

People Are More Valuable To God Than Anything Else On Earth

'God said, "Let Us make mankind in Our image, after Our likeness" ... God created mankind in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created male and female' (Genesis 1:26 & 27). 'God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul' (Genesis 2:7). He used His hands to make us (Psalm 119:73). 'Behold, I have etched you on the palm of each of My hands' (Isaiah 49:16). 'We know and believe the love God has for us. God is love. He who abides in love, abides in God and God abides in Him' (1 John 4:16).

'You did form my inward parts. You did knit me together in my mother's womb. I will praise You for the wonder of my birth! Wonderful are Your works and that my spirit knows well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was being formed in secret. I was intricately and wonderfully wrought in the depths. Your eyes saw my unformed substance, and in Your book all the days of my life were written before ever they took shape, when as yet there was none of them' (Psalm 139:13 to 16). 'You are He Who took me out of my mother's womb. You made me hope and trust when I was nursed. I was cast upon You from my very birth. From my mother's womb You have been my God' (Psalm 22:9 & 10).

Jesus said, "Do not be anxious for your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor for your body, what you will wear. Is life not more important than food and the body more than clothing? See the birds of the sky. They do not sow neither do they reap nor gather into barns, but your heavenly Father feeds them. You are much more value than birds" (Matthew 6:25 & 26). "Two sparrows are sold for a coin. Not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will, but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not be afraid. You are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29 to 31). "What man is there among you who has a sheep and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, would he not grab it and lift it out? Man is much more value than a sheep!" (Matthew 12:11 & 12).

We humans are valuable to God. Can we comprehend the enormity of His Master Plan for the lives of His most precious Creation? Earth is only a training ground for eternity and God has a place for every one of us. Many of us do not comprehend this concept and as a result, some of us throw ourselves away. To comprehend how valuable mankind is to God, we need only to look at the description of the creation of man. God is a triune Being: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Man is also a triune being: spirit, soul and body. We were formed and created in the absolute visual image of God. Head up top, arms, hands, legs, feet and torso all in the same place, just like our Father. We were created in His shape; in His form. We are not shapeless and neither is God. God stands like we do. He sits like we do. Jesus was the image of God and He was in the form of a Man, proving that we are in the same form or shape as God. The image of God is a visible image. The likeness is in the character. We were also made in His likeness or emotional character. He loves, hates, breaths, laughs, feels anger and joy, just like we do. The likeness of God is internal. Jesus was also in the likeness of God, in that He did everything He saw the Father doing (John 5:19).

We were not made as simple beings, we were made a living soul, with feelings, emotions and choices. Animals act largely on instinct but humans act through the soul. The breath of life breathed into us at creation, changed the lifeless shape of man made of dust, into a living soul. Never before or since has God done that act. It was the only time ever in the history of eternity, as recorded in the Bible, has God moulded dirt into shape then breathed life into that moulded piece of dirt. With that breath, the dirt came alive and became a breathing, flesh and blood masterpiece with all the mental, spiritual and physical faculties. Humans are absolutely unique in that aspect. That was achieved by the single breath of God. It was not a tiny sigh, it was a deep full exhale such as we would do, if we were trying to breathe life into a near-drowning man. We would not give that person little puffs of air. We would take the deepest breath we could hold and blow life into that victim. That is the type of breath God breathed into Adam. Adam was a living soul, Jesus is a life giving Spirit (John 20:22; 1 Corinthians 15:45 to 49). The Spirit is life giving; the soul is life receiving. When Jesus breathed on the apostles He gave them new life. 'It is the Spirit of God that made me, and the breath of the Almighty that gives me life ... Behold, I am toward God as you are; I am also made out of clay' (Job 33:4 & 6). There were two processes to our creation: the moulding or shaping of the dust, and then the breath of life. Somewhere in that process the flesh, blood, bones, tissue, skin, organs and brain matter were created and put in place in a perfect setting within our bodies.

Many people cannot understand how they were created and what they were created for. Man is the supreme masterpiece of the Creator; His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). No other creation was formed by hand out of dust then had life breathed into them, turning them into living, breathing, flesh and blood creatures who are intelligent enough to worship their Creator. No other creation was given a Saviour. Angels are also made in the image of God and in His form, but they are in spiritual form, not flesh and blood (Matthew 22:30). Although they can appear to us looking like humans (Luke 1:11; Hebrews 13:2), they can disappear just as quickly (Luke 1:38). Animals and birds were also made out of the ground (Genesis 1:24; 2:19) but they never received the breath of life from God. Mankind was made to be a partner with God (Genesis 2:18 to 20).

