

# OVERCOMING REJECTION

*book thirty-nine in the series:*

**THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU**

**DOUG BRITTON, MFT**

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

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Day One: Understanding the Danger of Self-Pity

Day Two: Evaluate Yourself

Day Three: Turn to God

Day Four: Respond to Rejection with Wisdom

Day Five: Review and Test

**Overcoming Rejection:** Book thirty-nine in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

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# The Owner's Manual to the New You

Forty-eight short books

(Each book includes a five-day Bible study and homework)

**By Doug Britton, MFT**

Twelve books on "Knowing God"

Twelve books on "Developing a Godly Character"

Twelve books on "Enjoying Healthy Relationships"

Twelve books on "Overcoming Personal Problems"

*For*

Individuals

Small Groups

Churches

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# The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

## **Knowing God**

- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

## **Developing a Godly Character**

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
- Book 24: Staying Faithful to God

## **Enjoying Healthy Relationships**

- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
- Book 27: Showing Grace to Others
- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

## **Overcoming Personal Problems**

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

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# Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in “The Owner's Manual to the New You” series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

## Small Group Leader's Guidelines

**Introduction.** These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

**Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions** you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

**Begin and end each study with prayer.** Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

**Review homework.** Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

**Personalize the lesson.** Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

**As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses.** Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

**Get everyone involved.** The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

**Consider breaking up into smaller groups** to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

**Use day five for a review and test.** Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

## Want to Learn More?

**Free online resources:** For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups)

**Small group leader's book:** For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups).

## Day One: Understand the Danger of Self-Pity

This is a difficult book to write. That's because it deals with what used to be one of my greatest weaknesses—feeling sorry for myself when I thought people rejected me.

It's also challenging because I don't know you personally. I don't know your hurts. You may have grown up with parents who were never there for you, or your parents may have been abusive—emotionally, physically, or sexually.

You may have experienced the pain of being divorced or being rejected by your best friend.

You may have suffered the embarrassment of being the last person chosen for a sports team. Or you may have never had the joy of close friends.

There are many, many ways you may have been wounded or rejected. It would be perfectly understandable if you reacted with anger, depression, self-condemnation, or self-pity.



### God understands your pain

If you have felt crushed or brokenhearted, God understands, and he wants to heal you. He loves you more than you can imagine. Plus, he understands rejection in a personal way. Jesus himself was rejected by people he had come to save.

*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. (Psalm 34:17-20)*

*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)*

#### Discussion questions

1. Have you ever experienced rejection? If so, describe what happened.
2. What did it feel like? How did it affect your self-image?

### Escape the trap of self-pity

I have counseled hundreds of people who have described the pain they felt when they were rejected by their parents, friends, people at church, boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, teachers, other students, coworkers, and others. Almost all of them reacted to rejection with hurt feelings and self-pity.

These are normal reactions, but it's important to move beyond them. If you don't, you can sink deeper and deeper into discouragement, depression, and bitterness.

*See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:15)*

## **Identify the dangers of self-pity**

In this book, you will read how to overcome the pain of rejection and escape the trap of self-pity. The first step is to understand how destructive self-pity can be.

### **Self-pity can distort how you see things.**

When you feel sorry for yourself, you lose your ability to accurately understand or analyze situations. It is similar to someone who doesn't take off his or her sunglasses when entering a room. That person can see, but not clearly.

Elijah, a famous prophet, felt sorry for himself because he thought he was the only prophet who was true to God. It turned out that he was wrong. There were seven thousand more prophets who had not deserted God (1 Kings 19:13-18).

#### **Discussion question**

3. How can self-pity make it difficult to see clearly?

### **Self-pity can hurt your relationships with others.**

When you feel sorry for yourself, it's hard to have healthy relationships. Sometimes that's because you are looking for "proof" that people don't like you. Other times it's because you want others to feel sorry for you.

Here's something else that often happens: When one person in a relationship feels sorry for himself or herself, the other person often also feels sorry for himself or herself. Each person can point out how the other person has been mean, unreasonable, or unfair.

