
VCL International
VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING CONFERENCE

REJECTION

Lesson Transcript by Steve Phinney

This is probably one of the messages that is a little difficult to get through because many people have the tendency to be a little rough on themselves. As we go through it, we're going to be talking about some things that are very difficult to hear. Oftentimes we do a little too much self-examination which causes us to reject ourselves.

Rejection is one of the most common consequences of man trying to be like God, playing God's role. In fact, as I was maturing as a Christian, I thought the way to grow was to understand the subject of rejection. I thought rejection was the core reason for the things people do. I believed that helping people understand how to deal with rejection would help them deal with life and become more mature Christians. This is not the case. Rejection is simply the most common consequence of man trying to play god.

I came into this world rejected. In fact, when I was born, I was put into a bubble. I was allergic to the air, all forms of food, and I could barely breathe on my own. I stayed in this bubble on and off for about five years. While in the bubble, I remember certain people visiting me, particularly my mother. As she would touch me, she had to wear rubber gloves. That's how we would bond, through rubber gloves. I could not remember the feelings of rejection during that time, but I certainly began to experience rejection by the environment, by my family, by doctors, by whoever was in the world. I developed a little bubble of my own in my heart. I didn't want anyone to get too close to me. As I was going through life, if someone

started to get too close to me, I would do things to keep them away. In fact, I believe I became a master at rejecting people. I kept them away from me. I didn't care if they rejected me or not.

Rejecting people was not my initial goal like it is for some. Some reject others first, so they will not be rejected. They are accustomed to it. That became my practice in junior high or high school. Prior to that I simply didn't want people around me. I felt safe in my bubble. That little bubble began as my bedroom and became my home. When I went to school, I would sometimes play hooky or get sick, so I could come home again. Home was my safe little fortress.

As I was approached by friends in the neighborhood or at school, I would continue to do and say things that would definitely communicate the message, "stay away from me, leave me alone." Today I understand what I was doing. I see how the enemy used rejection in my life to actually stop me from being able to enjoy and experience the body of Christ. God wanted to use friendships in my life to mature me as a believer. As I began to discover the truth behind rejection, I began to experience freedom. Rejection is not the root problem. The problem was my effort to try to be as God, or do God's job.

Jesus was rejected—excessively rejected. In fact, I just want to share with you a couple passages to help you see that rejection is really not the key issue. All of us will experience rejection, some more than others. Jesus said if we choose to walk after the Spirit, we are going to be rejected.

Turn to Matthew 27:27-31. Here is what the Word says, “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. And they stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.” That’s just some of it. Jesus experienced a great deal of rejection, but there was no sin in Jesus.

You see, spending time talking about how you have been rejected is not the solution. There is something else going on and that’s what we have to look at. I want you to write down this definition that I’m about to give you. This is the definition of *rejection*: “Knowingly or unknowingly withholding love from another person.” You see, when I was a baby, I was not in touch with the fact that there was love being withheld from me. My medical condition put my mother and family in a position that they had to withhold love from me. This is called “covert rejection.” There are two kinds of rejection and I want you to write definitions for them. The first type is “overt rejection.” It is obvious rejection that is known by both parties. Most of us are pretty good at overt rejection. The second kind is “covert rejection.” Covert rejection is only known by one party. I was covertly rejected by my family and the environment when I was born.

Others were put in the position of rejecting me. For example, my brothers and sisters didn’t know how to deal with this sick kid, so they stayed away from me. They didn’t mean to, but they were rejecting me. They were withholding love from me. I noted that and as I grew older I

held it against them. Over the years we have talked and reconciled a lot of the issues. You see, that was covert rejection.

Let’s consider overt rejection. Belittling or name calling would be examples. Suppose you are going about your day and someone decides to reject you by calling you “stupid.” That’s pretty obvious. The one doing the name calling deliberately rejects you. You know you are being rejected. Because it is easily identified, it is easier to deal with overt rejection.

