

## Say Yes: Saying “No” to Say “Yes”

Titus 2:11-14

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify himself a people that are his very own! All he wants us to do is Say Yes!!!

We had a wonderful time at the XO conference this weekend learning about how to keep the romance in our marriage. I thought it might be appropriate, since this week is Valentine’s Day and we just had the XO Conference to consider the excitement of “saying yes.” (VIDEO)

Wow! She said Yes! I wonder if that might be what God thinks or feels when we say YES! And do we get that excited when God asks us to serve him?

As we conclude our “Say Yes” series this morning, I want to thank the team that has worked so hard to pull this together – Robin McFerren, Jeremy Gross, Gar Brandt for the display, and to all the team leaders that are stepping up to do things a little differently. And let me say this very clearly...this is not a 3 week series and then we’re done. This is a new year and a new call to ministry! You will see the Say Yes board come out again. This is only Phase 1 of our Say Yes campaign. As

Pastor Dave mentioned last week, we intentionally did not include the beyond the walls ministries in this phase, because the critical need is starting right here at home. The next time you see the Say Yes board there will be additional needs, including our beyond the walls teams and our mission teams and hopefully some new teams that may form as God leads us.

I want to share with you the next steps in this initiative. Maybe some of you have filled out a card and are wondering “when will I be contacted?” We are waiting until we finish the series, which is today. Then we will compile the lists for team leaders and we plan to have those out to team leaders by 2/16. We are asking team leaders to contact you by 2/26 to set up time for training, which should be by 3/18. If you do not hear from anyone by 2/26, please contact me, Jeremy or Robin so that we can get you connected with your team leader. We are so thankful for those who have already responded. And we are thankful for God’s grace, His active presence and transforming power in our lives, which provides for the many needs that we have.

In our scripture reading this morning, we see that God’s grace is always at work in our life. By God’s grace, Jesus brings us salvation for all. It is not just salvation for some and it’s not just for our future in heaven; salvation begins right now, so that we can live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age. By God’s saving grace we are given strength to say No to the temptations that

this world offers. Wait a minute, I thought this series was say yes? But now we're talking about saying No? Yes!

Those who have taken a class with me on boundaries (especially Stephen Ministers) may find it ironic that I am preaching in a series about saying "Yes" because I teach very adamantly about the importance of saying "No." Mind you, I don't always practice that myself. We are all a work in progress. The book (image) *Boundaries* by Henry Cloud and John Townsend is subtitled "when to say yes, how to say no to take control of your life." The concept is that often we say "yes" to things that are bad for us and "no" to things that are good for us.

In our scripture, Paul is telling us that with the help of God, we can and must say "no" to those things that are not good for us; what he calls "worldly passions."

Those worldly passions can be described in one word, sin. Sin is anything that separates us from God. We must say "no" to sin. But we can't do that without help. That's where God's saving grace, which is for all, comes in. By God's grace we are given the strength to say "no" to those temptations. William Barclay says "an even simpler interpretation of worldly passions is that they are for things we could not show to God." What is in your heart and mind that you would not want God to see? I'm going to name just a few of the ones that I have encountered in my life and ministry: pride, greed, power, control, selfishness, unforgiveness, resentment, judgment...Boundaries teaches us that we are responsible for our thoughts and

actions. Through prayer and self reflection, God will show us those things we must say “no” to.

But sometimes, we have to say No to good things too, so that we can say “yes” to better things. Sometimes it becomes a choice between what is “good” and what is “best.” Sometimes our “yes” gets us in over our heads. We say yes to so many good things and then we feel overwhelmed, stressed, and unable to keep up the pace. Today, we are so busy with so many things, especially those with children at home. There’s work, family, soccer, dance class, tae kwan do, football, baseball, youth group, choir practice, music lessons, and on and on. (Images) How can we say “yes” to one more thing? By saying “no” to something else. And that something else might be an ungodly, worldly passion, or it might be something good that you enjoy. But we can’t do it all. So many of our staff and volunteers say yes to too many things, and they are at risk of burning out. You have to choose what is best for you and your family. And we have to choose what is best for our church family.

There are internal and external boundaries. We have to protect our hearts and mind from negative and critical thinking. Setting up internal boundaries helps us to become aware when we are having those thoughts and then we can replace them with scripture or positive thoughts. Externally, we have many people who ask us to do things for them. Being the caring, compassionate people that we are, we

often say yes. Even when it is something that person could do for themselves. But we tell ourselves we are doing something good and helpful. But eventually, it wears us down.