Everything up to that point of creation was good, but that was the first time God saw something that was not good ... it was not good for man to be alone so God made Eve out of Adam's flesh and bone to complement him (Genesis 2:21 to 23). It was not until after Adam obeyed God and did his very first job – naming all the animals, then God blessed him with Eve. Until they sinned, Eve was equal to Adam, and only after they sinned, did Adam rule over Eve (Genesis 3:16).

The Lord visited Adam and Eve every day and called to Adam (Genesis 3:8 & 9). Imagine having God the Creator walking through our garden every evening! What a privilege! How like our God that is! God also calls out to us to fellowship with Him. He sent Jesus to save us and to restore fellowship with God Who yearns for us (James 4:5; 1 John 1:7). God put a Spirit into each of us from Himself and He jealously desires that Spirit. It is amazing God would be bothered to be jealous. It is with a righteous jealousy that He desires our fellowship. He longs to be gracious to us and we are blessed if we wait for Him (Isaiah 30:18). That shows He really wants us.

Notice how Jesus took the time to stop and chat with Zaccaeus (Luke 19:1 to 10) and as a result, Zaccaeus was saved. When we are saved, we are a new creation in Jesus and all our old sins are washed away (2 Corinthians 5:17). Being a new creation does not mean we suddenly look 18 again. It means all the sins we have ever committed, all the hurts that we have suffered and all the old life is gone forever. We are Spiritually recreated. Our bodies remain the same age, but spiritually we are brand new. We are to strip off the old sinful nature and 'clothe' ourselves with our new selves (Colossians 3:1 to 17). The new creation restores the image of God that was marred by sin. In this newness of life, there is once again the likeness of God in the person of Jesus.

When we come to that place – that is the likeness of God – all difference in race, colour, denomination or culture, no longer divide us. This was a mystery that was hidden for ages and generations and was only revealed through Jesus (Colossians 1:26 & 27; Ephesians 3:3). The mystery is Jesus in us, the Hope of glory. Our salvation plan, which God thought through carefully, and which Jesus suffered and died for, was the mystery or secret, in accordance with His good pleasure and grace. He planned it for the maturity of the times and the end of the ages. It is in Jesus we need to put our confidence and hope (Ephesians 1:6 to 13). Further to the salvation mystery, the Gentiles are now to be fellow heirs with the Jews – members of the same body and joint partakers in the same divine promise in Jesus through their acceptance of the full Gospel (Ephesians 3:6). The fellowship we Gentiles can have with the Jews is one that blesses us (Genesis 12:3). We can learn so much from the Jewish people because they have known the scriptures for a lot longer than the Gentiles have, and they know what God is saying. If we listen to a born-again Jewish man preaching, his knowledge of the Word is far deeper than the average western pastor, and his anointing is more powerful.

After reading how valuable we are to our Creator, how should we view our own image? We need to see ourselves as the Lord sees us. If we study these following scriptures, we should never feel unworthy, that is if we can comprehend our incredibly privileged place in eternity. The angels and ancient prophets longed to see the salvation mystery. 'The prophets who prophesied of the grace of God which was intended for us, searched and inquired about this salvation. They sought to find out to whom or when this was to come ... into these things the angels longed to look' (1 Peter 1:12). Here is more about the secret or mystery the Lord kept hidden until Jesus came – and the privilege we have of being shown God's secrets. These mysteries have been kept secret since the Lord created the earth – or since the foundation of the world. The Kingdom of God was prepared for us humans way back then. 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matthew 25:34). 'God chose us in Jesus before the foundation of the world ...' (Ephesians 1:4). The secret plans that had been thought through before the earth was created, were revealed when Jesus came, and the fact Jesus died, was all for our sakes. 'It is true He was chosen and fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but He was brought out to public view in these last days for the sake of you' (1 Peter 1:20). Our salvation was in God's plan before we were created because in His foreknowledge, He knew Adam would bring sin into the world and we would need rescuing. The plan to save us was worked out before creation began and was kept a secret for thousands of years. 'We confess, great and important is the hidden truth, the secret of Godliness: God was made visible in human flesh, vindicated in the Holy Spirit, was seen by angels, preached among nations, believed on in the world and taken up into glory' (1 Timothy 3:16). The Lord did this for our salvation so we would have eternal life with Him. Jesus gave all He had to save us – He gave His blood for us. That is how valuable we are to God.

'The Kingdom of God is like treasure buried in a field which a Man found and hid again, then in His joy He went and sold all He had to buy that field. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of precious pearls, who on finding a single pearl of great price, went and sold all He had and bought it' (Matthew 13:44 to 46). The men in this story sell all they have to buy what is the most precious item to them. The first man did not want the field, he wanted the buried treasure in the field. The second man was a merchant and knew the

value of pearls. By telling these parables, Jesus was saying the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price were as precious as we are to Him. That is how valuable we are to God. By His grace and mercy God gave everything He had to redeem us. God gave us His only begotten Son. Jesus gave us everything He had; His lifeblood. All we have to do is accept His sacrifice and love Him with all our heart.