Covert rejection is more dangerous. Many people who experience covert rejection often can’t identify it. This makes dealing with covert rejection more difficult. I want to give you the example of my wife Jane. She gave me permission to share this with you. When she was tall enough to see what was on the kitchen table, one day she spotted a soda on it. Her mom was doing the dishes. She turned around and saw that Jane was about to grab this soda. Mom said, “Please do not touch Dad’s soda.” Now, Jane was spanked twice in her whole life. Once she was punished for something she didn’t do. The other time both Jane and her mom were laughing while she was being spanked. It wasn’t a very good education on the elements of discipline. She learned nothing of proper training through discipline. Here is an example: Jane heard her mom regarding Dad’s soda and put her hand right on the pop bottle. Mom turned around, saw Jane touching the bottle, but didn’t say anything. She turned around and continued washing the dishes. What do you think little Jane did? She slid that bottle of pop to the edge of the table and she waited for Mom’s response.

Now, meanwhile, covert rejection is kicking in high gear. Withholding discipline from a child is covert rejection. Jane had her hand on the bottle and waited for Mom’s response. Mom turned and saw, but returned to the dishes. Jane slid the bottle off the table and took her first

drink of the soda. Mom saw her take the first drink of the soda but said nothing. I personally believe the most severe form of rejection is the lack of discipline. It “trains people up in the way that they should **not** go” and then when someone does step into their life to disciple them, they start bucking against it. They are not used to being corrected. It creates very sensitive, but yet big problems in people’s lives when they become adults. Those who have experienced a great deal of overt rejection have a better chance of dealing with it than those who suffer covert rejection. They know they were rejected and who there is to forgive. They clearly have a choice to forgive or not to forgive. However, people who experience covert rejection often do not know they are being rejected. In fact, my wife shared with me the first year we were married that she did not ever remember being rejected by her parents—not once. It was obvious to me, but she did not see it. That is covert rejection. It is typically identified by only one party, but sometimes, believe it or not, it is not recognized by either party. You can covertly reject others and not even know you are rejecting them.

Overprotecting a child is an example of covert rejection. Most overprotective parents believe they are helping their child. They do not understand they are rejecting the child. The child actually believes he or she is being protected, but the child is not. Both parties are unaware that rejection is going on.

It is so very important for us to understand these two kinds of rejection. God wants us to deal with them through Christ. We need to know what to lay at the feet of Jesus. If we do not understand what or whom we resent, we will just carry it and live in misery. God wants us to understand rejection.

God gave me a great illustration while counseling a young man. I held an empty pop can and read through a list of rejection incidents I had

been recording in our conversation. For each incident I would put a new dent in the can with my pencil. He saw graphically how each rejection incident affected him. By the time I was done this poor can was mashed up. I asked him, “Is this how you feel?” He responded, “Yeah.” I said, “I want to show you something.” I walked with him over to a sink and put as much water into the can as it would hold. I poured the water into a cup, but there was only a little bit. Then I started pushing out the dents from the inside, explaining that God wanted to change his life from the inside out. God wanted to change his life by giving him what is true about him. I started quoting what was true about him: he’s a child of God, he has been redeemed, he’s been sanctified, he’s been made whole, he is complete. I tried to get that pop can as close as I could to its original shape. It still had some scars. It was still beat up a little bit. We walked to the sink and again filled the can with water. I poured it into the cup and guess what happened—more water. I helped this young man understand that the same thing is true of our spiritual life. If we allow the life of Christ to pound out “our dents,” the areas we have not reconciled, we have more room for the filling of the Lord in our lives. The presence of the Lord will inhabit every corner of our lives available to Him.

We do not live in perfect environments. We’re going to experience dents and bruises through life. Rejection will happen, but God works from the inside through the identity truths. I wonder if the word “identity” comes from “I-DENT-ity”? I think so. What we accept as our identity has a great impact on our lives. By the time I was 16 years old, I felt like that smashed up can. I had long hair; I was into drugs and theft. I was a mess because I believed I was rejectable. I thought it, felt it, and believed it. After getting saved at 16 years of age, I still struggled with rejection because there was no overflow in my life. Why? It was because I continued the same godship pattern. I was trying to do God’s job in

my life. God had to reveal to me what was going on behind all of the rejection.

Here are three sources of rejection. The first one is parental rejection. Parents can reject by overcorrection and undercorrection. Examples of overcorrection are: belittling, criticizing, or constantly hounding a child to do something. Undercorrection is what I described to you in regard to my wife. Sometimes parents think it is too painful to discipline their child. They don't want to hurt the child, but by not disciplining him or her, they actually reject the child. This is parental rejection.

