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PART 1: WHAT IS IT?

Chapter 1

Why Does It Happen to Us?

After church one Sunday, I spotted the familiar face of a beautiful, well-dressed lady. Although she was attractive, the look on her face was not. In fact, her expression was in sharp contrast to the one I saw just weeks before.

Weeks before, I saw her joy and admiration for the man she was about to marry. She glowed in her fiancé's presence, and he seemed excited, too. I don't know why the first thought that crossed my mind when I saw her now was that her trip to the altar was cancelled.

She was about a dozen people away from me, and I was not in any particular mood to exchange pleasantries, nor was I trying to push through people to reach her. I just let her be and hoped that all was well with her. A few moments later, I was at the mouth of the parking garage, and about two arms' length away from the lady in question. She still had the same sad look on her face. As she walked ahead of me toward her vehicle, I called out to her. She slowed down, looked back over her right shoulder, and acknowledged my greeting.

I asked how her Thanksgiving had been, and she responded by saying that it had been fine—with the same blank expression. I asked her how she was doing, and she unconvincingly told me that she was doing okay. I asked her again how she was doing, and then she spilled the beans. She told me that the engagement

was off, and that she experienced the rejection on the week of Thanksgiving. Going through that kind of experience might force anyone to ask: “What is there to be thankful for?”

I was saddened by what she told me. I didn’t even know what to say, especially since I had been happy for them and encouraged them about their pending marriage weeks before. In not so many words, I did my best to encourage her. She managed to force a faint smile, thanked me, and then we parted to our respective cars.

Rejection is in the air. It has always been and, as long as we exist, it will continue to be—for better—or for worse. How we *respond* to it determines which side of its effect we end up in. And when rejection is in the air, love, usually, is not. It’s been a few years since I’ve discovered how universal rejection is. Yet, I’ve also realized that it is an *effective* tool that God uses to help us find and fulfill our destinies.

The revelation of the relevance of rejection to help us align ourselves with God’s plan has invaluable transformed my life for the *better*. It can for you, too. And it is with this in mind that I attempt to address the subject in a manner that is balanced, real, informative, applicable, and helpful to you.

Perhaps you want to know why that guy or lady broke up with you. Maybe you want to know why you didn’t get that job or why you got divorced. You might be wondering why some people don’t like you, why others do not acknowledge you, why some dismiss you, why some look down on you, or why no one has ever asked you out. You might also want to know why your text message, phone call, voice mail or email was never returned; or why you lost out on the bid, failed to make the cut, had your idea rebuffed or never got a response to your application or proposal.

Whatever the case, rejection is something that we all face in life. We experience it at various times and in various forms—abuse, adversity, demotion, eviction, exclusion, failure, neglect, and prejudice. Rejection happens at various places—school, social events, work, home, and, sometimes, even at church. It hurts to be treated like you are not important. It’s demoralizing to be treated as worthless. Nevertheless, despite the sourness of the

experience, being rejected might be the best thing that ever happened *for* you.

I once heard a story about a duck that was trying to find itself. The duck saw a squirrel climb up a tree and decided that it would do the same. It was barely a few inches from the ground, on the trunk of the tree, when it flopped on its back. The duck was disappointed and dejected at its failure to mimic the squirrel. The duck then saw a bird swoop over it and decided that it would fly. The duck flapped its wings incessantly and made some progress a few feet up in the air, but it got tired and dropped faster than it went up. This time around, the duck was even more depressed and felt that it was good for nothing.

When the duck dropped from the air it landed on a pond. Swoosh! The duck glided on the water. Excited, exhilarated, and with a sense of accomplishment, the duck displayed its true colors as it coasted on the water. Eureka! The duck found itself. The inability of the duck to duplicate what the squirrel and bird did helped it find its niche. The duck felt restricted. It felt hindered. But, its experience helped it find its strength.

Like the duck, we often encounter setbacks in life. In our attempts to find fulfillment, some of us try to be like others who seem to be successful at who they are and what they do. Sometimes we look to them to validate us and give us our identities. And when we are unable to be like them or duplicate their successes, we feel like we've failed. At times, not only are they unable to validate us, some of them also invalidate or demean, hinder, and wrongly classify us. This leaves us frustrated and unfulfilled as we are yet to discover ourselves. The people we trusted to help us in our quest either couldn't help us with our identities, or made us feel like we were useless. Little do we know that our *setbacks* in life could turn out to be *setups* for life. When people and circumstances set us on our backs, where else can we go but *up*?

