

REJECTION

“Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate when people say unkind things about you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God wants you to do, and he will bless you for it.” 1 Peter 3:9 (NLT)

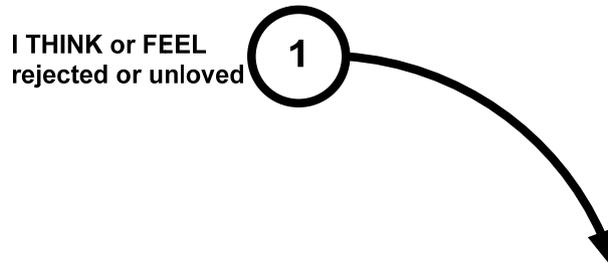
The social area of life deals with your relationships with people. God says to love everyone, even your enemies. But when people reject you, do you feel so hurt that you want to hurt them back?

Everyone gets hurt and rejected by others. **Rejection can be defined as knowingly or unknowingly withholding love.** You will not be able to avoid being rejected in this world. However, you can change the way you react to rejection. The way you handle rejection will either lead to abundant life or living death.

The Rejection Cycle

The following diagram begins building the Rejection Cycle. It illustrates how you may react to being rejected. In step 1 of the Rejection Cycle, an incident occurs and **you think or feel you are rejected or unloved.**

Rejection Cycle



Feeling Rejected

Rejection can take many different forms. You could feel rejected when people say or do unkind things to you. You could feel rejected when someone you care about ignores or overlooks you. Another painful type of rejection is feeling judged or condemned by others. Rejection can be intentional or unintentional.

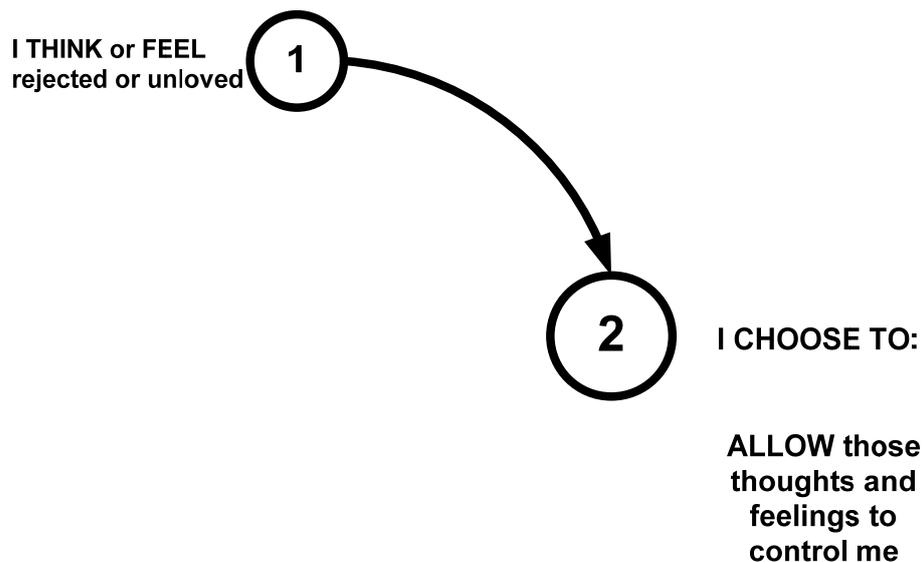
Q1. Describe one *specific* time when you were hurt or rejected.

Q2. What did you think and feel about the incident?

Controlled by Thoughts and Feelings

At step 2 of the Rejection Cycle, **you choose** how you are going to react.

Rejection Cycle



At step 2, you make a choice to allow your thoughts and feelings of rejection to control you. You are aware of the fact that you don't like rejection and you don't want to experience it again.