#### **Discussion questions**

4. What are some ways self-pity can hurt your relationships with others?
5. Have you known someone who complained so much about his or her problems that no one wanted to be around him or her? What can you learn from that?
6. Have you ever discovered that you misinterpreted someone, thinking he or she didn't like you, but you were wrong? If so, describe what happened.

### **Self-pity can lead to isolation.**

When you feel the pain of rejection, it's easy to withdraw from other people. This can become a vicious cycle—you withdraw, you feel more isolated, and you feel more rejected.

#### **Discussion question**

7. How would this vicious circle work? What would it look like?

### **Self-pity can prompt you to become angry with God.**

It's easy to slip into self-pity and question God when things go wrong in your life. You may even blame him for your problems.

**Discussion question**

8. Have you ever blamed God for your problems? If so, why? How did that affect your relationship with him? Are you still angry?

**Self-pity can trigger sin or unhealthy behavior.**

If you feel sorry for yourself because of the way people treat you, you may think you deserve better treatment or that you deserve some fun. You might:

- Watch pornography or engage in sexual immorality.
- Say angry words.
- Overeat (or eat too much junk food).
- Get drunk or use drugs.
- Get divorced.
- Go on a shopping spree—maybe spending more than you can afford.
- Stay up too late on your smartphone, social media, the Internet, or watching TV.
- Get mad at God and turn from him, even though he is your best friend.

**Discussion question**

9. Why would someone do something unhealthy or even sin when he or she feels self-pity? What is the long-term result of doing that?

**Self-pity can stop you from fulfilling your purpose.**

If you are consumed by self-pity, it's hard to maintain a positive, Spirit-led attitude and fulfill God's plans for you.

**Discussion question**

10. How can self-pity get in the way of you fulfilling God's purpose for your life?

**Self-pity can result in jealousy.**

Self-pity and jealousy often go hand in hand. If you feel sorry for yourself and you see someone whose life seems to be great, you can feel jealous. For example, if you feel depressed because you aren't married, and you see a happy couple, you might feel jealous.

**Self-pity can lead to a depressing thought life.**

Self-pity can take over your personality. Some people go through life with a martyr's attitude or a "victim's mentality," sad and unhappy most of the time.

Although David wrote many of the Psalms and often was very close to God, he also sank into despair on many occasions.

*How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? (Psalm 13:1-2)*

### Discussion question

11. How can discussing the dangers of self-pity help prepare you to overcome self-pity?

### Do you know Jesus?

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

*Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.*

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

### Memory verse

*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)*

### Want to learn more?

#### Free online Bible study

*You Have a Purpose*

[www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/you-have-purpose](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/you-have-purpose)



5. Today's lesson identifies many potential dangers of self-pity. Review these dangers, then list four dangers that could pose a problem for you. Describe why each one could pose a problem for you.

a. Danger 1:

b. Danger 2:

c. Danger 3:

d. Danger 4:

## Day Two: Evaluate Yourself

Whether you are very young, very old, or somewhere in between, you know what it feels like when people reject you. It hurts. In the following Psalms, David expressed the pain he felt when he was rejected:

*Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. (Psalm 41:9)*

*If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God. (Psalm 55:12-14)*

I think David, like most of us, reacted to rejection with anger, depression, and self-pity. These are normal reactions. Don't feel guilty if you react the same way as David.

But don't stay there. God wants to help you move beyond your hurts.

### When do you feel rejected?

The following questionnaire can help you identify reasons you have felt rejected. Check each reason that applies to you. Then, as you continue reading this book, look for ideas that will help you overcome every reason you checked.