There are numerous synonyms for rejection. Some of them include: prevent, hinder, frustrate, throw out, cast off, repel, repudiate, brush-off, exclude, turndown, constrain, restrain, inhibit, "ejection," etc. If you've been put-down, passed over, held back, divorced or fired from your job, you've been rejected. But

why do some people reject us? Why do some individuals turn us down? Why do some people dismiss us? The reasons vary; nevertheless, I believe that there are three main causes of rejection.

1. *People reject us when we do not meet their expectations.*

In this case we get rejected for *being* wrong or *doing* wrong. By being wrong, I mean that we are wrong for something or someone. We are turned down, refused or overlooked because we are not what they are looking for. We're not the right candidate for what they want us to do, or be. We're rebuffed because we do not have the qualifications or credentials.

This is where you get rejected because you don't fit the profile. You don't have the looks. You don't get the job because you don't have the required education and or experience. This is where you get rejected because you're not from a certain ethnicity, denomination, or religion. This is where you're not accepted because you're not an alumnus of a certain school, a member of a certain fraternity, organization, or club.

This is where a guy rejects a lady because she's not blonde or blue-eyed, brunette or green-eyed, red-headed or brown-eyed and attractive to him. Another rejects a lady because she's not light-skinned, tall, and physically endowed. A lady rejects a guy because he is not dark-skinned, bald-headed, and rolling in the dough. This is where you're passed over because your weight is not within a particular range. This is where someone is rejected because she is not a homemaker like Martha Stewart, does not cook like Rachael Ray, and does not live in a mansion with a yacht to match. This is where you are shunned because you're not spiritual, intellectual, sophisticated, or cool.

In all those cases, the individuals were rejected because they were wrong for what was expected of them. They were refused because they did not meet the requirements of those whom they wanted to be affiliated with.

By *doing* wrong, I mean getting rejected for doing the wrong thing. For example, a guy loses his job because he put his supervisor in a head lock. A student gets expelled from school because the student assaulted an instructor. A lady is rejected by her boyfriend, not only because she badmouthed him, but also because she did it in public.

If a wife annuls her marriage because her husband was unfaithful, a guy's job is terminated because he came late to work, a lady is dismissed by her friends because she slandered them behind their back, and a minister is asked to leave his church because he was insubordinate and incited the church members against their leadership, the individuals were dismissed because they *did* wrong.

When we don't meet people's expectations either by being wrong for their requirements, or doing wrong in the form of mishandling what they wanted us to do, we experience their disapproval. The expectations of those who turn us down might be reasonable or ridiculous; regardless, they reject us when we do not meet their expectations.

However, herein lies a problem. We can understand being passed over for not fitting the required profile. Even though we feel terrible, at least we can understand why we've been rejected. If we choose to, we can redeem ourselves by trying to meet the expectations of those who rebuffed us. A lady can work on sculpting herself to the specifications of the man she is trying to please. A guy can change his habit to ensure that he gets to work on time. A husband can ask his wife for forgiveness, spare no expense in winning her back, and faithfully attend counseling.

You see, friend, if you don't land a job or get a promotion because you lack the required education and experience, you can get the education and experience. If you get rejected because your hair is not a certain color, you can always bleach it accordingly. If you get dismissed because you don't have green eyes, you can get a pair of green contact lenses. If you are ignored because of your weight, you can hit the gym. Some women feel that if they are turned down because their body is not curvaceous, they can go under the knife. Some feel that if they are passed over because they are not physically endowed, they can buy Wonderbra® bras or silicon. Other women feel that, if they are refused because they do not look young enough, they can inject Botox®.

Even so, how do you explain it when a lady still gets rejected despite the fact that she is a bombshell, intelligent, and full of

self confidence? How do you explain when a guy does not land a job that he obviously has the credentials for? How do you explain when you still get rejected when you are *stellar* for the position? How do you explain when you are still looked down upon and put at arms length when you do what is expected of you? How do you explain why you get rejected even when you are spiritual, intelligent, philosophical and cool, but still unaccepted by those who wanted you to possess the aforementioned traits?

