

## OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF REJECTION

*“Fear of man will prove to be a snare,  
but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”*

*Proverbs 29:25 NIV*

Good morning! Let me start with a quiz. “What do all these people have in common?” Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Alva Edison, Henry Ford, J. K. Rowling, Tim Tebow, former President Trump? If you answered, “They have suffered rejection”, you’re right. If you feel rejected, you’re in good company.

We're in a series called “Conquering Your Fears” and we're looking at some common fears. Last week, Bro. Brandon talked about a fear that many of us can relate to – financial fear – unless you’re Kuya Elvin. But, you know, many of our greatest fears are relational. They have to do with people. Guess what’s the number one relational fear above everything else? The fear of your wife! No, it’s actually the fear of rejection, according to one survey. You see, we're in a society that produces approval addicts. “What do other people think of me?” That's the ultimate question. “What will they think of me?” The Bible says, that is a trap.

Look at Proverbs 29:25 *“The fear of man will prove to be a snare. But whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”* It’s a snare - a trap. When you worry about what other people think, you're headed for trouble.

How do we develop the fear of rejection? Simple. From experience because you've been rejected. It's that easy. Have you learned that not everybody in life likes you? Some of those hurts that you've had from people rejecting you, you've never gotten over. You can get the fear of rejection from all directions -- your marriage, your family, your parents, at school, at work, from former friends, from disappointments, from criticisms, from a look. Have you ever seen a look kill somebody? Have you ever seen a parent manipulate a kid with an eyebrow? The fear of rejection!

Today we're going to look at "Overcoming the Fear of Rejection." You do three things to overcome it. I want to share with you a very simple message.

1. I put God in first place.
2. I put people in their place.
3. I put "myself" in the proper place.

Before we look at those, I want us to look at what the fear of rejection does to us. First, you pretend to be someone you're not. You act or behave like someone else. Because you want to be accepted. You want to be appreciated. You want to be affirmed. You see, acceptance or being appreciated or getting others' approval is the number one need of every person. The problem is when we don't get the acceptance that we need we'll do things to make us accepted. Like going through an extreme makeover or telling lies, or bragging about our achievements, possessions, etc. even if they don't exist. In other words, we'll pretend to be the person who we are not. We'll become hypocrites.

Second, you retreat in your own shell. You isolate yourself. This is when you go and sulk in one corner. You'll become anti-social. You'll avoid people. Because you don't want to get hurt. The result is that you'll lose your ability to love and be loved. You'll live in your own world, away from the real world. I remember one story about Charlie Brown of the Peanuts cartoon. One time, Lucy approached him. Lucy looked angry. Charlie Brown said, "Lucy, why do you look like that? Are you quarreling with someone again?"

"Of course not," Lucy replied. "I love the whole world. It's people I can't take."

It's so sad what happens to people who avoid others because they don't want to get hurt. I have a friend in college whose self-esteem or self-confidence was really so low because of the pattern of rejection in his life. He told me that since childhood, he always felt rejected because of his looks.

You see, he was tall and overweight while he was growing up that people mistook him for an adult despite his young age.

One time, he and his mother stepped inside a restaurant. Once they were seated, the waiter approached him and asked, “Sir, do you want a bottle of beer?” He was just 12 years old at the time.

That happened to him many times in various situations. And so, he became extremely shy, he lost his confidence in himself, and he avoided people as much as possible. The last time we talked when I went home to the Philippines some years back, though he finished school, he wasn’t able to hold on to any job and was basically just bumming around.

Third, **you become depressed and unhappy.** In Japan, some school children commit suicide when they don’t perform well. Group pressure is so intense that when you’re not performing as well as others, you’re bullied. Which then makes you feel unhappy and depressed and eventually end your life. In fact, Japan has one of the highest suicide rates. David himself experienced depression and extreme loneliness. In Psalm 69:20, he says, **“Insults have broken my heart, and I am in despair. I waited for sympathy, but there was none; for comforters, but found no one.”**

Living for approval of others is a miserable way to live.