'May the God of peace fully sanctify you (that is to make you pure and wholly consecrated to God). May your whole spirit, soul and body be blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus our Messiah. He is faithful and is calling you. He will sanctify you' (1 Thessalonians 5:23 & 24). What exactly is involved having our bodies blameless? Most of us do not consider our bodies very often but we all have to live in a body. The Spirit of the Lord enters an unborn baby within the womb. 'You know not the way of the wind nor how the Spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a pregnant woman, even so you know not the work of God Who does all' (Ecclesiastes 11:5). We are all wonderfully made and that knowledge should go down deep into our soul. Our bodies are intricately woven together. King David knew through a revelation the human body is a created miracle of God. He made us with love in His heart. Just like expectant parents prepare their lives and their home for their unborn baby to thrive in a safe environment after it is born, so too, before mankind was created, the Lord took the time to set a perfect stage for us to thrive. He first created the earth to be habitable (Isaiah 45:18). He created light, warmth, food, water, shelter and animals, and made sure everything was just right before He created Adam and Eve.

Here are a few simple facts about the body. Millions of light sensitive nerve cells in the back of each eye, relay the information to our brain through a bundle of nerve fibres that form the optic nerve. Our brain analyses this information and as a result, we can see. The whole process takes just a fraction of a second. The lens focuses light onto the retina – the back wall of the eye – and to focus, the lens changes shape. In a single day, our lens may change shape 100,000 times. Compared to other animals (not that we are animals, but just as a comparison) we have a large brain for our body. The grey part of the brain is folded to fit inside our skull. Flattened out, it would cover a small dining table. We have approximately 37,500 kilometres or 60,000 miles of blood vessels inside our bodies; nearly enough to stretch 2½ times around the earth. We have about 5,000,000 hairs on our bodies but only about 100,000 on our heads, and God has counted every one of them (Luke 12:7). Most of the cells that make up our organs are so small, that 200 of them could fit on a full stop, and we have about one trillion cells inside our bodies. About 31 kilometres or 50 miles of nerves, snake through our body like a network of telephone wires and they relay messages to our body, spinal cord and brain. Obviously, our bodies are not the accidental random evolved beings the evolutionists would have the world believe.

The place of the body in regards to redemption has a very important position. In the whole book of Romans we read all about God's marvellous plan of redemption and salvation through faith, our role as Christians and how to get along with one another, both in our physical bodies and in the Body of Believers. 'I urge you brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable spiritual service. Do not be conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so you may find the perfect and acceptable will of God' (Romans 12:1 & 2). The very first thing we do as soon as we accept Jesus as our Saviour, is to present our bodies. We must not think that our spirit and soul are more important than the body, for the body is equally important to God. If we give God our body, the spirit and soul come with it as a complete package.

What we do in our body, tells Him how much we have appropriated His will. If we do not present our body to Him, we are not in a situation to find out His will for our life. To find out God's will for our life, we need to present our body, then God will renew our mind and we will end up knowing God's will for our life and we will develop the mind (the thoughts, hearts desires, purposes, aims) of our Messiah (1 Corinthians 2:16). God wants to know what we are doing in the body. When the scriptures say to present our body as a living sacrifice, he was referring to the Old Testament law. According to the law, a man would present his sacrificial animal to be sacrificed. Once it had been slain, it no longer belonged to the man – it belonged to God. We are to do the same but we are to give ourselves as a living sacrifice. Once we have presented ourselves, we no longer belong to ourselves, we belong to God. It is no longer we who live, but Jesus Who lives in us (Galatians 2:20). Once we have given God our body, we do not own it any more. We are a steward and we will have to answer to God for the way we have treated our body. 'For we must all appear before the Judgement Seat of Jesus, so that each one may receive according to what he has done in the body, whether good or bad' (2 Corinthians 5:10). Whatever is not good is bad; there is no in between.