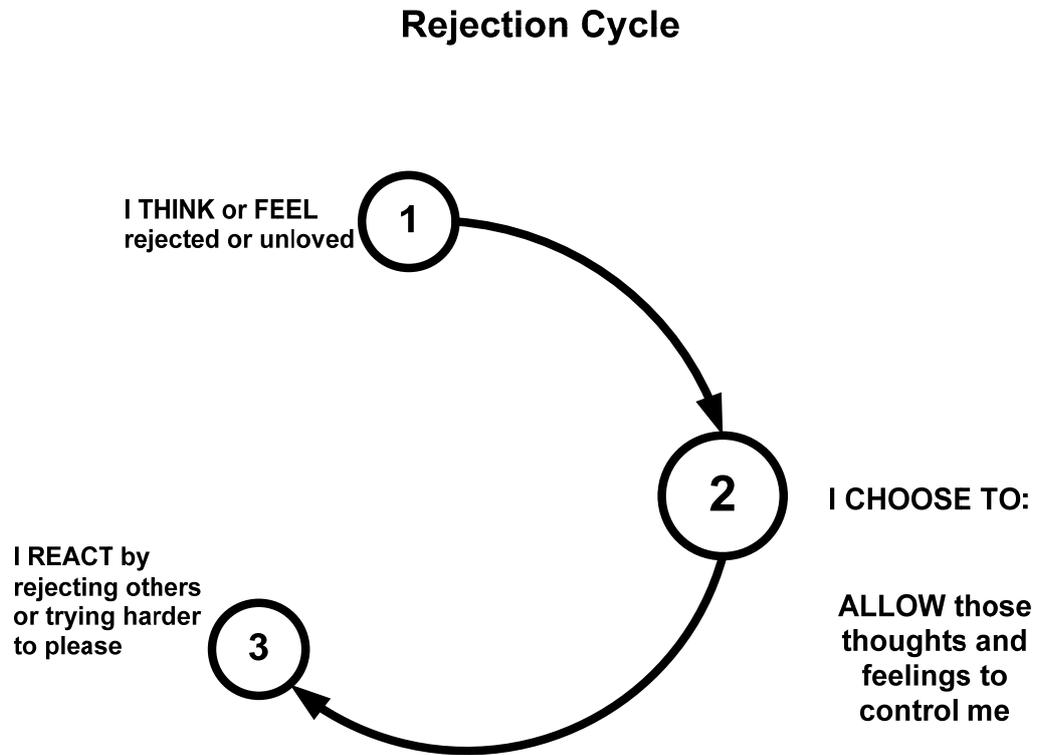
When you focus on the negative thoughts and feelings of rejection, they will control you. For example: Several people say something kind to you and one person belittles you. Which comment do you focus on? If you choose to focus on the rejection, you are allowing those negative thoughts and feelings to control you.

What the other person did to you might have been very wrong, but what you choose next determines if you are going to be wrong also.

“Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate when people say unkind things about you...” 1 Peter 3:9 (NLT)

Your Reaction

In step 3 of the Rejection Cycle, **you react by rejecting others or trying harder to please.** You may even reject yourself.



There are two different ways that you might react.

1. You reject back.
2. You try harder to please to avoid being rejected in the future.

These reactions are the result of the choice you made at step 2.

You might find yourself at step 3 so quickly that you may be unaware that there was a step 2. But you did make a choice.

Rejecting the Rejecter

The following is a list of how a rejected person may react to his or her rejecters. Check the reactions you have seen in your own life.

- I refuse to communicate with them.
- I have difficulty tolerating them.
- I say only what I think they want to hear.
- I am critical and judgmental of them.
- I spend little time with them.
- I build emotional walls for self-protection.
- I don't trust them.
- I abuse them physically.
- I say hurtful things to them.
- I reject anyone who reminds me of them.
- I try harder to get people to accept me.

Q3. In what other ways have you rejected (withheld love from) the person who has rejected you?

“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature [flesh], your lives will produce these evil results...hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger....”

Galatians 5:19–20 (NLT)

Q4. In what ways have you attempted to avoid rejection by trying harder to please?