Finally, **you’re afraid of sharing Jesus.** John 12:43-44, ***“Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God.”*** Sometimes silence isn't golden. We don't share our faith because we're worried about the approval of others. What will they think if I tell them I'm a Christian? What will they think if I invite them to church?

So, you see, the fear or rejection affects every area of your life.

Now, **HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THE FEAR OF REJECTION?**

You must get a new perspective in three areas: about God, about other people, and about yourself. You need to teach this to your kids so they can overcome peer pressure. So, now, let me share with you these three areas. First,

**1. I must put God in first place.**

**Psalm 27:1, “The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?”** God here is described in two ways. As light and as salvation. Please take note of those two. Light and salvation.

What does light do? It does three things: It illuminates, it protects, and it energizes.

Light illuminates. I see things more clearly. Are you afraid of the dark or of the light? Would you watch a horror movie in the total dark? Absolutely not. Because light helps you to see things more clearly. When you’re in the dark, you imagine things and that makes you afraid. The unknown makes you afraid. Have you ever been in one of those caverns where they turn the lights out and show you total darkness? It's not a fun feeling.

Light also protects. It provides security. Have you ever seen these high-tech alarms where you walk on to the property and every light in the house goes on? Some of you have those spotlights, that if there's movement in your backyard, the light flips on. Light is a source of security.

And light energizes. It lifts your mood. It brightens your day. Have you ever been out on a cloudy day? You were moody and low and all of a sudden the sun broke through and it changed your attitude. It lifted your spirit. In fact, light has a healing effect. Our son Eze when he was born, the doctor said that he had jaundice. You know, his skin and eyes had yellow discoloration. So, they put him under a special light for one week.

So, we went home without him and it was one of the saddest moments in our lives. Everyday, we went to the hospital looking at his small frame under the light. Eventually, his body was energized, and he was healed.

David is saying, “My relationship to God has the same three effects. He illuminates my life. He protects my life. He energizes my life. I'm not going to be afraid.” Do you have a relationship to God like that? If you don't, you're probably susceptible to the fear of rejection. Maybe you're looking to somebody else to be your illumination, to make things clear for you. You're looking to somebody else to be your protection, to give you security. You're looking to somebody else to energize your life and lift your mood, brighten your day and provide happiness.

Debbie Boone sang “You Light Up My Life”, do you remember that? I'm sure Kuya Rey is nodding his head. And Stevie Wonder sang "You are the Sunshine of My Life". The only problem with that kind of thing is that if other people are your light, you're in trouble. Other people can go out, burn out, wear out, die out. You can't make somebody else the light of your life. They're too unreliable. It's like the lady who married a fellow and after thirty years, he died. She had put on his tombstone "The light of my life has gone out". Three years later she met a new guy and married again. She went back and had the tombstone changed to "I've struck a new match". David says, God is my light. He protects me, He enlightens me, He energizes me. I'm not going to sweat it when other people don't like me. Big deal! He's my Light.

And He's my Salvation. David knew that no matter what happened, God would always love him. The Bible says nothing can separate me from the love of God. God says, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" It doesn't matter if somebody else rejects you, God won't. God will always love you. He will always accept you. He will always hold on to you.

Your fear of rejection is based and rooted in two things. One is the idea that we all need to be loved. That's a fact. We do.

We all desperately need massive doses of love in our life to be healthy individuals. God says, "I want to love you." God is love. You need to be loved. That is a deep profound need that you have. We all have that need to be loved. But what causes the fear of rejection is the false idea that we think that other people ought to be able to fully meet that need in our lives. When you expect somebody else to meet all your need for love, you're asking for trouble. You're setting yourself up for hurt. You're setting yourself for the fear of rejection. When you look to any other person besides God to meet all your love needs, you'll be disappointed. Because they can't. There is no human being alive that can meet all your needs. There is no human being alive that can love you as completely and as fully as you need to be loved. There's just isn't and there never will be. Only God can do that.