We are instructed to take good care of ourselves and not abuse our bodies with sin. 'Do you not know your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you, Whom you have received as a Gift from God? You are not your own. You were bought with a price. So then honour and glorify God in your body and in your Spirit, which are God's' (1 Corinthians 6:19 & 20). Our body is a temple. How do we treat a sacred temple? Do we treat it casually? No. It is God's temple and we must treat our bodies with respect. One day we will have a new resurrected body. 'We are citizens of heaven and we earnestly await the coming of the Lord

Jesus our Messiah and Saviour, Who will transform the body of our humiliation to be like the body of His glory' (Philippians 3:20 & 21). The transformation will be instant and will last forever. The body we live in today is a body of humiliation; a fallen body in a fallen world. We are humiliated because of our sin and by the things our bodies have to do. For example, we perspire and must wash to remove body odour, we must use the bathroom, our hair falls out, our teeth fall out, women lose their dignity when giving birth, we become old and feeble. We are simple creatures and are paying the price for Adam's sin which became our sin. Thank God that is not the end! We are going to receive a glorious body like the body of Jesus following His resurrection. Our human bodies have a wonderful destiny.

Our aim should be to attain the resurrection at any cost. 'If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead' (Philippians 3:11). We cannot take our salvation for granted. We must work on our relationship with the Lord and remain in sweet fellowship with Him daily. He can keep us from falling and present us faultless before the presence of His glory in exceeding joy' (Jude 1:24), but we must hold tight to that which is promised, which is eternal life. We should discipline ourselves, 'For fear that after proclaiming the Gospel to others, I would become unfit and be disqualified' (1 Corinthians 9:27). We have to work on our relationship with God so we will not be disqualified and lose our salvation.

How do we respect our bodies in line with scripture? We should watch what we eat, drink and ingest. The Lord does not tell us to avoid excesses just to be mean, He tells us to avoid excesses so we can be as healthy for as long as we possibly can. It is for our sakes; to prolong our lives. Alcohol, cigarettes and gluttony are three evils we should avoid. Alcohol should never be consumed by a Christian for three reasons. We could make a new Christian stumble. If there is a new baby Christian in our church who was once an alcoholic and was wonderfully saved and delivered, then we offer that person an alcoholic drink, we could make that person fall away from God and lose his salvation. We would then be held accountable to God and the scripture says it would be better for us to have a millstone tied around our neck and thrown into the sea if we make a child or a young Christian stumble (Mark 9:42). The second reason a Christian should not touch alcohol, it could get us hooked and 'disqualify' us or send us off to hell. To drink alcohol is to live as an enemy of the cross because we would be siding with earthly things and being a party to the same sin. 'If a servant should say in his heart, 'My Lord is delaying His coming', and begins to beat (or berate) his fellow servants and eat and drink with the drunkards, the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he does not expect it, and in an hour when he does not know it, and will cut him in pieces, appointing his portion with the hypocrites. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 24:48 to 51). The third reason not to indulge in alcohol, is it is a bad witness and we will not be an effective witness if we are conforming ourself to the world by drinking alcohol. Drinking alcohol does not bring glory to God. Abstinence is the best witness. 'Abstain from every form of evil' (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

No Christian should ever smoke any type of cigarette. If you are a Christian and you smoke, you are a bad witness to the people around you and you could cause them to stumble. It would be best to give it up. Smoking is illogical, stupid and a bad witness. The disease-causing chemicals in each cigarette eventually kills. If we saw a young child about to drink a cocktail of rat poison, brake fluid and sticky tar, we would not hesitate to remove the substance from the child. Yet adults, who should know better, ingest those types of chemicals every time they light up. How stupid is that? Then when they develop cancer, emphysema or diabetes, they do all they can to rid themselves of the disease and prolong their lives. Not logical is it? How can that possibly be a good witness to the unsaved? Christians who smoke, Christians who drink alcohol and those Christians who take illegal drugs think more of themselves that they do of the lost souls they should be trying to save, and will have to answer to God for their behaviour plus give an account for the people they have caused to stumble. The unsaved people still in the world are just as valuable to God as people who walk with Him daily. To be a good witness to them, we need to crucify our lust of the flesh, stop conforming to the world and behave in such a manner, we will really be the salt of the earth, bringing glory and honour to God the Father. Smoking does not honour God.

What we eat is just as important. Overeating – which the Bible calls gluttony – is sin. 'He is a drunkard and a glutton. All the men of his city should stone him to death, so you will cleanse out the evil from your midst' (Deuteronomy 21:20 & 21). See that? Eating to excess is considered evil in the Lord's eyes. 'So then, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the honour and glory of God. Do not give any occasion that will cause stumbling or offence to the Jews or to the Gentiles or to the church of God' (1 Corinthians 10:31 & 32). We need to eat or drink and behave in a way that brings honour to God and does not cause a person to stumble in their faith. We have already mentioned the millstone! Eating ourself into an early grave, does not bring honour to God. We need to be sure, whatever we do, brings honour to God. We must abstain from every form of evil. 'Their fate is eternal destruction; their god is their stomach and they glory in their shame, siding with earthly things' (Philippians 3:19). Parents are responsible for their children's eating habits and should teach their children about nutrition. It is their duty as parents. Sometimes children never recover from the bad habits taught to them by their parents and in turn go to an early grave. Christian parents sometimes forget their children's bodies are also a temple of the Holy Spirit and must be treated with

respect. We need to be careful what we feed our children, and be careful how we treat our children. Parents should set a Godly example for their children which in turn will honour God. The people who sell fast foods are more interested in taking our money than taking responsibility for causing bad health. They are not concerned about doing good, they care only about how much money we will give them and how often. They do not care if people succumb to diabetes or heart disease. We need to take responsibility for our own lives and well-being, and that of our children.

