

LENT 6 SERMON NOTES AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

SUFFERING AND HOPE



PART 6. RESPONDING TO REJECTION

WELCOME

We have all experienced rejection. Being rejected is one of the universal human experiences. I sat down and listed some ways I remember being rejected. Which of the following 'ways of being rejected' have you experienced too? What can you add to my list?

"You're not my type."

"You're too short."

"You're not qualified."

"I have something else on."

"You wouldn't understand."

"You're ugly."

"I like you... as a friend."

"You don't meet the selection criteria."

"Your writing is not really the sort of thing we want to publish right now."

Being excluded because of my language.

Rejection with complete silence.

Being totally ignored.

Being excluded because of my skin colour.

Being asked to leave because I don't comply with a dress code.

Messages and phone calls not returned or ignored.

People acting as if I am not in the room.

Being excluded because of my gender.

What does rejection feel like?

Why does rejection hurt so much?

WHY DOES REJECTION HURT SO MUCH

Neuroscientists have been scanning people's brains again! They discovered that when people experience rejection the same areas of the brain light up as when we experience physical pain. So on a brain scan rejection looks like physical pain! Other emotions light up different areas of the brain, but rejection actually looks like physical pain. They also discovered that pain killers like Panadol reduce the experience of rejection! Rejection is such a powerful emotion that it is like physical pain. They went on to suggest that humans adapted to avoid rejection because our survival depends on being accepted.

- From: *Emotional First Aid* by Guy Winch, Penguin Publishers, © Guy Winch, PhD. 2013.

This scientific work is brilliant. But they conclude that humans avoid rejection just in order to survive. This explanation doesn't really get to our hearts. It doesn't get to the meaning of it all. Let's get spiritual! We are wired to belong. We are made for relationship. Right from the start of the Bible we get a picture of human beings made for relationship, made to care for the earth and the sky, made in relationship with the animals, connected to everything, placed in a garden called Eden. In Genesis chapter 2, what is the first thing God says about the first human?

"It is not good for him to be alone." - Genesis 2:18a

That is why rejection hurts so badly. Because (in our Creator's image) we are wired to connect to relate and to belong. Rejection is so soul-destroyingly painful because we need to belong. The problem is that our world has become a place of disconnection and rejection. This is the story of Adam and Eve. After falling into sin humankind now struggle to belong.

What do you think of all this?

When have you struggled to feel accepted or belong?

What are the deepest longings and needs of human beings?

THE FUTILITY OF ALWAYS STRIVING TO BE ACCEPTED

Too often I see people on the Sunshine Coast working so hard to avoid rejection: striving for the right look, striving to fit in, striving to measure up, striving to be accepted. Often our religion becomes a life of striving for acceptance. Religion becomes "trying to work out exactly what things we need to do to be accepted by God or the universe". Much of the religion I have seen is "the futility of always striving to be accepted".

What's wrong with religion that is just 'striving to be accepted?'

What does religion look like when it's all about 'striving to be accepted?'

What does Jesus change?

THE MOST REJECTED ONE?

Read each of the following Bible passages and identify WHO rejected Jesus and WHY...

Isaiah 53:3. *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Luke 2:7. *She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

John 1:10-11. *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

Matt 2:16. *Herod ... was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under...*

Mark 6:1-4, Luke 4:29. *Jesus went to his hometown... And they said "...Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honour." . . . They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.*

John 6:66-67. *From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.*

Matthew 8:34. *Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.*

Luke 9:22. *"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."*

Luke 17:24-25. *For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*

Luke 22:4. *Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus...*

Matthew 26:74-75. *Peter began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."*

Luke 23:18-21. *With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"*

Matthew 27:45-46. *From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" - which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

Ps 118:22

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

REJECTION AND GOD'S ACCEPTANCE

A life of always striving for God's acceptance is not what faith in Jesus is about. Instead God's acceptance comes as a gift - no matter what others say - no matter what we have done. God accepts us just as we are - with all our sin and guilt. We just come with honesty, sorry for our sin!

Read each of the following Bible passages quietly.

Reflect on them in silence for a while.

Then share what you are hearing.

Romans 3:21-24

But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight--not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago. We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done. For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins.

Psalm 27:10

For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.

Luke 3:22

"You are my child, whom I love; I am proud of you!"

SPEAKING AND HEARING THE ACCEPTANCE OF GOD

You may have heard others reject you, but when you come to God honestly, sorry and heartbroken, with all your faults, failures and sin, just as you are, God welcomes you. This is the greatest acceptance of all! You don't have to earn God's love. He loves you first, just as you are!

Finish by saying these words together to each member of your group:

[NAME],

God says to you:

"You are my child, whom I love, I am proud of you!"