



Session #3 - Rejection Must Fall

Orientation: Rejection letters for writers are legendary. New writers are coached on how to get ready for multifarious rejections from agents and editors. Blogger Nathaniel Tower goes so far as to categorize rejection letters in his post "Ten Levels of Rejection (and What to Do about Them)."

There even used to be a magazine called *Rejected Quarterly* that accepted only short stories that had been rejected at least five times. Writers submitted the five rejection letters as proof, along with their stories. Sadly, like many magazines in recent years, *Rejected Quarterly* stopped publishing due to lack of interest. It was rejected by its audience.

As painful as writerly rejection is, thought, it is dwarfed by the pain of rejection from someone close to us: a parent, a spouse. A few words from a key person in our world, or the lack thereof, can shape our view of ourselves for our entire lives. Rejection looms as a giant and haunts us with its cousins—insecurity, inferiority, perfectionism, or compulsive drivenness. Whenever we believe we're only as good as our latest success (or failure), we're in the clutches of the giant of rejection. Fortunately, God counters that toxic thinking with the only thing that can defeat it: his acceptance. In this session, we will see how David resisted the pull of rejection and how God invites us to embrace the acceptance he offers us.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him...

Romans 8:14-17a (ESV)



Welcome to Session #3! Open it up!

1. When you were growing up, who accepted you just as you were? (If the answer is nobody, you can say so.)

2. What are some of the ways you typically respond to rejection?

3. Did you take part in any of last week's "Between Sessions" activities? Share your reflections. Any insights from engaging in these activities?

Read the Orientation from the website.

Hearing it from the Word!

Listen for any fresh insights as this portion of the David and Goliath story is read.

1 Samuel 17:32-37 (ESV)

³² And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." ³³ And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." ³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. ³⁶ Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." ³⁷ And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

Explore it!

4. What was one thing that stood out to you from the Scripture, and why?

5. How did Saul react when David offered to fight the giant?

How did David respond to these words of rejection?

Watch the video segment for session three, and jot down some notes using the comments below:

- It's often hard to shake off comments said about us—or not said about us. Feeling as if we don't live up to others' expectations can lead to the giant of rejection in our lives.
- In life, we have to ask if we are doing things "so that" or "because." Are we doing things *so that* we can get something from God? Or *because* of what God has already done?
- The difference in the two phrases is powerful. We do not serve God so that we can somehow gain his approval, but "because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).
- People operating out of a *so that* attitude respond in one of two ways to rejection. They are either crushed and feel unworthy of others' love, or they flip it around and vow to become the best at everything to prove they are somebody worthy of love.
- God has already decided that we are "good enough" to have a relationship with us. We were never worthy of this on our own, but we were worth it enough for God to send his Son to die for our sins.
- If we live *for* people's approval, we will never feel as if we measure up. But if we live *from* God's approval, we will already know that we are accepted. This mindset changes everything.
- The Bible says we are worthy, loved, valued, and chosen sons and daughters of God. The giant of acceptance falls when we choose to live this out.
- Rejected people reject people. Loved and accepted people love and accept people. We must believe we are accepted by God to truly accept others—and thus promote God's glory.



Reflect on it!

6. Consider the reasons outlined in the video about why people typically feel rejected. Could you identify with any of them? If so, which ones?

7. What reasons for feeling deeply accepted did you hear in the video? Which of them are already prominent in your thoughts, and which aren't?

8. What does it mean to understand the miracle of our creation? How does that nurture a sense of acceptance?

9. In what sense can you say, "God chose me"? What does this mean to you, and why is it so important?

10. What do we need to do to become fully captivated by God's acceptance so that it affects the way we think and act?

11. What's the difference between living *for* acceptance and living *from* it? How can you put this into practice?

Apply it to your life...Living from Victory

(Everyone needs two blank nametags "I am ..." or Hello, my name is ..." and a marker.)

On one of your nametags, write a name that you have been called, or that you have called yourself, that is a rejection name. Rejection names include *unworthy; unwanted; broken; irreparable; unloved; outcast; lonely*. Whatever the name is, write it on the tag and place the tag on your arm.