One quirk of human nature is to deny the possibility of serious illness until it occurs. For example: how many people only stop smoking after they have been diagnosed with cancer? Once illness occurs, we will do and pay almost anything to repair our bodies. Prevention is easier, cheaper and much less stressful. We need to take care of the whole person; that is the body, soul and spirit and not just the soul. Most certainly God can heal the body, but we need to be good stewards and keep the body clean and healthy. If our diets are all wrong and we suffer from illness, then we need to do something about it ourselves. God will not do what we can do for ourselves. God will step in and heal when there is nothing more we can do.

'As many as are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God' (Romans 8:14). As a child of God, anything that is not bringing glory to God should be put to one side and we should focus our whole heart and soul on the Lord and the things of the Spirit. 'Set your minds on what is above and not on the things that are on the earth' (Colossians 3:2). If we are a Christian and indulge ourselves with the earthly things (called lust of the flesh), then we are to be pitied! 'If we who are abiding in Jesus, have hope only in this life and that is all, then we are to be pitied' (1 Corinthians 15:19). We need to look to God and to eternity as citizens of heaven, and not satisfy the longings of the flesh. 'Walk in the Spirit then you will not gratify the lust of the flesh, for the flesh is opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit is opposed to the flesh. They are antagonistic to each other' (Galatians 5:16 & 17). We as Holy Spirit-filled Christians, have two opposing forces within us and they battle against one another. We have the pure Holy Spirit and we have the old carnal nature, so whenever we yield to the Holy Spirit, we are denying the flesh and when we give in to the flesh, we need to repent. It is a constant battle but yielding to the Holy Spirit reaps eternal rewards, whereas yielding to the flesh may bring momentary pleasure but afterwards comes the uneasy sense of conviction which will only go once the sin has been confessed and we are clean once more.

Young adults sometimes have a very poor self-image due to the pressures of this current age. A teenager can deal with poor self-image and feel accepted by developing a prayer life, fellowship with other Christians of similar age group, read the Bible, listen to Christian music and attend church. In time, as God gently takes charge, so you will see He loves you, you too are wonderfully made and are valuable to God. You will find the love and acceptance you are looking for by accepting God's holy love. Remember there is no sin too terrible for God to forgive. If you are troubled by some sin you are too embarrassed to tell anyone about – you can tell God. You cannot shock Him, He knows about it already and if you confess your sin to Him, He will forgive you, and if you have a sinful habit like alcohol or drugs, then ask God to help you give up. Take pride in yourself because you are loved by God as much as anyone else. You are God's child, He loves you, you are chosen. The closer you get to God, the more your self-image will improve. He is the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords and since you are His child, that makes you a young prince or princess in the Kingdom of God. You are special to Him and accepted by Him. 'Be imitators of God, as beloved children' (Ephesians 5:1). You are 'Accepted in the beloved' (Ephesians 1:6). Imagine this scenario: There is a major competition on and unsure of your own worth or abilities, you decide to enter. While waiting and hoping to be selected, a person comes up to you and says to you, "Congratulations Young Person. From thousands of applicants, you have been chosen as a winner of this competition and in time, you will marry The King of kings." How good is that! That is exactly what you are and will be. As genuine Christians, we will all, in time, be part of the Bride of our Messiah, but for now, we are to be His faithful servants on earth, doing good and bringing Him glory and honour.

Many people, young and old have great difficulty accepting themselves because they have been rejected by their parents. Some feel, "If my own parents did not love me, how could anyone else?" Sometimes poor self-image, self-loathing, low self-esteem and low self-confidence can shape the person's life negatively. Whether we have had the best or the worst parents on earth, we are all equally valuable to our Creator God and He will adopt us if we turn to Him. This part of the Bible study is for those who have been forsaken by their own parents or betrayed by a family member. 'Although my father and my mother have forsaken me, the Lord will adopt me as His child ... I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord' (Psalm 27:10, 13 & 14).

The most common type of rejection, and the deepest wounding in a person's life, is when children are rejected by a parent. The rejection is doubled when a child is rejected by both parents. The feelings of being unwanted, unworthy, unlovable or unlikeable, last throughout that person's whole life, and can affect their adult relationships with a spouse or their own children. The sense of being unwanted, rejected or unloved, affects more people than we realise. People suffering from rejection can react in several different ways.

