

THE REALITY OF

# REJECTION



**What to do when rejection makes you feel afraid, anxious, and alone... and you don't want to feel that way anymore.**

## A Note from Julie Elias



Dear Friends,

For most of my life, I felt like God was writing some really exciting chapters. I have had some wonderful experiences and a lot of cool stories. But chapters don't mean as much if you don't know what that whole book is about. It was frustrating. Though I've been a Christian since a young age, I didn't know God's overall, big-picture plan for my life. Praying for answers a few years ago, a plot began to develop that I never had imagined. Turns out, every chapter taught me something that shaped who I have become and equipped me to be where I am today, even when I didn't understand it.

I can only imagine what kinds of temptation and danger you all face every day. They say it's worse now than ever before. I want to encourage you to find your relationship with Christ NOW so you have a strong foundation that guides everything you say and do. Being a teen is hard; I remember, I was there once. But being an adult is hard, too. Life is hard. The sooner you have the tools and support to live a wise, godly, healthy life, the better the quality of your life will be.

My hope and prayer is that you use your life in some way for His glory, remembering every day that you are a witness of Christ's love and compassion in a world that desperately needs it. You have no clue how many lives you may impact just by being the best YOU that God wants you to be.

Thanks for your support and friendship!

Julie

# NO.



### What is Rejection?

"No." From a young age, nobody likes hearing the word "no." You want that new cell phone, you want to stay out late, and man, are you going to be angry if you don't get your way! Even as an adult, if someone tells you "no," you feel that person is denying your happiness and it can be frustrating. More often than not, the effects of this kind of "no" fade away; we move on and get over it. But there's another kind of "no" that hurts much deeper and lasts a lot longer. Rejection can feel like everyone around you is saying "no" all at once. Or it can occur when someone you care about makes you feel unloved and unaccepted. Whether love is withheld knowingly or unknowingly, its absence causes pain. Rejection hurts.

Rejection, no matter where it comes from, can cause feelings of:

- low self-esteem
- being unloved
- being unacceptable
- anger, distrust, bitterness
- worthlessness
- withdrawal and ambivalence
- guilt

There are two kinds of rejection you may have experienced:

- 1) Rejection by peers: when you feel unaccepted by friends, teammates, coworkers, etc.
- 2) Rejection by parents: when you feel unloved by the people who should care the most

You may notice one key word here: "feel." Emotions are incredibly powerful. **But feelings can change quickly and are a lousy barometer of reality.** One moment you can be bawling your eyes out at a sad movie, then an hour later be laughing with friends over dinner. The world around you hasn't actually changed, but your feelings sure have. Feelings are often inaccurate, misguided and fleeting. Sometimes rejection is very real but sometimes it is worsened because of the way you feel about yourself.

One of the hardest things to remember is that no matter how rejected you may feel by the world, you are never rejected by God. You cannot do anything to make Him abandon you. You are accepted by grace and grace alone, "not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:9). The more you understand

rejection and why it is happening to you, the more value your relationship with Christ will have because you will experience His unconditional love.

If you have faced rejection, you probably have a discrepancy between what you KNOW to be true and what you FEEL to be true. When you allow your feelings to become reality, you base your thoughts and actions on them instead of the truth. This will cause you to always distort reality so it will agree with your emotions.

The consequences of allowing rejection to claim victory in your life can cause lifelong damage and keep you from forming healthy, happy relationships with others. Rejection will be a reality in your lifetime. It will hurt, but it doesn't have to destroy you. The right attitude is the best weapon to fight rejection, changing what could be a devastating setback into a valuable learning tool. How will you choose to use rejection?

### **Peer Rejection: Classmates, Friends, Teammates, Coworkers**

The people surrounding you play an important role in how you perceive yourself. If they tell

you that you're the best hitter on the team, you may begin to believe you are a great baseball player. But say next year a new kid comes to town and has a better batting average and now he is getting the praise you used to have, taking your place on the lineup. Your skills as a ballplayer haven't changed at all, yet your standing on the team is completely upside-down, according to your teammates, coaches and parents. You're suddenly feeling totally devalued and rejected.

Welcome to the wonderful world of growing up. Competition with others can maximize the feelings of rejection. I can think of so many people who excelled at one thing, only to face a harsh reality once they moved to a higher level. Some were embarrassed and quit; others were encouraged to try harder. Again, it is all in the attitude you choose to have.

Any of this ever happened to you?

