

*cross culture children* (racial and ethnic minorities, members of alien religions, and immigrants).

**Co-Culture:** Rejection by parents for who we refuse to be or what we refuse to do, or for no good or apparent reason, is also painful and common. This occurs often in *co-culture children* (members of the dominant race, class, religion, etc.). No matter a child's relationship with the culture, rejection is a scourge that produces pain and years of work to overcome.

## **Birth Order**

**First Born:** This category includes *only children*. Rejection often comes for them later in childhood as they are *left* to supervise or even raise their younger siblings.

**Middle Child:** Rejection often comes for them quickly as they are compared to their older sibling/s.

**Last Born:** Rejection often comes for them early as they are left to the care of older siblings who are often neither skilled nor available.

What are the things that parents do or fail to do that produce feelings of rejection in their children, either immediately or, like a time release capsule, further down the road of their lives? After twenty-two years of pastoral observation and counseling, spiritual revelation, and focused study in this specific area I've arrived at the following list:

### ***1. Acknowledgment***

*If a child has not been looked at, seen, or watched over sufficiently, that child will feel rejected.* Our relationships with our parents form the foundation from which we relate to ourselves, and the world around us. That foundation is established through parental care, and damaged through parental rejection.

You can't care for something without looking at it, seeing it, and thinking about it. Care requires sight. What we love we look

at. What or whom we say we love expects us to look at it or them, and measures the depth of our love by the depth of our stare. The deeper we love, the deeper we look. Yahweh loves us deeply, to our core, so He looks into our heart (*1 Samuel 16:7*)<sup>1</sup> and keeps us forever before His sight (*Isaiah 49:16*).<sup>2</sup> That's how He knows the number of hairs on our head, and the moment even a sparrow dies—because He's always watching, seeing and looking. In the same way, a looking parent will know the life's minutiae of the child s/he loves: her favorite song, his friends' names, what she scored on that physics quiz, what he had for a snack last night. Like pastors who are called to watch for the souls of the flock (*Hebrews 13:17*),<sup>3</sup> because seeing is caring, parents, especially fathers, are also called to watch for the souls of their children.

This is why prejects have such a deep need for praise and will pursue it at high cost. It is also why many prejects are drawn to athletics and the performing arts, where we can be *seen*, and earn enormous amounts of praise if we work hard enough. We are convinced we were rejected because we were *bad*, and the only way to be accepted is to work hard at being *good*. And, paradoxically, this is also why prejects find it difficult to accept praise they don't feel they've earned. Praise for being anything less than good does not compute for a preject. This is also why prejects find it difficult to accept that Yahweh loves and applauds them just for who they are, irrespective of what they've done.

If a parent or anyone wants to make an indelible impression on a preject's life, leaving a mark that won't be erased, bless him/her in the spirit. To do that, you must walk in the spirit and train

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<sup>1</sup> *1 Samuel 16:7* (NIV) But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

<sup>2</sup> *Isaiah 49:16* (NIV) See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.

<sup>3</sup> *Hebrews 13:17* (KJV) Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

yourself to see the way Yahweh sees: spiritually. Look into the spirit of a preject's life. Ask Yahweh, "Do you have anything you want me to tell this person?" If He says yes, speak into their lives whatever Yahweh says.

Make your prayer, "Yahweh, teach me to see the way you see." Because when we really see someone, it is the highest form of respect and acknowledgment. The word *respect* comes from the root word *spectere*, from which we get the word *spectacle*, which means 'to see.' Respect is about seeing someone for who they are. When we are seen for who we are, we are acknowledged as valuable human beings on the planet.

In the early 1990s my wife and our oldest daughter, Johanna, who was a toddler at the time, lived in Astoria, Queens, a predominantly Greek and immigrant neighborhood just across the East River from New York City. As I was waiting on a long line in the local McDonald's® on 33<sup>rd</sup> Street to buy Johanna a happy meal, an elderly Greek woman approached the line, looked me in the face, and then stood in front of me. When I said to her, "Excuse me, Ma'am, but you just cut in front of me and I've been standing here for a while." She replied, "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't see you," and promptly moved to the back of the line.

