Uninvited

Living Loved When You Feel Less Than, Left Out, and Lonely

Lysa TerKeurst
I dedicate this book to my dearest friend Colette Greene . . . you are a gift from God and I dearly love and treasure you. I couldn’t have persevered through the writing of this message without you.

And to anyone who has felt the sting of rejection, grieved the deep loss of a relationship that was there one day and gone the next, or questioned whether God has any good plans for you at all . . . I understand. God made sure to get these words of hope to you. He loves you and so do I.
Contents

Chapter 1  I’d Rather Ignore Honesty  1
Chapter 2  Three Questions We Must Consider  11
Chapter 3  There’s a Lady at the Gym Who Hates Me  27
Chapter 4  Alone in a Crowded Room  41
Chapter 5  Hello, My Name Is Trust Issues  53
Chapter 6  Friendship Breakups  66
Chapter 7  When Our Normal Gets Snatched  74
Chapter 8  The Corrective Experience  88
Chapter 9  Why Does Rejection Hurt So Much?  102
Chapter 10  Her Success Does Not Threaten Mine  117
Chapter 11  Ten Things You Must Remember  127
When Rejected
Chapter 12  The Enemy’s Plan Against You  146
Chapter 13  Miracles in the Mess  160
Chapter 14  Moving Through the Desperate  172
In-Between
# Contents

*Chapter 15  I Want to Run Away*  
188

*Chapter 16  What I Thought Would Fix Me Didn’t*  
203

*Bonus Chapter: What’s It Like to Do Life with Me?*  
211

*What’s It Like to Do Life with Me? Assessment*  
226

*Corrective Experience Chart*  
230

*A Note from Lysa*  
233

*Acknowledgments*  
235

*Scriptures*  
237

*Things I Don’t Want You to Forget*  
255

*Notes*  
269

*About the Author*  
271
Chapter 1

I’d Rather Ignore Honesty

In the quiet of an early morning, honesty finds me. It calls to me through a crack in my soul and invites the real me to come out, come out, wherever you are. Not the carefully edited edition of the me I am this year. No, honesty wants to speak to the least tidy version of the woman I’ve become. The one I can’t make look more alive with a few swipes of mascara and a little color on my lips.

Honesty is a suitor with piercing vision who isn’t swayed by pretending and positioning.

I can try and make things appear better than they seem, but honesty will have none of it. So, I throw my hair in a messy bun and let my face stay splotchy. I don’t suck in my stomach or whiten my teeth or spritz on some perfume.

I simply emerge.

I come out from behind all the efforts to carefully construct
Uninvited

a more acceptable version of me, and I hesitantly extend my hand, uncertain how to greet honesty. I could be met with a slap or a hug, and I’m well aware it could go either way.

I would never opt for the slap, except with me that is probably the safer of the two options. I am an incredibly awkward hugger of the worst sort. I was once introduced to a well-known pastor I was extremely nervous to meet. He was a hefty older man with a delightful soul who was determined to make me feel welcome.

I should have felt honored.

But as I saw him approaching, all the options of how to greet him danced in my brain, and I became increasingly freaked-out with every step he took toward me. I stuck out my hand. He enveloped me in a bear hug, accidentally forcing my arm down in the worst possible location. Thankfully, he quickly backed away and instead placed his hands on my shoulders to say whatever he’d planned to say.

Of course I can’t tell you what he said in the end, because 243 alarm bells were going off in my head about the awkward hug possibly resulting in my being banned from every church this side of the Mississippi. Or the world.

So, since hugs aren’t usually my first choice, I didn’t want to hug honesty.

Actually, I’ve never wanted to fully embrace honesty at all. I’m much better at it today than ever before, but I hesitate, knowing just how dangerous this can be. As long as I suspect that honesty’s intention is to expose me and hurt me, it will always feel like a dangerous thing.

It’s easier to construct a more palatable life story—where I can draw straight lines from each hurt of the past to the healing I later experienced—than to face the raw truth. I prefer
to neatly match each hard part of my testimony with the soft place I landed in the middle of God’s grace, forgiveness, and restoration as proof I am walking in freedom.

Which I am. Most of the time. But honesty didn’t want to talk to me about that. Honesty wanted me to bring the core of who I believe I am and hold it up to the light of what’s really true.

And there’s not a soul alive who will find perfect alignment there.

Not. One.

No matter how saved, sanctified, mature, and free we are, there are misalignments embedded in our souls. So this is what honesty wanted to address with me. The cause of this misalignment is something we all wish would have stayed in the middle school locker room: rejection.

One maliciously crafted rejection with my exact vulnerabilities in mind will pierce the deepest part of me. Being mature in my faith can help me better process it. It can help me have a better reaction to it. It can even help me remove the arrow and patch up the wound. But spiritual maturity doesn’t shield me from rejection.

Today’s rejections, big or subtle, are like stealth bombs that zing straight to my core, locating hurts from my past and making them agonizingly present all over again. They send messages that scramble up all my carefully established formulas for keeping life stable. The voices of doubt and insecurity whisper, “See, I’ve been telling you for years what an utter disappointment you are.” Those voices don’t have to scream; the pain does that in deafening tones.

So honesty stares at me, and I nod my head. I agree. There is still work to be done.
Finally, I see that honesty isn’t trying to hurt me. It’s trying to heal me.

_Honesty isn’t trying to hurt me._
_It’s trying to heal me._

If you want to know what’s really inside a person, listen carefully to the words she speaks. Recently the Lord made sure I had an acute awareness of what some of my own words reveal. Hints of the misalignment between what’s true and what I believe about myself leaked out one day at the airport. There’s nothing like a serious dose of stress mixed with an extreme time crunch that makes a person’s mouth forget its filter. What you really think spills out in words a little too raw and forces you to take a look at where they came from.