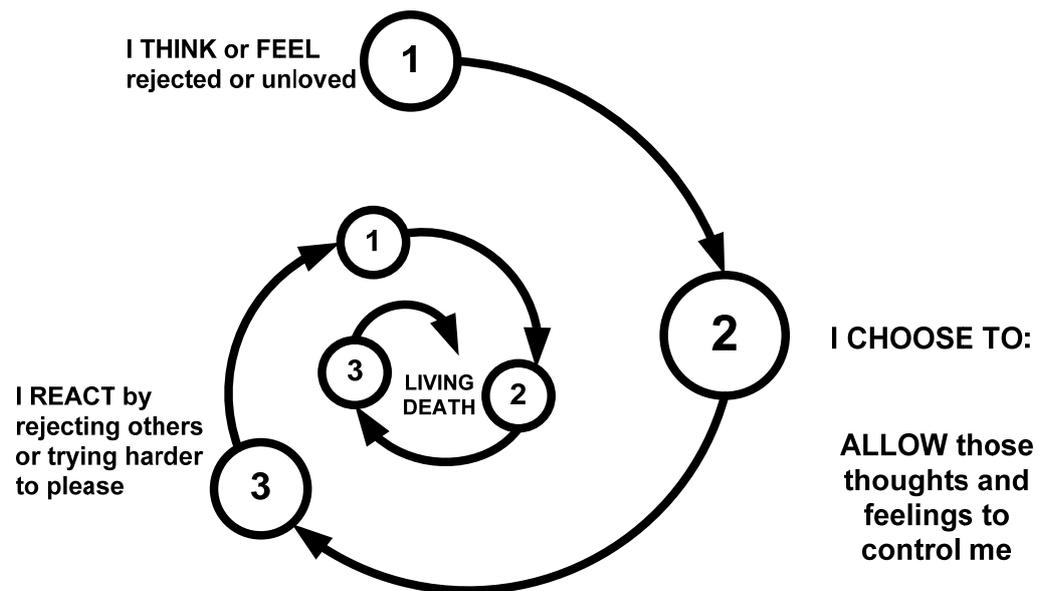
When you react to rejection by trying harder to please, you will discover you can never do enough. You are focusing on gaining acceptance from others but what you will experience is hurt, loss, and more rejection.

*“For where envy and **self-seeking** exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” James 3:16 (NKJ)*

Living Death

Inevitably, your reactions bring on more rejection. This cycle continues until it ends in **living death**.

Rejection Cycle



If you react to somebody by rejecting him/her, then that person will think or feel rejected and react by rejecting you back. Your step 3 becomes another person's step 1. Both of you are spinning down the Rejection Cycle.

Q5. Have you seen this pattern of rejection in your relationships? Describe.

“But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.” Galatians 5:15 (NLT)

The Rejection Cycle illustrates the outcome of thinking, “You reject me and I’ll reject you.”

Q6. What things do you continue to do that bring on more rejection?

Living in the Rejection Cycle

The following list describes how someone stuck in the Rejection Cycle may experience a living death. Check the statements you see in your own life.

_____ I take personally everything people do or say.

_____ I cling to people who accept me.

_____ I am filled with worries, doubts, and fears.

_____ I feel guilty.

_____ I try too hard to please.

_____ I am a perfectionist. “If I’m perfect I won’t be rejected.”

_____ I am irresponsible and undisciplined. “I don’t care anymore.”

_____ I think that life “isn’t worth it.”

- Q7.** Are you living in the rejection cycle and experiencing a living death? Explain.

Reversing the Rejection Cycle

Fortunately you **can** stop or reverse this cycle of rejection. This reversal doesn't come by denying or ignoring the rejection from others or by trying harder to please. Rather, the solution is found in making different choices.

