

Is there anything harder on the ego than being rejected? I suspect that is one reason many married persons are happy they are no longer playing the dating game. It hurts too much when someone rejects you. “What’s wrong with me?” is the question we inevitably ask.

Charles R. Boatman tells about a strange, new twist on this ancient ritual. He notes that traditionally, the male of our species makes the first approach in the dating game. Men have developed all sorts of pick-up lines to interest the women they are attracted to. An important step in the process is a request for the woman’s phone number.

I remember one girl I was dating used this line, “Jonathan, you know that nice guys finish last and you’re one of the nicest guys I know.”

What if the woman is totally uninterested, however, but doesn’t want to crush the poor fellow’s fragile ego in a public place? The option of giving a false phone number has been around a long time, says Boatman, but now a new twist has been added: she now can give him the phone number of the local “rejection hotline” then smile, and walk away. The would-be suitor thinks he has hit the jackpot, but it is a cruel illusion.

When he calls the following day, he hears this recording: “Hello, this is not the person you were trying to call. You’ve reached the rejection hotline . . . Unfortunately, the person who gave you this rejection hotline number did not want you to have her real number.” Even worse, the rude voice goes on to list numerous negative characteristics that the woman may have noticed. (1)

Wouldn’t that be devastating? You would have to have thick skin even to risk such a response. Rejection. What a cruel thing to happen to anyone, and yet it happens to us all sooner or later.

You apply for a job. You believe it is the perfect fit for you. But your prospective employer has other ideas. Rejection.

You work hard on a proposal at work. You know your boss will be delighted. Instead, she is more impressed by a co-worker’s idea. Rejection.

It happens to everybody. It happens to best-selling writers.

The Christopher Little Literary Agency receives 12 publishing rejections in a row for their new client, until the eight-year-old daughter of a Bloomsbury editor demands to read the rest of the book. The editor agrees to publish but advises the writer to get a day job since she has little chance of making money in children’s books. Yet *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* by J.K. Rowling spawns a series where the last four novels consecutively set records as the fastest-selling books in history, on both sides of the Atlantic, with combined sales of 450 million.

*The Diary of Anne Frank*, a book that has inspired millions, was rejected 15 times and called “very dull” by one publisher.

**“You have no business being a writer and should give up.”** Zane Grey ignores the advice. There are believed to be over 250 million copies of his books in print.

*Chicken Soup for the Soul* by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen was rejected 140 times. And yet they turned it into a series of books that have made them both very, very rich.

Alex Haley writes for eight years and receives 200 consecutive rejections. His novel *Roots* becomes a publishing sensation, selling 1.5 million copies in its first seven months of release, and going on to sell 8 million. Such is the success that The Pulitzer Prize award the novel a Special Citation in 1977

Stephen King’s disturbing work, *Carrie*, was rejected 30 times. Supposedly, after the final rejection, King threw the manuscript in the trash and his wife fished it out. (2)

It happens to best-selling writers. In fact, it happens to celebrities of every kind.

When Steven Spielberg applied to the film schools of both UCLA and USC he was rejected. But he's done all right for himself as a director of blockbuster films.

When Fred Astaire had his first screen test at MGM, the casting director wrote this memo: "Can't act! Slightly bald! Can dance a little."

Cartoonist Charles Schulz of "Peanuts" fame had every cartoon that he drew rejected by his school's yearbook staff.

Henry Kissinger (remember him?) is best remembered by his classmates as the kid nobody wanted to eat lunch with at school.

So take heart. Rejection happens to everyone sooner or later. If you're unable to deal with this fact of life, you're in trouble. Because sooner or later you're going to be rejected.

**Our Master was rejected.** We read in today's lesson from Acts 4, "The stone that [the] builders rejected has become the head cornerstone." Luke, the writer of Acts, was quoting Psalm 118:22. He was saying that Jesus is the fulfillment of that prophecy. "The stone . . . that was rejected has become the head cornerstone."

