

*“Getting Unstuck So We can Live Free”      Lee Ann Orndorff*

*“Getting Unstuck from Rejection and Pain of the Past”      July 22, 2018*

Key Texts: Jeremiah 29:11-13 and Psalm 27:13-14

Unstuck from Rejection and Pain of the Past – Really Randy, you give me this topic? This is definitely not an easy thing to talk about but when he mentioned Unstuck, I began to think of all the times I have been stuck in my life. The first thing that came to my mind was spending the night on my uncle’s sailboat only to wake up and discover that we were stuck on a sandbar. We had to wait for the tide to come in to be able to sail away. I remember being stuck in the snow in Mark & Karen Settle’s driveway. Brandon had to come and shovel me out. I have certainly been stuck in traffic. I have been stuck in my grief over the death of our daughter Kelsey. I have been stuck because of rejection and pain from my past.

What are ways that you have been rejected or suffered from the pain of your past? Maybe you have been rejected or experienced pain from your mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, siblings, your child, other family members, a spouse, friends, peers, boyfriends or girlfriends, co-workers, bosses or even strangers.

Rejection and pain from our past hurts, many times it is excruciating and it sticks to us like glue and can leave emotional, spiritual and, at times, physical scars. What is rejection? Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defines it as “The act of throwing away; the act of casting off or forsaking; refusal to accept or grant.” To me, rejection is an injection of pain, fear, self-doubt and worthlessness that lingers with us, and the damage that it causes does not wear off easily or quickly.

If you’ve ever read the book Great Expectations by Charles Dickens or seen the movie adaptations, you will meet a woman named Miss Havisham. On her wedding day, she was almost dressed when she found out that she had been jilted by her fiancé through a letter and the wedding was canceled. Time stopped for Miss Havisham at that moment. She lived the rest of her life in her wedding dress, wearing only one shoe and remaining inside her decaying mansion. She left her untouched wedding day breakfast and cake on the table and her clock was stopped at the exact moment, twenty minutes to nine, that she took that painful, unbelievable blow. When Miss Havisham meets a young boy named Pip some twenty-five years later, she places her hand over her heart and asks him what is there. After Pip tells Miss Havisham it is her heart, she utters one word: “Broken.” You see, she could not move past this tragic event and because of it, she hated all men and wanted her adopted daughter to hate them as well. At the end of her life she realizes that she had caused Pip’s heart to break, just like her heart was broken, because he loved her daughter. All her life she had tried to achieve her own revenge on men but only caused more pain for herself and others. The “side effects” of rejection carried over to another generation. Before she died, she asked for forgiveness.

Have the thoughts of revenge and unforgiveness been in your and my past? God doesn’t want us to live in that place because He has an amazing plan for us and it is to give us a future and a hope! Not a past and a hope but a future. I know I have said at various points in my life, “But God, why, why did all this have to happen?” “I don’t know how to move forward,” “I’m hurt,

I'm angry, I'm stuck." Maybe you have had some of those questions as well. Maybe you have been at a place where you have put your hand over your heart and uttered, "Broken."

When I started seeing a Christian counselor 7 ½ years ago to work through my grief, I had no idea that I had kept so much from my past bottled up – to be exact over 40 years of bottled up stuff. When I started opening up about my grief, it was like the lid came off the pressure cooker of all the emotions I had never talked about from my past. Honestly, I am still working with my counselor through those painful things from my past.

Randy mentioned a little about my past last week but I'll give you a little more detail. My mom and dad divorced when I was three months old. My dad was seeing the woman who would become my step-mother. She had two daughters just a little older than me. Growing up I didn't understand why he didn't stay with my mom so he could be my dad all the time, not just on weekends or vacations. Was I not good enough? Was I not worth anything to my dad? My mom remarried when I was three. I called my step-father Daddy because he was the only father I lived with. Because of issues from his past, words that were said to me made me feel like I was never good enough, not worthy of his love. I could never do anything the way it should be done because it was supposed to be perfect. I became afraid to fail and afraid to make decisions. I became a people pleaser and was very shy around adults. I will say, my mom was very instrumental in keeping my dads in my life. I also have a second step-father who was married to my mom when she died. I still struggle at times with not feeling like I have truly known the love of an earthly father. None of my three fathers will call me. I have to do the initiating, so sometimes it's hard to feel really loved and cared for. But, I do know they love me and I am so grateful that they are still in my life and I do love them.

I was blessed to have a small group of amazing friends as I was growing up. I loved playing sports with them and spending time with them. I have made some amazing friends at the two churches Randy has pastored but it has also been in these churches where friends have walked out of my life. The first time this happened at our previous church I felt like I had been stabbed in the heart. They were the Godparents to our children and literally just walked out of our lives. They did not want to have any communication with us after that point so there was no opportunity to reconcile. It was really the first time I had lost a friend. It was heartbreaking. It's strange though, that after some years passed, I could see how God used that in my life to help me grow and be more open to friendships with other people.

Maybe you have experience rejection and pain at school, work, on social media, or even in the church? Maybe you have been the one who has rejected others? God wants us to live in the present without the weight of the past that keeps us in chains. It keeps us from living fully.