#### I feel rejected when:

- Others are angry with me. \_\_\_\_\_
- People criticize me. \_\_\_\_\_
- No one asks me to be on a sports team. \_\_\_\_\_
- No one wants to be my friend. \_\_\_\_\_
- Someone less qualified is promoted. \_\_\_\_\_
- Other people ignore me. \_\_\_\_\_
- People change the subject when I talk. \_\_\_\_\_
- My spouse is a workaholic. \_\_\_\_\_
- People interrupt me when I talk. \_\_\_\_\_
- My parents are mean to me. \_\_\_\_\_
- My boyfriend/girlfriend breaks up with me. \_\_\_\_\_
- I am not invited to a wedding. \_\_\_\_\_
- I am not invited to a party. \_\_\_\_\_



- My spouse rejects me sexually. \_\_\_\_\_
- I am my family's scapegoat. \_\_\_\_\_
- I am treated poorly because of my faith. \_\_\_\_\_
- I am falsely accused of doing something wrong. \_\_\_\_\_
- Friends stop talking to me. \_\_\_\_\_
- People ignore me at church. \_\_\_\_\_
- Someone stops being my friend. \_\_\_\_\_
- I reach out to people. No one reaches out to me. \_\_\_\_\_
- I'm blamed for everything. \_\_\_\_\_
- People don't respect what I say. \_\_\_\_\_
- My spouse doesn't care about my feelings. \_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion questions**

1. Look over the reasons for rejection you checked. Which ones were the most painful? Explain your answer.
2. Are there other reasons you have felt rejected that are not on this list? If so, what are they? Explain your answer.

**Do you set yourself up to be rejected?**

When I counsel people who have been rejected by friends and others, sometimes it's easy to see why they were rejected. Although they weren't aware of what they were doing, they actually pushed people away.

I'd like to invite you to go on a journey of self-discovery to see if you have pushed people away without knowing it. It's possible none of the following points describe you, but it's also possible you will learn something that helps you understand why people reject you.

**People may not want to be around me because I:**

- I usually talk about problems or negative topics. \_\_\_\_\_
- I mainly talk about myself. \_\_\_\_\_
- I interrupt and change the topic. \_\_\_\_\_
- I talk non-stop. \_\_\_\_\_
- I rarely show an interest in others' lives or ask them questions. \_\_\_\_\_
- I often talk so intensely or loudly that people feel overwhelmed. \_\_\_\_\_
- I speak rudely or seem to think I am superior to others. \_\_\_\_\_
- I seem bored when others talk. \_\_\_\_\_
- I frequently correct people or give them advice. \_\_\_\_\_
- I am silent, rarely contributing to conversations. \_\_\_\_\_
- I act like I am an expert in every conversation. \_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion questions**

3. Do any of the bulleted points in “Evaluate yourself” describe you? Explain your answer.
4. If any of these points describe you, what changes will you make in the way you listen and talk with others?

**Ask mature friends for feedback.**

If you have mature Christian friends who care about you, ask them if there are things you say or do that push people away. Choose friends who will be honest with you, and assure them that you really want to know. Most people will not want to tell you the truth because:

- They feel awkward.
- They want to support you.
- They don't want to hurt your feelings.
- They think you will get mad if they say something.

Discipline yourself to listen carefully and seriously consider what your friends say. It's a precious gift to have supportive friends who will give you honest feedback. Be sure to thank them.

Of course, you may disagree with what they say. If you do, don't immediately discount their words. They may make more sense in a day or two.

*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17)*

**Discussion question**

5. If you feel rejected by others, would you be willing to ask a mature Christian friend for feedback? Why or why not?

**Never blame yourself when you are abused.**

I'm not suggesting that every time you are rejected it's because you pushed others away or you are responsible for the rejection. For example, if you had cruel or insensitive parents, mean classmates, or a sadistic boss, don't blame yourself if they rejected you. Likewise, if you were raped or sexually abused, don't blame yourself—no matter how much the abuser says it was your fault.

**Expect disappointments and unfair treatment**

One thing that helps me overcome hurt feelings and self-pity is that I expect everyone I know will disappoint me from time to time. That's because life is hard, and people are imperfect. That includes me.

When people say or do hurtful or disappointing things, I rarely think, “I can't believe he said that,” or, “How could she have done that?” I expect that sometimes my wife, children, pastor, and best friends will do or say things that hurt me.

If you expect fairness in life, you will be disappointed. When you interact with people, you are bound to face times when you are disappointed or hurt.

