

A Billion Rejections

Somewhere in time and eternity God looked into the mirror of His need and saw a reflection of you and a reflection of me— that moment decided our existence.

(Pastor Dan)

Reece Jack Russell joined the family and I hate to admit it, but he was a pretty good dog even though he drove me crazy. He chewed on everything, made our yard look terrible and left his muddy footprints on the sliding glass door. He would not sleep in the doghouse; he had to make his bed at the back door or in one of the holes he dug. He sinned by leaving piles of smelly stuff all over the place. Reece did not understand how to be friends with a man. He was too pushy. He jumped on me and invaded my space. He did not allow me time to warm up to him and my only defense from the forward little nuisance was to close him out of my life.

I really tried but at best our relationship was strained. A few times I even petted the mutt. Somehow we managed to get along for about eight months and then tragedy struck—Reece dug under our fence, ran out into the road and was hit by a car—he died instantly. While driving home I thought, “Everyone in the family is going to blame me for his death. At least I have a rock solid alibi of where I was at the time of the accident.” Somewhere in the shadows of their thinking the family was entertaining the thought, “Dad, the dog hater, was responsible for the cold bloodied murder of Reece.” Probably I deserved their suspicion. There were times I had been hard on him. One time, early in the morning, my wife was feeding him on the back porch when suddenly he burst through the door and ran to the back of the house. In a fit of excitement he jumped on my bed and licked me in the face. I yelled, “Get off me you stupid mutt!” I smacked Reece and threw him on the floor.

That afternoon a cloud of sorrow hung over our house. I tried to be understanding to the kids and my wife, but no one seemed open to my concern. They knew my heart wasn’t aching and I did not relate to their grief. They wanted to be with mom who was grieving over the loss as much, or even more than they were. After all she was the one who found Reece by our fence. Johnny lay on the sofa for a little while then got up and went outside. He went to Reece’s grave, grabbed a stick and began raking dirt away from it. With frenzied motion he tried to get to Reece. We all went outside to be with Johnny but he ran under the trampoline to get away from us. He didn’t know how to express his anguish. I coached him out and picked him up. His small body went limp in my arms and I took him to his bedroom. We lay down together for a while. “Johnny, we still have each other.”

Each night before the kids went to sleep I would lay down with them. That night Johnny tolerated me for a while and then asked for his mother. Erica was cold to me when I took Reece’s two birth certificates off her bed so I could lay down. She needed something of Reece’s to hold as she mourned the loss of her special friend. She cried and after a few minutes asked, “Will you ask mama to come and lay down with me?”

The next morning I got up before daylight and went to the back door. There on the ground lay Reece’s blankets. It was unusually quiet. That little pest always seemed to sense when I was up studying or praying or doing work and he used to annoy me by jumping on the door, making all kinds of noise. Now, even though he was dead, he was still interrupting my thoughts. Now I

actually missed him. My heart was filled with sorrow as I thought about my wife and kids. As the sun arose in the east, I looked towards his grave and wished he would come to the door and put his muddy paws on the window.

Tragedy makes you think strange things. Even though I never wanted Reece; I was grieving for him. Me—the dog hater was missing my furry friend. But now it was too late to appreciate him. I stood there looking at Reece’s grave, and in my imagination I could hear him talking. The little guy spoke to my thoughts, “The key to happiness is love. Did you notice, Mr. Dog Hater, how alive and happy I was to see the family come home. It was even a joy to see you; even through you were not thrilled about seeing me. I lived to show your family how important you all were to me. I tried to love you, even though you didn’t love me back. I gave unconditionally. Don’t ever become weary of trying to love. Adoring others and giving affection creates positive energy in your life. Some people will reject you, like you rejected me, and even get angry, like you did, but one response to the warmth you share is worth the affliction of a million rejections.” Reece did like everyone, and went berserk when people took an interest in him. His voice continued to echo in my mind, “Take risks and don’t be afraid to be passionate. You were willing to tolerate me and suffer the loss of some convenience because you knew the kids would find joy in their relationship with me. That is passion! Don’t ignore that part of your being.”

Reece went the second mile in seeking someone to love. His search for affection cost him his life. My little friend seemed to be saying, “Love never fails. The love I gave to you is causing you to feel love for me.” “You are right you little rascal, you have really gotten to me. I didn’t love you, but you never gave up on me. I didn’t give you the time of day even though you begged for my attention. You could have never made me understand this while you were alive. I am sorry.” One last thing, the pup said, “Don’t allow a bad experience to keep you from experiencing the possibility you have for joy in your life. Get over things quickly and don’t hold grudges. Remember when you were putting up the Christmas lights and smacked me with that extension cord because I was chewing on it? That hurt! Do you remember? It took me a few hours, maybe even a whole day or two to get over it. Did you notice that sooner than you wanted, I was chasing after your love and trying to win your friendship again?”

Reece’s life and what He meant to my family caused me to do a serious emotional inventory. If only I had reached outside of myself and been willing to give more; I would not have these feelings of guilt. After indulging in a time of intense introspection my thoughts turned upward to God. In some ways I believe that the heart of Reece in a very small way reflects God’s heart. He seeks to give us love time and again but we push Him away, never affording Him an opportunity to get through to us. Sometimes we use His name in vain, showing our lack of respect for God. In spite of what we do, the Lord never quits trying to get our attention and love us. Obviously, the all-knowing God realized what we were going to become without Him. So sometime before the dawning of history, He created a plan in which He would step outside the gates of His safe heaven and die for us. God’s overwhelming desire for love killed Him. He died to get our attention. He realized that it was the only way. Only through His death would we be able to comprehend His love. In spite of the fact that God has been rejected, He says to us today, “One response to My love and warmth is worth a billion rejections.” Now in a moment of silent

reflection, think about what is important. Look towards the sky. If you will listen carefully, God will speak to you.

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