Let's recap what is happening in the book of Acts. In chapter 3 there is a much beloved story about a lame man who was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful. Friends or family brought him to that gate every day to beg. This was the first century equivalent of a welfare program.

When this poor man saw Peter and John about to enter the gate, he asked them for money. But, boy, did he get a surprise. Peter turned to the man and said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Then, taking the lame man by the right hand, Peter helped him up.

Instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong and he began walking and jumping, and praising God. This was one happy man.

People who recognized this man were filled with wonder and amazement when they saw him carrying on like this. A huge crowd gathered and Peter began preaching to the crowd about the resurrected Jesus and his power to heal. This disturbed the priests and the captain of the temple guard, for many who heard the message believed what the two Apostles said. In fact, that day the number of believers grew to about five thousand.

The Sadducees were particularly disturbed by the Apostles' claim that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. The Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection from the dead. Christ's resurrection, if true, presented them with a real dilemma. It struck down one of their core beliefs. And so they seized Peter and John and had them put in jail. The following morning those who were disturbed by the Apostles' teaching interrogated Peter. "By what power or what name did you do this?" they asked. Instead of answering their question, Peter took the opportunity to do a little teaching.

Peter explained that whatever they saw the disciples doing was not being accomplished by their own power or strength, but by the power of the risen Christ.

Peter also reminded them that this act of healing the lame man was an act of kindness. Surely that should take precedence over rules and regulations. This lame man was rejoicing and praising God because God had healed him.

Finally, Peter confirmed that this lame man was healed through the name of Jesus. This was the same Jesus, he said, whom the religious leaders had crucified but, in fulfillment of scriptures, God had raised from the dead.

Peter further elaborates by repeating the beautiful verse already expressed in Psalm 112: "The stone you builders rejected . . . has become the cornerstone." He reminded all who were present that Jesus, although temporarily humiliated, was subsequently glorified. He is now the Redeemer and no one can go before the Father unless they come through him. There are some important things that our lesson for today is saying to us.

**First of all, Jesus, the stone the builders rejected, is the cornerstone of our faith.** That is the important thing we need to see.

Let me comment for a moment on the significance of the cornerstone or capstone as it is sometimes referred to. The cornerstone or capstone is not simply a decorative stone used to finish off the corners of a building with a bit of architectural flair. Rather it is that fundamental stone that structurally holds a building together! Visualize for a moment an old Roman archway, built from two columns of carefully carved stones. Where the two sides arch in toward each other at the top and meet in the center, there's a triangular shaped stone that sits in the middle and balances the two sides of the arch against each other. That is the capstone. If you removed that stone, the whole thing would fall to pieces. (3) Make no mistake about it, Jesus is the capstone or cornerstone for all who follow him.

German theologian, Johann David Michaelis taught that this passage from the Psalms concerning the cornerstone refers to a specific event that reportedly took place during the building of Solomon's temple. It's said that this massive temple was built in relative silence. There was no pounding of hammers. The reason there was no pounding of hammers is because the plans were so exact that each stone was perfectly shaped at the quarry. When the stones arrived at the building site, each one fit perfectly into place.

But there was one huge stone that didn't seem to fit anywhere, and the builders placed it to the side. Eventually it got in the way, and workmen pushed it over the bank and it rolled into down into the Kidron Valley below. After the foundation had been laid, the time came to hoist the cornerstone into place. But the cornerstone could not be found. Word was sent back to the quarry, but the masons there replied it had already been delivered. Finally it was deduced that it was the stone that had been rejected and had rolled into the valley! When it was retrieved, it slid perfectly into place, serving as the stone that held all the others in position. (4) "The stone you builders rejected . . . has become the cornerstone," wrote the Psalmist. Luke knew this was the perfect description of Jesus. He was rejected by the religious leaders of his day, but he was the only foundation upon which people could reliably build their lives.

Mark it down so you never forget it. **Jesus is the only reliable foundation on which we can build our lives.** Is your life built on that foundation? If so, you are a very fortunate person.