The first step in overcoming the fear of rejection is you've got to put God in first place because He's the only one who can ultimately meet all your needs.

Does God ever use other people? Sure. Does God ever love us through other people? Of course. Does God want us to love others? Yes. Does He want to use us as channels of love? Absolutely.

But, you will never have all your needs met by any person or group of people. God never meant it to be that way. They just don't have enough love. Human love is limited. God's love is unlimited, unconditional. No matter how deep your need is, He can fill it. And He never runs dry. Human beings run dry.

The first step in overcoming the fear of rejection is realizing the Lord is my light and salvation, not anybody else. I don't look for anybody else to brighten up my day. I don't look for anybody else to save my life. The Lord is my life. He's my salvation. So I'm not going to be afraid.

What's one thing He saves me from? Psalm 27:10 says (NLT) *“Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.”*

As David says, God saves me from abandonment, from rejection, from disapproval, even from those closest to me. He realizes that only God can accept him for who he is.

We hear news of parents abandoning their children for some reason. In fact, one rejection, one abandonment that is normal here and in many parts of the world is abortion. Young girls and women rejecting the very child they have conceived.

Let me tell you the story of Jim Kelly. He is the oldest abortion survivor we are aware of. He has told his story publicly only once, to a pro-life rally on the steps of the state capitol in Sacramento, California. Jim Kelly is a surviving twin. His twin sister, Katherine Marie Kelly, was killed by his mother in a self-inflicted abortion in 1949.

Although he did not suffer his sister's cruel fate, Jim Kelly's life has not been an easy or cheerful one, by most standards. His mother was a troubled woman who had nine children by five different men, only one of whom she ever married. Jim never met his father. His mother placed him in foster care while he was still very young and he was raised in a series of foster homes and institutions, where he suffered physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

The greatest pain for him, however, was the lifelong feeling of rejection and the craving for his mother's affection and approval. Jim learned of his mother's abortion and the death of his twin sister when he was 27 years old. He had become a Christian several years earlier and had intellectually forgiven his mother for abandoning him and for her continued rejection of him, but he still struggled with feelings of anger, resentment, and loss.

Although he and his mom had a reconciliation of sorts and he felt his mom's love as he held her hand when she was dying on her bed, Jim knew that it was God's love and acceptance that helped him cope with rejection in the past.

According to Jim, his life is proof of the truism that God works in mysterious ways. He says, "As negative as so many of my life experiences have been, I wouldn't trade any of them now." Those experiences have given him compassion and psychological insights that are invaluable to his vocation as a social worker.

Jim found solace and comfort in God's love.

Friend, the only true love comes from God. The only person who we should get approval from is God. Paul says, "We are not trying to please people but God." (1 Thess. 2:4) That simplifies life. You can't please everybody. The secret of simplifying life is saying, "I'm going to do what pleases God. If I do that it sure simplifies life. And if I please God, it's always the right thing to do. It doesn't matter what anybody else thinks."

To overcome the fear of rejection -- put God in first place.

## **2. I must put people in their place.**

That doesn't mean to be aggressive with them. I'm talking about putting their opinions in the right place, having the right perspective. Not overvaluing what they say.

In Isaiah 51:12, God says, "I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mere mortals, human beings who are but grass". Note the word "mortal". God is saying everybody's temporary. He's saying, "Why are you afraid of other people's opinions. Other people are not God. Their opinions aren't going to last anyway." The secret of success is to outlast your critics, keep on going. He says if mortal man puts you down, don't worry about it, God's the one who counts. If somebody comes up and criticizes you, you don't have to automatically accept it. You ought to judge it for what it's worth.



Why am I saying this? When people's approval becomes all-important to you, you're setting yourself up to be afraid.

