

Have you ever been rejected? Have you ever had a door shut in your face? Welcome to the real world. Parents spend years grooming their children for success. Perhaps it would be more profitable to train our children to handle failure and rejection because everyone faces these unhappy experiences sooner or later.

Go to Google. Type in the words “famous rejections.” If you do, you will learn that J.K. Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* series of novels, was rejected by 12 different publishers before her work was accepted. One of them even advised her to “not quit her day job.” Fortunately she did not listen. To date, her writings have netted her more than one billion dollars. That’s a billion with a “b.” I believe she can live on that.

Steve Jobs of Apple computing fame was at one time fired by the very company he created. Eventually he was taken back, of course, and Apple went on to become the most profitable company in the world, but even Steve Jobs knew what it was to fail.

Director Steven Spielberg was rejected three times for admission to the University of Southern California School of Theater, Film and Television. I guess they figured that Spielberg who directed such films as *Jaws*, *E.T.*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Saving Private Ryan* and many, many more just couldn’t cut it in the film business.

REJECTION...A BIG PART OF OUR SOCIETY!! Many young people today are having a difficult time getting their careers and even their lives off the ground. Critics point to the many adult children who still live at home. But many young adults who are on their own are also struggling. All I can say to these young people is “don’t give up” if you aren’t an instant success. Many of the most successful people who have ever lived have failed their first time at bat--or even several times at bat. **It even happened to Jesus SHORTLY AFTER HE RETURNED HOME.**

DO YOU REMEMBER LAST WEEK’S READING? Luke tells us Jesus went to Nazareth, where he was brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”* After reading those words, Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were focused on him. **Then he began his lesson by saying, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”**

To this point, people were impressed. Jesus spoke with authority. There was something about the way he presented himself that captured their attention. **“All spoke well of him,”** Luke tells us, **“And were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. Their Jesus was becoming something!! He should have STOPPED!! But Jesus kept talking and the more he talked, the more displeased his hometown congregation became. “Surely,” he said, “you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”**

“Truly I tell you, ”He continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed--only Naaman the Syrian.”

THE MOOD OF THE SYNOGOGUE BEGAN TO CHANGE. *What’s he saying? He’s not going to perform miracles in Nazareth like he’s performed in other places? Why not?* Is he saying that his theological views have taken him far beyond the small town attitudes that he was brought up with? **The people in his hometown did not understand Jesus at all.** Whatever he was saying, it was not what those folks wanted to hear. Luke tells us they were furious. They were so furious that they rose up and drove Jesus out of the town. **In fact, they were so aroused with anger that they took him to the EDGE OF THE HILL on which the town was built, so that they could**

throw him off the cliff. He escaped. **HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BEGIN YOUR CAREER THAT WAY? Yes, they were a tough audience.**

THEIR RESPONSE TO HIS WORDS WAS DEATH!! However, someone has noted that these town folk had biblical grounds. Deuteronomy 13 says that if you have a false prophet in your midst, you may kill him . In the eyes of his own people, Jesus, the Son of God, was a false prophet and eventually, of course, was put to death.

This is a sad but true fact of life. False prophets often prosper while true prophets are often rejected.

EVEN IF PEOPLE “REJECT” THE GOSPEL, WE MUST STILL “LOVE” THEM. A good example of this was reported by Ralph Neighbor, pastor of Houston's West Memorial Baptist Church. **Jack had been president of a large corporation,** and when he got cancer, they ruthlessly dumped him. He went through his insurance, used his life savings, and had practically nothing left. Pastor Neighbor visited him with one of his deacons. The Pastor said, *"Jack, you speak so openly about the brief life you have left. I wonder if you've prepared for your life after death?"*

Jack stood up, livid with rage. *"You *** *** *** Christians. All you ever think about is what's going to happen to me after I die. If your God is so great, why doesn't He do something about the real problems of life?"* He went on to tell us he was leaving his wife penniless and his daughter without money for college. **Then he ordered them out and told them that God was a bunch of Garbage.**

Later the church's deacon insisted they go back. They did. The deacon said, *"Jack, I know We offended you, I humbly apologize. But I want you to know I've been working since then. Your first problem is where your family will live after you die. A realtor in our church has agreed to sell your house and give your wife his commission. I guarantee you that, if you'll permit us, some other men and I will make the house payments until it's sold. Then, I've contacted the owner of an apartment house down the street. He's offered your wife a three-bedroom apartment plus free utilities and an \$850-a-month salary in return for her collecting rents and supervising plumbing and electrical repairs. The income from your house should pay for your daughter's college. I just want you to know your family will be cared for."*

Jack cried like a baby. He died shortly thereafter, so wrapped in pain **he never accepted Christ.** But he experienced God's love even while **REJECTING HIM.**

And his widow, touched by the caring Christians, responded to the gospel message AND ACCEPTED CHRIST.

