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SERIES: 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

Spiritual Growth Campaign

Part 7: When God Says 'No'

Welcome back home to your CVCHURCH family. If you are our guest today, we're so glad you're here, and we consider you part of our family. We are a multicultural and intergenerational church. This means we believe and celebrate every ethnic group on this planet, because God has a specific plan for every ethnic group and both genders male and female. We are better together. We are to commit to accepting and valuing each other. This means as an intergenerational church the Bible says we're to treat each other as family. Paul in 1 Timothy 5:1-2 says, **“Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him respectfully as you would to your own father. Talk to younger men as you would to your own brothers. 2 Treat older women as you would your mother, and treat younger women with all purity as you would your own sisters.”** We value each human person from in the womb until they die. We desire to respect, accept and love each other regardless of their age, and we want to be open to learning from each other and never write each other off ever because of age, gender or color and ethnic group. Today we conclude this fabulous 40 day spiritual emphasis on prayer. In Psalm 91:14-15 the Bible says, **“The Lord says, ‘I will rescue those who love Me. I will protect those who trust in My name. 15 When they call on Me, I will answer.’”** Please circle the phrase in your

notes, “When they call on Me, I will answer.” It continues, “**I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them.**” First notice the premise, the conditions to the promises made here. God rescues those who love Him. He protects those who put their trust in His name. Do you love Him? Have you surrendered your life to Jesus yet? If you haven’t you can right now. You simply confess that you have put yourself before Him and His purposes and plans for your life. You repent. That means you ask Him to forgive you of your sinful clinging to your life and you put your trust in what Jesus Christ did for you on His cross. You humble yourself and ask Him to take His rightful place on the throne in your life. If you will do that right now, He will. When you do that you are placed in His family, and these promises of God rescuing you, protecting you and answering your prayers become a reality for you. You will want to grow in what God’s Word says to you in all the areas of your life so you know how to pray. but you’re in the family when you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and you confess Him as your Lord and Savior. God answers every prayer you pray, but you won’t always get God’s ‘yes.’ ‘No’ is an answer. ‘Wait’ is an answer. ‘You need to grow up’ is an answer. Father God never leaves a prayer unanswered. There are a lot of examples in the Bible where God says ‘no.’ This is why it is so important that you get our Bible bookmark and you read through the entire Bible with us once in a year and the N.T. twice. Nothing turbo charges your prayer life like reading through the Bible every year with a great plan. We have that plan for you. God said ‘no’ to Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Job, Jonah, Elijah, Peter, Paul, and God said ‘no’ to His own Son,

the 2nd person of the trinity. Do you agree this is very confusing for most of us? This is why I want to address this issue as we close this series on prayer. You are going to have a lot of no's from your heavenly Father. I want to prepare you for them and the times He says no. I will give as good an explanation as I am capable of at this time. Like the couple who pray for a child and they get pregnant and others just as sincere who claim God's promises and they don't conceive. Their hearts are broken by that. Why does God sometimes say yes and relieve their pain and for others does not? Why do some receive relief from their pain and others don't.

I. Three of the many reasons God says 'no':

Notice the caution I have in your notes. **Use these three truths to comfort yourself, but you must be careful how you share them, if you say them at all, with someone in great pain, because you can't be sure why God said 'no' to them.** I am encouraging you to stay away from being presumptuous and assuming you know why God didn't answer their prayer. Please hear me. Explanations never truly offer comfort. If one of my loved ones died tomorrow knowing why wouldn't make it less painful. We often think if we understand why something happens it'll make it easier. It doesn't friends.

A. God says 'no' when He has a bigger perspective

The truth is, friend, our Father sees what you can't see. Father sees the whole picture but we have a limited perspective. Our

Father sees the implications of every decision. Hebrews 4:13 says, **“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes, and He is the one to whom we are accountable.”** God won’t always answer your prayers the way you want Him to simply because He sees what you don’t see. You don’t see the unintended consequences of what you’re asking. God can see how the dominoes fall over. God can see that every prayer that is answered starts a chain reaction. Your Father knows how that decision that you just asked for will influence your grandchildren and your great grandchildren. He can see the multi-generational results of what you’re praying for today, but you can’t. Proverbs 2:8 in the NIV says, **“God guards the course of the just and protects the way of His faithful ones.”** God is consistently guarding and protecting you in every way concerning your life, and when you pray something that might not be good for you and those you will influence in the future He might just say ‘wait,’ ‘not now,’ ‘no’ or ‘I want you to grow up before I answer your prayer.’

