

REJECTION

Healing a Wounded Heart



June Hunt



HOPE
for the Heart

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JUNE HUNT



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Dear friend,

Years ago, I came to this excruciating conclusion: *Nothing* cuts to the core as deeply as rejection. Even death, while heartbreaking, doesn't leave such lasting wounds.

As a child, I longed for a family like the Andersons on *Father Knows Best*. How I wanted a dad who loved me, who would listen to me. My friends seemed to have daddies like that—ones who were interested in their activities, ones who were involved. When problems erupted in their families, they were eventually resolved with heart-to-heart talks. In contrast, my family life and my father were completely different.

I remember watching the happy “TV families” talking around their dinner tables, and then I would compare our family. Oh, we also gathered around the dinner table, but we children were told that we could speak only if we had something to say of interest to *everyone*. *Everyone* actually meant Dad. And nothing my siblings or I ever said or did was of interest to him. So we ate in silence, listening to Dad and his frequent guests pontificate about politics and world affairs. (Truthfully, Mother would have relished hearing us talk,

but she believed her duty was to sit quietly and keep us from “disturbing the peace.”)

With each passing year, I felt the sting of rejection even more. I spent several summers at a beautiful camp in Colorado, but I hated Colorado only because I had been “sent away.” Numerous times Dad would sternly say, “*You are a bad influence on your mother.*” I couldn’t get past the fact that I’d been *sent away*.


The one time that I confronted my dad about the way he treated Mother, he responded violently—physically—toward me. And then, within two days, I was shipped off to boarding school. Again I hated it. Although the school had a reputation for “educational excellence,” my grades dropped to a string of Ds and Fs. As a mere sophomore in high school, I walked from class to class with the raw wounds of rejection, never sharing with a soul the hurts hidden in my heart. Rejection and dejection were my closest companions.

Have you, too, walked the lonely road of rejection? If so, you know the silent cry for acceptance, that inner need for intimacy, your deep craving for closeness.

What an indescribable comfort to know that even when my “outer circumstances” had not changed I could experience true acceptance, intimacy, and closeness, and that in the midst of my pain there was One who would never, ever reject me. He is the One who has already suffered great rejection *for* me. His name is Jesus. With His presence in my life, He began the process of healing my wounded heart, from the inside out, and He can do the same for anyone who has been rejected.

If you too have experienced that severe pain of rejection, I’m so glad you’ve met me here. As you read these pages, you will learn the greatest story of rejection and redemption. And my prayer is that you will realize how God feels about you and discover the deepest security that only His love and acceptance can provide.

Yours in the Lord’s hope,



June Hunt

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”

(Jeremiah 31:3)

REJECTION

Healing a Wounded Heart

Nothing can ravage your heart like rejection. The most penetrating wound is the painful rejection of a loved one. Even death itself does not pierce your heart as deeply as when you know you have been abandoned. You feel devastated when someone dear to your heart deserts you. Rejection chips away at your self-image. It chisels down your confidence and challenges your hope. Meanwhile, the memory of your loved one lingers on and on in the recesses of your mind, repeating—through whispers and shouts—those haunting messages: “You are unwelcome. You are unworthy.”

Is your heart broken? Is your spirit crushed? Nothing is more healing than to know that the Lord loves you unconditionally. He accepts you eternally. When your pain seems endless and your heart is tender to the touch, continue to put yourself into His compassionate hands. He will hold you with His heart of love until there is true healing, for ...

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)



DEFINITIONS

Favoritism can be extremely painful. Children catch on quickly when there is a “favorite” in the family. The favored child often comes late in life—late like young Joseph in the Bible, the beloved son of Jacob. In his heart, the father not only favors Joseph over his ten brothers, but also flaunts his favoritism by giving Joseph the infamous “coat of many colors”—a coat Jacob himself has made! Meanwhile, the older brothers seethe with anger at the sight of this richly ornamented robe, which has now become a symbol of their father’s painful rejection. Little did Jacob know that his own favoritism would be the breeding ground for jealousy—the spark that would create a climate of hurt, hostility, and lasting hatred.

“Now Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.”

(Genesis 37:3–4)

WHAT IS Rejection?

Have you ever wondered, *What was the very first rejection on earth?* The first rejection is recorded in the first book of the Bible. God gives Adam and Eve everything they will ever need. He also gives one warning, “Don’t eat *from that one tree*.” And what do they do? They eat *from that one tree*! Their direct defiance means that they reject not just God’s Word, but also God Himself (Genesis 2:15–17; 3:6).

► **Rejection** is the act of refusing to accept or consider a person or thing that is not wanted or not approved.¹

- When you experience rejection, you feel unloved, unwanted, unacceptable.
- The Greek verb *apodokimazo* means “to reject as the result of examination and disapproval.”² (*apo* = away from, *dokimazo* = to approve)
- Jesus felt the pain of rejection. The Bible refers to Christ as the “Cornerstone”—the vital, the most essential stone of a major structure—yet He was the cornerstone (or capstone) the builders rejected.