There I stood, staring into an empty car trunk just outside the terminal, as a stabbing realization made my heart beat fast and my thoughts swirl. I had my itinerary. I had my driver’s license. I had plans to get home. But I also had a rather inconvenient realization: I didn’t have my luggage. Somehow it hadn’t made it into the trunk of the car.

I thought another person had grabbed it. She thought I had. So there’s that.

Quickly I called a friend who was still at the hotel. I breathlessly told her of my situation and asked if she could grab my luggage and stick it on the very next shuttle headed to the airport. And one other minor detail—I only had fifteen minutes to spare before the airline would no longer allow me to check my bag.

I’m not a nail biter, so instead I nervously picked at the little
threads of skin at my cuticles. I twisted my fingers until my knuckles cracked. Again, not a normal habit of mine. But this wasn’t a normal moment.

Who shows up at the airport without their luggage?

I paced back and forth, willing the shuttle van to speed, but then quickly repented because my rule-following brain made me. Mentally, I was beating myself up and recounting why in heaven I hadn’t made sure I had my luggage. I checked my watch. Things weren’t looking good. The bus had more miles to go than I had time to wait. Ugh.

I walked over to an outside check-in counter with pleading eyes and a nervous voice, high-pitched and more than slightly annoying. “I know you don’t work for the airline I’m flying, but your company is in the process of merging with it. So, is there any way I can check my luggage in here as soon as it pulls up to the curb and you can just work it all out on your computer? Please? Yes?”

“Sorry, but no,” he replied. “Our computer systems aren’t merged yet.”

Bummer. Big huge stinking bummer.

And then I started to do what I often do when life refuses to cooperate with me. I started talking to myself. Frustration lilted and lifted from my nerves right out of my mouth. “I’m just such an idiot. I invite so much unnecessary drama and complication in my life, because my pace and my brain aren’t in sync. I mean, seriously, what is wrong with my brain?!?”

The luggage man made an abrupt about-face turn in my direction, extended his arm, and held up his hand, signaling me to stop. “Not in my presence,” he said. “Not in my presence will you talk about yourself this way. Absolutely not.”

His command startled me.
His words stopped me.
And suddenly I wondered if I was having a conversation with an angel.
“Spit happens, woman.” Only he didn’t say spit. He said, well, you know.
Great. Wouldn’t you know it? I have an “angel” that cusses.
So he wasn’t a divine presence, but some of his words certainly were.
They stuck to me. Like when a two-year-old spends an hour working a large lollipop into a gloopy, gummy mess and then runs her hands through your hair. That kind of sticking, it’s serious.
And so was this. These words—“Not in my presence will you talk about yourself in this way”—they don’t brush off easily. Nor should they. Sometimes a phrase lands in your soul with such weight it leaves the deepest impression. I collect these phrases like other people collect stamps and Beanie Babies. I fill the unlined pages of notebooks from Walmart with these phrases. These words that move me are treasures.
My fingers twitched, eager to add this to my collection, but my Walmart notebook was inside the luggage hopefully speeding, but not breaking-the-law speeding, my way. In the absence of the notebook, the only thing I could do was let the words take center stage in my mind. I heard them over and over and felt peace.
With car fumes and sharp airplane noises providing the unlikely backdrop for a church-type lesson, I realized why these words were so personally necessary for me. Negative self-talk was a rejection from my past that I had allowed to settle into the core of who I am. I talked about myself in ways
I’d Rather Ignore Honesty

I would never let another person. Hints of self-rejection laced my thoughts and poisoned my words more than I cared to admit.

Self-rejection paves the landing strip for the rejection of others to arrive and pull on up to the gates of our hearts. Think about why it hurts so much when other people say or do things that make you feel rejected. Isn’t it in part due to the fact they just voiced some vulnerability you’ve already berated yourself for? It hurts exponentially more when you’re kicked in an already bruised shin.

Someone doesn’t invite me to her event, and my thoughts recount all the faults and frailties I’ve voiced about myself recently. Suddenly, I assign my thoughts to that person. I hear her saying these same hurtful things. I feel labeled and judged and, yes, rejected.

Or my husband makes a comment about something I already feel sensitive about, and it incites an emotional response from me that is totally out of proportion. I find myself interpreting what he says and does way more emotionally than he ever intended. And it makes our relationship feel hard and exhausting. I feel so very rejected, and he’s left scratching his head wondering why.

Or something I set my heart on unexpectedly falls through. I try to rally in my heart and remember that it’s due to unforeseen circumstances. But there’s some part of me that feels rejected. I don’t want to take it personally, but I find myself slightly off for the rest of the day and can’t quite shake the disappointment.

Or one of my adult kids makes a choice they know is the opposite of the advice I gave them. The more I push the more they pull back, and I feel like the mom I promised I’d never
be: overbearing and controlling. They become quiet and distant. And I ache in deep places.

Or someone flat-out rejects me, my idea, my invitation, my kids, my project, my whatever, and it messes with me more than it should.

Relationships feel increasingly unsafe. Opportunities feel increasingly risky. And life feels increasingly uncooperative. I carry on, because that’s what we girls do. But this nagging sense of rejection, real or simply perceived, is doing more of a number on me than I care to admit. Rejection steals the best of who I am by reinforcing the worst of what’s been said to me.

Rejection isn’t just an emotion we feel. It’s a message that’s sent to the core of who we are, causing us to believe lies about ourselves, others, and God. We connect an event from today to something harsh someone once said. That person’s line becomes a label. The label becomes a lie. And the lie becomes a liability in how we think about ourselves and interact in every future relationship.

**The line:** I don’t want you becomes the label you aren’t accepted.

**The label:** You aren’t accepted becomes the lie you aren’t worthy.

**The lie:** You aren’t worthy becomes a script of self-rejection. And it unleashes suspicion, doubt, hesitancy, and many other liabilities that hinder present relationships. We project the lines of rejection we heard from our past on others and hold them accountable for words they never said. And worst of all, we catch ourselves wondering if God secretly agrees with those who hurt us.
Rejection steals the best of who I am by reinforcing the worst of what’s been said to me.
I would love to tell you I’m writing about this because I’ve overcome rejection in every way. I have made progress. I’m nowhere near as overly sensitive as I used to be. But there’s a cussing “angel” who would caution me there’s still work to be done.