The second is peer rejection. When I was a teenager I dressed in ways to draw rejection. I let my hair grow and painted my face. I wanted peer rejection. I felt rejected and I wanted to be rejected. I was rejected by my peers for the way I looked and acted. I did not measure up to their standards.

The third one is public rejection. A great example of that is traffic. You can be driving down the road, life is good, you're singing to the Lord having a good time. Maybe you veer off a little bit over the white line and the guy in the car next to you shakes his fist and yells at you. You didn't really do anything. That's public rejection. There are many forms of public rejection. What I read to you out of Matthew about Jesus was public rejection. You can even be rejected for doing what is right.

THE REJECTION CYCLE (Diagram 110-A)

Turn with me to Diagram 110-A, "The Rejection Cycle." When rejection comes crashing in, makes its first dent, suddenly you may begin thinking and feeling rejectable. That suggestion starts going around in your mind. "Why did they do this? Should I have done . . . ? Maybe it's because I'm" I come around to point number 2 on the diagram. "I decide I'm

rejectable." Notice that number 2 is a lot bigger than the other numbers. We did that because this is the most important point. It is the time to make a decision. Am I going to choose to allow these thoughts and feelings to control me? If I do, I proceed to point 3. "I do or say things that bring more rejection," which is godship. I react by rejecting others or the person who just rejected me. I was a shotgun rejecter. I would load my rejection shotgun and blow away anyone standing by. I didn't care who they were. I didn't care what they looked like. I would blow away innocent people. I didn't care. Others are a little more selective, they'll only reject those who have rejected them.

Some people search for acceptance. Notice the word "godship" under point three on the diagram. Remember, godship is man trying to be like God, taking God's job. When we try to seek acceptance and approval from others, that is godship. God is the only one entitled to praise, honor, and worship. When we start seeking it from others, it sets us up for rejection.

Perhaps you are looking at point three on the diagram, but you don't desire to reject others. Your desire might be to keep people happy. This is still a reaction built on the feelings, thoughts, and fears of being rejected. This can control you. It then moves deeper in the cycle to the smaller point 1. "I think or feel even more rejected or unloved." Let's suppose you send back a rejecting comment. The person responds in kind. As you progress in the cycle, you yield more and more control of your life to people and circumstances. The cycle continues, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, etc. I explain it this way. If you draw this diagram three dimensionally and pull the spiral up, what do you have? You have a tornado. This tornado is going through life destroying everything in its path. That is what I was like and likewise anyone who gets stuck in the rejection cycle. It's a living death. Even if they are trying to please people, it's still a living death. For me, when I started thinking and

feeling rejected and unlovable, I started to choose to believe that must be true.

Let's take a look at Jonah. Turn to Jonah, Chapter 1. I want you to understand the picture of Jonah. He was asked by God to go to Nineveh, which was a great city. But this city was very wicked. In fact, it was so wicked the Word says they did not know the difference between their right and left hand. They did whatever they wanted to do. God wanted to save this city. He called Jonah to ministry, but Jonah didn't like the people of Nineveh. Verse 2 says, "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." Next, Jonah rejects God. Verse 3 says, "But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." Jonah thought, "I am going to reject the Lord." He had already rejected Nineveh.

The rejection cycle has already started and now he is rejecting God's plan for him. God rejects Jonah's plan. Here's what Jonah 1:4 says, "And the Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up." God is the only one who has the prerogative to reject people. God causes everything in Jonah's life at this point to bring him to the end of himself. It was very important for Jonah to hear God's voice. Jonah could have avoided this whole thing by hearing God's voice, but Jonah would have none of it. God had to speak to Jonah through his circumstances. God creates a great storm and the boat starts falling apart. Jonah makes a choice. Verse 1:5 says, "Then the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down, and fallen sound asleep." We have this great storm busting up the ship and Jonah is

down in the hold of the ship sound asleep. There are some people who actually sleep through rejection. That's their number 3. They just try to sleep it off and escape reality. It is impossible.