A major challenge with this reality is that you can understand if you were rebuffed because you did not fit a profile or possess certain traits. You can understand when you are cast off because of something you did wrong. And if you choose to, you can make amends by educating yourself, going for counseling, or turning a new leaf.

However, if you're dismissed despite your work ethic, aspirations, and credibility, then what exactly can you work on since you're already doing the things that society in general says that you are supposed to be doing?

When you are the poster child for what people want and they still do not accept you, how do you handle this? How can you redeem yourself? You don't even know why they turned you down. If you knew the reason, you would make the necessary adjustments. But since you don't know why you were rejected, you don't know what to do to combat the situation. You don't know where you are lacking. So you are forced to ask yourself these gnawing questions: "What is wrong with me? Why don't people want me? Why is this happening to me? What is the problem exactly?"

Well, if those cases apply to you, then it's likely that you've been asking the wrong questions. You should not be asking yourself, "What's wrong with me?" You should be asking yourself, "What's right with me?" This brings me to the second reason why we get rejected, which is not because we did not meet expectations. It's because we exceeded them.

2. People reject us when we exceed their expectations.

Sometimes people reject us when we exceed their expectations. This is where we get rejected for being right or doing

right. By *being* right, I mean that we are the right candidate—or too good of a candidate for what was expected of us. For example, a lady rejects a guy because he’s “too nice” and too much of a gentleman. A lady is denied a position at a church because the church leadership felt that her credentials went beyond what *they classified* as a woman’s role within their fellowship.

This is where a well-mannered, well-dressed and beautiful lady is rejected by other women because they assume that she is conceited and because unlike them, she usually draws the attention of a lot of gentlemen who fall over themselves to win her affection. This is where a guy is rejected by other guys because he went to an Ivy League school while they went to schools full of poison ivy. This is where you hear a recruiter say something like, “We can’t afford to pay you...you’re overqualified for the job,” so, you are not hired. This is where you hear people say things like, “You think you are all that? You think that you are better than us? Who do you think you are?”

This is also where a lady is rejected by a guy because her pay grade is higher than his. She has her own house, but he lives in an apartment—with his mother. Please don’t misunderstand me. If the lady rejects him based on their material possessions, she would be rejecting him because he did not meet her expectations. However, this is not the point I’m making here. She has no problem with where he is now. She’s aware of his financial struggles, but she still loves and cares about him. She accepts him as he is. She believes in him and sees his potential, but he, out of his insecurity, has a problem with her accomplishments. He’s got a problem with her having more things than him, so he feels intimidated by her accomplishments and pushes her away.

If you are rejected for *doing* right, it’s because you did the right thing while others wanted to do the wrong thing and wanted you to do the same. For example, a lady is dismissed by a guy because she does not want to be physically intimate with him before their wedding day. A board member of a church is asked to resign and leave the fellowship because he cautioned

the board about misusing church funds. A pastor loses half of his members because his vision for the fellowship goes beyond *just* his parishioner's needs. A lady does not get an overdue promotion and is mysteriously fired because she turned down her boss's romantic advances toward her. In these cases, the individuals were rejected because they exceeded the expectations of those who turned them down.

When you are refused because you exceeded expectations, sometimes it is because people are intimidated by your accomplishments, your standards, your dreams, visions, or aspirations. You've raised the bar, and they feel like you are making them look bad or incompetent. As a result, they "hate" on you. Being ignored and dismissed because you do the right things, treat people well, and have the experience, education, or expertise that qualifies you, signifies that you were rejected for exceeding expectations.

The third reason why people reject us is somewhat a combination of the first two. It's because we did right and wrong at the same time. By this I mean that we might have done the right things, but at the wrong time.

3. People reject us when we try to accomplish things with them at the wrong time.

We also experience rejection when we do things at the wrong time. The things we did might have been right, but it wasn't the proper time to carry them out. For example, a wife gets the cold shoulder from her husband when she confronts him about an issue while he is with his friends, watching the Super Bowl, and his mouth is stuffed full of Kentucky Fried Chicken. A guy is rebuffed by a lady, not because she didn't care for him, but because she was still healing from a recent breakup. A youth pastor's request for additional funding for more programs for young people is struck down because his church was managing some financial constraints. A lady's proposal to enhance her firm ends up in the trash pile because, at the time she proposed her project, her company did not have the necessary resources to execute her idea. In all these cases, the individuals were rejected because of the timing of their requests.