There is a young woman I read about who feels a deep connection to these verses. Here is her testimony:

"I am the second child of my mother . . . a single mom . . . and when she gave birth to me, she decided that she never wanted me, so just like Moses was placed in a basket and sent down a river, I was placed under a plum tree in front of my father's house. A lady was passing by and told my paternal grandmother that I was outside under the tree. My father came and got me and his house was my home for 22 years. I grew up with him and my grandmother.

"Fast-forward to 24 years later, a university graduate with a second degree, the Chief Financial Officer of a major company and a well-known Christian woman who is recognized for philanthropy, I was doing pretty well despite growing up always believing that I was my mother's reject. I reconnected with my mother at a seminar; she had sought me out because by now she had seven children, nowhere to live, no job and no food to give them. The short version is I bought her a piece of land, built a house on it, found her a job and moved my youngest brother in with me so that I could mentor him. Today he is a 3<sup>rd</sup> year law student. The statement made about Jesus being the head cornerstone, the redemptive blood of my Savior and my relationship with him was what helped me to forgive my mother and made it easy for me to become the head cornerstone in her life. She rejected me and gave me away . . . and few years later I was the one she needed." (6)

Can you imagine being able to love and forgive like that? Only Christ can work such a change in a person's heart. Jesus, the stone the builders rejected is the cornerstone of our faith. Jesus is the only reliable foundation on which we can build our lives.

Back in the days when the Old West was being settled, there were many pioneers who made their way over the Oregon Trail. When they got to the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, they found a stream a little too wide

to cross in one step. So they “two-stepped” across by using an ugly lump sticking up out of the water in the middle of the stream.

As the years passed, other pioneers settled in that area, built their cabins, strung fences and plowed the fields. One man built his cabin near that same stream. But he had a problem his door flapped in the wind. To solve his problem, he found a heavy lump in the middle of the stream. So he carried it to his front step and it became a door stop.

More years passed. Railroads were built across the nation, more people pushed west and modern cities sprang up. A nephew of that same pioneer went east to study geology at a large university. He returned home during vacation. Lo and behold, on the front porch of his uncle’s cabin by the stream, he found not just an ugly lump, and not just a heavy lump, but a lump of pure gold, the largest gold nugget ever discovered on the eastern slopes of the Rockies! It had been there for three generations, but everybody saw it in a different light, some as an ugly lump, some as a heavy lump, but only the nephew saw it for what it really was a lump of gold. (7)

The same thing is true of Jesus. The same Jesus whom some have seen as a stumbling rock is to those who know him as he really is, a precious stone the chief cornerstone. He is the chief cornerstone of our faith. He is the only reliable foundation on which we can build our lives. Won’t you welcome him into your life today?

1. Charles R. Boatman in *The NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, 2009-2010*. Ronald L. Nickelson, ed. (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 2009), p. 28.

2. *My Father’s Business: 30 Inspirational Stories for Finding God’s Will For Your Life (Purpose Driven Dreams - Seeking God’s Vision For Your Life)* (Eddie Jones)

3. *Words & Music* by Lari Goss. © 1976 Bridge Building Music, Inc. (BMI).

4. Rev. David B. Smith, [ww.fatherdave.org/article/article\\_213.html](http://ww.fatherdave.org/article/article_213.html).

5. Robert J. Morgan, *He Shall Be Called: 150 Names of Jesus and What They Mean to You* (New York: Hatchette Book Group, 2009).

5. Dr. Gilbert W. Bowen, [http://www.lectionary.org/Sermons/Bowen/OT/Isaiah\\_43.1-7\\_WhoseAreYou.htm](http://www.lectionary.org/Sermons/Bowen/OT/Isaiah_43.1-7_WhoseAreYou.htm).

6. Avril Ellis.

7. As told by Alan Smith, <http://www.tftd-online.com/content.asp?CID=19468>.

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