There are so many in the Bible who experienced pain and rejection – Noah, Leah, Samson, Stephen, and Paul to name a few. Today we will talk about Joseph in the Old Testament. He was despised and rejected by his brothers. They wanted to kill him but at the urging of his brother Reuben, they came up with another plan - they put him in a pit and he was sold to the Ishmaelites, who then sold him to Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the bodyguard. In Genesis 39:2 it says, "The Lord was with Joseph and the Lord caused all that he did to prosper." Joseph was

put in jail for something he didn't do. Joseph was forgotten by the chief cupbearer. He interpreted dreams. Even through all that he had suffered, God never left him and God blessed him. Joseph's first-born son was named Manasseh, which means "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household" (Genesis 41:51). And because of the famine, Joseph did see his brothers and his father again. When he saw his brothers, he wept and said, "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5). Throughout the events of his life, Joseph kept his heart soft towards God. He kept his eyes fixed on God and God's purposes for his life. Joseph could have become an angry, bitter man but by knowing who he was to God and knowing that God had a purpose for his life, he was able to live in the present, free from the pain of the past. God wants us, like Joseph to keep our hearts open to all that He has for us and not be stuck in the chains of our past.

So, how can we move from rejection to restoration?

1. We need to recognize who God is and who we are in His eyes. God is loving, holy, pure, faithful, redeemer, forgiver, creator of all things new, all knowing, Savior, rock and fortress. God formed each one of us in our mother's womb. He loves us more than we can think or image. Psalm 17:8 says that we are the apple of His eye and He hides us in the shadow of His wings. He is with us always. There is nothing that can separate us from His love. When people hurt and abuse us in our lives, God is still there! He wants to hold us and help us get us out of our stuck places.
2. Open the doors of your heart that have been locked and chained because of hurt and rejection. Allow God to begin the healing process. God says in our Scripture from Jeremiah today for us to call on Him and pray to Him and He WILL listen – not might, not sometimes – He will listen. If you are still holding on to the painful events or words of your past, today is the day to start opening your heart to all He has for you.
3. Know and believe that God has a plan for your life, a future and a hope.
4. Forgive those who have wronged you. This is so very hard, especially when the hurt is very deep. But continuing to keep unforgiveness in our hearts is like drinking poison hoping the other person dies. Unforgiveness hurts us. It causes us to become bitter and it affects our relationships in the present. Remember that God has forgiven each one of us. It took me eleven years to forgive a person for a wrong they had done to me. Did I forget the wrong? No, but forgiving them changed my heart and my perspective. Reconcile with a person when possible and safe to do so. If we have done the rejecting and caused the pain – ask for forgiveness from God. Seek God and a mature Christian about how to reconcile with the person.
5. Understand that we cannot change other people as that is God's job. I think sometimes we get into relationships because we think we can change another person. Wrong. There are circumstances in our lives that we can try to do everything possible to reconcile with others and they don't want to have anything to do with that or they are stuck in their own stuff and just can't see how to let you in. This can be gut wrenching! This is where we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and trust him with the situation.
6. Live in the present. Psalm 27 spoke to me back in 1984. This verse jumped off the page of my Bible because I was dealing with depression but I wouldn't be diagnosed until 14 years later. I didn't want to do life anymore. I was stuck but then I read – "I would have

despaired unless I believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” I would revisit this verse again after Kelsey’s death because I didn’t want to do life without her. Let our hearts take courage and wait for the Lord. He wants you and me to enjoy all that He has planned for us and that may mean at times through the pain or rejection or even despite the pain.

7. Get in a small group where you can be real, authentic and transparent. This can help us stay focused on who God has called us to be and to also help others who are stuck.
8. Seek professional help when needed.

Now, I’ve shared some ways we can get unstuck and move forward from the pain and rejection of the past but I’ve saved the best for last...His name is Jesus. “Jesus was the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone” (Psalm 118:22). In 1 Peter 2:4-5 it says that “Jesus was a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God.” Jesus experienced the rejection of his brothers, his closest friends, those in power and many who didn’t really even know who He was. As humans we at times stay in that place of rejection and pain but Jesus was always focused on the will of His Father.

His rejection and pain included severe physical abuse. Some of you sitting here today have also experienced emotional, verbal and/or physical abuse. My heart aches for those of you who have endured so much. But there is also hope in my heart because of what Jesus did on the cross for each one of us. The Bible says that “Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12 1-2).

Friends, there is hope that we can get unstuck from rejection and the pains of our past. Today, “let us lay aside all the rejections, the ‘I’m not good enoughs’, the ‘I’m worthless’, the fears, the failures, the doubts, the hurts, the inability to forgive or to ask for forgiveness and the sins which so easily entangle us (and keep us stuck) and let us (break free from those things that have held us in chains) and let’s run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes of Jesus, (not our past pains) because He is the author and perfecter of our faith. He knows what each one of us has gone through in our lives so let’s invite Him to help heal us and let’s not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:1-3). Amen.