“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.” (Matthew 21:42)

► **To be rejected** is to be cast aside, cast off, cast away—to be thrown away as having no value.³

- When you are rejected, you can feel useless, abandoned, worthless.
- The Greek verb *atheteo* means “to do away with, to set aside, to cast or throw away as useless or unsatisfactory.”⁴
- Jesus challenged the Pharisees and teachers of the law because they were rejecting the laws of God.

“You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!” (Mark 7:9)

► **To reject** someone means to despise, refuse, shun, turn away from.⁵

- If you reject others, you use your attitudes and actions to reveal the condition of your heart.
- The Hebrew word *maas* means “to reject, refuse, despise.”⁶
- Because God has given each of us free will, we may choose to reject the Word of God and even God Himself.

“The wise will be put to shame; they will be dismayed and trapped. Since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what kind of wisdom do they have?” (Jeremiah 8:9)

QUESTION: “My father died six years ago, but I’m still having trouble dealing with the anger I’ve had toward him. He was partial to my brother, but treated my sister, my mother, and me like second-class citizens. I tried to please him with my achievements, but we never communicated and he never recognized my accomplishments. How can I stop being so controlled by my anger?”

ANSWER: Anger has four sources: hurt, fear, frustration, and injustice. The anger you describe comes from at least three of the four. The rejection you experienced is very hurtful. Seeking to please him and never achieving recognition is extremely frustrating, and being treated in a negative way simply because you are a female is most unjust. The truth is that his treatment of you had nothing to do with you, but everything to do with him. He was the one in the wrong. His inadequacies let you down. Recognize this truth and turn loose of your expectations regarding him. Admit that your father was unable to be loving and accept him simply for being your father. Choose to forgive and release him to God so that your anger does not produce bitterness in your own heart. “*See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many*” (Hebrews 12:15).

WHAT IS Acceptance?

Joseph understood rejection. Although he was his father's favorite son, Joseph was betrayed by his brothers. Imagine Joseph as a teenager—he suddenly finds himself jerked out of his comfortable home, only to be carted off to a foreign country to live as a stranger, to live as a slave! The grief of losing his family must have been frightening.

Still, Joseph accepted the will of God in his life, which enabled him to accept the sovereignty of God over his life. In spite of one betrayal after another, Joseph refused to become bitter. Instead, he accepted his circumstances by humbly entrusting himself to God.

As years passed, Joseph rose to a position of highest respect and power. When his brothers journeyed to Egypt in search of grain, they found themselves at the mercy of Joseph. Immediately, he knew who *they* were—but they didn't know who *he* was!

Did he take revenge and refuse to give them grain? Did he send them off *with grain*, but not acknowledge them as brothers? Did he extend his hand of help, but insist they bow before him?

No. Joseph refused resentment—he accepted

his brothers despite their past betrayal. By inviting them to become part of his life once again, they knew his acceptance was not merely *conditional*, but rather *unconditional*. And, in truth, his acceptance was possible only because of the condition of his heart—his heart of true forgiveness, which allowed him to focus on the future, and his heart of true commitment, which enabled him to let the past stay in the past. (Read Genesis 37:12–29 and chapters 41–45.)

► **To accept** someone means to approve or to receive that one favorably or willingly.⁷ We should receive and value others because of their God-given worth.

- Your acceptance of others is based on the disposition of your heart, which, in turn, is expressed through your attitude and actions.
- The Greek word *proslambano* means “to accept, receive, welcome.”⁸
- Jesus Christ provides the supreme example of acceptance. The Bible says we are to accept others the same way Christ accepts us.

**“Accept one another, then,
just as Christ accepted you,
in order to bring praise to God.”
(Romans 15:7)**

WHAT ARE Three Levels of Acceptance?

When we reject someone, if we look closely, we may find that we are repeating the same rejection that we ourselves have received. The same is true of those who have learned to be accepting of others. Typically, we give what has been given to us. However, *your past rejection need not determine your future*. You can grow in your ability to become more and more accepting—even when you yourself have been rejected. The Bible says ...

**“Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.”
(Isaiah 43:18)**

The Three Levels of Acceptance⁹

1 Zero Acceptance

- “No matter what I do, I’ll never be accepted.”

The person who *totally rejects* you harbors deep hurt and bitterness and extends no grace and mercy. But the Bible says ...

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,

just as in Christ God forgave you.”
(Ephesians 4:31–32)

2 Performance-based Acceptance

- “I feel accepted only when I perform perfectly.”

The person who accepts you based only on *how you act* demands, “You must meet my requirements,” and rarely offers grace and mercy. But the Bible says ...

“Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!” (James 2:13)

3 Unconditional Acceptance

- “No matter what I do, even when I fail, I always feel accepted.”

The person who accepts you—especially when you fail—lives with a heart of grace and mercy and reflects the heart of God. The Bible says ...

“Show mercy and compassion to one another.” (Zechariah 7:9)