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## MINISTERING IN SPITE OF REJECTION

Have you ever tried to help someone and he or she let you know that your help wasn't wanted? There used to be an advertisement for a pain reliever that had a line that said "Please, Mom, I rather do it myself." If we try to help someone that we don't know very well and get that sort of reaction, then our natural tendency is to back off and "mind our own business." On the other hand, if we see a person that needs help and that person is someone who is close to us, then we are less likely to stop trying to help in spite of the help being rejected. That is especially true if that close person is a family member. Many parents see that their children need help and because the child is trying to be independent, the help and advice of the parent is rejected. A loving parent will not give up in trying to help.

Throughout the history of God dealing with man, He has tried to help us and we have rejected that help time after time. God tried to have fellowship with us as a means of helping us learn and grow to be more like Himself. We (Adam and Eve) rejected that fellowship by letting sin come between us and God. God gave us examples of good people (Noah), gave us His principles of living (law), sent His prophets (Jeremiah) to warn us, chastised us when we did wrong (the exile), forgave and restored, and finally came Himself to live among us in the person of Jesus. All this was done to help us and, for the most part, people rejected the help because they were really rejecting God Who was offering the help. Jesus found that rejection especially strong in His home town of Nazareth.

MARK 6:1-4 After Jesus began His public ministry, He experienced a strong wave of popularity. There were great crowds that followed Him. He taught them, many people were healed and great miracles were done. Even during this time of popularity, there were pockets of opposition and resistance, especially among the Jewish religious leaders. This opposition grew until it finally became open hostility and took action in the arrest, false conviction, and crucifixion of Jesus. There was other opposition and rejection that Jesus encountered during the early part of His ministry and it came from people closest to Him. His family members (mother, brothers, and sisters) found Him to be an embarrassment. At one time they came to get Him to take Him home. At the height of His popularity, He returned to His home town along with His disciples. He was not appreciated among those people. They still saw Him as the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of their neighbors. Their attitude could be expressed by "Who does He think He is?"

Jesus' claim to be the Messiah (recorded in Luke) was especially hard for them to accept and when He told them that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in Him, they even tried to kill Him. I don't think that we can be too critical of them, for I suspect that we would behave in somewhat the same way. We would not try to physically kill someone but we would do it verbally. We might say, "He's just another religious fanatic, ignore Him and maybe He will go away."

MARK 6:5 Do we ever wonder why we see so few miracles? Some of the other gospel writers say that He could do no great work among them because of their unbelief. It is rather frightening to realize that we can limit what God can/will do in our lives by our lack of belief.

MARK 6:6 If Jesus was amazed that the people of Nazareth experienced unbelief, He must be totally flabbergasted at the unbelief that is in the world, but especially in our nation, even here where we live. If Jesus had started His public ministry at Nazareth, then we could understand how the people would have trouble believing; however, Jesus had already proven His power many times over in others areas of Judea and Galilee. The word had spread and they had heard but they chose to not believe and in so doing limited the help that they could receive. In spite of the general

rejection, Jesus did not give up but ministered where He could. This should be the pattern that we should follow: minister where we can and in spite of rejection.

MARK 6:7-11 The disciples of Jesus had seen the rejection that Jesus experienced and they had seen that Jesus did not just give up and go home, but He kept on help those that would let Him -- those that would believe. They needed to see that, because Jesus was going to send them out to minister to people in their need and He knew that they too would experience rejection by some.

He did not send them out alone, but two by two. There is good reason for this method. The pair could help and encourage each other. He did not send them out without the proper tools. In this case, Jesus gave them power over unclean spirits. (Matthew records that Jesus gave them instruction to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast our devils.) Jesus also sent them out with hope (expectation). He wanted them to expect that someone would accept them and that someone would help them with food to eat and a place to stay. If they did not have that expectation, then if the initial reaction they would receive as they entered a new town were negative, then they might just move on and not look to find that person who would accept them. If we were to share the gospel with people and did not have the expectation that God was going to send someone our way who was ready to accept the message of salvation, then we might get discouraged and give up after the first rejection.

There are consequences of rejection for the person that does the rejecting. Jesus said that judgment day is coming and everyone is going to be accountable.

MARK 6:12-13 The starting place for each person in the restoration of relationship with God is repentance. John the Baptist proclaimed it, Jesus preached it, and the disciples declared it as they went into the villages and towns. Repenting is putting an end to our rejection of God and His will for our lives. It is a decision that each one has to face. Part of our ministry to bring people to a realization that a decision is needed and to help direct them to Jesus as they decide. God will equip us with the tools to do the job just as Jesus equipped the disciples with power and authority over demon and sickness. Spiritual problems require spiritual solutions and all too often we resort to psychology and drugs to help people when what they really need is deliverance from demonic spirits. However, we live in a society that rejects the realities of the spiritual realm and consequently we do not have access to all the help that God wants to provide for us.

We should be very thankful that God loves us enough that He does not give up on us when we reject Him. We should demonstrate that same kind of love toward others to not abandon people in their need when they reject us.