- You weren't invited to a birthday party of a "friend"?
- Dumped by a girlfriend or boyfriend?
- Failed to get a part in a school play or on a sports team?



# You need to have a strong sense of who YOU are. If you let others define your success, they will also dictate your failure.



- Missed out on an award (MVP, etc.) you feel you earned?
- Bullied?
- Turned down by a crush?
- You weren't nominated for homecoming or prom court?
- Lost a school election?
- Fired from an after-school job?
- Didn't get in the colleges you wanted to?

The reality of peer rejection is present throughout our school years and even beyond, into college and the workplace. We all want to be accepted by those around us, and seeing other people's success or popularity can bring out some really nasty feelings like jealousy or anger. Constantly comparing yourself to others can be your biggest downfall because, again, situations can change in the blink of an eye. You need to have a strong sense of who YOU are in order to have confidence when things change. If you let others define your success, they will also dictate your failure.

Just because you feel challenged does not necessarily mean you are doing something wrong. In fact, perseverance is rewarded in the Bible: "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12). If you are finding setbacks in the things you truly love and that you feel are your greatest strengths, you can actually use

rejection as a tool to make you better. Setting goals for yourself can make you achieve more of your potential. Self-esteem does not come out of thin air; true self-esteem comes from proving to yourself that you can succeed and overcome obstacles. Studying, training, practicing, learning, working... all these things will show you what you are capable of and that confidence will overflow in other areas of your life. Your personal successes are FACTS. No matter how talented, smart, attractive, strong or rich someone else is they can NEVER take away your accomplishments. Don't let your own self-worth be diminished by other people.

### **Parental Rejection**

We all come into this world with three basic emotional needs: the need to be unconditionally loved and accepted, the need to feel valuable and capable, and the need to feel that you are not alone. From the moment we are born, the most important, formative relationship we have is with our parents. If your emotional needs are not met by your parents at an early age, it can affect your feelings of self-worth and self-respect throughout your life.

Rejection by your family is one of the most painful things you could experience. These are the people who you have depended on for your whole life. You have built your identity, morality and outlook around what they have taught you. But you need to know something:



solid, stable and functioning families in this world are the exception to the rule. If you have a happy home life, be thankful every day and realize this is a huge gift. Things like divorce, financial pressure, infidelity, depression, jealousy, failure, addiction, and selfishness can make good people behave poorly. Unfortunately, kids often are easy targets to have hurt and frustration projected onto them.

Does any of this apply to you?

- Your parents have said, "I wish you had never been born," "I wish you were a boy/girl," "You were a mistake," "Why can't you be like...?"
- Your parents show no interest in what you're doing?
- Your parents abuse you verbally, emotionally, or physically?
- Your parents have unrealistic expectations of you, as if they only see you as an extension of their own identity (or their own shortcomings)?

- You believe the love of your parents is based on your performance or achievement?
- You feel abandoned by one of your parents through death, divorce, or suicide?
- Your parents don't give you their undivided time and attention?
- Your parents don't support or encourage you in your extracurricular activities?
- Your parents are too permissive and don't seem to care about rules or structure, and therefore let you feel neglected?
- Your parents are too strict and don't seem to think you will ever be responsible or capable on your own?
- Your parents don't treat you with respect? Are they rude, don't apologize if they are wrong, take you for granted?

Feeling betrayed and rejected by your family causes inexplicable and sometimes irreparable hurt. If you are not aware of it, the way you react to any of these situations will make your life even more sad and troubled.



"I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude."

— Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Many of the problems teens develop derive from an unstable home, including:

- bad attitudes: negative, argumentative, prone to anger
- deliberately seeking friends your parents disapprove of
- using bad language and hurtful words
- bullying others to make oneself feel more powerful
- rebelling against authority
- repeated absences from school, practices, church
- low academic achievement
- avoidance of parents
- social withdrawal
- indulgence in vices like sex, drugs, alcohol
- eating disorders

If unresolved, these can become even larger problems into adulthood. Friendships, work relationships, and the way you treat your boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse all stem from how you perceive yourself. Why would you treat others with respect if you don't even respect yourself? If you are not actively seeking a way to overcome rejection, your own hurts will never be healed.