The story goes on. Jonah gets rejected again. Verse 1:7 says, "And each man said to his mate, 'Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.' So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah." God is even in control of the lot. You cannot escape God with your number 3, your reactions to rejection. Jonah's rejection tornado continued. The men became extremely frightened and they said to him in verse 10, "How could you do this?" They knew he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord because of what he told them. Verse 1:11 says, "So they said to him, 'What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?'—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy."

Jonah rejects himself now. Verse 1:12 says, "And he said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.'" Self-rejection is now kicking in full force. Jonah gets rejected again. Verse 1:15 says, "So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging." As you know, Jonah was swallowed up by a great fish. While in the belly of that fish for 3 days, Jonah repents. There's a beautiful repentance prayer in this book. He was spit out on the shore. He goes to Nineveh and preaches the gospel and 120,000 people in that great city came to know God.

That's quite a successful day of evangelism. Strange, but Jonah wasn't happy. The rejection cycle kicked in again, even after repentance and obedience. What happened? He went to the edge of the city and he sat down. God raises up a plant so he has some cool shade to sit under. Jonah begins to whine and complain, "Oh God,

how come you were so tough on me and you showed such grace to this city.” God and Jonah had a discussion. Here is what Jonah concluded. Verse 4:3 says, “Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.” Jonah was stuck in the rejection cycle. Who was Jonah thinking about the whole time? Himself. The end result of the rejection cycle is self-love.

FEELING REJECTED . . .

(Diagram 110-B)

Turn to Diagram 110-B, “Feeling Rejected . . . I am filled with self-pity. I feel that life ‘isn’t worth it.’” Did Jonah think these things? Yes. There are 3 times in the book of Jonah that Jonah tried to end his life in some way. That is what the rejection cycle will do. The focus is constantly the big “I.” In reality the goal is to avoid more “dents,” but they keep coming. You cannot avoid dents by avoiding rejection. Why is that? It is because rejection is a consequence of man playing god.

Let’s consider a few others on our diagram. Number 5 says, “I am easily depressed.” One of my friends defines depression as “an internal temper tantrum.” When depressed people become upset that things aren’t going their way, they often turn inward and engage in internal temper tantrums. They don’t talk to others. They close themselves off and sink into a dark hole in their minds. It is allowing rejection to be in control.

Look at number 9, “I am perfectionistic.” It is putting things in order externally in order to feel emotionally in order. That’s perfectionism. The perfectionist likes to straighten things up just a bit. They are continually adjusting things. Why? Because they feel emotionally out of order. It’s another fleshly way of choosing to allow rejection to be in control. Consider number 12, “I am filled with worries, doubts, and fears,” or number 15, “I try too hard to please.”

I became the biggest people pleaser. Someone told me, “Phinney, you need a degree before you can help someone.” I went out and got a degree. Then someone told me, “You know, if you had a masters degree you could have a better outreach.” I went and got a masters degree. “Phinney, if you had a Ph.D., you could become a licensed psychologist and you could really be effective.” You see, I was driven every day to please someone. Why? I didn’t want rejection anymore. I labored to please people in order to avoid being crushed. I was tired. I kept dishing out what I thought people wanted to hear or doing what they wanted me to do. It stressed me out so much that it brought me to a Victorious Christian Living Conference.

The first lesson was called “Godship.” I wrestled with that one. The second lesson was “Rejection.” I knew that life. “Want me to teach it?” That was my attitude. It was godship, trying to be as God. That one was the one that took me down. God said, “Oh Steve, you’re just trying to do my job. Let go.”

Turn to Matthew 15:11 and 18. These 2 verses I’m going to read to you were 2 verses that God used to transform my life. Matthew 15:11 says, “Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.” Verse 18 says, “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.” What I learned was that it is not the rejection that comes to the man that defiles him, it is the rejection in the heart that defiles that man. That totally changed me. God started using that in my life and set me free. I used the excuse myself, “If you reject me, I have no choice but to act the way that I am acting.” God said, “Not true. You are acting the way that you are acting because of the defilement and godship in your heart. You’re being defiled by your own rejection.” That was a tough one for me to swallow, but once I swallowed it, I was set free.

REACTING TOWARD OTHERS . . .