There is a great example of this in Exodus 18. Moses' father in law, Jethro, comes for a visit. Moses shares with him all the wonderful things that God has done for the people of Israel and they give God praise. The next day, it was "bring your father in law to work day" and Jethro watched as Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people and they stood around him from morning till evening.

Jethro watched this and asked Moses "what are you doing?" So Moses told him how the people bring their conflicts to him and he tells them how to resolve it.

Jethro, being the wise father in law, tells Moses "What you are doing is not good! You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone." (Ex 18:17-18). Jethro then goes on to help Moses set up a system where he selected capable men to serve as judges over the simpler cases, only bringing the difficult cases to Moses. "That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you." (Ex 18:22)

Moses was being helpful to the people. His intent was good. But his method was not. We must share the load of ministry with one another. Pastor Dave spoke of the priesthood of all believers last week. We all have a commitment to God to serve Him where He needs us.

We see another example of shared ministry in Acts 6 when Stephen and 6 others are selected to care for the widows so that the disciples can go out and spread the gospel. “Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word,” (Acts 6:3-4). It is important to take care of the needs at home. This is what Stephen Ministry is all about.

I need to take a moment to brag about our SM Team. I call them a team because that is exactly what they are. We have team leaders and Marilyn King is the coordinator. Each team works together to provide loving care for members of our congregation. Pastor Dave and I are like Moses, only called in for the most difficult cases. They do incredible work caring for the people of this congregation and I could not be more proud of this ministry. I know that there are other ministries that do good teamwork, but this is the one that I am most closely associated with. This team model of ministry works.

There is much research that shows the effectiveness of leading by teams. In a church our size, we need many teams to do the work of ministry. Part of our strategic plan is to equip the people for the work of ministry. Ephesians 4:12 says: “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

This makes me think of Paul's description of the church in 1 Corinthians 12 when he talks about the body of Christ. The church is made up of many members. And each has been given different gifts. We can't all be the eye, or the hands. We need some feet and noses! Paul says that "God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be?" (1 Corinthians 12:18-19).

Let us go back to our scripture reading this morning. In Titus 2:14, Paul tells us that we are "a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good." Other translations say (NKJV) "zealous for good works." (NLT) "totally committed to doing good deeds." (CEB) "who are eager to do good actions." Eager to Say Yes! Are we eager to do what is good? Are we committed to doing good deeds? What if those good deeds are serving in the most uninteresting place?

Pastor Dave has shared each week about the various teams. Once again, take a look at your bulletin insert. Some of these jobs are not glamorous or fun or exciting. But they are needed. Few people feel called to Food service team or parking team or grounds/maintenance team. But those are important parts of the body. A more visible team is our Worship and Arts team. Many may be gifted in music – playing instruments or singing and we need you, but there are many behind the scenes jobs that go unnoticed like our AV team, that make our worship

services happen and they are just as important to the body. Remember, no part is any greater than another. We are all part of the body. Ask God to reveal your gifts and where He is calling you to use them at this time.

On a more personal note, serving is important for you. Have you ever noticed that God seems to know what we need before we ever do? We are called to serve His kingdom not as servants or slaves, but as partners in ministry. We are joining God in His work. God tells us to do this because it's good for the kingdom and for us. When we serve, we receive a blessing. When we serve, we feel connected, a part of the body. This connection helps us grow in our relationship with God. As we grow into the image of God within us, we become one with God. We are disciples of Jesus Christ. What we believe is directly connected with what we do. Jim Harnish says "Belief is like breathing in; serving is like breathing out." Part of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is serving. As we grow in the likeness of Christ, we must follow his example of leadership and ministry. Jesus came to serve. John Ortberg wrote "God is the Infinite Servant....Jesus did not come as a servant in spite of the fact that he is God; he came precisely because of the fact that he is God." Jesus set the example for us when he knelt down to wash the disciple's feet. This was the job of a servant, yet Jesus, who is God, knelt to serve. He showed us that no job is beneath us and that no job is unimportant.

So take a moment to think about what you might need to say “no” to. Is it a “worldly passion?” a negative or critical thought? Too many activities in your schedule? Maybe what we need to say “no” to is our own pride, selfishness, or fear. God’s promises are always Yes. Say No to something today so that you can say Yes to God.

Let us pray.