No, I didn’t choose this topic because I’ve mastered it. I chose this topic of rejection because I want us to dig in to the core of who we are and expose and finally heal rejection’s deep infection. I’ll warn you, the exposing of it all won’t be tidy. But it will be honest.

And it will be good.

I can’t say I’m quite ready to envelop honesty in a bear hug. I think you know the horribly awkward reason why. But I am willing to hold hands. And walk together from here.

* Oh, and P.S.—I did end up making my flight. Just in the nick of time that day. I think my angel at the luggage counter was quite eager to send me on my way.
Chapter 2

Three Questions We Must Consider

Several years ago we remodeled our house and tore part of the kitchen down to the studs. Since I had a vision in my mind of how I wanted things to turn out but am clueless about all things construction, I asked a very knowledgeable friend for his advice. I was so excited to get his expert opinion on fun details like where to place the appliances, cabinet colors, and lighting fixtures. But when he walked in and started staring at the ceiling with a look of grave concern, I knew something was wrong.

The beams running the length of the kitchen had been hidden by sheetrock. But now that we'd temporarily exposed them, he could see one of the major beams wasn’t able to provide the necessary amount of support. About three-quarters
of the way across the ceiling, the board stopped short. It wasn’t long enough to extend all the way to the supporting wall. In an effort to fix it, someone had nailed into its side another board that finished extending the length of the kitchen. Not only is this not the proper way to fix a supporting beam, but the nails were barely holding things together.

But since it was just one board, I didn’t understand why this was such a big deal. There were plenty of other boards doing just fine. Let’s just get on with the fun decorating ideas I thought we’d be discussing.

My friend knew better.

He took me upstairs. In the exact place where the broken boards were in the ceiling below, the second floor dipped and sagged. One good jump or one heavy thing dropped in that area, and that supporting board would likely come apart.

I didn’t bother to ask my friend to unpack this any further. I already knew we couldn’t leave this the way it was. I walked back downstairs and stood below the problem spot.

Broken boards can’t provide stability. There was nothing profound about that from a construction standpoint. Except seeing those boards barely hanging on was like looking inside myself.

For years, I’d been expecting stability from a broken identity.

When Ditches and Dads Disappoint

When I was a little girl, I had a place I’d go to hide away. We were living in a very brown apartment complex at the time. On the side of our unit near the woods and the run-down tennis court, there was a cement ditch. It was an unlikely spot
for a small-framed girl who liked pink and hated bugs. From the first time I ventured down into the ditch, however, being hidden made me feel wonderfully secure.

I’m sure if I looked at it today from my adult perspective, all I’d see would be a dirty drainage ditch. But as a small girl, I loved this place where I could go out of sight from others. People passed by so unaware of me. And, though I could hear every word they were saying, I hardly paid attention. It was all just background noise.

Kids fighting over toys. Women letting gossip fly as easily as dandelion seeds. And teenage girls flirting with silly-sounding boys.

Lots of events could spin and swirl in other people’s lives outside the ditch. But I remained untouched and unaffected. I was a spectator, not a participant. I loved this feeling that life could happen around me but not to me.

My world in the ditch felt predictable and therefore safe. No one ever came over to peek inside or attempt to join me. Though I’m assuming this ditch was there to carry off rainwater, that year things stayed dry. On many occasions I brought some of my treasures down to the ditch and arranged them just so, loving the feeling of being able to control my environment.

Things only changed if I changed them.

In the strangest way I felt as long as I stayed hidden, life stayed in control and I stayed safe. It was a place where scary possibilities at home couldn’t touch me. But I couldn’t stay in the ditch. I eventually had to go home each day. And back inside the brown apartment, things felt so very unpredictable.

I had no control of things happening around me, but they very much affected me. I now know my dad had issues and battles he was fighting that I couldn’t have understood as
a young girl. But at the time, I just thought he was incredi-
ibly unhappy whenever I was home. Therefore, I must be the
problem.

And on some level, maybe my dad did think I was part of
the problem. I complicated his life. I cost money he didn’t
have. And, worst of all, I was a girl.

He never wanted a girl. And I was desperate to be a trea-
sured daughter. That’s a hard equation for which there is no
easy answer. My greatest fear was that my dad would one day
stop coming home and I’d be no father’s daughter.

In my research on rejection, I discovered two core fears
that feed a person’s sensitivity to rejection:

- The fear of being abandoned
- The fear of losing one’s identity

As a little girl, being abandoned and losing my identity
weren’t words I would have used. But rejection’s sting was
a feeling I knew well. When a man is physically present but
emotionally absent, a girl’s heart can feel quite hollow and
helpless. This is true whether that man is her father, her hus-
band, or even a man whom she deeply respects.

**When a man is physically present but
emotionally absent, a girl’s heart can
feel quite hollow and helpless.**

So tucked underneath my Holly Hobby blanket when the
darkness of night made my heart hammer in my chest, I would
whisper over and over, “God, don’t let my daddy leave me. Just don’t let him leave.”

My dad fed my fears every day. He’d use the word *divorce* as if it were his freedom pass—not just from my mom but from me as well. He thought it no big deal to say whatever he felt. But because his words carried such weight for me, every threat of divorce was death breathing down my neck. Because if he did leave, then who would I be? A girl without a daddy felt like a girl without a place in this world. After all, if he couldn’t love me, who would ever love me?

*Love* was not something that graced my dad’s vocabulary. His words were harsh. But it was his silence that most terrified me. It just made me want to run to the ditch. We’re all desperate to anchor our souls to something we can trust won’t change. It didn’t matter what the ditch looked like; it was how it made me feel safe that mattered.