Before you start thinking of your parents as the villain of your story, you must understand that it is possible that they do not realize how they are rejecting you. For example: Your parents were once children, too, and if they were treated with neglect and rejection, that may be all they know. Your parents can love you and mean well yet be oblivious to the damage they are causing. Pray for patience and understanding, so that your feelings don't contribute to a dangerous cycle that you pass on to your own children! Remember: "Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (James 1:20) and it is your responsibility to recognize this anger now and work to resolve it. Pray that you have wisdom through your words and a chance to talk to one or both of your parents about what's bothering you, in a mature and heartfelt way. Opening this line of communication may be the best thing you can do for your relationship.

### **Fear, Anxiety, and Loneliness**

Even though feelings are temporary, it is miserable to be hurting. I have never met anyone, young or old, who is truly unaffected by rejection, so I don't want to pretend there

is an easy way to never be hurt again. There are many feelings that result from rejection but God has a verse to comfort you for every single one:

**Fear.** Once you are rejected, you may feel afraid to trust anyone ever again. It is understandable that you are afraid to give your heart to anyone because you don't want to bring more pain in the future: "When I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God, whose Word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid." Psalms 56:3

**Anxiety.** Sometimes rejection affects your plans for the future and will make you start to worry and stress about what to do next. Anxiety accomplishes nothing and only makes you feel worse: "Do not be anxious about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done." Philippians 4:6

**Loneliness.** Humans need companionship and put a lot of energy in relationships. When

someone you care about rejects you, you must remember you are not alone; God is with you: "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." Psalms 27:10

You can choose to let go of your hurt feelings. How? By choosing to turn your focus away from the problem to God. Peace is a gift from God to Christians, through Jesus Christ. In John 14:27 it was Jesus who said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." Remember: you have a friend. Jesus is your friend and you can talk to Him about anything, any time. Instead of spending time grieving, crying and in self-pity, bring it to His feet. He wants to help you heal and for that healing to come from your faith. He can handle all of your hurt and pain; no burden is too big for Him. Joshua 1:9 reminds us, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."



Focus on the purpose God has placed in your heart and use every instance of rejection to make yourself stronger, wiser and even more determined as you continue onwards.



### Does rejection mean failure?

When you are rejected, you may feel like a failure. There's that word again: "feel." "Failure" is a temporary result, not an identity. Again, your feelings are making you believe something that isn't true. It's an unpleasant reality, but you will fail in your life. Multiple times. But you're in good company.

- Winston Churchill failed the sixth grade. He didn't become the British Prime Minister until he was sixty-two but when he did, he became a legend for his leadership skills and navigating Britain through World War II.
- "The Great Gatsby" was reviled by critics when it was released. Nowadays, it is considered a literary classic and is required reading at schools across the USA. Its author, F. Scott Fitzgerald, is regarded as one of the most influential American authors in history.

• Abraham Lincoln failed multiple times at business, lost six elections and had a nervous breakdown before becoming President at age

fifty-one. History remembers him as one of the most influential Presidents the US has ever had.

- The NBA's Michael Jordan lost more than 300 games and missed more than 9,000 shots; twenty-six of those were potential game-winners that he missed. He is considered the greatest basketball player in history.
- Do these names sound familiar: Johnny Depp, Brad Pitt, Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Cruise? These are some of the biggest names in Hollywood, loved by both critics and fans. None of them have ever won an Oscar. Imagine if Churchill, Fitzgerald, Lincoln and everyone else who had ever failed quit after the first try. The world would be a very different place. None of them let failure consume their lives or overpower their dreams.

The following are the wrong ways to respond to failure:

- **Blaming others:** The person who is not willing to accept complete responsibility for his

actions will never change or succeed. Don't hold others responsible for what is wrong in your life.

- **Unresolved anger:** Being angry at your parents, finances, etc. is just placing the blame elsewhere and labeling yourself as a hopeless, helpless victim.

- **Covering up failure:** Failing may seem embarrassing. But EVERYONE goes through it. Author H. Stanley Judd said, "If you're not failing, you're not growing."

- **Not changing direction:** A close friend told me the definition of disappointment is when expectations clash with reality. Be realistic with your expectations and change them if you need to!

- **Lying:** This ties in with blame and not accepting responsibility. Lying won't turn a failure into a success, no matter how skilled the liar thinks he or she is.

- **Giving up:** Author Paul J. Meyer said, "Ninety percent of all those who fail are not actually defeated. They simply quit." If you quit, you have lost all opportunities to succeed. When you quit, you let failure win.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. 'Plans to prosper you and not harm you; plans to give you a hope and a future.' " God has amazing things planned for all of us. He does not want any of His children to be miserable. You can choose to become swallowed up in woe or you can choose to try again. The only person who keeps you down is you; in turn, you are the only person who can get back up again. You have to want to try again. Pastor Chuck Swindoll said, "I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude...life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it." Attitude is everything here and it is your best weapon against failure.