Remember Daniel, he kept on praying as was his custom even when the law changed. He was thrown in the lion’s den. It looked like God had abandoned him, but He didn’t. God kept the lion’s mouth closed. Daniel’s three associate’s response was incredible when Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and threatened them by saying he would throw them into the blazing fire and then we will see what God rescues you. Listen to their response in chapter 3:16-18, **“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. ¹⁷If we are**

thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. ¹⁸But even if He doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.” In this case, God did honor them, and Nebuchadnezzar jumped up and shouted to his soldiers, “Didn't we throw three men in the fire?” to which they said, “Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did. In vs. 25 the Bible says, **“Look!** **Nebuchadnezzar shouted, ‘I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed. And the fourth looks like a god.’”** Many scholars believe this was an O.T. sighting of Jesus. God says these things that have been binding you up are going to be burned off. And God says, “You're going to go through it, but when you come out on the other side, you're going to be free, free from certain habits, free from that person, free from that fear, free from that guilt, free from shame. It would never happen unless you went through the fire. Paul wanted to go to Rome. He thought he would go on his own terms. God said no. He went to Rome as a prisoner. There he wrote some of the most important books we have in the N.T. That wouldn't have happened unless he was sent to prison. God always has the bigger perspective, church. God saw what Paul couldn't see. God sees what you can't. God says, “I say ‘no’ to some of your prayers because I am working in your life on the bigger picture, the bigger perspective.”

B. God says ‘no’ when He has a better plan

God often times says to us, “I will answer your prayer, just not the way you wanted it answered. I’m going to say ‘yes,’ but I have a better plan than yours.” Church, our Father in His infinite wisdom, He has a better plan than yours or mine. This is another reason He will say no. Isaiah 55:6, 8-9 is profound in this context. **“Seek the Lord while you can find Him. Call on Him now while He is near....⁸‘My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,’ says the Lord. ‘And My ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.⁹For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts.”** Please circle the words, “My ways.” Notice they are plural. God never just has one way of doing something. Unlike you, God’s options are unlimited. For example, let’s say you’re deep in debt and your dealing with financial stress. You pray, “Father, I have spent money I didn’t have to buy things I didn’t need. Father, now I’m really in debt. It was my own decisions that got me in debt.” You got yourself overextended. It’s your responsibility. “God it’s my fault, but I’m asking you to bail me out.” God can answer your prayer in many ways, but most likely He will not bail it out. He won’t most likely use the lottery as a quick fix. There is a defect in your personality, and your impulsive nature must change. God is more concerned about your character than He is your comfort. This is true with any sinful habit I am involved with. God wants to help you get out of debt, but He won’t help you get out of debt in an easy way and, tomorrow, you just get right back into it. He will allow us to experience our consequences and try to reach us that way. But church, the way your faith grows sometimes requires a delayed

answer. God is not a vending machine or a genie. God isn't a jackpot or a slot machine where you put in the prayer, pull the lever, and boom, you instantly get the answer. This does not grow your character. It just makes you less likely to grow. Sometimes God, in order to let you mature, delays the answer to your prayers. He says, "We're going to go slow until you grow, and then I will give you the answer." Did you know that in the Bible many of the greatest people of faith did not get the answer that was promised to them before they died? Hebrews 11:39-40 says, **"These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. Since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."** Please circle in your notes, **"God has planned something better."** Please write this in your notes: **God has all of eternity to fulfill His promises.**