But feeling safe and actually being safe are not one and the same. One day the rains came, and as the water rushed through my hiding place, it carried off all my little treasures. The ditch wasn’t a safe haven. It was just a ditch, doing what ditches do. And once I saw it for what it was, I never returned. Things of this world all eventually reveal what incapable anchors they really are.

A few years later, we moved to a blue house with green carpet. And Dad stopped coming home. The last bit of what held together my security and identity splintered as he packed his things without so much as looking at me. I pressed my face against the front window and watched his car fade into a blur. And then he was gone.

Rejection settled deep into my heart. And I came to one earth-shattering conclusion: “I don’t matter. I am worth
nothing to my dad.” And even more disturbing: “I fear I am
worth nothing to God.” The sum of these feelings became my
new identity.

Who is Lysa?
The unwanted one.

Tearing Out the Old

After my dad left, I tried to prop up what was left of me so I
wouldn’t collapse into the broken place inside. Good grades.
Achievements and accolades. Fun friends and good times.
Boys who made me feel special. I tried to steady myself with
anything that helped me feel better.

But feelings are fragile props. As are ditches that can’t really
hide you and daddies who won’t stay.

Just like the broken beam in my house couldn’t be fixed by
simply nailing another board in to prop it up, neither could I.
It wasn’t just a better feeling that I needed; I needed a
completely new way of defining my identity. I needed truth
to inform what I believed about myself. Otherwise, what I
believed about myself would become a fragile, flimsy, faulty
foundation. The beliefs we hold should hold us up even when
life feels like it’s falling apart.

At that point, though, I couldn’t say that the beliefs I held,
held me up. For years I’d heard people talking about putting

The beliefs we hold should hold us up even
when life feels like it’s falling apart.
my identity in Christ. I nodded my head. I memorized by rote Colossians 3:12, which proclaimed I was one of “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.” But when life felt threatening, I’d revert right back to the old thought patterns of feeling unloved and unwanted.

Standing underneath those broken boards helped me to see why. I couldn’t keep my old broken beliefs, nail a little Jesus truth to the side, and expect stability. I knew I had to stop assessing God’s goodness by how my life felt at any given time. Feelings are broken boards. Only truth is solid, unchanging, and stable through and through.

Old patterns of thought must be torn out, and a new way of looking at the core of who I am using God’s truth has to be put into place. My identity must be anchored to the truth of who God is and who He is to me. Only then can I find a stability beyond what my feelings will ever allow. The closer I align my truth with His truth, the more closely I identify with God—and the more my identity really is in Him.

Here’s the deal . . . when my identity is tied to circumstances I become extremely insecure because circumstances are unpredictable and ever-changing. I rise and fall with successes and failures. I feel treasured when complimented but tormented when criticized. I’m desperate to keep a relationship that makes me feel valuable. Then I’m constantly terrified of that person slipping away. Because I don’t just feel like I’m losing them . . . I feel like I’m losing a big part of myself as well.

My fearful mantra is “I must keep things good so I can be good.”

The exhausting manipulation and control it takes to protect an identity based on circumstances will crush our hearts and hide the best of who we are behind a wall of insecurity.
It's time to stop the lies and devastating hurt stemming from this kind of circumstantial identity. We must tie our identities to our unchanging, unflinching, unyielding, undeniably good, and unquestionably loving God. And the ties that truly bind me to Him and the truth of who I am in Him are given to me in those quiet moments where I say, “I’m Yours, God.

I’m not who that guy says I am. I’m not who that girl says I am.
I’m not who that guy says I am. I’m not who that girl says I am.
I’m not who social media likes and comments say I am.
I’m not who the grades, to-do lists, messes, and mess ups say I am.
I’m not who the scale says I am or the sum total of what my flaws say I am.
I’m going to stop flirting with the unstable things of this world so I can fall completely in love with You. I am loved. I am held. I am Yours. I am forever Yours.”

The more intimacy like this that I have with God, the more secure my true identity is.

Now that we know this, the question becomes how do we live this?

Putting in the New

How do we live this out in the midst of everyday life ups and downs, acceptance and rejections, healthy days and bloated days, and all the unpredictable in-betweens? We need to
develop an “intimacy-based identity,” and this starts with answering three core questions:

• Is God good?
• Is God good to me?
• Do I trust God to be God?

Wrestle well with these questions using truth, and you will start to sense those new, more stable boards holding you up.

Is God Good?
I used to have a cautious approach to God. One look at the news, and one can quickly wonder, How can a good God allow all this craziness, tragedy, and hurt? For years, I would have answered, What do I believe about God? with a tilted head and a narrowed expression. “I believe He’s unpredictable and slightly scary.”

I didn’t doubt God’s power. I didn’t doubt God’s authority. But I did very much doubt God’s goodness. However, when we go to the truth instead of our feelings for the answer to this question, we can understand God’s goodness in a whole new light.

His goodness has been apparent since creation. When He formed and shaped and painted and sculpted this world and its creatures into being, His goodness seeped in with every thought and touch. “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day” (Genesis 1:31).

When Adam and Eve chose to sin, their sin infected and infiltrated the goodness of all God had made. So, while there
are still good things in this world, the world is no longer a perfect reflection of God’s goodness.

In Romans 8:21 Paul explains that the world is in “bondage to decay” or, as some versions say, in “slavery to corruption” (NASB, THE VOICE). This decay and corruption is evidence of the brokenness of this world. I personally see this evidence every time swimsuit season cycles back around. Y’all, the cellulite is real! My body is in bondage to decay. But this is a conversation for another day.

The world is in a state of decay and corruption. We see it in deadly weather patterns, natural disasters, and famines that were not part of God’s good design. Cancer, sickness, and disease were not part of God’s good design. Car accidents, drownings, and murders were not part of God’s good design. Abuse, divorce, and relationship breakdowns were not part of God’s good design.

The first sin did those things. When sin entered the world, it broke the goodness of God’s design. And sin absolutely breaks God’s heart. But in no way did sin affect the goodness of God. He has a plan, a good plan to rid this world of every effect of sin.