## If you use failure to motivate you to work harder and try again, you are a success. Period.



### Rejecting Rejection

Once the rejection hits, how do you move on? There are three things you need to do to reject rejection.

**Face Reality.** Attitude plays a major role when it comes to battling rejection. Your attitude is determined by your belief system and plays a huge part in how you live:

- The belief system determines what you think about
- What you think about determines how you feel
- How you feel determines how you act

But what if your belief system isn't accurate and therefore your responses are not based on reality? Say a mother has been taught that the world is flat so she teaches her son this and he has accepted this as "truth." In school he was taught the earth is round, but he denied it. One day as a young adult, he won an awesome prize: a free cruise around the world. But his belief system said that the world was flat- if he tried to sail around the world, he would fall off and die! That sounded terrifying. "Absolutely not!" he says, denying the offer. As a result, he missed out on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, because of a faulty belief system.

Recognizing that you have a distorted view of yourself, others, right and wrong, or of the

world in general is where you have to start. As you grow up, you must determine what is really true, facing reality and making the necessary changes in your thoughts, attitudes and actions. It can be hard to accept the fact that your belief system is faulty, but ultimately doing so will make you understand why you were rejected and help you begin to move on.

**Forgive.** Understanding forgiveness and why it is important may be one of the most important lessons you learn in your whole life. Teens and even many adult Christians don't always truly "get" forgiveness. Forgiveness is not a feeling. It is a decision you make with an act of your will. It has nothing to do with the person who has offended you. It is an emotional release that must happen before there can be healing in your life.

Many people don't understand that forgiveness is an undeserved pardon and an undeserved release. If you think forgiveness is only for those who ask for forgiveness, or deserve your forgiveness, then you don't understand forgiveness at all.

Forgiveness is not denying, minimizing, or excusing what happened. It is being honest and objective about the offense, the pain, and the consequence caused by the offender. Just because you forgive someone does not mean you have to jump back in the same relationship



# You cannot control what people do. But you can control what YOU do.



with them and trust them implicitly. God also gave you a brain...use it.

I met a man once after a concert who had spent sixteen years taking care of his grandma, because his father didn't want to invest the time, money, or energy to do so himself. When his grandma passed away, he had so much anger toward his father; he felt totally rejected. But at the same time, he was his grandma's closest friend and they had a unique bond neither had with anyone else. He didn't realize that even though his relationship with his father was sour, he had something so special with his grandma that he wouldn't have had otherwise.

Hurt feelings make us focus on the negative when, in reality, the positive is worth cherishing. I encouraged him to pray for the strength to forgive his father. His anger was taking away from the joy he shared with his grandmother. His rejection was very real, but his unwillingness to forgive was causing additional pain and keeping him from moving forward. I hope he made the choice to keep this new attitude in his heart.

The idea of forgiving someone close to you, like your parents, may seem impossible right now. Unforgiveness is the soil in which bitterness grows. Bitterness will lead to even more anger, hostility, and distrust, keeping you from forming loving relationships. That's why you need to forgive- so YOU can

move forward. Forgiveness is one of God's commands.

Colossians 3:13 says, "Bear with each other and FORGIVE whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as God forgave you."

Salvation is based on the forgiveness that came from Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus' death and resurrection removed the penalty of our sin. Our sin drove nails through the feet and hands of God's only Son. Yet God forgave us. We did not deserve His forgiveness, but He gave it anyway. This is the ultimate act of compassion and love. Unforgiveness allows hate and anger to play on repeat; you need to turn it off and move on. Don't allow it to keep you from being close to God and living a godly life. You cannot control what people do. But you can control what YOU do. You can decide not to allow the actions of another person control or destroy your life.

**Try Again.** Life is a series of challenges, problems and disappointments. You can fail a hundred times, but you are still not a failure unless you allow yourself to be. Failing can put you in position for a miracle. Thomas Edison failed hundreds of times, but he only had to make one light bulb work in order to change the world. If you use failure to motivate you to work harder and try again, you are a success. Period.

Satan wants you to believe you are a loser, that you are worthless, that no one likes you and that no one could possibly love you, including God. If you choose to believe the lies he is telling you, then you will experience feelings of depression, self-hatred, doubt, fear, anger, and worry.