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

God always works on your behalf because of His love and care for you, and because He has a greater purpose for your life. God will never let your prayers interfere with your purpose. The Bible is very clear that if you're praying for something that's not according to His purpose for you, He will not give it to you. 1 John 5:13-15 say, **"I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. ¹⁴And we are confident that He hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases Him. ¹⁵And since we know He hears us when we make our requests, we also know that He will give us**

what we ask for.” God’s greater purpose is always pleasing to Him, and if you are truly committed to His Kingdom purposes it will be most pleasing to you. God has created us to desire His greater purpose. If you keep insisting on what you want you will miss His greater purpose. Psalm 57:2 says, **“I cry out to God Most High, to God who will fulfill His purpose for me.”** God isn’t obligated, loved ones, to explain what He is doing all the time in our lives. There are some things you and I won’t understand, but He says to us, “I have a greater purpose for your life.” We all know this but not everything that happens in your life is good. A lot of bad stuff happens because you make bad choices and other people make bad choices. But God goes, “I can even use those bad choices—your mistakes and other people’s mistakes, and I can fit those into My purpose for you.” In everything God does and allows in your life, even the negative things fit into God’s purpose for your life. You could be in a tough spot right now. Look at what 1 Peter 1:6-7 says to you in your present circumstance. **“There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. ⁷These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.”** So what does Peter tell us to do? Anytime you’re discouraged and disappointed that you’re not getting your prayers answered and things are not going well you simply remind yourself that your faith is being tested to show that you truly do have genuine faith.

Your faith is simply being tested, and, as your faith remains strong through all of the varied trials you will go through, the Bible says you will receive much praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ comes back for you and He is revealed to the whole world. God has a greater purpose for you. Friends, it is vital that you cling to these truths this morning (afternoon) and remind yourself daily. God has a bigger perspective than you can see. God has a better plan than you can figure out and God has a greater purpose for you.

So how are we to respond when God says no?

II. What are my best responses to God when He says ‘no’?

A. Trust that God does everything in goodness and love

All that God does on your behalf is done out of His love, care and concern for you. God does not have the ability to do anything that is unloving or evil. Everything God does for you is for your own good because He deeply loves you.

Psalm 25:8-10 says, **“The Lord is good and does what is right; He shows the proper path to those who go astray.**

⁹He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them His way. ¹⁰The Lord leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep His covenant and obey His demands.” There are three truths here in this passage that demonstrates that everything that God does is done out of His goodness and love. **1) Father God is good and always does what is right, and He leads those who have gone astray on to His good**

path. He doesn't punish you by saying 'no' to your prayers. 2) Father God leads the humble in doing right and teaching them His way. 3) Father God leads us with His unfailing love and faithfulness. Please write the fill-ins for this in your notes:

I don't have to understand God's answers to know that they are motivated by His love, faithfulness and integrity.

In order to grow in relationship with Father God through prayer, trust is intricately and delicately involved. The deeper your trust in Father God grows the more intimate you become with Him and the more convinced you become that everything He does in your life is bathed in His goodness and love. In our 3rd week of 40 Days of Prayer, I taught on the topic **"You Need To Know Who You're Talking To."** I taught you that there are four responses God can give to our requests. You might want to write this down again. **1) When Father says 'no.'** No is an appropriate answer to many of our requests. Remember, God has a bigger perspective, better plan and a greater purpose. Sometimes God simply says 'no' to my request. **2) Father God says 'slow.'** Slow means I intend to give this to you, but the timing is not right. So, not yet. There is a difference between a delay and a denial. No and not yet are not the same thing. **3) Father God says 'grow.'** This means you want to focus on your own growth and spiritual maturity. Waiting gives us a chance to allow our patience and endurance to keep growing. **4) God says 'go.'**

