

# **Christian Literature and Living**

**“Was Blind, But Now I See!”**

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**Leah’s Legacy**

**Overcoming Rejection**

**Sheila Andrews, B.A., B.Ed.**

# Leah's Legacy Overcoming Rejection

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## **Pain Lingers**

It's not your fault. If others have mistreated you or plainly rejected you, don't conclude that something is wrong with you. Perhaps, you are the victim of someone who has completely abandoned you. That might have been a father, mother or spouse. They have gone out of your life now and they exist only in names at the far end of your memory lane. But the pain they caused lingers nevertheless. Perhaps, you are the victim of someone who never considers you as a person of value and continues to abuse you still. You are held captive under their authority and now you are stuck in a situation which you detest every moment. And there seems to be no way out.

Your heart is broken and full of bitterness towards them - and towards God, too.

## **Who Is Responsible?**

But the truth is that God has nothing to do with it. It is not God who lets others do what they do to you. There exist cruel and plainly mean people who choose to be cruel and mean. They determine to treat others shamefully, and they don't feel any guilt for doing so! Some others are controlled by demons to afflict others. All these people are called "ungodly" and "wicked" in the Bible. Though they are fully aware what they do is wrong, they do it anyway.

## **Meaning of Rejection**

According to Webster's *New World College Dictionary*, one of the definitions for the word "reject" is "to deny acceptance, care, and love to someone." If not treated, rejection can lead either towards rebellion or deep depression, both of which are harmful.

Whether you have been hurt in the past or you are going through the pain of rejection now, I want to assure you that there is a way out. You don't have to wallow through the mire of uncertainty any longer. Take courage; there is hope.

The valley of rejection has seen many souls pass through it. The ones who refused to look up to the mountain of glory, lurched in self-pity and loneliness till the end; while the ones who looked up to the distant hills and took the steps forward boldly, no matter how painful they were, did reach the top in triumph!

Leah was one of them.

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## Overcoming Rejection - Leah's Way

Once, her pitiful cry was rising from the ravine of rejection which echoed around the arid hills of Aram. But in the end she came out victoriously raising a banner of hope.

However, Leah's victory did not come when *she* wanted it. If Leah is in front of you, she would ask you to quit doing two mistakes.

1. Quit trying to be the favored one.
2. Quit pleasing your oppressor.

Commonly, in a situation where rejection occurs, there is someone else around who is favored than you. It may be a sister who could do everything better than you do effortlessly, or a brother whose touch makes everything gold while you struggle to pay your bills every month. You are always compared with the favored one; sometimes openly admonished, and sometimes subtly hinted that you could never come up to their level. Therefore you try with all your might to get attention the favored one gets.

## Influence of Rejection in Our Life

Rejection always urges you to be someone else rather than being yourself. That was what Leah did.

She desperately wanted to be Rachel who was her younger sister. She did not want to be like Rachel; rather she wanted to *be* Rachel. What is the difference? If I want to be like a celebrity, I'd try to get all the resources to imitate the celebrity. I would wear my hair like her; imitate her style of walking and talking, and so on... But it is one step further, if I want to *be that celebrity*. Unrealistic, you say. Yes, only when we try to achieve something unrealistic, the problem starts. Despair sets in. A sense of hopelessness arises as a result, because we fail miserably. So, Leah's attempts to be Rachel failed too. Rachel was undoubtedly the favorite of everyone!

Leah's frustration escalated one night when a stranger stepped into her door step. In fact, Jacob was her unknown cousin who lived far away until that time. Rachel had met him at the well and brought him home. Leah observed that Jacob and Rachel had already fallen in love with each other! Leah felt unwanted.

But one day came the chance of "being Rachel" quite unexpectedly. It was the night of Jacob's wedding. When the time came for the bride to be given, Laban brought, not Rachel, but Leah to Jacob! (Gen. 29:23).

Now that she has become his wife, Leah expected Jacob to love her. Jacob could care less! After a week of festivity, he married his sweetheart, Rachel. The Bible clearly states that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (Gen. 29:30). Leah felt the cold and cruel hand of rejection slapping her face making her cheeks burn with shame.

### **Trying to Please**

Leah realized that she could never be Rachel. As the pangs of rejection gripped her, Leah began to search for something to fill her love-starved soul. She didn't want to give up easily. So she tried another method.

She tried to please her husband.

### **Divine Intervention**

She thought that the more number of children she bore for her husband, the more he would be pleased. At this juncture, divine intervention helped her. The grace of God was upon her because God saw how Leah was treated by Jacob. God is always on the side of the oppressed and He always comes to the rescue of the rejected. "And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, He opened her womb," says the Bible simply (Gen 29:31). Leah testified that the Lord had seen her affliction and heard that she was hated.

