


LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 What's the most painful rejection you've ever experienced? Why did it hurt so much? How might God be using that experience to refine your character, deepen your dependence on Him, and give you more compassion for others who have had a similar experience?
- 2 Is there someone who may feel rejected by you, whether you meant it or not? How can you draw on the example and power of Christ to seek reconciliation?

WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message us thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.

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SUNDAY WORD

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When God created mankind, there were two things we were never initially designed to experience. They are death and rejection. When God created the world, everything in it was "very good". Genesis 1:31 - "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (NIV) Neither physical death nor the death of relationships was part of his perfect design. But when mankind fell into sin, both experiences invaded our lives as what happened in Genesis 3:16-24.

That is why death and rejection hurt so much. They are completely contrary to what we were made for. Adam and Eve rejected God and passed on a legacy of physical and relational death to their children. Cain rejected Abel and he killed him. Jacob rejected Leah and infected his household with jealousy. Jacob's sons rejected Joseph and broke their father's heart. And so the record goes throughout the Bible including the night when Peter rejected Jesus as he walked alone to His death.

Since we were not designed for relational rejection, it always hurts. Most of us have had experiences that hurt far more. A friend turns his back on you. Your family disowns you. An employer demotes or fires you. A parent or child doesn't love you back. Worst of all, a husband or a wife says, "I want to get an annulment or divorce." The closer the relationship, the greater the pain and the more rejection feels like death.

Even if we avoid these kinds of rejections, we are often wounded more than we like to admit it by the interactions and words that feel like a personal rejection. We try to act like these things don't bother us. We try our best not to show the pain that we felt. But in reality, they do because rejection breaks our hearts. We often place unrealistic expectations on others. And we depend way too much on the attention and affirmation of others. Any time we make an idol out of a relationship, by looking to other people for the approval and fulfillment that only God can provide, we set ourselves up for grief.

A lot of mental studies have been done in the area of rejection. One mental health study stated that "Rejection is both a cause and consequence of depression." Psychologists tell us that for most people, the very earliest memories that we have are the memories that come from about age 3 or 4. Those earliest memories have to do with the subject of rejection.

Research confirmed an MRI which showed that pain pathways for physical pain and emotional pain overlap each other. For some reason, we forget the physical pain but remember the emotional pain strongly. When you try to remember when you broke that bone or fell from the bike, it is hard to recall exactly how it felt. But the moments of rejection from the same period are remembered more intensely. That's how powerful the pain of rejection feels.

Samuel was a Prophet and a Judge who was rejected by his own people he had faithfully led for many years. 1 Samuel 8:1-5 - "1 When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders. 2 The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. 3 But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. 4 So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. 5 They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

The elders expressed their concerns openly and directly to Samuel. Adding insult to injury, they said: 1. You are old. 2. Your sons don't walk in your ways. Immediately, these same people proposed a solution: "Appoint a king to lead us." Their remedy was to appoint a king to lead them.

PROBLEM 1: THE AGE

We are little a surprised to hear this emphasis on age in the Bible. Most of the Bible heroes like Abraham, Moses, and Caleb, started their ministry at the age of 75 and 80. Old age didn't seem to be treated in a degrading way in the past. Old age meant wisdom and vast experience. However, old age is a problem now in our culture.

Samuel could have responded, "Hey! What does age have to do with it? I have led you faithfully for many years!" Well, they obviously didn't want to hear any of Samuel's explanation. Samuel didn't have to because he has a long list of achievements he has done for Israel. One of them was how Samuel fought for Israel so that they could win the war against their enemy, the Philistines. How did God use Samuel to achieve that victory? 1 Samuel 7:5 - "Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the Lord for you."

Who won the victory? It's God. Through what human means? Through Samuel's leadership. How did Samuel handle it? By praying for the people. That's how the battle was won. You might think age could be a problem. If we are thinking of Israel's leadership in terms of someone who can carry a heavy sword and carry a shield, maybe Samuel is old with some health issues. Can that prevent him from praying effectively? No. The fundamental problem isn't age; it's whether you have faith in God and God's favor is upon you.

PROBLEM 2: SONS

Many parents would wish that their children walk in their path or their steps with respect to careers and ways. In 1 Samuel 8, Samuel had a great deal of struggle with his two sons. They didn't follow in his steps. As Samuel grew old, he repeated his mentor - Prophet Eli's error - and appointed his own sons to succeed him. Like Eli's sons, they turned out to be greedy and corrupt. This is the reality: Even the most dedicated parents may face the heartbreak of wayward children. The work of parenting is as challenging as every other job in the world but far more emotionally intense. Now, the question is:

WHO ACTUALLY GOT REJECTED?

When the people rejected Samuel, it was God they were rejecting. 1 Samuel 8:7-9 - "7 And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. 8 As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. 9 Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights."

Samuel forewarned the people of all the abuse, claims, and rights that a king would do to the people of Israel as written in 1 Samuel 8:11-17. Samuel ended it with a stern warning: 1 Samuel 8:18 - "When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day."

In their stubborn hearts, Israel rejected God as their king and God allowed them to have their way. The trade-off? The king would use their money. The king would enslave them. In their rejection of Samuel, the servant of God, they also rejected God because they wanted security. With this lesson from Samuel, HOW DOES REJECTION AFFECT US? Rejection attacks our identity. Rejection alters the way you look at life with others. Rejection blocks us from experiencing a true relationship with God.

How do we deal with rejection? We need to be cautious of becoming addicted to seeking the approval of men. So many of us have our identities and our self-worth wrapped in the approval of others. If we don't get it, we're crushed. When Jesus was rejected by His own people, He was not crushed that His own people didn't throw a parade and hoist Him onto their shoulders. Jesus was not about that. One of the amazing things about Jesus was that He never lost focus of His mission. His job in coming to Nazareth was to share the Good News and bring salvation to men.

THE GOSPEL REVERSES REJECTION

God has given us a clear path forward. We look to the One who was despised and rejected, yet His mission on earth continues until this day. It's called the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Christ is the greatest example the world has ever seen of how to overcome rejection. Although mankind rejected God, He did not reject us. Even though each of us has sinned against God and gone our own way, He is a faithful shepherd. God sent His Son Jesus into this world to seek what was lost, to offer Himself up as a sacrifice for all of our sins, and to open a path for reconciliation with our Heavenly Father.

Through the gospel, God has given us an example to inspire us to do all we can to reverse rejection. Through His Word, He has given us practical guidance on how to reverse rejection. Through His Spirit, God has given us the power to overcome our judgments, fears, and bitterness, and to clothe ourselves with the patience, humility, gentleness, and courage of Christ as we do whatever we can to reverse the rejections we've caused or experienced.

Rejection can be a great learning experience. It allows you to look inward and assess your life and your decisions. We must remember that what people think about us is not nearly as important as what our Heavenly Father thinks. We are loved and accepted by Him, no matter what, and His love for us does not change depending on our performance or achievements. If we can hold onto this truth, and if we see ourselves as how God sees us - beautiful, worth dying for, whole, then we will not judge our worth by what other people think about us.

What would you do when someone or a loved one rejects you? Like Samuel, you say nothing, but you don't do nothing. You get down on your knees and pray. Bring it to the Lord. Pour it out. Let God listen to your pain. Samuel dealt with rejection with an honest prayer. And God quieted his heart.