You might have graduated cum laude with an MBA from Harvard, but you likely wouldn't have landed a job at Bear Stearns around the time the investment bank collapsed amid the mortgage crisis. Experiencing rejection as a result of bad timing is not so much because of who you are, or what you do, but because of *when* you do.

With this in mind, it's imperative for us to be cognizant of the fact that timing is a very important factor in what we do. Because of this importance and the need to adequately explain the relevance of timing as a reason why we get rejected, I'll be talking more about timing in chapter 4.

IT'S A CHAUFFEUR THAT DRIVES YOU TO YOUR DESTINY

Once again, people reject us when we don't meet their expectations, when we exceed their expectations, and when we try to accomplish things with them at the wrong time. While it is important for us to find out why people reject us, I believe that it's even more important for us to find out why God allows us to experience rejection. Whether you've been dismissed because you did wrong, did right, or did both simultaneously, it's beneficial for you to know that God allows you to be rejected so that you can *meet* His expectations.

God's expectations are for you to fulfill your call. God uses rejection as a chauffeur to drive you to your destiny. Whether it's to do something, go somewhere, or be with someone, God employs rejection as a vehicle to transport you to your purpose.

At this juncture, it will be pertinent for us to reference a scripture that revolutionized this book:

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. (Psalm 118:22 NKJV)

According to the apostle Peter, the stone was Jesus and the builders were the scribes and chief priests of His day (Acts 4:7-11). Jesus became who he claimed to be. He was the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed One. Similarly, just like Christ was "rejected" into His purpose, you are also pushed to your destiny. So, why don't you personalize that scripture? Look at that passage afresh with the perspective that you are that stone.

The passage said that the stone which was rejected had be-

come the chief cornerstone. If you noticed, the passage refers to the stone which the builders rejected; it did not say that the stone was rejected by destroyers. It said that the stone was rejected by *builders*. This is significant. It's one thing to be turned down by someone you're not familiar with, but it's another thing when you are refused by a "builder." I want you to think of a builder as someone who is supposed to build you up.

A builder, like a building, is someone who is supposed to support you. It's one thing for you to be rejected by someone you don't really know, but it's another thing when you get the cold shoulder from someone who's close to you. It's more agonizing when someone who you look up to rejects you. It's devastating when someone who's supposed to build you up tears you down.

That builder could be a leader; it could be your parent, spouse, significant other, pastor, mentor, boss, or friend. It's more hurtful to be betrayed by someone whom you respected, admired and desired to build you up, rather than someone who did not mean much to you.

Furthermore, notice that the stone was just a stone before it got rejected, but after it was cast off it became the "chief cornerstone." What comes to your mind when you think of a stone? Usually, I think of something you step on, kick around, throw around, and play with. It's something that's useless by itself. I think of something unstable—a piece of stone that is here today, there tomorrow, gone tomorrow, due to people kicking it around and playing with it.

The stone was just a stone before it got rejected, but it became the chief cornerstone after it was rebuffed. God does not want you to be a stone. God does not want people to step on you, play with you, kick you around, "throw you for a loop," or throw you around. He wants you to be a chief cornerstone. He wants you to become who He created you to be. Unfortunately, people do treat us like stones. They step on us. They step on our dreams and on our self esteem. They play us for a fool. They play with our minds and emotions. They use and exploit us. As with a stone, they dismiss us as defective, useless, and good for nothing.

Notwithstanding, God uses their thrust to propel us to our destiny. The stone was *transformed* after being tossed. The rejection served as a catalyst to change the stone into a cornerstone. A cornerstone is a foundation stone. It's a stone used in construction to hold walls together. It's basically the foundation of a building. By binding structures together, the stone was fulfilling its purpose. The spiritual significance as it pertains to Christ is that Jesus is the foundation of the church and every other thing He has for His children. Christ, the stone, who was rejected by the scribes and religious leaders, the builders, became a chief cornerstone. He turned out to be the foundation and pillar of the church.