For the Eternal is on His way:
    yes, He is coming to judge the earth.
He will set the world right by His standards,
    and by His faithfulness, He will examine the people.

(Psalm 96:13 THE VOICE)

Though we may get our hearts broken from the effects of sin in this in-between time, God’s goodness will eventually set the world right. In the meantime, we must hold fast to the
truth of who God is and His unchanging nature: God is good. His plans are good. His requirements are good. His salvation is good. His grace is good. His forgiveness is good. His restoration is good.

That is what I believe about God.

God is good.

Is God Good to Me?

Based on my experiences with my dad not wanting me, I wondered what my heavenly Father’s attitude was toward me. After all, how could God just stand by and allow so much heartbreak into one little girl’s world?

It seemed every three years starting the year my dad left, there was some kind of awful tragedy that cast lingering, dark shadows into my life. Abuse. Divorce. Abandonment. Mental illness. The death of my sister. A devastating breakup. The cycle just kept going and going.

Even after I’d been a Christian for a long time and knew God loved me, I still had this nagging question about why the hard stuff had to be so painful. Was God really being good to me in this? I think C. S. Lewis said it best: “We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be.”

And it’s at this point someone at Bible study whips out Romans 8:28: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” I like that verse. And I think it helps shed some light on the reality that even if something doesn’t feel good, God can still work good from it.

But verses 5 and 6 from this same chapter give me another layer of assurance:
Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

What doesn’t feel good in my flesh won’t make sense in my flesh. But if I have the Holy Spirit in me, my spirit is different because God is there—His indwelling presence with me. He speaks reassurances in the spirit. He speaks comfort in the spirit. He reminds me He is right there with me in the spirit. Others might disappoint me and leave me... but God never will.

Therefore, I have to keep my mind focused on what the Holy Spirit whispers, not what my flesh screams.

And in my spirit I know God is good to me.

Do I Trust God to Be God?

Once we’ve stabilized our identity by replacing old feelings with the solid truths that God is good and God is good to us, now we have to answer one final question: Do I trust God to be God?

This will not just stabilize our identities, but it will fully anchor us. I love these verses, Isaiah 26:3–4:

You will keep in perfect peace
those whose minds are steadfast,
because they trust in you.
Trust in the LORD forever,
for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal.
Three Questions We Must Consider

The Hebrew word for steadfast used in this verse is samak, which means “to brace, uphold, support.” Amazing, huh? In other words, those with minds fully braced, upheld, and supported by truth and trust in God will be kept in perfect peace. The mind feasts on what it focuses on. What consumes my thinking will be the making or the breaking of my identity.

Will I trust that God sees and knows things I don’t? Will I trust Him when I don’t understand? When circumstances are hard? When people betray or reject me? When my heart gets broken? Will I trust Him to the point where I fully turn the control of my life and those I love over to Him?

If God is good and God is good to me, then I must fill in the gaps of all the unknowns of my life with a resounding statement of trust: God is good at being God.

I don’t have to figure my present circumstances out. I don’t have to fill the silence left behind in another person’s absence. I don’t have to know all the whys and what-ifs. All I have to do is trust. So in quiet humility and without a personal agenda, I make the decision to let God sort it all out. I sit quietly in His presence and simply say, “God, I want Your truth to be the loudest voice in my life. Correct me. Comfort me. Come closer still. And I will trust. God, You are good at being God.”

Getting Past the Past

Your story might be different from mine, but I suspect you also have past rejections that have prompted you to search for stability in various, not-always-healthy ways. The resulting hurt of any form of rejection can linger and entangle us from moving forward if we don’t put it behind us. That’s
The mind feasts on what it focuses on. What consumes my thinking will be the making or the breaking of my identity.
what we’ve been doing by ripping out those old thoughts and replacing them with a new, solid understanding of who God is and what that means for our own identities.

Remember what I said earlier in this chapter. What the mind focuses on, it feasts on. And if you want to know what a person’s focus and feast is, all you have to do is listen to the words that come out of her mouth.

We live in a broken world, where rejection—even from fellow Christians—could be just around the corner. But there is good news as we wait in expectation for God’s ultimate redemption! And that is Jesus. Jesus brought with Him a love that remains . . . is constant . . . stays the same.

No person’s rejection can ever exempt me from God’s love for me. Period. No question mark. The most beautiful love story ever written is the one you were made to live with God.

Imagine how differently you might approach each day by simply stating:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{God is good.} \\
\text{God is good to me.} \\
\text{God is good at being God.} \\
\text{And today is yet another page in our great love story.}
\end{align*}
\]

Nothing that happens to you today will change that or even alter it in the slightest way. Lift your hands, heart, and soul, and receive that truth as you pray this prayer:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{My whole life I’ve searched for a love to satisfy the} \\
\text{deepest longings within me to be known, treasured,} \\
\text{and wholly accepted. When You created me, Lord, Your} \\
\text{very first thought of me made Your heart explode with}
\end{align*}
\]
a love that set You in pursuit of me. Your love for me was so great that You, the God of the whole universe, went on a personal quest to woo me, adore me, and finally grab hold of me with the whisper, “I will never let you go.”

Lord, I release my grip on all the things I was holding on to, preventing me from returning Your passionate embrace. I want nothing to hold me but You. So, with breathless wonder, I give You all my faith, all my hope, and all my love.

I picture myself carrying the old, torn-out boards that inadequately propped me up and placing them in a pile. This pile contains other things I can remove from me now that my new intimacy-based identity is established.