When everyone has done this, the leader will invite the group to call out the acceptance names that God has given to you to overcome these words of rejection. Acceptance names include *worthy; loved; valued; chosen; cherished; son or daughter of God*. List as many of these acceptance names as you can.

Now pair up with a partner other than your spouse. If there's an extra person, make a group of three. On the blank nametag that you still have, write one of the acceptance names. Stick it on your partner over his or her rejection name. Say, "You think your name is [rejection name], but your real name is [acceptance name]." Then your partner will do the same for you. If you have a group of three, go in a circle so that each person has a chance to write an acceptance name and to receive one.

Don't throw away your acceptance name when the group ends. Place it somewhere you will see it daily as a reminder to live from acceptance this week.

To go deeper, check out the church website under the LifeGroups tab for ASK resources.

Pray within your group...

Close the session by praying together this prayer based on Paul's words in Ephesians 3:16-21! Don't forget to pray for each other!!



Going Deeper ~ ASK ~ Ask, Seek, Knock!

There will be a time for you to share these reflections at the next session.

Ask: List your rejections.

It can be helpful to face the times in your life when you felt rejected. What were the big ones? Maybe one or both of your parents rejected you when you were a child. Or maybe rejection by a boyfriend/girlfriend had a lasting impact and affected the way you felt about yourself. Maybe you have endured a divorce. Maybe a close friend turned his or her back on you for reasons you still don't understand. Take time to write down what happened and how it affected you. Nobody will read this except you. Here's a guide:

I was rejected by _____ when _____.

What happened was this: _____.

It left me feeling _____.

No go a little further and write out some details. Try to dig deeper than "It left me feeling sad," or, "It left me feeling hurt." If you're not a person who normally dwells on feelings, see if you can come up with what it made you do: "It left me not wanting to get up and try again with somebody else."

It left me not wanting to _____.

Instead, I wanted to _____.

What I actually did in response was _____.

Looking back, I can see that over time my response to this rejection has been _____.

How has rejection affected different areas of your life? For example, are you reluctant to put yourself out there in social environments or work situations because it's safer to be invisible than risk being rejected? Are you highly competitive or easily agitated when you don't win? Or are you excessively driven and determined to win at all cost? What price do others pay for your success?

Rejection affects the way I _____.

I make sure I never have to face rejection or failure because _____.

Some of the things I have done to assure my success are _____.

Make a few notes summarizing your insights to share with your group next week.

Seek Worship: Bask in God's Acceptance.

The antidote to being driven by the pain of rejection is to bask in the deep and complete acceptance we have from God. There are a number of Bible passages that might help you do this, such as Romans 8:31-39; Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:16-19. The passage we're going to focus on here is Psalm 8.

An ideal way to reflect on Psalm 8 is to go out for a night walk. If you live in an urban setting where light pollution blots out the night sky, try driving out of the city into an area where you can see the stars the way David saw them. Pick a cloudless night if possible. Look up at the stars—really see them.

If a clear starry night is not available to you, go in the daytime to a place that displays God's majestic handiwork in mountains or great trees or a vast lake or ocean. If none of that is an option, go online and find images of the grandeur of God's handiwork. Now, read Psalm 8.

As you read Psalm 8, think about this: God made this incredible creation—all those magnificent stars—and yet he cares for *you*. He has made you a little lower than the angels and crowned you with glory and honor. That's how he sees you: crowned with his own glory. He sees you that way regardless of how much you have succeeded or failed in your life. Compared to the starry heavens you may feel small, but David says no, the night sky makes him amazed that he matters so much to God.

Spend some time rolling these verses around in your head. Let them bump up against your feelings of inferiority or drivenness. Let the sight of God's creation be a permanent reminder to you of how much you matter to him. If your feelings of rejection go back to your childhood, here's a verse to memorize: "*Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.*" (Psalm 27:10)

Write down a few notes about your time of worship to share with your group next week.



Knock and Proclaim: Tell Someone What God Has Done

Tell a friend or coworker you trust about your journey through Psalm 8 and what it meant to you. Tell them something else you've learned about God's acceptance. It doesn't have to be long; you can just say a few sentences and celebrate how God's acceptance has impacted you.