*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)*

### Discussion questions

6. Why do you think Jesus warned us in John 16:33 that we will have problems in this world? Explain your answer.
7. Do you think expecting that people will disappoint you from time to time will help you overcome hurt feelings or self-pity? Why or why not?

## Realize you may be overly-sensitive

Many people are overly-sensitive or thin-skinned, and they react to the slightest hint of rejection. If that describes you, it's possible that sometimes you read too much into people's words.

### Discussion questions

8. Do you think you may be overly-sensitive, or do other people say you are thin-skinned? Explain your answer.
9. If you think you may be overly-sensitive, take a few minutes to ask God to help you grow thicker skin and to realize that sometimes you may misinterpret others' words and actions.

## Catch self-pity at an early stage

The sooner you realize you are feeling sorry for yourself, the easier it is to deal with your emotions. If you begin to slip into self-pity, identify what you are feeling and deal with it.

### Discussion question

10. Do you agree it's a good idea to catch self-pity at an early stage? Why or why not?

## Memory verse

*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17)*

## Want to learn more?

### Free online Bible study

*Take the plank out of your eye*

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## Homework – Day Two

1. Do you think God is disgusted if someone feels sorry for himself or herself? Why or why not?

2. List the top three reasons you might feel rejected. Describe why each one would be hard for you:

a.

b.

c.



## Day Three: Turn to God

Most of us look for approval from other people. To some degree, that's a good thing. After all, the Bible says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).

However, you are making a mistake if other people's opinions become too important to you. That's because it's much more important to please God than to please other people. Read what Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians:

*Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)*

When you read these words, you might think, "Of course I agree with Paul. I want to win God's approval too."

But then when someone rejects you (or even disagrees with you), you may find yourself obsessing about what he or she said. You might spend hours, days, or weeks turning the words over in your mind, alternating between feeling hurt and feeling angry. You may think you were unfairly treated, unappreciated, and misunderstood. Or you may wonder what you did wrong, what other people think about you, or how you can make things better.

One result of focusing so much on criticism or rejection is that your walk with God can suffer. That's an unfortunate result, because your relationship with God can be the best way to overcome rejection.

### Discussion question

1. Have you ever been so upset about being rejected that you found yourself feeling distant from God? Explain your answer.

### Pray to know Jesus' peace, regardless of your circumstances

Jesus knew his followers would experience tremendous amounts of rejection, and that many of them would be killed for their faith. Yet he said he came to give us peace and joy, regardless of our circumstances.

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)*

*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:11)*

Read John 14:27 again. Notice that Jesus said, "My peace I give you," then he added, "I do not give to you as the world gives."



The world gives peace for two reasons: circumstances and relationships. When our circumstances and relationships are going well, we find peace. When they aren't going well, we feel agitated, worried, or upset.

The peace Jesus gives is very different. It is the peace that comes from knowing him and trusting him.

When you feel rejected, ask God to help you relax and enjoy his peace. There may be steps you should take or difficult conversations you should have, but you can still enjoy his peace.

### Discussion questions

2. Describe the difference between the peace Jesus gives and the peace the world gives.
3. Have you ever experienced Jesus' peace when you were going through a difficult situation? If so, describe what happened and how you experienced his peace.
4. Can praying to know Jesus's peace help you when you feel rejected? Why or why not?

## Focus on pleasing God

I like to get along with people, and I like to please people. But there are times when I have to choose between pleasing God or other people.

For example, what should I do if I am with people who are telling dirty jokes, making derogatory racial comments, or asking if I agree that "all religions say the same thing"?

If I were to join in the jokes, approve of the racial insults, or agree that all religions say the same thing, I would be doing something I know is wrong. But if I don't go along with them, they might reject me.

I hope I would choose to please God, not others. I wouldn't need to argue with them or be rude, but I hope I would silently pray for them and, if the Lord prompted me, be willing to gently tell them the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Whether or not someone rejects you, remember whose opinion is the most important. What God thinks about you is far more important than what anyone else thinks.

*Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29)*

*On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. (1 Thessalonians 2:4-8)*

### Discussion questions

5. Reread 1 Thessalonians 2:4-8. Paul wrote that he didn't try to please others or use flattery. Does that mean he spoke harshly or unlovingly? How did he speak? What was his attitude?
6. What can you learn from Paul's example? Explain your answer.

God is looking for people who will honor and love him in all circumstances.

*He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight." (Luke 16:15)*

*Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God. (John 12:42-43)*

Do these verses mean you should always speak up for Jesus when people criticize him or make fun of Christianity? Not necessarily. There may be times when silent prayer would be more effective. But they do let you know you should never be ashamed of being a Christian, and that you should be much more interested in pleasing God than in pleasing others.

### **Discussion questions**

7. Have you ever denied knowing Jesus because you were afraid of being criticized or rejected? Explain your answer.
8. Has this section ("Focus on pleasing God") been helpful to you? Why or why not?

## **Enjoy Jesus' love**

People may reject you or disappoint you, but Jesus never will. No matter what you have done, and regardless of what anyone else thinks about you, Jesus loves you and wants to have a close relationship with you.

You can enjoy God's love no matter who rejects you—even your parents.

*Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. (Psalm 27:10)*

Regardless of anything you have done—and regardless of what anyone thinks about you—Jesus loves you and wants to be close to you.

*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)*

*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)*

## **Evaluate your Christian life**

You will be much better equipped to respond to rejection when you are walking close to Christ. I'd like to invite you to give yourself a quick spiritual checkup:

### **Do you have a solid church home?**

We need the teaching, strength, and fellowship we find in church, If you don't have a church home, I encourage you to:

- Find a church that says the Bible is the word of God.
- Find a church where people pray.
- Find a church where people praise and worship.
- Find a church that has a small group you can join.

**Discussion question**

9. Do you have a home church? If not, find a church and make a plan to visit it.

**Do you read the Bible every day?**

The Bible is amazing. It tells us about Jesus, and it shows us how to live an abundant, full life. Plus, God's Spirit changes us supernaturally when we read it.

If you haven't been reading the Bible, find a translation you can understand, start with the gospel of John, then continue on through the rest of the New Testament. Underline verses that "speak" to you. Write notes in the margins. Don't be discouraged if you don't understand everything you read. Ask people at church for help. Pray and ask God to help you grow in understanding.

**Discussion question**

10. Do you have a habit of reading the Bible every day? If so, describe what you do. If you don't, make a plan to develop this habit.

**Do you pray daily?**

Praying is talking to God, and it is listening to God. Imagine trying to get to know someone without ever talking to that person. It's the same with God. We need to talk to him every day. A good habit is to pray every morning, then continue praying throughout the day.

**Discussion question**

11. How frequently do you pray? Describe your current pattern. Also describe any changes you plan to make in your pattern.

**Memory verse**

*Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)*

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## Homework – Day Three

1. Have you ever spent hours or days worrying about what someone thought about you? If so, describe one situation:
2. How did worrying about the situation you described in question 1 affect your walk with God?
3. How could someone feel peace when he or she is rejected by a close friend?
4. What does it mean to focus on pleasing God, not others?

5. Would thinking about Jesus' love for you help if someone rejected you? Why or why not?

6. Would being part of a Bible-based church help you deal with rejection? Why or why not?

7. Would reading the Bible daily help you deal with rejection? Why or why not?

8. Would praying regularly help you deal with rejection? Why or why not?

## Day Four: Respond to Rejection with Wisdom

In the early years of my marriage, I often was sure my wife Skeeter didn't love me. If she loved me, I asked myself, why did she do things I didn't like? And why didn't she do things I wished she would do?

In church I likewise sometimes felt wounded. I still remember one time when I saw some friends talking in the church hallway. As one of them looked my direction, the others laughed. I was sure they were talking about me. Not only was I thin-skinned, I was also paranoid.

You may not be as touchy as I was, but there's a good chance that you, too, sometimes react to situations with hurt feelings and self-pity.