Such things do happen in this world. False prophets get rewarded—while True prophets DO get REJECTED & just like Christ, THEY GET CRUCIFIED

WHY AM I TELLING YOU THIS? YOU MAY GET ‘REJECTED’ WHILE YOU FOLLOW JESUS. BUT IT DOES NOT MATTER HOW YOU ARE ‘REJECTED.’ It might be BY YOUR FRIENDS, or it might be WHERE YOU WORK. It might even be by YOUR OWN FAMILY. It might be because you have done something right or it may be because you have done something wrong. **EITHER WAY—REJECTION STINGS.**

But listen to this word of REASSURANCE. There are two remedies for REJECTION: The first is TIME. *“Time heals all wounds,”* says the ancient proverb. Some insightful advisor has added, *“and wounds all heels.”*

There is a grand measure of truth there. **TIME IS A GREAT HEALER.** That funny lady Phyllis Diller once added, *“Yes, time is a great healer, but time is a terrible beautician.”*

That is why, by the way, we must never make it easy for people to take their own lives. Most people who take their own lives do so during a period of depression, and for most people, depression passes given enough hours and days and weeks. The desperate person, if he or she will simply hold on a little bit longer, will live to see the ultimate worth of life. That is the word that must always be spoken to rejected hearts. Don't give up. Better days will come.

Listen to the story of how Kurt Cobain, a rock singer's life ended. On April 8, 1994, Cobain was found dead at his home in Seattle by an electrician who had come to install a home security system. His death was ruled a suicide by a self-inflicted shotgun wound to the head. He was 27 years old. During the last years of his life, Cobain struggled with heroin addiction and chronic depression. He also had difficulty coping with his fame and public image. And there seems to have been problems in his marriage to his wife, musician Courtney Love. Cobain traced many of his problems back to his parents' divorce when he was nine years old. He seemed to have felt that in addition to rejecting one another his parents were rejecting him by divorcing. In fact, all his short life this seemed to be a common theme--**REJECTION. One of his last recordings was titled, "Jesus wouldn't want me for a sunbeam."** (27) years old! What a waste. Drug addiction is a terrible thing. So is depression. That is why I am saying to you if you are going through a tough time right now, hang in there. Even if LIFE OR your health is getting the BEST of you! **Many people who are determined to take their own life discover that, if they can just hang in there until the cloud passes from their soul, there is hope on the other side.**

Time is a REMEDY FOR REJECTION. But the other Remedy for REJECTION is: Your FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD.

If somebody had just gotten the word to Kurt Cobain, not in a superficial way, but in a deep, authentic way that *"Jesus would want him for a sunbeam,"* what a difference it might have made. *The most powerful antidote to feelings of rejection, to the feelings of depression is THE GREAT "LOVE" of God.*

A young man named Jeremiah, one of the premiere prophets of the Old Testament, discovered that. HE was rejected in the same way as Christ was rejected, and it broke his heart. In fact, he was known as the "Weeping prophet." Deeply religious people sometimes experience depression, don't forget, just like everyone else. **But Jeremiah had a good reason for weeping. Jeremiah was called by God to prophesy Jerusalem's destruction.** This destruction, he said, would occur by way of invaders from the north. This was because Israel had been unfaithful to the laws of the covenant and had forsaken God by worshiping Baal. The people of Israel had even gone as far as building high altars to Baal in order to burn their children in fire as offerings. The nation had deviated so far from God that, in God's eyes, they had broken the covenant, causing God to withdraw his blessings from them. **Jeremiah was guided by God to proclaim that the nation of Judah would be faced with famine. Furthermore, they would experience severe robberies and be taken captive by those from the North.**

How do you think such a prophecy was received? **"Change the channel, Gladys,"** one of them probably said, **"I'm tired of hearing what's wrong with this country."** And then the people turned against Jeremiah.

Jeremiah could not have endured the isolation and the scorn that was his fate without a deep and abiding faith in God. The word of the Lord came to him saying, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you."* Wow, what a source of security! No wonder he could handle rejection so well. His life was built upon the rock of God's love for him. He knew, because he was speaking for God, time would prove his assertions as true. **He had the greatest friend that anyone could have. He was on the side of God.**

Do you have that kind of security. That kind of FAITH--an inner strength that will not fail you?

My friend, God offers each of us that same kind of security, that same kind of refuge when we are rejected. **REJECTION HURTS.** It is a universal hurt. But we can go on. *There are two remedies for rejection that will not fail us, TIME and OUR FRIEND--God.* **Hang in there when things get tough and trust Him.**

A popular little song from days gone by says: *"If tears were pennies and heartaches were gold, I'd have all the money My pockets would hold."*

We have all been there in our own way. And when we have BEEN THERE... **We remember that great Prayer...**

"God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Don't EVER GIVE UP, regardless of your situation. BECAUSE GOD WILL GRANT YOU WISDOM AND STRENGTH FOR ANY SITUATION!! Amen.