You see, for some people, all that matters is popularity or fame or applause. To them image is everything. If you live that way, you are at the mercy of everybody else's judgments. If they think I'm a loser, I must be a loser! If they think I'm a dork, I must be a dork! I don't want to live that way, do you?

You don't have to live that way! God never intended for you to live that way. He says, "What are you listening to them for? They're just mortal men. I'm the one that counts. They are no more enduring than grass." Fame doesn't last. If you live your life just to be famous, just to get your picture on the cover of the *Rolling Stone* you may get it there once and from there it's all downhill. Today's hero, tomorrow's zero. How many people have been on the cover of *People* magazine five years ago and you don't even know where they are today? Even a year ago? Fame is so fleeting and so fickle it is a lousy thing to live for. It makes life miserable. You don't have to live that way.

**Galatians 1:10 "Am I now trying to win the approval of men or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."** Paul says his goal in life is to please God, not men. He says I have a choice. I can choose whether I'm going to live for the applause of God or the applause of men. Who are you more interested in pleasing? The crowd or God? He's saying you can't seek the approval of both at the same time. You've got to decide, "Who am I trying to impress?"

The number one fear they say nationally that people have is the fear of speaking in front of other people. Why? Because of the fear of rejection.

Speech experts tell you that the way you get rid of the fear of speaking in front of others is to humanize your audience -- put them in their place, in other words. They're just people. Humanize them.

The tips I've read in many books say, "When you're afraid of a crowd, imagine everybody sitting there in their underwear." Honestly, as your pastor, I've never used that technique. I don't think I ever will. Relax. But I do see the point behind it. You've got to put people in their place.

I think the Bible has a better alternative. It says, "Who are you trying to please, God or man?" I would suggest that the way to overcome the fear of rejection is to live your life for an audience of one. I walk in here and say, "God, I'm not doing this for anybody here. I want to say this is for You. I want to present this message as a living sacrifice to You for an audience of one." That's what it means to overcome the fear of rejection.

**Romans 8:31** *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* If you recognize how much God is for you, it gives you the ability to withstand tremendous rejection. Can you ever come to the place in your life where you are not affected by the opinions of others? Can you ever come to that point? My honest answer is no. I don't think so. I don't think you can ever come to the point in your life where you're not affected by others' opinions. But I do think you can come to the point in life where you're not directed by others' opinions. You will always be affected, but you don't have to be directed. Sometimes people will say the meanest things to you. And it hurts. But it doesn't direct you.

Tim Tebow has written a book called **"Shaken"** which was adjudged the Christian Book of the Year in 2017. In it, he describes the times in his life when he received so much criticism because of his playing style in football. Altho' he was a star player in college, even winning the much-coveted Heisman Trophy in his sophomore year, he was cut three times and traded once when he entered the NFL. And during his short-lived career, he was branded a no-gooder, someone who couldn't play football, etc. He admitted that he was really hurt and dejected. But what kept him going? The fact that he knew God was with him.

The fact that he can find his identity in Christ. The fact that what matters most is not what others think of him but what God thinks of him. And what God thinks of him is what God thinks of you, too.

The Bible says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well... How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:13-14, 17)

So, I don't need the approval of others to be happy. If you can grasp that truth - "*If God be for us, who can be against us*" -- it doesn't matter, you will be released to new levels of developing your potential. Put God in first place; put people in their place.

Lastly,

### **3. I must put myself in the proper place.**

You don't realize how unique and valuable you are. None of us do. The reason you are so vulnerable to the fear of rejection is because you're full of self-doubts. That's why when criticized by another person, deep down inside, you have the doubt and fear that they're right. So it hurts even more.

You know why we feel this way? It's because of sin. The effect of sin is always insecurity. The more we sin, the more insecure we become. Somebody ignores you at a party and you say, "They must not like me!" No, maybe they just didn't even see you were there. But because you were seeing through the eyes of fear, you're vulnerable.

I read a story this week where a woman was standing at a bus stop. A lady from her church walked up and said nothing to her. She thought, "She must be mad at me. She's upset with me. She must not like me. Therefore I don't like her."