It's one thing to be ignored, to not be looked at, and so not seen; it's another thing to be looked at, and not seen, to be rendered invisible. Many prejects are looked at by their parents, and just not seen. And many are convinced, as was the case with me and the elderly Greek woman, that this blindness is elective. So, many prejects develop loud compensatory behaviors to force people to see them: oversized personalities, garish attire, slutty make-up, and anything that is attention-getting, with the goal being attention for the sake of attention.

We all have a basic need for acknowledgment because in the Genesis account of creation, everything Yahweh made, He then verbally acknowledged. The creation needs to hear itself acknowledged because that is the only way for it to know that its existence is valid and sanctioned. We don't know that we are real

until we hear Yahweh say that we are. We all have a divinely installed need to hear Yahweh call our name, to legitimize us.

When my second daughter and middle child, Nailah, was a kindergartner in North Fort Myers, Florida, she was blessed with a teacher who did not know how to pronounce her name. Unfortunately, rather than admit this to my wife or me, her teacher chose to just not risk linguistic failure and instead used pronouns to address my daughter. About a week into the school year my daughter said to me, "Daddy, my teacher doesn't know my name." When I asked her why she would think that, she told me, "Because she never says it." Sure enough, when I dropped her off to her classroom the next school day and paid attention to the teacher's interactions with the children, she addressed everyone by name...except my daughter. I promptly created an index card with the phonetic spelling and pronunciation of Nailah's name, the meaning of her name, and a few examples of usage in a sentence.

The hurt in my daughter's voice was palpable as she told me her story. If a child does not hear his/her name in a loving, accepted way, or know that they have been seen, and thus respected and acknowledged, that child will feel rejected, because our need for respect and acknowledgment is as basic as our need for air.

## ***2. Affirmation***

*If a child has not been affirmed that child will feel rejected.* Acknowledgment recognizes that you *are*. Affirmation establishes that you *are good*. If pastors don't go into ministry affirmed like Jesus (*Matthew 3:16-17*)<sup>4</sup> then they will go looking for affirmation from whomever will give it to them, and be set up for sexual sin. Sex is affirming for men in general and male prejects in particular. Fathers, like Yahweh, are supposed to affirm their children. If they

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<sup>4</sup> *Matthew 3:16-17* (NIV) As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

don't, their children will look for it from others.

When we track Yahweh's affirmation of the world He made through specific verses in *Genesis 1*, we find that this is the foundation for the need of all humans to be spoken to, seen and affirmed.

When Yahweh created the world He spoke to it, saw it, then acknowledged, applauded and affirmed it (*Genesis 1*). All of us have the same basic needs encoded into our spirit being. We need a father to speak into us, to speak us into existence and name us, to see, acknowledge, and notice us, and then applaud and affirm us. These are basic existential needs for wholeness and self-worth.

We all have a basic need for affirmation because everything Yahweh made He called good. The creation needs to hear *you are good*, not just *you did good*. We all have a divinely installed need to hear that we *are* good. Whoever affirms us that way will have our love and loyalty. The deepest blessing we can impart to another person, the one that makes an eternal impression, is our agreement with Yahweh that they *are* good. Not that they *look* good, *sound* good, *play* good, or *do* good, but that they *are* good.

We took the project assessment to the sex industry and had both the *talent* and the fan or customer fill it out in exchange for a free gift. This project confirmed *our thesis: most people in the sex industry are projects looking for affirmation*. Many project men are addicted to sex and porn, because the same chemicals released in the brain when being embraced or complimented by parents is also released during an orgasm. And many project women have been taught to *give sex to get* affirmation.

Men for whom sex has been a weakness have a hunger in their life because they've not yet felt satisfied, full, or complete in that part of life. There's nothing *wrong* with them. They've just been hungry for connection their whole *emotionally aware* life.

If a child does not hear that they *are* good, or know that they have been fully seen, flaws and all, and thus legitimately affirmed rather than just being sold a bill of goods, that child will feel rejected, because our need for affirmation is as basic as our