Many people have a strong desire to be loved and become promiscuous as they seek that love, which is the wrong way to find the parental love they have missed out on, and that simply compounds the problem because promiscuity leads to more rejection. Others feel they have to be the centre of attention all the time, telling jokes, being pranksters, making people laugh, speaking loudly, laughing loudly, or are overtly affectionate. Some rejected people wonder why they cannot hold a relationship together. Some join up with criminal gangs to make themselves feel accepted. Some turn inward and become reclusive and are more likely to suffer from phobias. There are people who feel they are on the outside looking in, but cannot quite fit in. There are others still who end up with a very bad attitude and are frequently angry or grumpy for no apparent reason. Some end up acting in a violent manner and become violent criminals. If we look at the crime all around us, we can see the result of rejected children growing into their teens and they are angry young people ready to lash out at others. Others take drugs, both legal and illegal to try to cope with feeling rejected. Other effects of rejection can be loneliness, self-pity, moodiness, despair, hopelessness, feeling miserable, sad, depressed and isolated. Or they can become hard, bitter, arrogant and rebellious. Some become indifferent to the suffering of others and may become cruel and sadistic. Most rejected people put up a barrier around their emotions so no one can reach them. These people are often sociable, jovial, successful; appear self-sufficient and impenetrable, but underneath the façade, they are crying out for the release of their feelings of rejection. Some people blame God, yet He is the only Person Who can help them.

Causes of rejection can be many; the divorce of their parents; being given up for adoption; having a chronically ill parent who is unable to nurture their child; the parents' alcoholism or drug addiction; parents who work and leave very young children in care; sexual abuse by a family member; being the child of indifferent parents who do not show love to their children; being the middle child and especially if the middle child is the same gender as the eldest; or simply being the child of very bad parents. All of these scenarios can leave a child feeling rejected, insecure, unwanted and often these children blame themselves. "It's my fault my parents' split up", "It's my fault dad drinks too much", "I was a bad child so I had to be adopted out", "I'm too ugly to be loved". Some people have had terrible things said to them and about them that has hurt and wounded deeply, and when a parent says vicious things, those wounds penetrate, leaving a child with a broken spirit.

Some parents say the cruellest things in jest, not wanting to consider how much damage they are doing to their children. Other parents are terribly cruel and say things to deliberately hurt their children. Some things that have been said to children are, "Go to Daddy, I don't want you." "Do that again and I might dump you in the harbour for the fish to eat." "Speak like that again and I will bury you in the back yard with the dog." "I will hang you from the clothesline." "I will take you overseas and leave you there." "Do not expect me to love you, it will never happen." "Stop following me around like a bad smell." "Shut up, you useless article." "I do not want to see your ugly face until morning." If your parents have said things like that to you, remember, it was not God Who said it. He cannot be blamed.

Even following a happy childhood, adults can sometimes develop deep feelings of rejection when, for example, their spouse leaves them, a parent dies, a long standing friendship crumbles or they lose their jobs. Perhaps you have told somebody something in the strictest confidence and they have betrayed your confidence, gossiped and told of the matter and that has left you wounded. The scriptures give us a few descriptions of the results of rejection. 'Forsaken, grieved in spirit and heartsore' (Isaiah 54:6). 'Who can bear a broken spirit?' (Proverbs 18:14). 'The words of gossip and slander go down into the innermost parts' (Proverbs 18:8; 26:22). They cause emotional wounds, not physical wounds.

There is an area deep down in our emotions where some things penetrate. Our emotions can be wounded which can result in a broken spirit. There is a spirit in man that is deeper than our understanding and the spirit knows our thoughts (1 Corinthians 2:11). We can have wounds in the spirit we have carried for years, that our conscious minds do not know about until God reveals them to us so we can be healed. Only the Holy Spirit can reach into our spirit and heal the deep wounds we have there. When the Holy Spirit begins to heal a wounded human spirit, often the person sobs brokenly for some time. They also frequently say they had no idea the problem was there. Sometimes the wounds are so deep and painful, the mind refuses to acknowledge there is a problem and the person deliberately pushes the painful memory out of their mind. That often happens when a young child is sexually abused, and only the Lord can heal such a devastating wound. The wound is deeper than the mind, reason or the memory. Rejection is very frequently in that area; in the spirit and many people do not realise their problem stems from rejection.

