

2. God always gives us the grace to cope when He says 'no'.

When Paul wrote about the thorn in his flesh, his particular weakness, he said:

'Three times I pleaded with the Lord, to take away it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in your weakness" 2 Cor. 12:8

Grace is, *'the power to do what is right'* i.e. the will of God.

Whenever God says 'no' to our requests, He always gives us the grace i.e. the strength, to receive His answer.

When we go through hard times and ask God to take away our pain or loneliness sometimes God says,

"No, I'm going to take you through the storm not around it. Will you come with me? Because if you don't learn to trust me for grace in the hard times you are never going to become the strong person I want you to be."

Q. What does our prayer life reveal about the nature of our relationship with God? What is the difference between trust in God and trust in our prayers? See Prov. 3:5 & 6

IV. How do we respond when God says 'no'?

Three possibilities:

1. **Resist God** – get angry and fight back, *"God, if you are not going to do things my way, forget it."*
2. **Resent God** – doubt His love and feel sorry for ourselves.
3. **Relax and be thankful** – God has something better for us.

Q. Have you been telling God how to answer your prayers, instead of asking how to pray? *"Lord not what I want but what you want?"*

We won't be in heaven five minutes, before we say, *"It was all worth it."*

"Thank you God for all those things that were so difficult for me - that you chose to answer my prayers your way not my way. Thank you for all the times that you said, 'No'."

Sermon Outline and Questions When God Says 'No'.

2 Cor.12:7 -10

It was Job who first protested to God:

"I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up but you merely look at me." Job 30:20

The Good News version says, *"You pay no attention."*

Why is it that God invites us to ask for anything but then fails to give us what we ask for?

"Ask and it will be given to you..." See Matt. 7:7

Q. Have you ever felt like Job? Why does it sometimes feel like God doesn't hear or answer our prayers?

I. Three Ways God Answers Prayer

"Call unto me and I will answer you." Jeremiah 33:3

God answers our prayers in one of three ways; 'yes', 'wait' or 'no'.

The Bible is full of examples when God said 'No' to people;

1. **Abraham asked God to make Ishmael the son of the promise.** God said, 'No'. You will have another son through Sarah.
2. **Moses said, 'I want to go into the Promised Land'** and God said, 'No' – you are tired. I want you with me'.
3. **David pleaded with God to save the life of his son born to Bathsheba,** but God said 'No'.
4. **Jonah said, "Don't send me to Nineveh to preach to those heathen."** Once again God said 'No'.

For all of these people, God's 'No' was hard to deal with at the time.

II. Three Reasons that God Says 'No'

1. God says 'no' when He has a better perspective

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account."
Heb. 4:13

It would be very handy to see into the future but the fact is that only God can see what's ahead of us. God wants us to live by faith and not by sight.

"God guards the course of the just and protects the way of the faithful ones." Prov. 2:8

Sometimes God says 'No', to protect us from the unforeseen problems of life. Wise parents do the same for their dependent children.

Q. Can you look back on past situations in your life and see why God said 'no' to you?

2. God says 'no' when He has a bigger plan

God knows the desires of our hearts and if we have a heart towards God He is able to create the right desires within us.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways declares the Lord. My ways are higher than your ways." Isaiah 55:8 & 9

"...this plan of mine is not the way you would work it out." LB

Note: God says, "My ways" (plural) - He has more than one way of doing things. He is never dependant on everything going according to plan.

Q. Do you agree that God has more than one way of doing things? What implications does this have for you?

We often have a **preconceived idea** of how things should work out.

"This is what God should do, this is how He should do it", because it's the most logical way. **Right? – Wrong!**

Do we really want to pray to a God who doesn't know better than us?

Hebrews 11 is one of the great faith chapters of the Bible because it describes what the Old Testament heroes had in common.

i. **Daniel prayed**, *"Lord please keep me out of the Lion's den."*

God said, *"My plan is to put you in the Lion's den and shut the lion's mouth."* *"Then people will acknowledge me and I can save them."*

ii. **Shadrach and his friends prayed**, *"Lord keep us out of the fiery furnace."*

God said, *"No I'm going to put you in the flames but I'm going to join you there so you will be safe."*

"These were all commended for their faith, yet none had received what was promised, God had planned something better." Heb. 11:39 -40

Q. Many of the better known stories of the Bible are about people who asked God for one thing and received something far more wonderful. Has something similar happened to you?

3. God says 'no' when He has a greater purpose

God isn't obligated to explain anything that He does to us.

(God) *"My purpose will stand and I will do what I please."* Isa. 40:10

God will use everything that happens in our life, including our problems and disappointments, for His greater purpose.

¹⁶"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Cor. 4: 16 -18

No good parent gives their child everything they ask for.

Jesus understood the importance of accepting 'no' as an answer from his Heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"Father, if it's possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless if the only way this cup will pass from me will be that I drink it, not what I want but what you want."

God did not save Jesus from the horrors of the cross because he had a much greater purpose – namely our salvation.

Our challenge is to keep our eyes off the problems we face in life and onto God's eternal purpose.

III. What Are We to Remember When God Says 'No'

1. Everything God does is motivated by His love for us

When God says 'no' the old devil loves to create doubt in us e.g. *"Didn't I tell you that God doesn't care about you?"*

God is willing to risk losing us rather than indulge us.

"All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful" 25:10