I lay down my need to understand why things happen the way they do.
I lay down my fears about others walking away and taking their love with them.
I lay down my desire to prove my worth.
I lay down my resistance to fully trust Your thoughts, Your ways, and Your plans, Lord.
I lay down being so self-consumed in an attempt to protect myself.
I lay down my anger, unforgiveness, and stubborn ways that beg me to build walls when I sense hints of rejection.
I lay all these things down with my broken boards and ask that Your holy fire consume them until they become weightless ashes.
And as I walk away, my soul feels safe. Held. And truly free to finally be me.
There’s a Lady at the Gym Who Hates Me

There’s a lady at my gym who hates me. No, I’m serious. She sees me coming, and I can feel little poofs of disdain chugging out of her ears as her feet are churning eighty-seven miles per hour on the elliptical machine. I honestly don’t know how she goes so fast. I once tried to keep up with her. It was awful.

And I think that was the day her infuriation with me began. Let me back up and confess my sins that started this whole thing. The elliptical machines are set up very close together and are completely awkward with their angular moving parts. Think if a New York high-rise and an elephant had a baby. That’s an elliptical machine.

Now, conjure up a picture in your mind of the most athletic
person you know. The one who doesn’t have a drop of fat on her entire body, not even at her belly button, which should be illegal in my cellulite-ridden opinion. Okay, do you have your person?

That’s her. She’s honestly stunningly beautiful.

Then picture a marshmallow dressed in a T-shirt and spandex pants. Her ponytail is rather tight, but not much else is. That’s me. Hello, world.

So, I had to sort of get in her space just a tad to mount my machine, and I think I threw off her rhythm. That was sin number one.

And then I decided to try to stay in sync with her, because I wanted to teach all the folks at the gym that day that, though my legs and derrière might not look like it, I’m in shape. My heart can pump with the best of them. And by golly, I was tired of being out-ellipticalled by her. That was sin number two.

And then there may have been a little issue with me taking a phone call while working out. In my defense this is not at all my common practice. But a friend called who really needed me. I realize now I should have stepped off my machine and taken the call elsewhere. But I was sort of in a competition at this point and needed to win this thing on behalf of every other marshmallow-feeling woman.

I tried to chat quietly, but when you feel like a lung might very well pop out of your mouth at any minute, it’s difficult to whisper-talk. That was sin number three.

Three strikes, and she deemed me out. Out of my mind. Out of line. Out of control. She abandoned her elliptical and huffed over to the treadmill. And she’s hated me ever since. But then the other day, something occurred. Something odd that stunned me.
She smiled at me.

It wasn’t an evil, I’m-about-to-whip-your-tail-on-the-gym-floor kind of smile. It was more like an “oh hey, I’ve seen you here before, right?” kind of smile. I thought about her expression the entire time on the elliptical that morning. I mean I analyzed it up one side and down the other. Was it just a stunned-reaction kind of thing, where she felt forced to smile because she couldn’t quite figure out what else to do?

Or was it “I think we could be friends”?
Or was it a truce of some sort?

I’ve decided it wasn’t any of those. I truly believe it was a simple smile acknowledging that she’d seen me but had none of this crazy hate toward me at all. It’s all been a perception thing on my part. Let me rewrite the story as I now believe it actually is.

There’s a lady at the gym who really enjoys her workouts. One day the gal next to her talked on the phone, so instead of making a big deal out of it, she just transitioned over to the treadmill. She really hadn’t thought of it much since. And then one day she saw this same woman in the bathroom and smiled and thought, *Good for you for getting up this morning and working out.*

End of story.

Obviously, I don’t know what went through her head as she smiled. But I think my second version is closer to reality than my first. Which has really gotten me thinking about all the many times I assign thoughts to others that they never actually think. I hold them accountable to harsh judgments they never make. And I own a rejection from them they never gave me.

I know not every rejection is like this.
Some are completely certified and undeniable. As clear as
a just-cleaned window. And the feelings so intense they can make you as horrifically stunned as a bird soaring eastward toward the morning sun, only to slam headfirst into that clean window. The thud feels like it might just kill you. That’s true rejection.

But then there’s this perceived rejection, like I had with my fellow gym-goer. I don’t even think I was really on her radar. But in my mind I was absolutely in her crosshairs. And so goes the crazy inside our heads sometimes.

It makes me remember something I saw an author friend of mine do several years ago that I filed away in my “Words I Love” notebook. She was signing a book. I peeked over to see what she was writing. Her approach was simple. Before signing her name she wrote, “Live loved.”

Not only an instruction, but a proclamation. One that now arrests my soul and is so applicable to our discussion at hand. Live from the abundant place that you are loved, and you won’t find yourself begging others for scraps of love.

How in the World Does It Really Work?

Living loved is a bit of a tricky concept. I will hand that to you along with a few more pages of my thoughts on this. Because I heard you. Just now. When you read my grand answer to “live loved” in that last section, you sighed with a big ol’ “But how?”

You aren’t alone.

When I posted a bit of this on my blog last year, my cyber friends were ever so clear that they liked the idea but couldn’t quite connect with how this would actually work. I had typed
Live from the abundant place that you are loved, and you won’t find yourself begging others for scraps of love.
up that blog and hit send with that “boo-ya” feeling you get when all of life seems solved. I did a little fist pump in the air, indicating I might just be about to party like it’s 1999—in a Bible study sort of way.

“Live loved” is certainly a sermon that preaches really well. But walk outside for 2.3 seconds, and the music comes to a screeching halt while the fist pump wilts. It might preach well, but it’s crazy hard to live some days. Because it’s hard to live something you sometimes don’t feel.

It’s easy to live loved when I feel loved.

But some days I’m just not feeling it.

When life karate chops my feelings into words like hurt, brushed aside, and left out on Monday and then on Tuesday morning the lady at the gym smirks at me, how in heaven am I supposed to be jolly and not assume the worst? For real, it does not come naturally to me to think in those moments, Girl, I am not picking up that negative vibe you just laid down, because I live loved.

No way, no how.

I’m going to get into a funk, because that’s what I do. I will feel put off, and then I will put on that ratty robe of rejection and wear it all day long. But I don’t want to keep being a slave to my runaway emotions and assumptions. I don’t want my days to be dictated by the moods of other people. And I really don’t want the rejections of my past feeding my propensity to feel rejected today.