There are occasions when extreme rejection can result in a spirit of death taking over the person's will. There is no set 'rules' for identifying a spirit of death, but some of the symptoms are: These people often become thin or obese, they are never happy, suffer from imagined illnesses, aches and pains, have migraine headaches, they often have difficulties relating to those closest to them, have a sad 'air' about them, they weep a lot, sigh a lot, they seriously lack energy, have little motivation and can become very depressed and even suicidal. Society calls that depression; the Bible calls depression a 'spirit of heaviness' (Isaiah 61:3). If

the scripture calls it a spirit, it is a spirit. Putting on the garment of praise will help, but if the person cannot overcome the spirit and the depression hangs on, then the Lord will have to intervene. A spirit of death can lead to a desire for death rather than a desire for health.

A spirit of death can enter an unborn baby if the mother rejects the pregnancy, or seriously contemplates terminating it. The child usually has a sense of being unloved and unwanted. A spirit of death can enter into a young child if they feel lonely, unwanted, unloved and rejected. If we look into a day-care centre for very young babies and see them wailing for their mothers day after day for months on end, it does not take a genius to imagine the long term effect that will have on those babies as they grow. Every baby is born needing the nurturing of its mother. God created humans that way. When the mother separates the baby from her care, the baby will feel rejected no matter how good and caring the day-care centre is. No day-care centre can give a tiny baby the cosy love of its own mother, with her smell, her voice and her touch and that is what young babies thrive on. If the mother is removed from the infant, it will feel a sense of loss akin to grief. In this modern age, many mothers are putting the desire of unnecessary items before the emotional health of her baby. The mother wants a fancy new car, a plasma TV set, a huge house or other material things she can get by without, and the tiny baby is placed into care and it is the child who will suffer the effects later. Children who are overly 'clingy' and sob when they are separated from their mothers are children who are suffering rejection that will surely cause psychological wounds. No amount of designer clothing, expensive toys or a fancy house can make up for the lack of time spent with children. Rejected children often grow up to reject their parents when the parents are ill or elderly, and we only have to look at the thousands of elderly people forced into homes for the aged to see that. Sometimes rejected children grow up to reject and neglect their own children which then becomes a generational pattern that is very hard to break. We only need to look at the increasing crime, drug use and lawlessness committed by teenagers to see this modern Western world is awash with children with wounded souls.

What is the opposite of rejection? Acceptance. How do we move from feelings of rejection to the joy of acceptance? 'The Lord is close to those who have a broken heart and saves those who have a crushed spirit' (Psalm 34:18). When God said we are accepted in the Beloved, He does not mean barely tolerated. He means greatly favoured as the angel said to Jesus' mother Mary (Luke 1:28). She was greatly favoured and full of God's grace. That is where we are, once we have accepted Jesus as our Saviour. Elizabeth who was filled with the Holy Spirit said Mary was blessed (Luke 1:42). In this context it meant Mary was favoured of God. Elizabeth also added the 'Fruit of Mary's womb' Who as we know was Jesus, was also favoured of God. 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will toward men' (Luke 2:14). We can take this verse deep into our hearts. If we look closely at that scripture, we see we will have peace when we have God's favour or good will. When we accept Jesus, it makes God the Father well pleased. How good does it feel to know God the Father is well pleased with us?

There are a few other scriptures where God said He was well pleased with Jesus. 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him' (Matthew 17:5). 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased' (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; 2 Peter 1:17). Jesus said, "Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God'" (John 20:17). If we look closely at Jesus' words, He is putting us into the same category as He is. God was well pleased with Jesus and He is well pleased with us. We need to take that to heart and allow that acceptance by God to warm our hearts and let Him heal all feelings of rejection, because the opposite of rejection is acceptance. We are accepted and loved by God, before we accept Jesus. 'We love Him, because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19).

As Christians, we need to believe the facts that are written in the Bible, even when those facts are contrary to our feelings. The Gospel is four eyewitness statements of facts. It is a fact Jesus was rejected by some Jewish people whom He regards as His family; He was wounded for our iniquities and was striped for our healing (Isaiah 53:3 to 12; 1 Peter 2:24). Jesus died for our sins, was buried and was raised from the dead. These facts are the basis for the whole Gospel. We believe these facts by faith. We cannot go by our feelings because they are very changeable. Sometimes do not 'feel' saved, but the fact is, we are saved. Our feelings change but the facts do not. The cross is where God provided every solution to every problem mankind has, and that includes rejection. Jesus dealt with this specific problem on the cross. Jesus was despised and rejected by men. His own (the Jews) received Him not (John 1:11). His own rejected Him and called for His death by crucifixion (Mark 15:13). The Gentiles also rejected Him and they crucified Him (Matthew 20:19). Jesus cried out because He felt rejected by His heavenly Father (Matthew 27:46). How much more could one person be rejected? But God did not reject Jesus, He accepted Him. We know that because God the Father repeatedly said He was well pleased with His Son Jesus. God raised Jesus from the dead to sit in fellowship, side by side, together, in heaven (Ephesians 1:20). Jesus was favoured of God so He was not really rejected or forsaken but He felt that way. How many of us feel rejected by our parents, when the reality is, they did their best in difficult circumstances that arose to affect our lives? Feeling rejected and being rejected are two different things, but the result is the same. We hurt, we react and we cry out.

