectionism. The main point is that you need to make right choices now so at the end of your life you will have nothing to regret. If you think you can be classified as insecure, rebellious, poverty-minded, escapist, or workaholic, you need to consider your motives, realize what is driving you, and make changes.

REJECTION AFFECTS PERCEPTION

How we see things is affected when we have a root of rejection in our lives. As I have mentioned, rejection-based people often perceive that they are being rejected when they are not. They may feel as if they are being mistreated when in reality they are not. They are very sensitive to the way people make them feel. They are actually overly sensitive.

Before God healed me in this area, I was very difficult to talk to. Unless Dave totally agreed with everything I said, I became upset. I perceived his disagreement as rejection. I would try to *convince* him to agree with me so I would feel "fixed." Dave, on the other hand, would feel *manipulated*, as if he had no right to his own opinion about anything. Dave repeatedly said to me, "Joyce, I'm only giving my opinion. Why do you act like I'm attacking you?" I acted that way because I *felt* attacked!

This situation caused more than a few problems between Dave and me. I said repeatedly, "We just cannot talk about anything." To which Dave always responded, "Joyce, we don't talk anyway; you talk, and if I do anything other than listen and agree, you get upset."

If you are having trouble communicating with someone, then one or both of you may have the same problem I did. Healthy conversation between two people must include the right to be heard. I mean really heard. Do you listen, or just talk? I talked, and I wanted Dave to listen. I wanted him to agree with me. When he didn't, I

stopped listening. At that point I started reacting out of my old wounds of rejection. I *felt* rejected even though he was not rejecting me. I perceived it that way, so it was that way for me.

I know God has changed me, because I don't respond to disagreement the way I once did. I can talk, and I can listen. I like agreement, but if I don't get it, I respect other people's right to their own opinion. I don't feel wrong just because they may not agree, but I am open to considering that I might be wrong. Even if my opinion turns out to be wrong, it does not mean something is wrong with me. Learn to separate your opinions and ideas from who you are as a person.

Page 11

TALK TO YOURSELF

You can survive rejection, and you need to tell yourself that you can. I am suggesting that you actually talk out loud to yourself, telling yourself, "I can survive rejection." Also let the thought roll over and over in your mind, "I may not be accepted by everyone, but I can survive it."

We all fear rejection too much. Start believing you can survive it, if you need to do so. Jesus was rejected, and He survived. You can too! Value the unconditional love of God more than the conditional approval of people, and you will overcome rejection.

When I say you will survive, I don't mean that you will just barely make it. I mean that rejection really will not bother you at all. You just need to develop a new attitude toward it. When people have rejected me in the past, I have been hurt and let their attitude toward me control my thoughts for days afterward. When Dave has been rejected, he has simply said, "That's their problem, not mine." What was the difference between him and me? Dave was secure, and I was insecure. It is just that simple! I relied too much on what people thought of me, and Dave didn't care what people thought of him. He has told me that he cannot do anything about what people think; all he can do is be himself.

If you have had problems in these areas, stop torturing yourself with concern about what people think. You can survive rejection, You will live through it, and when people are finished thinking something unkind about you, they will go on to someone else. You will have the rest of your life left to live, and you can live it without them. If you have God, you have all you need. If He knows you need anything else, He will provide that also (See Matthew 6:8, 33-34).

I mentioned earlier in the book that some very unkind newspaper articles were written about us. I contacted a man I knew who owns a magazine and has been in

the publishing and newspaper business for many years. I asked him what he thought we should do about the situation. He said, "If I were you, I would ignore it; the whole thing will blow over, and next week they will be picking on someone else." Sure enough, he was right, We are not responsible for our reputation anyway. God is! So relax and keep saying to yourself, "I can survive rejection. I am not addicted to approval." Say it over and over until you believe it and are no longer bothered by the way people treat you. When Satan knows he cannot hurt you with rejection, he will stop working through people to bring that type of pain into your life.

In this part of the book, we've looked at some things we **must** change about ourselves as we begin to break the cycle of approval addiction. In the next section we will focus on some final important truths regarding our wholeness in God and where we need to be headed in our lives. There is good news for us if we're willing to take those steps!