They both got on the bus and about five minutes later the lady looked over and saw her and said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see you here." And she started talking.

She said, "I was just consumed with my own pain. I just came from the doctor and found that my son has leukemia."

When we look at life through the eyes of fear, we don't see other people in their pain. We only see our fear. We miss opportunities to minister to others. We can only see ourselves and what victims we are. We must look and see the pain of others and give our lives away as Jesus said.

What's the antidote? The antidote is to accept what the Bible says about how God looks at you. In **Psalm 8:5**, it says, *"You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor"*. So, you are special in his eyes. God does not make junk.

Not only was I created by God but Christ has made me acceptable. **Ephesians 1:4**, *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ."* That is a great verse! We are acceptable to God, not because of what we've done, because we could never be good enough to be acceptable to a perfect God. But through what Jesus Christ has done. He died on the cross, paid for all our sins, covered us with His love. God looks down and says, "What Jesus did was acceptable. You are acceptable." You are spotless. Because of what Christ has done, I'm acceptable. All I have to do is accept what He's done for me. One of the most amazing truths is that God knows every single thing about me and still loves me. God knows every single thing about you, every thought you've had and He still loves you. That is amazing.

I was created by God. Christ has made me acceptable and if God says I'm ok, I'm ok. **2 Corinthians 10:18**, *"When people commend themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them."*

He says it doesn't matter what I say about myself, it doesn't matter what other people say about me, what counts is what God says about me. If God says I'm ok, then I'm ok.

No matter who rejects me, God never will. Your happiness does not depend on other people. It depends on believing in your mind and in your heart that God loves you for who you are. His love is constant. It will never fade.

As I close, let me ask you. Have you been looking to other people to meet a need that only God can satisfy? Watch out! You're headed for trouble. Have you been living to please other people? God wants to be your Light and your Salvation. He knows everything about you and He still loves you. Jesus Christ paid for your sins so you can be acceptable to God. You can be forgiven. I would encourage you this morning to simplify your life by saying, "I'm going to concentrate on God's approval. That's what counts. I'm going to concentrate on God's approval. I want my life to be pleasing to Him. I want to stand at the end of my life and hear Him say, *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”*

Let us pray. Let's bow our heads and close our eyes.

At this point, you may be asking. "How do I get God's approval? There is only one way. There are not many ways. There is only one way the Bible says to get God's approval. Hebrews 11:2 says it is by faith we win God's approval. We accept His love and what He's done for us. We trust our lives to Him. If you've never done that, would you do that right now? Would you say, out loud or in your heart, "Dear God, I want to switch the focus of my life starting here from living for the approval of other people -- boyfriend, boss, husband, wife, family, kids, popular people, people next door -- and I want to focus on Your approval and I want to have Your approval by putting my faith in You and trusting what Jesus Christ has done for me. I want to give my life to You.

I believe that Jesus paid for my sins by dying on the cross. And I believe that he rose from the dead to give me eternal life. Thank you for saving me. In Jesus' name. Amen."

With heads still bowed and eyes closed, let me now speak to those who are already Christians.

You may be feeling out of sorts. Lonely and afraid. You may have been rejected. Or these feelings of rejection keep coming up. Maybe it's happening in school, at work, in your family, among your friends, or even in church. Remember that all you need to please is God. You can't please everybody. And their thoughts about you don't matter. What matters is how God thinks about you. You're special because Jesus is in you. And you're heaven-bound. Nothing can be more special than that. If you want me to pray for you, raise your hand wherever you are.

God, I pray for my brothers and sisters who need a special touch from you right now. I don't know exactly what they're feeling but you're a God who knows them inside and out. You know what they're going through, the troubles they're seeing. Please give them your peace and grace.

Let your Spirit minister to their hearts and minds right now. Continue to strengthen their spirits. You're faithful and I trust that you're able to do it. In Jesus's name, I pray, Amen.