

REJECTED? Genesis 37:1-11; 50:15-21; Matthew 21:33-46

Joseph was the first born son of Rachael, Jacob's favorite wife. Jacob loved Rachael, but married Leah through the deception of her father (Genesis 29).

There was already a house of siblings by the time Joseph arrived, sons of Jacob and Leah. The antagonism of being the favored son grew into outright hate by the time he was a teenager. One day Joseph suggested the idea that in a dream he saw them along with his father and mother bowing down to him! When he was seventeen Jacob sent Joseph to the fields to check on his brothers. They saw him coming and determined to kill him. His oldest brother Reuben interceded and threw him in a pit hoping to rescue him later. While he was gone the other brothers saw an Ishmaelite caravan passing by and sold Joseph as slave to them. They killed a goat, dipped Joseph's coat in blood and told their father that they had found the blood-soaked coat. They let him conclude that a wild animal had killed his favorite son.

Ancient rabbis saw in Joseph a type of the coming of the Messiah. They distinguished the difference between the reigning sovereign king Messiah and the suffering Messiah. The future sovereign king they called Messiah ben David (Da-vid of NCIS, Israeli-Mousaad), and the suffering Messiah they called Messiah ben Joseph. Many noted scholars have drawn the comparisons between the life of Joseph and Jesus the Messiah. Without getting fanciful let's examine some highlights and comparisons of these two.

Joseph and Jesus were both loved by their fathers.

Genesis 37:3 says, "Now Israel (God changed his name) loved Joseph more than all his sons . . ." Jacob's love for Joseph is demonstrated overwhelmingly in his grieving of his "dead" son.

On three occasions in the life of Jesus there was the clear testimony of the Heavenly Father's love for His Son. The Father declares Jesus to be His Son. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus testified to that love saying, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand" (John 3:35). In John 5:20 Jesus said, "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel." We are loved like that but we to suffer.

Joseph and Jesus were both hated by their brothers.

Regarding Joseph Moses wrote, "And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms" (Genesis 37:4). This hatred provoked their evil plan to kill him.

Jesus came unto His own and His own rejected Him. Jesus observed the following behavior toward him by the members of His own nation. He said, "He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 'They hated Me without a cause'" (John 15:23-25). Once while Jesus was teaching,

someone said, "Look, your brothers and sisters and mother have come for you." Jesus responded saying those who were His true mother, brothers and sisters were those who listened to Him and believed His words. .

Joseph and Jesus were both conspired upon by their enemies to be put to death.

The brothers of Joseph saw him approaching from a distance and "before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death" (Genesis 37:18).

You don't read very long into the Gospel accounts until you encounter the enemies of Jesus seeking to put Him to death. After watching Jesus heal on the Sabbath his enemies, "the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6).

Although Joseph was not put to death, he was accounted for dead by his father. Later, when found alive, it was like a resurrection. He was presumed dead based upon the news from his brothers and the blood stained robe. They told their father, "We have found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not." Joseph examined it, and said, "It is my son's tunic." Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. It was taken for granted by his father that Joseph was dead.

Jesus, on the other hand, actually died and was buried. History proves this fact. It was written: "And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. . . At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left" (Matthew 27:35, 37). Roman soldiers certified to Pilate that Jesus was actually dead before he would release the body for proper burial (Mark 15:44-45). Roman soldiers guarded the entrance to the tomb. No man, dead or alive, could have entered or left that tomb without their knowledge of it. Rejected? God knows only too well

Rejection was a part of the lives of Jacob and Jesus and in our lives as well. The next time you are turned down for a promotion, the next time you are snubbed, the next time you have a spat with someone you love and they walk away leaving you feeling cold and alone, remember that Jesus was also rejected. Now, we worship a triumphant Lord. True, but before he was triumphant, he was rejected. Our scripture is usually seen as reflecting how Jews rejected Jesus.

Rejection seems to be in our blood. A New York Times Magazine issue showed a series of photographs of a rock formation in Yosemite National Park. A prominent sign read: "Danger. Climbing on rocks and cliffs is extremely dangerous. They are slippery when dry or wet. Many injuries have occurred." One picture shows a woman walking on the rocks in a tight dress and high heels. She's rejected the warning. Why do civilizations pollute their own backyards? Why do most of us drive over the speed limits? (Speak for yourself, Spencer) It may be that we construct false beliefs to protect ourselves from our fears. Most teenagers think they're immortal. Dying is what other people do. All of us think we're the exception to the rule. Yes, God knows what it's like to be rejected by his children. As scripture says, "The one who God sent, that one you did not believe." Jn.

5:38

What is important is rejection doesn't mean the end of the road. It is not the last word.

Sometimes in the loneliness and hurt of a time of rejection, we imagine that we are the only ones who have been hurt that way, but we're not. It is a common experience. Everyone who has ever walked this earth has been rejected at some time in his or her life. And that includes Jesus. That is what the cross is all about. Misunderstood by his own family, cast out by his own townspeople, crucified by his own nation and particularly by the leaders of the religion in which he was nurtured, Jesus was utterly rejected. It hurts. It shatters. Occasionally it kills. Yet Jesus' rejection was turned to rejoicing. Don't let a bad word be the last word. God's word trumps all.

When you are on the receiving side of rejection, I believe it is right to reject the rejection. Jesus was not some 90 lb weakling. He stood up to his rejecters-the Pharisees and Sadducees-the wouldn't sees and the couldn't sees-and told them they were a den of vipers. Do you trust snakes? Jesus says they tithe mint, dill and cumin and neglect the weightier matters of the law. It's tough but necessary. We are made in the image of God and while sinners Christ died for us so everyone deserves love and respect. So I can reject the rejection. Don't receive words that don't determine or define you. This is good practice for a lot of things.