### Realize it's easy to misinterpret others

You can be absolutely sure that people have rejected you, yet be wrong. I was wrong about Skeeter, and I was probably wrong about my friends in the church hallway. Here are some ideas that can help you see more clearly:

#### Realize you may be overly-sensitive.

As I wrote in Day 2, many people are overly-sensitive or thin-skinned, and they react to the slightest hint of rejection. If that describes you, you may read too much into people's words or actions.

It's hard to see yourself clearly when you are sure you are right. After all, you have "proof." Someone didn't invite you to a party or their wedding. He or she doesn't respond to your emails or text messages. When you pass in the church hallway, this person doesn't say "hi."

One way to evaluate whether or not you are overly-sensitive is to ask close family members and friends. Do they say you take things too personally, or that you misinterpret others? If they do, there's a good chance they are right.

When you catch yourself starting to take something personally, remind yourself that you may not see things clearly.

#### Discussion question

1. Do you think you are overly-sensitive? Why or why not?

#### Look for the positive.

As I wrote earlier, when I was a young husband I sometimes thought Skeeter didn't love me because she didn't do some things I wished she would do. However, over time I began to realize how many good things she did for me and our children. I had slipped into a common trap—focusing on the negative. When I realized that, I felt ashamed about how immature I had been.

Make an effort to see the positive things people say and do. Paul gave us great guidelines in his letter to the Philippians:

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)*

#### **Discussion questions**

2. Do you focus more on what other people do right or what they do wrong? Explain your answer.
3. Take a few minutes to pray that you will be able to put Philippians 4:8 into practice.

#### **Realize that you can't read other peoples' minds.**

If someone says or does something that wounds you, it's possible he or she doesn't mean to hurt you. In fact, his or her words may not have anything to do with you at all.

- Realize that you may read too much into someone's smile, frown, or body language.
- Realize that the other person may be late or really busy.
- Realize that the other person may be stressed, tired, or sick.
- Realize that the other person may be thinking about a project.
- Realize that the other person may have personal problems that have nothing to do with you.
- Realize that you may have misunderstood someone.

#### **Discussion questions**

4. Can you think of a time you misinterpreted someone? If so, describe the situation.
5. How can you remind yourself that you may be misinterpreting someone?

#### **Give others grace.**

People are imperfect. So are you. Don't react every time someone is grumpy or uncommunicative, or if someone says something in a disrespectful tone of voice. People aren't necessarily rejecting you. They are being imperfect human beings.

People may actually reach out to you, but you may be unable to receive their actions because you think they aren't sincere or that they are putting on a show. I often see this when counseling married couples. I see the same thing happen between friends, with one person only able to see what feels like signs of rejection.

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)*

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Colossians 3:12-13)*

#### **Discussion question**

6. What does it mean to give others grace? How can this help you respond to rejection?

**Realize that it's normal to talk about problems.**

Do you immediately feel criticized or rejected if a friend, coworker, or boss brings up a problem? If that happens, immediately pray. Ask God to help you trust him and experience his peace. Problems are part of life, and we need to talk about them.

**Realize that people may have misunderstood you.**

I have been writing about how easy it is to misinterpret others. Not only is it easy for you to misinterpret other people, they may misinterpret you, maybe even thinking you are rejecting them. Be sensitive to people around you. If they seem distant, they may have misunderstood your words or misinterpreted your actions. If you think that may have happened, you could say, "You seem a little distant. Have I done or said something that hurt or offended you?"

**Practice the "nineteen out of twenty" principle.**

Over the years, I became aware of a pattern in my life. I would think someone didn't like me or was upset with me, but later I would discover I had misinterpreted the other person's actions. This happened so often that I figured I was wrong approximately nineteen out of every twenty times. I used this information to make a plan that has helped me many times.

If I start to think someone doesn't like me or is rejecting me, I say to myself, "Chances are nineteen out of twenty I am just being weird and nothing is wrong. If this is the one out of twenty times I am right, God will help me deal with the situation."

**Discussion questions**

7. Describe the "nineteen out of twenty" principle in your own words.
8. Can this principle help when you feel rejected? If so, how will it help?

**Realize that some people won't want to be your close friend**

Realize that someone may like you, but not desire an intimate closeness. For example, someone may have so many close friends that he or she cannot develop the close relationship you would like.