B. Pray when in pain what Jesus prayed when facing His cross

On the eve of Jesus' crucifixion Jesus went to the garden to pray to His Father. The word Gethsemane, the olive garden where he prayed at, means the oil press. It was Jesus' favorite place to pray. Jesus knew that tomorrow He would suffer worse than any other human being in all of human history. He knew He would be tortured. He knew He would publicly be humiliated and shamed. He will be spit on, slapped, whipped and nailed to a cross. He did not want to go through this pain any more than you or I would. The Bible records for us in several of the gospels the actual words that Jesus prayed, and I believe they are the same words you and I are to pray when you're going through pain. You might be in pain right now. I am going to ask you to read this passage in Mark 14 out loud with me. **“³⁵He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, that awful hour awaiting Him might pass him by. ³⁶‘Abba, Father,’ He cried out, ‘Everything is possible for You. Please take this cup of suffering away from Me. Yet I want Your will to be done, not Mine.’”** This is incredible, church. Jesus had known throughout all of eternity that this day was coming, and yet He was able to cry out to His Father, “I don't want to do this. I don't want to go through all of this humiliation, pain, suffering, agony, alienation, and abandonment.” Jesus is our example. What are you going through right now? Did you know that it is okay to go to your Heavenly Father in prayer and say, “Father, I don't want to go through this. I don't want to face what I'm about to face. I don't want to go through

cancer, this surgery, this divorce, this death, this failed relationship. I don't want to be single. I don't want to be married." Whatever it might be it is okay to say to Him in loving respect, "I don't want to do this. I don't want this." Then after you do that, you will want to follow your Savior and Redeemer in His humility and submission to the Father. Jesus prayed three things that are a perfect model for us when we are getting no's from Father God, or you're going through stress, tension and trauma that you don't want to face or think you shouldn't have to. He addresses God as His Abba Father. It is the most intimate term for a child with their father. Then He makes three statements about His Abba Father that He knows are true: **1) Everything is possible for You. 2) Please take this cup of suffering away from Me. 3) Yet, I want Your will to be done, not Mine.** Here are the three things you and I will always want to pray when you're in pain and not wanting to go through what you're going through.

Here is how to pray in faith (just like Jesus):

1) Affirm God's power

You say, "Father, I know you can do anything. I know You could take care of this situation. I know You could keep me out of this suffering. Father, You're all powerful and I confess that.

2) Ask for what you want with passion

"Father, please give me what I ask! Please take this suffering, humiliation, agony away from me." There are some times He will, and sometimes He won't.

3) Accept God's plan

“Yet, with all of this pain, I want Your will not mine. I trust your bigger perspective, better plan and greater purpose for me. I submit to Your plan for me. I choose to trust You. I want Your purpose and plan for my life more than anything else.

C. Expect God to give you His grace to respond to His answer

This is where you say, “I expect You, God, to give me Your grace, strength and power to handle the answer You have given me.” What is God’s grace? Grace is God’ power to handle pain. Grace is God’s power to do the right thing anyway, even when it’s painful. I choose to do the right things even though it’s painful. The Apostle Paul wrote just over half the New Testament and is 2nd only to Jesus as far as the influence he had on his culture and the entire history of humanity since he wrote his letters and epistles. As committed and submitted to Jesus Christ as he was, Paul did not get all of his prayers answered. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, **“...even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So, to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. ⁸Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. ⁹Each time He said, ‘My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.’ So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work**

through me. ¹⁰That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong." Here is what Paul was saying that we can take and put into practice in our prayer life with Father God through Jesus Christ. Listen, loved ones, there is nothing more powerful than you learning to grow in a deep intimate relationship with Jesus by taking all of your pain and giving it to Him in prayer. Paul was teaching us to say to Father God, I'm not going on my power. I'm going to live in God's power. Loved ones, the greatest lesson any of us here today can ever learn is to receive from God these incredible words in the midst of your greatest pain. **"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."** This is absolutely unbelievable. Paul says, "Since this is true, I choose to boast about my weaknesses for the express purpose of letting the power of Jesus work through me. This is the breakthrough I am praying for every one of us who truly call CVCHURCH your home church. That means you know the Holy Spirit has led you here to be family with us. That this year, 2018: THE YEAR OF BREAKTHROUGH, every one of us would learn to take pleasure in our weaknesses, the insults, hardships, persecutions and troubles that come from living for Jesus and suffering for Jesus. Paul says when you can grow to that place, that is where you take all of your unanswered prayers, all of your pain, problems, failures, stresses, fears, and anxieties and you say, "When I am weak, then I am strong." Let's pray.