God has never rejected mankind. We are the object of God's loving care and attention, and He says to give Him all of our worries because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). God is on our side (Psalm 118:6). We are number one in His priority. God never tells us to wait because He is too busy to spend time with us. God never tells us to be quiet because He is sleeping because He never sleeps (Psalm 121:4). Jesus is always knocking at the 'door' for us to open it to Him (Revelation 3:20). God's attitude is like the father of the prodigal son – the father knew the son was coming home before anybody else did because the father was always watching for him (Luke 15:20). When the son wanted to confess his sins, the father cut his words off and welcomed him home, and the father had the son clothed in fine clothes, shoes and jewellery, and fed him the best food (Luke 15:22). The whole household rejoiced in the son's return (Luke 15:25 & 32). That is the same as in heaven. Angels rejoice when a lost sinner repents and comes 'home' (Luke 15:10). We are not second-class citizens. We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus calls us His friends (John 15:15). Jesus bore our rejection on the cross and we are accepted because of His rejection (Romans 15:3 & 7). We need to lay hold of our acceptance because we have been adopted by God through Jesus (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5).

If people will believe they have been accepted and adopted by God, that could change their whole life. They will know what it means to be accepted and loved. Even if our own parents or other family members rejected us, God's plan is to adopt us as His own children. Even if our parents have forsaken us, God said He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). If our parents failed us, God will never fail us. We are wanted and highly favoured. We are the object of His care and affection. God sent Jesus to die for us so we could be reconciled with God the Father. Everything God does, revolves around His children. The scriptures tell us we will be raised up with Jesus and all things are for our sakes (2 Corinthians 4:14 & 15). All we have to do to be adopted by God is accept the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. That is not hard! If we have accepted Jesus and are still troubled with rejection, there are other steps we can take to begin our healing.

Step one: We have to forgive those who have rejected us. If we do not forgive them, then God will not forgive us (Matthew 18:21 to 35). No matter what they have done to us, or how terrible they were, or even if the person is dead, we must forgive them. Forgiveness is not an emotion – it is a decisive action. It is our will, and our decision. Either we will forgive or we will not forgive. If we want healing for our emotions, first, we must forgive.

Step two: We need to lay down all negative emotions like bitterness, hatred, resentment and rebellion. If we have a problem laying these things down, then we can ask the Father and He will help us. He wants us to be healed because He cares for us.

Step three: We need to accept as fact, we are accepted by God through Jesus. If we have accepted the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, then we are God's children no matter what the outward circumstances. We are His and He loves us and wants to spend time with us.

Step four: We need to accept ourselves. We were wonderfully made. God knew us when we were still an unformed substance, He brought us out of our mother's womb, He knows the day of our birth and He knows the day we will go home to be with Him. He knows every day of our life. He knows everything about us and He accepts us. Now it is time to accept ourselves. We should never belittle ourselves and never criticise ourselves. We are God's handiwork; His workmanship. He made everything about us that makes us who we are. We need to accept the things He did when He was forming us in secret. Do you have brown eyes? Do not try to turn them blue. Are you tall? Do not ask to be shorter. Are you pear shaped or square shaped? Accept yourself as you are. When we criticise ourselves, we are criticising the way God made us. When we criticise things about ourselves, we are criticising what God formed in secret.

After taking these four steps, try praying something like this: "Thank you Lord for helping me to forgive (name). I lay down all bitterness, resentment and hatred at Your feet. I believe by faith I am accepted by You and now I accept myself. Lord Jesus I believe you are the Son of God and the only Way to God. You died on the cross for my sins and You rose again from the dead. I repent of all my sins and I forgive every other person – as I would have God forgive me – all those who have rejected me, hurt me and failed to show me love. Lord I forgive them all now and I trust You for Your forgiveness, and I believe in my heart You accept me, right now, as I am in Jesus. I am accepted, I am highly favoured, I am the object of your special care and You really love me. You want me, You are my Father. Lord I accept myself. Thank you for beginning a new work in my life. Lord I want to thank You and praise You and rejoice in my salvation. Amen."

Allow the Holy Spirit to minister to your heart and release the longing that may be deep within your heart. If you weep, then do not hold back. Let the healing flow. Praise the Lord you are free.

Amen and God bless you.

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