Likewise, if you have a friend who starts to spend more time with other friends, don't be crushed. Interests change, and sometimes friendships change. Make it a project to make some new friends.

**Discussion question**

9. What will you do if a friend starts to spend less time with you?

**Don't take hurtful words personally—even if they are personal**

When you think someone is rejecting you, you might be wrong. But, of course, sometimes you might be right. How should you respond at these times—especially if the other person is rude or cruel? The Bible teaches a surprising response:

*But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:27-28)*

**Pray for people who reject you.**

Instead of trying to get back at people who wound or reject us, God wants you to pray for them.

This would include “cliques” or “in-groups” that don’t accept you because of your social status, clothes, finances, or other superficial reasons.

You don’t need to take others’ words personally, even if they want you to take them personally. Instead, see their words as a sign of immaturity. If someone says something hurtful, ask yourself:

- Was what he or she said loving?
- Was what he or she said wise?
- Was what he or she said Christ-like?
- Does God want me to accept or believe what was said?

Since the answer to all these questions is obviously “no,” say to yourself, “He (or she) has a problem, so I won’t allow myself to be wounded. Instead, I will pray for him or her.”

#### **Discussion question**

10. Will the previous four bulleted questions help you not to take things personally? Why or why not?

Although you should always pray for people who reject you, also remember the question in Day 2: “Do you set yourself up to be rejected?” If you have done something wrong or offended the other person, be sure to ask him or her to forgive you.

#### **Take action when appropriate.**

There may be times when you should take action when someone rejects you. For example, if you aren’t able to work things out with a supervisor who rejects you, it might be appropriate to talk with his or her supervisor. If someone rejects you but also physically abuses you, take steps to protect yourself and contact law enforcement.

### **See bullies and abusers as weak, not strong**

It can be especially hard to deal with rejection by someone who has abused you physically or emotionally. If you have been abused—whether by a parent, spouse, teacher, pastor, acquaintance, or anyone else—you may look at the abuser as a powerful person, someone who is stronger than you physically and emotionally. That’s not how God looks at the abuser. He sees him or her as an emotionally weak, flawed person who sinned. Don’t believe the abuser’s angry words.

Pray to see the abuser through God’s eyes. Realizing that the abuser is weak, not strong, can help you break free from the power of his or her words.

#### **Discussion question**

11. Have you thought of a bully or abuser as superior to you? If so, what is a more accurate way to view him or her? Explain your answer.

### **Memory verse**

*But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:27-28)*

## Homework – Day Four

1. Do you think you sometimes are overly-sensitive? Why or why not?
2. Review the section titled “Realize that you can’t read other peoples’ minds.” Do you think you sometimes think people are rejecting you when they aren’t? Why or why not?
3. Which bulleted point(s) in the section titled “Realize that you can’t read other peoples’ minds” will help you? Explain your answer:
4. Describe one time you misinterpreted someone else’s word or actions, thinking he or she was rejecting you when that wasn’t true:







## Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

### Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

### True or false

- T 1. Self-pity is a normal response to mistreatment or rejection.
- T 2. Self-pity is a trap we need to escape.
- T 3. Self-pity can lead to bad decisions or unhealthy behavior.
- T 4. It's possible to set yourself up to be rejected.
- T 5. We should expect disappointments and unfair treatment from time to time.
- T 6. It's possible to experience Jesus' peace when someone rejects you.
- F 7. Focusing on pleasing God will not help you deal with rejection.
- F 8. It's easy to understand what other people are thinking.
- T 9. You don't have to take others' hurtful words personally.
- F 10. If someone is grumpy, it's a sure sign he or she doesn't like you.

### Memory verses

- 1. Galatians 1:10

*Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

- 2. Luke 6:27-28

*But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*



## About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

He has also trained pastors, counselors, mentors, and lay leaders in biblical counseling, mentoring, and small group leadership.

Doug and his wife Skeeter live in Northern California.



### Books

Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore).

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### Seminars and retreats

Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com) and click on the "Seminars" link.

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