Choose to Believe

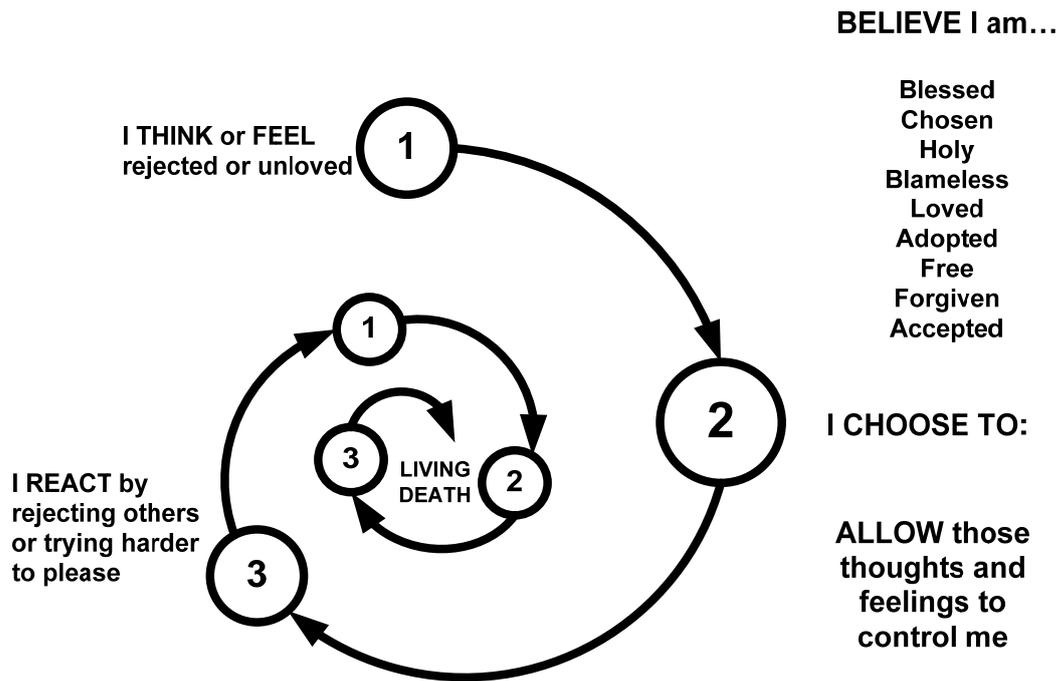
Notice in the diagram that step 2 is a larger circle. That is because it is the key step to reversing the Rejection Cycle.

Rather than choosing to allow your thoughts and feelings of rejection to control you, you **choose to believe** who God says you are. God says many good things about you, if you are "in Christ." He says that you are **blessed, chosen, holy, blameless, loved, adopted, free, forgiven, and accepted.**

At step 2, you choose to focus on what God says about you, rather than how people treat you.

"...If God is for us, who can be against us?"
Romans 8:31 (NLT)

Reversing the Rejection Cycle



If other people are saying things about you that are different from what God says about you, choose to believe God.

Read the following verses.

*“How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed** us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. Long ago, even before he made the world, God **loved** us and **chose** us in Christ to be **holy** and **without fault** in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to **adopt** us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our **freedom** through the blood of his Son, and our sins are **forgiven**. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.”*

Ephesians 1:3–8 (NLT)

*“...We have the free gift of being **accepted** by God, even though we are guilty of many sins...”* **Romans 5:16** (NLT)