God has never rejected you and He never will. In order to move past rejection, you need to believe that you are already accepted. God's acceptance is unconditional. He will never give you conditions or limitations that keep you from His love. We don't "owe" Him anything in order to be accepted. In Colossians 2:14, scripture reminds us that the "Certificate of Debt" was cancelled when it was nailed to the cross. In Paul's time, a Certificate of Debt outlined the crimes and the sentence for a convict. After a prisoner served his time, the Certificate of Debt was rolled up and given to the prisoner; justice was served and he would not be punished for those crimes any longer.

Two thousand years ago, our sins were written on a Certificate of Debt, then nailed to the cross. When Jesus died, those sins were paid in full and we can never be found guilty for them again. Because God accepts

and approves of Jesus, He also approves and accepts you. Your soul is bought and paid for; you are "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

## Are you rejecting God?

Sometimes we want to find guidance but we are not willing to do what it takes to get it. No one wakes up one morning with all the answers. You have to put in the work and be willing to trust God with your hurt. Becoming a Christian is a wonderful thing, but it doesn't end there. The potential for your relationship with God knows no end. Once you truly place your faith in Him, you will experience His love on a whole new level. Here are four easy ways you can go deeper and get more personal in your faith:

- **Pray.** Pray every day, multiple times a day, as often as you want. Although time focusing solely on God is important, you don't necessarily have to stop, bow your head, and close your eyes to communicate with Him. Praying can be as simple as expressing a worry, a question or a "thank you" as they come up. Talking to God all day long will keep Him in your thoughts and make you realize He really is a constant companion.



# Think before you speak. Words of anger, hurt, jealousy and violence are not pleasing to anyone- especially God.



• **Quiet Time.** This is the time in your day you set aside just for you to be alone in God's presence. Many people do this in the morning because they feel that starting their day with the Bible puts their mind at ease and sets the tone for a positive day. By deciding that the first thing you do in the morning will be to spend time with God, you are putting God first in your life, something He so desperately strives for. If you don't get time in the morning, that is okay: but make sure you devote some time every day- even ten minutes- with no other distractions like cell phones, internet, friends, homework, etc.

• **Think Before You Speak.** Words of anger, hurt, jealousy and violence are not pleasing to anyone- especially God. Controlling your tongue is a challenge you will face throughout your life, but if you get to a point where you are conscious of your temper or emotions, you can remind yourself to keep quiet until you have calmed down. Knowing when to be quiet can be the difference between hurt feelings, regretted fights, ruined relationships, and even physical violence.

• **Practice What You Preach.** You can say all the words you want, share all of the scripture you memorized, and be known for giving great advice. But that is not enough. If you don't act out the same morals that you profess, your

words are useless. Say you tell a promiscuous friend that premarital sex is wrong, but you are having a sexual relationship yourself. To a non believer, a hypocritical Christian may tarnish the reputations of all Christians and turn them away from God altogether. God wants you to live accordingly to the Bible, but He also wants you to be honest. If you struggle with an area but use your faith to overcome it, that is an amazing victory that God wants to share with you.

We all want to find our purpose and seek fulfillment and significance in life. This can only be found in Christ. If you start looking for fulfillment in other ways- places, people, romance, materialism, experiences- you WILL be defeated, frustrated and empty. Your identity as a Christian is based on who you are, not what you do. You don't have to perform, meet certain standards, or prove your worth to God. When you understand that God's value of you far surpasses that which mankind can give you, you will be set free from trying to please people. If they reject you, they are the ones with the problem, not you. Focus on the purpose God has placed in your heart and use every instance of rejection to make yourself stronger, wiser, and even more determined as you continue onwards.

## Questions and Scripture:

1. Read Psalm 27:10. How have you ever felt rejection from your parents? Is it still there or has it been resolved? How did you overcome it?
2. Romans 8:31 shows up in a very popular worship song. How have you experienced God being on your side when everyone else seems to be against you?
3. Check out I Corinthians 10:13. Though this verse is about temptation, relate this to an experience you have had with rejection.
4. II Corinthians 4:8-9. Think of a time you failed but got back up to try again. How did you do it? And how did you feel once you succeeded?
5. Think about someone you need to forgive. Is it a parent? A friend? A classmate? Check out James 5:16, then pray for them, and pray that God helps you have the strength to forgive.



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