



**Big Idea:** God sometimes says, “No.”

**Primary Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 12:7b-10

**Supporting Scripture:** Psalm 34:1-2

## **CAPTURE**

[Teacher Note: Share about an adult in your life that seemed to consistently tell you, “no,” as an act of love.]

When I was a teenager, I felt like my parents’ favorite word was, “no.” I thought that they loved nothing more than saying, “no,” to me and my brother, because they said it so much.

*Can I go to Brad’s house Friday?*

*No!*

*Can I spend the night at Tim’s house?*

*No!*

*Can I go to Joe’s party?*

*No!*

It felt like my teenage years were filled with an endless stream of nos. Sometimes, there was a reason given. Like, no, I couldn’t go to Brad’s house, because he had a computer, and his parents weren’t home to monitor what he was doing on it. My parents were protecting me from being exposed to things that I shouldn’t be exposed to. Fair enough. I didn’t like it, but I understood.

Other times, my parents wouldn’t let me do something based on what they knew that I was not allowed to do. I used to spend the night at a friend’s house regularly, but then, all of a sudden, I couldn’t. He kept asking, and I kept asking, and my mom kept saying, “no.” What I didn’t know was that my friend’s mom had confided in my mom. She had told my mom that her

husband had started drinking excessively again, and he was becoming abusive towards his wife and kids. My mom was praying for her and encouraging her to get herself and her kids out, but she wasn't a gossip, so no one else in the home knew about it. When my mom kept telling me no, I was upset. I went from being annoyed, to frustrated, to angry as the nos built up. But when it all blew up, I moved to being thankful. It all made sense.

I learned that **loving someone means saying “no” sometimes.**

But then there were other times when it never ended up making sense, and so it didn't feel so loving. Sometimes, I'd really want to something, and my mom would say, “no.” She didn't owe me an explanation, but I'm wired to seek explanations, so I'd always ask, “Why not?” My mom would generally tell me. She didn't pull the old, “Because I'm your mom, and I said so,” though I suppose it would have been her right. But there were times she would shrug and say, “I don't know. Mother's intuition.” Let me explain that quickly. My mom would get an overwhelming sense of danger sometimes with no clear reason, and when she felt it, we were going to be told, “no.”

What I understand now that I did not understand or even believe in then is that my mom had the gift of prophecy, and in that gifting, God would warn her of danger to her kids. But as a kid, that answer didn't feel right. I wanted to understand, and in the mother's intuition situations, I knew that I wouldn't understand, not at that time and not any time later. And that just felt bad. Bad, because I didn't get the answer I wanted, and bad, because no one could explain it.

## **SCRIPTURE**

God says, “no,” too. When God says, “no,” I know it might feel like He hasn't answered. You might wonder where He is. But “no” is an answer, and God does say it.

**God says, “no,” in advance.** Thinking about commandments in the Bible. You might not have thought about it that way, but a lot of those are God's saying, “no” in advance.

No, you cannot steal something, just because you really want it and cannot afford it. You shall not steal. You were told no before you even asked. God

wants you to love and honor Him and others well, so He has put some restrictions in place to help us do that. Those restrictions might not matter to you all the time, but when they keep you from doing something you'd like to do, you start to realize they're there. You feel the advance no when it gets in your way.

**God also says, “no,” in response.** Even outside of commandments, it's important for you to know that God says, “no.” Have you ever prayed for something that you really wanted God to do, and it just didn't happen? I have. I'm sure most of us have. And it really stinks when it happens. Why didn't God do it? I had faith. I asked. What gives? Sometimes, you'll see why down the line, but there are other times when it never really ends up making sense.

I do realize that it's frustrating when we do not get what we ask for in prayer, but I want you to know that it shouldn't shake our faith. Do you know why? Because we see in the Bible that God doesn't always give us what we ask for. Sometimes, He gives us something even better, but it's true that He sometimes just says, “no.”

The Apostle Paul knew this, because he experienced it. He records just such an interaction with God in 2 Corinthians 12. I'd love to reach that and see what we can learn from it.

***7<sup>b</sup> 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. 8 Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 9 Each 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. 10 That'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. (2 Corinthians 12:7b-10, NLT)***

I always find it interesting when the Bible shares a direct conversation God had with one of His prophets. Getting to listen in on that kind of conversation feels special. But it's more than special. It reveals so much to us, and this passage is no exception. I want to just highlight four truths that I see in these verses.

## **INSIGHTS**

**Big Idea:** God doesn't always move as quickly as we'd like.

**Primary Scripture:** Hebrews 11:36-40

**Supporting Scripture:** Hebrews 12:1, Hebrews 12:2, Luke 18:1-8

## SURFACE

Are you generally the hurrier or the one people wait on?

## SERIOUS

For the hurrier, how do you feel when it seems like no one else is in a hurry like you?

For the one that tends to be waited on, how do you feel when people around you try to rush you, because they are in a hurry?

## SPIRITUAL

Why do you think God's slow-moving nature can be so discouraging?

Why do you think that people believe that not having their prayers answered the way they'd like or as quickly as they'd like means that they don't have enough faith? Have you ever felt this way about yourself?

Based on Hebrews 11:36-12:2, how do we know that's not the case?

How might it be encouraging to know that the greatest men and women of faith didn't get everything they longed for during their lifetimes?

Think about the parable of the widow and the wicked judge from Luke 18. How will this encourage you in times when you feel like giving up on asking God to move in your life?

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