In the words that Norman Cousins made famous: Accept the diagnosis; defy the prognosis. You may know that Norman Cousins was a prominent political journalist, author, professor, and world peace advocate. However you may not know that at age 11, he was misdiagnosed with tuberculosis and placed in a sanatorium. This would not be the last time he would have to fight his way out of ill health. Later in life Cousins was diagnosed with a form of arthritis then called Marie-Strumpell's disease, although this diagnosis is currently in doubt and it has been suggested that Cousins may actually have had reactive arthritis. Told that he had little chance of surviving, Cousins developed a recovery program incorporating megadoses of Vitamin C, along with a positive attitude, love, faith, hope, and laughter induced by Marx Brothers films. "I made the joyous discovery that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep," he reported. "When the pain-killing effect of the laughter wore off, we would switch on the motion picture projector again and not infrequently, it would lead to another pain-free interval." Cousins received the Albert Schweitzer Prize in 1990. He died of heart failure on November 30, 1990 in Los Angeles, California, having survived years longer than his doctors predicted: 10 years after his first heart attack, 16 years after his collagen illness, and 26 years after his doctors first diagnosed his heart disease. Norman Cousins knew how to reject the rejection. I have people say to me when I walk up to a group, "speak of the devil," even though in jest I say, "I cancel and reject that in Jesus name."

We live both sides of this coin. We get rejected and we do the rejecting. We can't help being rejected but we can help rejecting others. Remember that causing pain to others is a spiritual issue. As scripture says, "Let your speech always be gracious..so that you may

know how you ought to answer everyone." Being full of grace isn't just about being courteous; it's about being Christ-like. Carry Christ into your life. Be more than merely courteous because it's tough to stay courteous when others are hitting hard.

When things go wrong in people's lives, they may find themselves thinking why God would abandon or reject them. This is not what the Lord does. Bad things do happen to good people because of no fault of their own and no desire on God's part. In other cases, the truth of the matter is that we first reject God. Many people think that nothing wrong will happen to them if they don't live according to God's will. A lot of folks believe nothing too bad will happen if they don't live by God's rules and regulations. Too often we are wrong to believe that nothing out of sorts will happen if we reject God's design of the best way for us to live. But it's not true. This isn't because God is vengeful; rather, it's because the Lord is just. Think of God's rules as warnings just like when parents warn a child not touch the burner. My strongly held beliefs about judging and not judging as well as sowing and reaping work in the life of a Christian and the world whether we like it or not. I ask forgiveness of any judgment I have made or seed sown everyday so as not to get the consequences of my sin

According to author Barbara Brown Taylor, all sinful acts share the common theme of going against God's will. Sinners are out of sync with God, and with the life God desires for them. So don't tempt the Lord's organization. Follow the directions. Listen to the instructions. Yet even when we fail, there is much more to God than justice and punishment. Mr. Harris, a 3rd grade teacher, asked, "George Washington not only chopped down his father's cherry tree, but also admitted it. Now, Stacy, do you know why his father didn't punish him?" Stacy replied, "Because George still had the axe in his hand?" That is not true or why the father forgave George. Actually, what is true is that whatever we have done to reject God hasn't been bad enough to make God reject us. Return to God. The Lord can work wonders.

Back to Jesus and Joseph. Joseph was understood to be dead for 21 years, and when Joseph's brothers went to Egypt looking for food, he was waiting for them. However, he was not waiting for vengeance, but in anticipation to give them food and deliver them from their famine. He was their savior after 21 years of being assumed dead.

Jesus' own brothers and members of the family of Israel recognized Him, after His resurrection from the dead. "They saw Him and worshiped Him." Two of His disciples recognized Him on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:31-39). Thomas emphatically declared that he would not believe in the resurrection until he saw Jesus with his own eyes, and put his hands into the nail prints and reached into His side. That very same Thomas stood in the physical presence of Jesus and exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:24-31).

Jesus Christ was the innocent sufferer dying for the guilty. It was not because He had committed some crime or was paying for His own sins. He never experienced personal sins. He died as a substitute on the cross to pay our sin debt. He was the lamb that takes away the sin of the world. His suffering enabled Him to become our Savior. 3

A woman lay dying of AIDS. The visiting priest attempted to comfort her to no avail. "I am lost," she said, "I ruined my life and every life around me. Now I go to hell. There is no hope for me." The priest saw a framed picture of a pretty girl on her dresser. "Who is this?" The woman brightened. "She's my daughter. The ONE beautiful thing in my life." "And would you help her if she were in trouble, or made a mistake? Would you forgive her? Would you still love her?" asked the priest. "Of course I would!" cried the woman. "I would do anything for her! Why do you ask such a question." "Because I want you to know," "that God has a picture of you on his dresser."

Do you believe that? I guess it depends on what kind of God you have. I heard of a man who continually dreamed that God ran after him with a paper in his hand. All his life, he ran from God. He believed that paper was a warrant for his arrest. After accepting Christ, he realized that the paper was a pardon and not a summons. Accept the pardon. Reject the rejection. God has done what it takes to turn rejection into rejoicing. As scripture says, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." Ps. 30:5

It is all of grace. We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). What is your response to such an outpouring of love? When God came to us in the person of His Son, our response was to kill Him. But He kept on coming. There is no greater love than this. There is no greater suffering servant than our great God and Savior!