Soon after each son was born, Leah hoped for a better relationship with her husband. Her expectancy and yearning for Jacob's love would be heard from her statements every time she bore a child.

### **Hoping for the Better**

After Reuben was born, she said, "Now my husband will love me." When she bore Levi, she said, "Now, this time, my husband will be a companion to me." After giving birth to Zebulon, her sixth son, she proclaimed, "Now will my husband dwell with me because I have borne him six sons."

Children were considered as assets and wealth to a family, and so it was understandable that Leah believed that she had done great benefits to Jacob. In turn, she expected that he would love her as he should.

But once again, Leah was wrong.

She finally came to the conclusion that there was no use trying to win his affection. This time the rejection seemed complete. No more would she long for Jacob's approval or Rachel's favor to hire him for a night!

### **God Will Not Despise a Broken Spirit and a Contrite Heart**

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Leah settled in a mundane daily routine of a homemaker, looking after her large and growing household. She was busy from morning till late at night. But her busyness did not fill the emptiness deep inside her soul. Did God feel her pain? Yes, He did. He will not despise a broken spirit and a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17). Neither will He despise the prayer of destitute (Psalm 102:17).

When Jesus was on the earth, His heart was always towards those who were rejected by society. He touched the lepers and healed them. He gave fresh living water to the Samaritan woman who was rejected by her five husbands. He saved an adulterous woman from being stoned when her community rejected and condemned her. Jesus knew the pain of rejection personally, because He Himself went through it. His closest friends rejected Him and He died a cruel and lonely death.

### **Feeling the Pain**

Moreover, it is one thing to feel sorry for someone else when they have pain; it is totally another thing to feel the pain itself! We humans can never feel another person's pain. But God can. He feels the actual distress you are in, whether it is physical or emotional. All the books of the prophets, whether great or small, speak of His sadness for the people He loves. It doesn't take long to see the heartaches He felt when we read the story of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years. Sure, there are wrath-filled rebukes in the writings of the prophets, but they are almost immediately followed by His heart-melting and comforting promises.

The fact that God does feel our pain is even clearer in the New Testament. Saul was causing great harm to the disciples of the Lord. On one of his murderous trips to arrest the believers in Damascus, he was stopped by a sudden bright light from the sky and he was pushed down to the ground.

Then he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" When Saul asked, "Who are you Lord?" the voice replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4). Jesus let Saul know that persecuting believers was actually persecuting Jesus Himself.

### **Jesus Does Feel Our Pain**

Dear one, Jesus feels your pain. He feels every blow that falls and resonates in your heart. He feels each and every pounding your mind goes through. Would you call on Jesus, right now? Give that burden of rejection over to Him. The moment you do that, He would take charge of the situation. Isaiah 26:3 says, "He would keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind is stayed on Him".

### **True Liberty Starts in Our Heart**

Jesus came to the earth to bind up and heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives (Isaiah 61:1). True liberty starts in your heart. When your burden of sin is lifted and yoke or iniquity is removed by the power of Jesus' blood, you would find true freedom. No outward situation can imprison you anymore. Haven't you seen a caged bird sing? Though it is surrounded by bars and its wings are clipped off, it lifts up its head, stretches its neck and sings a song, a happy song.

### **God Honored Leah**

Coming back to Leah's story, after she stopped trying to be the favored Rachel and stopped pleasing her husband, Leah found true peace in her heart. She changed her focus and began to be content. When Rachel died suddenly, after giving birth to her second son, Leah automatically became the mother of Rachel's sons. In fact, the entire responsibility of Jacob's young and growing family fell on Leah's shoulders. She worked tirelessly to take care of Jacob's twelve sons and one daughter. Slowly Jacob began to notice Leah's absolute devotion to the family. By then, he had acquired enormous wealth. Genesis 30:43 says, "In this way, the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys." Surely, Jacob needed Leah to oversee such a large dynasty. And Leah did just that, with charm and dignity, day by day till the end.

At last, Leah got what she wanted - her husband's love and respect! And God honored Leah in His own way. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was born in Leah's lineage through Judah, her fourth son.

### **A Legacy for Us**

This is the legacy Leah left for you. You can overcome rejection. Never underestimate your potentials. You are not who others say you are. You are what the Bible says you are. "Arise, shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you." Arise from your depression. Arise from your rejection. God loves you. He is giving you the oil of gladness in exchange of your mourning: the garment of praise in exchange of despair. He is going to do great and mighty things in you and through you.

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