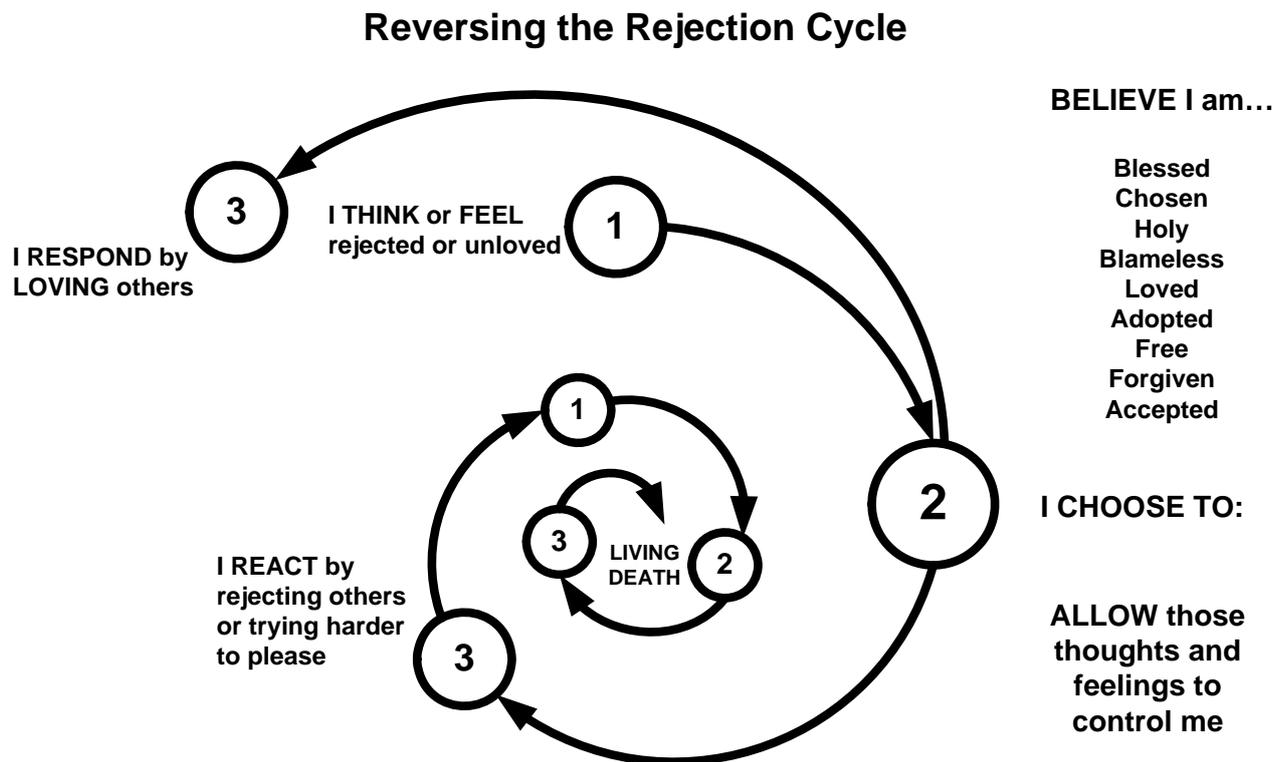
Q8. Write out what God is saying to **you** in these verses.

What God says is true. Nothing anyone else says will ever change the truth of what He says about you. If you believe what God says, rejection won't control you.

By believing who God says you are you are enabled to make good choices consistent with your true identity “in Christ.”

Respond with Love

Notice in the diagram that the cycle is reversed when you choose to believe who God says you are. Now rather than reacting by rejecting others or trying harder to please, you can **respond by loving others**. You are taking action on what God says. The action is that of loving others, even those who have hurt you. Instead of a living death, you experience abundant life!



What makes it possible for you to respond in love to the people who have hurt and mistreated you? First of all, you are deeply loved by God! You no longer require anyone else's acceptance. When you believe this truth, it produces an overflow of love and acceptance toward others, regardless of how they treat you.

The second reason you can respond in love to the people rejecting you is because you can trust God's control. God will cause even your hurts to work out for good.

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

Romans 8:28 (NLT)

Consider Jesus’ response to rejection.

“...Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.”

1 Peter 2:21, 23 (NLT)

Jesus was never caught in a cycle of rejection. Jesus lived in the approval of God, not the approval of man. Jesus knew His true identity. He was His Father’s Son and He knew how much He was loved.

He trusted God to use His suffering for good. Jesus chose to love and forgive others, not threaten or reject back.

Q9. Are you ready to be set free from the Rejection Cycle?

If so, the following steps may be helpful.

Set Free from the Rejection Cycle

Tell God how you have been thinking and feeling unloved and rejected.

“O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge...” **Psalm 62:8** (NLT)

Renew your mind daily with the truth that you are totally accepted by God.

“Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God’s likeness – righteous, holy, and true.” **Ephesians 4:23–24** (NLT)

Start treating the people who reject you the way God wants you to treat them.

“Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate when people say unkind things about you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God wants you to do, and he will bless you for it.” **1 Peter 3:9** (NLT)

God is pleased with you when you love your enemies.

“When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”
Proverbs 16:7 (NKJ)

Rejection Cycle

Diagram

Notes