The rejection He experienced, ultimately on the cross, enabled Him to fulfill His destiny of not only becoming the foundation of the church, but also *paving* the way for everyone to be reconciled to God. This stone, which was discarded as useless, became useful *through* rejection. This stone which was discarded as nothing, through rejection, became something. This stone found and fulfilled His purpose; and this was facilitated by the rejection He underwent.

Likewise, you are the foundation of the purpose God has for you. The aforementioned scripture revealed that the stone became a chief. "Chief" is a title. If you have a title, this means that you have a function. If you have a function, this means that you have a purpose. More so, the stone became a chief cornerstone. In order for you to fulfill your purpose, you need to be *positioned* to do so. Hence, the chief *cornerstone*.

A corner is a position. If I told you to move to a corner, I'm telling you to move to a specific location. In order for God to help you fulfill your purpose, God has to position you for it. So, the stone becoming a chief cornerstone after being rejected is like you fulfilling what God has called and positioned you to do. He uses the thrust from your offender(s) to land you in the *corner*, spot, place, environment, location or position where you can carry out your vocation.

God allows people to reject you so that you can be transformed from being walked on, kicked around, thrown around and played, to being in a position where you will fulfill His will

for your life. He wants you to hold things down; He doesn't want you to be held down. He wants you to be held up, not held back. A stone is unstable by itself as it gets tossed to and fro but becomes stable when it's positioned to hold walls together.

When you are involved in relationships where you are unstable and unfulfilled, God will let individuals push you away from their lives so that you can end up with others who'll help you find fulfillment. Through your newfound acquaintances, you'll discover where you fit and gain your stability. When people get *rid of you*, God uses their rejection to get you to those who have *need of you*. He takes advantage of rejection to deliver you from your *naysayers* and redirect you to your *yah-sayers*.

The *Today's English Version* of Psalm 118:22 says that "*the stone which the builders rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all.*" God utilizes rejection to get you from those who treat you like you're worthless, to those who'll treat you like you are worthwhile. He uses it as a means to liberate you from individuals who deem you as useless, placing you instead with others who'll accept you as useful.

When people treat you like you are useless, you are *used less*. But God created you to be useful, so through their neglect, He'll get you to an area, position or place—corner, and people—other "builders" where, and with whom, you're useful—*used to the full*. Your usefulness is your purpose; it's your chieftaincy title. Consider some of the chiefs of our day: commander-in-chief, chief executive officer, chief operating officer, etc. These are all positions of eminence and relevance. Like them, God created you to be prominent and relevant. If anything or anyone threatens that, God uses their threat to lead you to a safe haven where their threat will not hinder your potential.

As long as you are involved with people who deny or are ignorant of your worth, you're likely not going to know how special you are. Consequently, you will not know that you're so much better than their perception of you. You'll not be cognizant that you exceed their expectations. That's why God has

to get you out of their lives to help you discover yourself. Hence, not only does God use rejection to position you for promotion, or redirect you to a place where you'll accomplish your purpose, but He also uses it to refine and define you.

To refine simply means to free from impurities. Gold, for example, is refined by fire to free it of its impurities so that it can become the precious metal that we know it to be. Similarly, rejection is a fire that God uses to free you of the people who compromise your value. And once you've been liberated from them, the gold in you can be utilized to brighten the lives of others. As a result, the person God destined you to be will be brought to the forefront. Your preciousness is displayed to be seen. In a nutshell, you've been defined.

Not only did the stone which was rejected become the chief cornerstone, the next verse, Psalm 118:23 (AMP) says, "*This is from the Lord and is His doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.*" It's a marvelous and mind-boggling thing to discover that God uses rejection to help you fulfill your destiny. In essence, sometimes the dismissal you experienced is God's doing. And it is a marvelous thing because He is using it to direct you. He is using it to navigate you to His plan for your life; be it a project, a person, a place, or all of the above. God uses your *opposition* to *position* you. Yes, your *op-position*; He uses it to position you for your purpose, like the stone that was cornered as a chief—so to speak.

If you've been wondering why you were rejected, especially if—to your knowledge—you did nothing wrong, it's likely that God had something to do with it. *It was His doing.* He allowed you to be refused to ensure that the gift He placed in you would not be hindered or prevented any further from being expressed.