(Diagram 110-C)

This list is a further description of the kinds of reactions we might experience from point 3 on Diagram 110-A. This list shows how you might dish it out to others. In Matthew 12:35 it says this, “The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil.” If I draw from my righteous treasure box in my life, I am going to give out righteousness. If I draw from the evil treasure box in my life, the flesh, I am going to exhibit what you see on this list. The treasure box is in our heart. Perhaps you pull out “people pleaser.” You will then work at pleasing people so they won’t reject you. Even after all that work, sooner or later you are still going to be rejected by the person you long to please. When that happens, you might reach into the evil treasure box and pull out “name calling.” He or she responds in kind and you are rejected again. Again you reach into that treasure box and pull out “refuse to communicate with him.” If you don’t talk, he won’t reject you. This doesn’t work either. He continues to reject you. You can continue to pull out destructive choices from the evil treasure box. That’s what this list is for. Take a few minutes and check the boxes that you know are in your life. God does not want you drawing from this list. He wants something else. But I’m afraid it doesn’t stop there.

REACTING TOWARD GOD . . .

(Diagram 110-D)

Turn to Diagram 110-D. This is Satan’s number one goal. He wants us to reject ourselves and others, but he really wants us to reject God. He wants you to resist God’s authority. He wants you to be unable to trust God. He wants you to view God as a tyrant like your dad or your mom or whoever it was that really was beating up on you through life. He wants you to be angry with God and reject Him and His sovereign hand. He wants you to have little fellowship or communion with Him. Satan

definitely does not want you to be able to receive God’s love. Second Corinthians 5:17 says “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” God wants us as believers to understand that all the old has passed away. It is not your life anymore. He says, “Behold I have done something new. I have given you a new treasure box and I want you to draw from this new treasure box, so reach down inside and draw from this treasure box. Out of this treasure box, when you are slapped on one cheek turn the other cheek, and while you’re turning the other cheek, give love. When they slap you again, reach into that treasure box. Realize that you are holy. Don’t concern yourself with what they say about you. I say that you are holy.” God says you are holy. When you are rejected again, you reach into that treasure box. “You’re blessed.” You may not feel blessed, but you are blessed.

STOPPING THE REJECTION

CYCLE (Diagram 110-E)

When we feel rejected, number 2 needs to become our focus. It is the fork in the road. I can choose to believe I am blessed, chosen, holy, blameless, loved, adopted, accepted, redeemed, forgiven, and the list goes on and on. We have a list of 100 that we cover with people who come for discipleship, but even that doesn’t scratch the surface. They go on and on about who we are in Christ. Notice the new number 3. “I respond by loving others.” I am redeemed. I will deal with this person in such a way as to help the person understand his or her redemption.

Do you see the difference? It abandons worrying about self to helping others be set free. That’s why I can stand up here today, having gone through what I went through, with a passion to show you how God’s way functions. It is not Steve Phinney’s way, not your way, but God’s way. If God has brought some conviction in your life going through this lesson, I

want to just take a moment and pray. I call it the rejection prayer, and if these words speak what you are experiencing right now, just in your heart quietly pray this prayer with me. Let's bow our heads.

“Dear Lord, I agree that I have been stuck in the rejection cycle, thinking and feeling rejected by myself and others. I have been wrong for choosing to allow these thoughts and feelings to control me. It is wrong for me to reject others and myself by hurting them and seeking acceptance from them. I choose now to accept your forgiveness for all these wrong choices. I now choose to believe what you say is true about me, that I am blessed, chosen, holy, blameless, loved, adopted, accepted, redeemed, and forgiven. I thank you, Lord, for allowing me to go through being rejected, and I thank you for your promise that all things work together for good. Amen.”

REVIEW

Consider our review. “Rejection happens to everyone.” It does happen. “The rejection cycle begins when we allow thoughts and feelings of rejection to control us.” Point 3, “The person who believes that he or she is rejectable and unlovable makes a number of decisions that reinforce his or her view of being rejectable. These decisions create a lifestyle consistent with that point of view, bringing more rejection upon the person.” “People who live in a rejection cycle react by becoming self-centered. They also react by rejecting others, even God.” And finally, the rejection cycle can be stopped by making the choice to accept who you are in Christ.