I want the kind of emotional stability I read about in the Bible:

The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.

(ZEPHANIAH 3:17 ESV)

I love the thought that God is in our midst and that He will quiet me by His love.

Yes, please. I'll take an extra-large order of that every morning. I want to believe it's possible for me not just in the middle of Bible study but in the middle of life.

So I decided to go on a “live loved” quest. I determined to be a one-woman experiment in whether or not it is actually possible to live from a place of being loved. I wanted to get to a place where my immediate reaction to off-kilter interactions with others wasn’t a downward spiral of wonky feelings, but stable love instead.

It was a tall order. A venti-size order from life, really. Because immediately when I started, I struggled. My natural reaction to things happening to me was not a feeling of love.

Love is full. And I was quite empty.

I should have been happy. I knew it. I could have listed out so many things for which I was thankful. So, what was this undercurrent of disappointment that ebbed and flowed just beneath the surface of my more honest moments?

I got still, and I got sad.

Then I would see something horrific on the news that other people were facing, and I would feel so horribly guilty for even daring to give myself permission to entertain anything other than gratitude. Which just heaped shame on top of my sadness. I’d determine that maybe all this off-kilterness was just because I was running a little low on sugar and caffeine.
I’d reach for a handful of something chocolate and wash it down with a Diet Coke.

Then I would rev up my Christian to-do list with all manners of serving, blessing, and giving others the kind of love I was so desperate to have boomerang back on me. Those are all good things. Fabulous activities. Biblical instructions. But when given from a heart whose real motivation is what I’m hoping I’ll get in return, it’s not really love at all.

That’s not the answer. Giving with strings of secret expectations attached is the greatest invitation to heartbreak. That’s not love. That’s manipulation. And it’s all so unrealistic. Only audiences are trained to applaud performances. People in everyday life can sniff out the neediness of a performer trying to earn love. Their instinct isn’t to clap but rather to be repulsed by the fakeness of it all and walk away.

No soul can soar to the place of living loved when it’s a performance-based endeavor. Living loved is sourced in your quiet daily surrender to the One who made you.

It’s like the crazy notion I had as a little girl that ballerinas could fly. I wanted to fly. So I begged my mom for lessons and pink shoes. I wore myself out from all the leaping. Sure, I caught a bit of brief air, but never did I soar. I simply landed with a thud.

There was something crucial I misunderstood. A real ballerina doesn’t attempt to fly. She simply infuses each move with such grace that the audience scarcely remembers she’s as much a victim of gravity as we are. But make no mistake what you’re observing when you watch her effortless elegance and softness. Underneath those floating layers of tulle perched on top of pink ribbon shoes is a soul full of disciplined grit and toes bloody from the daily practice floor.
There’s a Lady at the Gym Who Hates Me

The stage performance ending in applause isn’t what enables the ballerina. It’s her daily return to the instructor that, because of his love, tweaks her movements in the quiet studio. That tweaking in the quiet is the saving of her in public. And I imagine it is the instructor’s approval she longs for the most. It is the source of her soaring.

We are much the same.

The gravity of living in a sin-soaked world will always try to hold us back from living loved. But if we will remember to return often to our Instructor...our Creator...we will discover His loving hands still pulse to continue making us. Tweaking us. Molding us. Filling us. And daily completing the good work He began in us.

Yes, this was what I was missing in this living-loved endeavor. I was doing many things with God in mind but not really spending time getting refilled by God and His abundant love at all. I was saying I was connecting with Him, but in all honesty, I was letting the world stir my deep affections.

I’d say, I put God first in my life, but give all my first moments of each day to checking my text messages rather than checking in with His message.

I’d post a Bible verse and return fifteen times that next hour to see how many likes I got.

I’d think, I am doing everything I can to protect my marriage, but then watch a movie with so much airbrushed love that I couldn’t help but be slightly disappointed with my reality.

I’d believe I had prayed about things, but in reality I’d only worried about them, talked to friends about them, and tried to figure out how to solve them myself.

How dangerous it is when our souls are gasping for God but
we're too distracted flirting with the world to notice. Flirting will give you brief surges of fun feelings but will never really pull you in and hold you close. Indeed, the world entices your flesh but never embraces your soul. All the while, the only love caring enough to embrace us and complete enough to fill us, waits.

He waits every day with every answer we need, every comfort we crave, every affection we’re desperate for, while we look everywhere else but at Him.

I was quite simply getting it wrong. Maybe you can relate? We run at a breakneck pace to try and achieve what God simply wants us to slow down enough to receive. He really does have it all worked out. The gaps are filled. The heartache is eased. The provision is ready. The needs are met. The questions are answered. The problems are solved.

_We run at a breakneck pace to try and achieve what God simply wants us to slow down enough to receive._

Fully.
Completely.
Perfectly.
In Him. With Him. By Him.

We just have to turn to Him. And sit with Him. No matter what. Even if our toes are bloody from the constant wear and tear of desperately running to Him. Get to Him daily.

How it must break His heart when we walk around so desperate for a love He waits to give us each and every day.
Imagine a little girl running with a cup in her hand sloshing out all it contains. She thinks what will refill her is just ahead. Just a little farther. She presses on with sheer determination and clenched teeth and an empty cup clutched tight.

She keeps running toward an agenda He never set and one that will never satisfy. She sees Him and holds out her cup. But she catches only a few drops as she runs by Him, because she didn’t stop long enough to be filled up. Empty can’t be tempered with mere drops.

The tragic truth is what will fill her—what will fill us—isn’t the accomplishment or the next relationship just ahead. That shiny thing is actually a vacuum that sucks us in and sucks us dry . . . but never has the ability to refill. I should know, because that’s where I was. There’s no kind of empty quite like this empty: where your hands are full but inside you’re nothing but an exhausted shell.

