

Early Struggles

Coping With Rejection

1. Will I experience rejection after I become a Christian?

A) Yes—the Bible teaches that Christians will be rejected and persecuted by the world. Our example, Jesus Christ, was rejected during His earthly ministry. He was rejected by:

- (1) His family (John 7:3–5; 1 Corinthians 15:7).
- (2) His friends and neighbors (Mark 6:1–6).
- (3) The religious leaders (Matthew 12:14; Matthew 23).
- (4) His own people, the Jews (John 8:48–59).
- (5) His disciples (John 6:53–66; Matthew 26:56).

B) Jesus, in turn, taught His disciples that they should expect to be rejected just as He was rejected (Matthew 10:24–25; John 15:18–21).

2. What are some general principles for coping with rejection?

A) Understand the truth of rejection. The rejection that comes from believing in Christ is very personal in nature. It feels as though you are being rejected for who you are and it can be very painful. However, it's important to remember that ultimately it is Christ who is being rejected (Matthew 25:41–45). You are being despised only because you have chosen to follow Him (John 15:19; Acts 7:51–60).

B) Know that God empathizes with your pain. Jesus knows exactly how it feels to be rejected—after all, He was rejected by His own family. That's why He promised to encourage us. Paul said, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received

from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows” (2 Corinthians 1:3–5, NIV).

C) Remember that you are not alone. Rejection can leave you feeling very lonely and isolated. God knows this and He has promised to be with you. There is great comfort in knowing that no matter how many people reject you, God will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).

D) Keep the goal in sight. Remember what Jesus said to keep in mind when you are rejected (Matthew 5:12)—God has promised to reward those who are faithful in spite of rejection and persecution (Hebrews 11:24–26). Also, remember the sin and darkness from which you were saved (Ephesians 2:1–3). The road to eternal life may be difficult, but the alternative is eternal death.

E) Pray for those who reject you (Matthew 5:44). Jesus told us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. He left us an example of this when He prayed for those who were killing him (cf. Luke 23:34). How can we do any less?

F) Find love and friendship in your spiritual family. As a Christian, you have a new family—the Church (Matthew 12:46–50; 19:29). Your church will be reaching out to you and welcoming you into their family. As a new convert, you should show yourself friendly and respond when people extend friendship in your direction.

3. What should I do if my spouse rejects me?

A) 1 Corinthians 7:10–16 and 1 Peter 3:1–2 give advice on how you should handle being rejected by a spouse:

(1) If your unbelieving spouse rejects you completely and wants to leave the marriage, let them leave. If they remain unmarried, your desire should be for their salvation and for the restoration of your marriage relationship. If they marry someone else, you are no longer bound to them.

(2) If your unbelieving spouse is willing to live with you, remain with them. God does not want you to divorce your spouse simply because you are now a Christian. Be willing to endure persecution from them with a Christ-like attitude.

(3) As you remain in the relationship, live in such a way that your conduct will witness to them and they may be won without a word being spoken.

(4) In extreme cases where your physical safety is at risk, separate from your spouse but do not pursue other relationships (1 Corinthians 6:19). Your prayer should be for their salvation and for the restoration of your marriage relationship.

4. What should I do if my family/parents reject me?

A) If you're young and still living under your parent's care, you should remain submissive to them and show them respect in spite of their rejection. Be mighty through God in prayer. Many of the principles we looked at in the case of a rejecting spouse can also be applied to parents (e.g., live in such a way that your good behavior is a witness to them).

B) If you're married and have a family of your own, you will often find it necessary to create boundaries to protect yourself and your children. Unsaved family members can be a very negative influence, and you will have to make some hard decisions. Be as kind and respectful as you can, but don't allow them to be an ungodly influence.

5) What should I do if my friends reject me?

A) Let them go. In some cases rejection can be a good thing (see 1 Corinthians 15:33). Indeed, some friends may need to be rejected by you as their friendship can only lead to trouble (1 Peter 4:3–5). If some of your friends respect your faith in Christ, you should remain friends with them and seek to win them to Christ (1 Corinthians 5:9–10). Prayer is your best weapon here—be firm but sensitive to when they need space/time to think about what you have said.

B) Turn to the church. As a Christian, you have a new family in the church. It is your responsibility to involve yourself as much as possible in the many activities available. Show yourself friendly.

C) Boyfriend/girlfriend (2 Corinthians 6:14). You may find yourself in a position where you have been saved but the person you are dating is still a sinner. In such a case, I advise you to be truthful and straightforward about the change in your life. It may be that you will win them to Christ. If they reject Christ and tell you that they will not continue the relationship unless you give up your faith, you must be ready to break off

the relationship. This can be a very difficult and painful experience. But remember, God will reward you for putting Him above all others!

6) What is going on in the minds of those who reject me?

A) It is helpful to understand what is going on in the minds of those who reject you. Often we are so focused on how we are being treated that we are unaware of how our faith affects others. Consider this:

(1) Conviction. The change in your heart and life is a tremendous source of conviction to your friends and family. Most sinners have some awareness that what they are doing is wrong, and your life serves to amplify this awareness and intensify their feelings of guilt. In a sense, you are making them miserable (actually it is their own resistance to God's grace but they will see you as the root cause; see 2 Corinthians 2:15–16).

(2) Light provokes sin. The Bible teaches that when light and truth are focused on a sinful heart, it provokes more sin (Romans 7:8). Your good example will serve to inspire sin in those rejecting you, so don't be surprised if they become worse than they were before.

(3) Justification. Sinners are constantly trying to justify their attitudes and actions to themselves and others in an attempt to ward off the feelings of guilt they have for their sin. You may find them trying to justify themselves to you.

(4) Persecution. Many times the one rejecting you may persecute you hoping you will respond in kind—if you do, it will make them feel better to know you are really no different than they are. If you don't, you will convict them all the more.