Since my fast-paced chase had gotten me into this mess, I knew it would take slow moments to get me out of it. I needed to reconnect with the One who knows how to breathe life and love back into depleted and dead places. Jesus doesn’t participate in the rat race. He’s into the slower rhythms of life, like abiding, delighting, and dwelling—all words that require us to trust Him with our place and our pace. Words used to describe us being with Him.

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” (John 15:7 NASB)

Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

(Psalm 37:4 ESV)
Jesus doesn’t participate in the rat race.

He’s into the slower rhythms of life, like abiding, delighting, and dwelling— all words that require us to trust Him with our place and our pace.
He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall remain stable and fixed under the shadow of the Almighty [Whose power no foe can withstand]. (Psalm 91:1 AMPC)

Did you catch the beautiful filling promised in each of those verses? When we abide, delight, and dwell in Him, He then places within us desires that line up with His best desire for us. Therefore, He can give us whatever we ask, because we will only want what’s consistent with His best. He can fully satisfy our hearts, because they are consistent with His heart. He can promise us stability, because we’re tapped into His consistent power.

This is the fullness of the person who can truly live loved. This was the kind of fullness I needed to properly process the woman at the gym. This is the kind of fullness I need in every situation I face. And it’s certainly the kind of fullness I’ll need as I continue to live out the calling on my life to bring the love of Jesus to this desperate world.

As a matter of fact, when Jesus appointed the disciples (Mark 3:14–15), there were two parts to their calling: “He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (emphasis added). Yes, they were to go out to preach and drive out demons, but the first part of their calling was to be with Him.

Fullness comes to us when we remember to be with Him before going out to serve Him. He wants our hearts to be in alignment with Him before our hands set about doing today’s assignment for Him.

So, He extends what we need and invites us each day to receive in prayer, worship, and truth from His Word. And He
Uninvited lovingly replenishes our cups while whispering, “This isn’t a race to test the fastest pace. I just want you to persevere on the path I have marked out especially for you. Fix your eyes not on a worldly prize but on staying in love with Me.”

Then, and only then, will I stop flirting with this world. And, instead, operate from the full assurance of His love.

It’s not deciding in my mind, *I deserve to be loved*. Or manipulating my heart to feel loved. It’s settling in my soul, *I was created by God, who formed me because He so much loved the very thought of me. When I was nothing, He saw something and declared it good. Very good. And very loved.*

Therefore, I can bring the atmosphere of love into every situation I face. I don’t have to wait for it, hope for it, or try to earn it. I simply bring the love I want. Then I’m not so tempted to flirt with the world, hoping for approval, because I have the real thing with God. And I’m not nearly as likely to fall into perceiving rejection that isn’t really there, because I’m not starving for affection.

*I am loved*. This should be the genesis thought of every day. Not because of how terrific I am. God doesn’t base His thoughts toward me on my own fragile efforts.

No, God’s love isn’t based on me.

It’s simply placed on me. And it’s the place from which I should live . . . loved.

---

*God’s love isn’t based on me. It’s simply placed on me. And it’s the place from which I should live . . . loved.*
Lysa TerKeurst is a wife to Art and mom to five priority blessings named Jackson, Mark, Hope, Ashley, and Brooke. She is the president of Proverbs 31 Ministries and author of nineteen books, including the *New York Times* bestsellers *The Best Yes*, *Unglued*, and *Made to Crave*. Additionally, Lysa has been featured on *Focus on the Family*, *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, and more. Lysa speaks nationwide at Catalyst, Lifeway Abundance Conference, Women of Joy, and various church events.

To those who know her best, Lysa is simply a woman who loves Jesus passionately, is dedicated to her family, and
struggles like the rest of us with laundry, junk drawers, and cellulite.


Connect with Lysa on a daily basis, see pictures of her family, and follow her speaking schedule:

**Blog:** www.LysaTerKeurst.com

**Facebook:** www.Facebook.com/OfficialLysa

**Instagram:** @LysaTerKeurst

**Twitter:** @LysaTerKeurst
About Proverbs 31 Ministries

Lysa TerKeurst is the president of Proverbs 31 Ministries, located in Charlotte, North Carolina.

If you were inspired by *Uninvited* and desire to deepen your own personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we have just what you're looking for.

Proverbs 31 Ministries exists to be a trusted friend who will take you by the hand and walk by your side, leading you one step closer to the heart of God through:

Free *First 5* app
Free online daily devotions
Online Bible studies
Writer and speaker training
Daily radio programs
Books and resources

For more information about Proverbs 31 Ministries, visit

To inquire about having Lysa speak at your event, visit
www.LysaTerKeurst.com and click on ”speaking.”
Infuse God’s hope and power into your heart with Lysa’s FREE audio recording of “Prayers to Press Through Rejection.” Based on Psalm 91, these deeply personal and healing prayers will help you declare God’s promises over your life.

Visit www.proverbs31.org/uninvitedgift to download yours.

Stop allowing rejection to steal the best of who you are with help from the declarations found in 10 Things You Must Remember When Rejected.”

Visit www.proverbs31.org/uninvitedgift to download your FREE printable copy today.
Uninvited DVD and Study Guide

All of us are either healing from a past rejection, dealing with a present rejection, or fearing an unexpected rejection could be coming our way. Join Lysa in this six-session video Bible study as she digs deep into God’s Word to help women explore the roots of rejection, the way other relationships get tainted because of a past rejection, and the truth about what it looks like to live loved. Filmed in the Holy Land, each session takes participants on a visual journey to some of the places where people such as Hannah, David, and even Jesus Himself lived and walked. The corresponding study guide is packed full of deep Bible teaching, guided group study questions, and personal reflection as well as in-between-sessions study material.
Are you living with the stress of an overwhelmed schedule and aching with the sadness of an underwhelmed soul?

www.TheBestYes.com

AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS AND EBOOKS ARE SOLD

CURRICULUM ALSO AVAILABLE!
Are you living with the stress of an overwhelmed schedule and aching with the sadness of an underwhelmed soul?

www.TheBestYes.com

CURRICULUM
ALSO AVAILABLE!