

WHEN GOD SAYS “NO.”

HYMN BY FANNY CROSBY “FOR WHAT HIS LOVE DENIES”

God does not give me all I ask, Nor answer as I pray but o, my cup brimming o'er. With blessing day by day, how oft the joy I tho't withheld, Delights my longing eyes, and so I thank Him from my heart For what His love denies.

Even the greatest of biblical characters faced occasional denials of their prayer requests.

- Abraham begged God for Ishmael to be the son of promise, but God said “No” and raised Isaac (Genesis 17:18-19).
- Moses prayed earnestly to cross the Jordan with the children of Israel, but the Lord said “No” and sent Joshua (Deuteronomy 3:25-28).
- David prayed for his infant child to live, but the Lord took the child to heaven instead (2 Samuel 12:16-23).
- David wanted to build the temple, but the Lord assigned that task to Solomon (1 Chronicles 28:2-6).
- The demon-possessed man of the Gadarenes, having been delivered by Christ, asked to follow the Son of Man, but Jesus would not permit him, telling him: “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you” (Mark 5:19).
- The apostle Paul prayed repeatedly for healing from the thorn in his flesh, but the Lord refused, saying, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- Of course, the greatest unanswered prayer in the Bible is Jesus' cry, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me” (Matthew 26:39).

MOSES IS FORBIDDEN TO SEE THE PROMISED LAND

Six things stand out in Deuteronomy 3:26-27.

The first is the _____ between God and Moses. “But the LORD was angry with me.” The word “angry” perhaps can be more accurately translated as “furious.” Moses' use of “angry” expresses his heart's heaviness and intimacy with the Lord. Exodus 33:11 tells us of his intimacy: “*So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.*”

The second thing that stands out is Moses' (or any leader's) responsibility to _____ God regardless of outside pressures.

We must remember two things when considering God's decision not to allow Moses to enter Canaan. 1. *Moses disobeyed the Lord's command.* 2. *He was*

under a lot of pressure from his people when he disobeyed.

The third thing that stands out in verses 26–27 is the _____ of Moses' request to enter Canaan. *"The LORD ... would not listen to me. So the LORD said to me: 'Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter.'* His request was motivated by a natural desire. Neither his persistence nor his natural desire was wrong. However, there is a sense that Moses' vision had slightly lost its focus. The focus of the vision had slipped from the Lord of the Promise to the Promise itself. This shift in focus is what made Moses' request wrong. It was the Lord Himself who was to remain the true promise and vision of Moses.

Getting wrapped up in the gift and forgetting the giver is easy.

1. Moses' joy should have sprung from the fact that the land was about to be possessed and that God's promises were true.
 - a. The psalmist understood this principle when he said, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, / And He shall give you the desires of your heart. / Commit your way to the Lord, / Trust also in Him, / And He shall bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:4–5).
 - b. Was Moses' delight in God or the land? Which was he committed to?

The fourth thing that stands out is Moses's _____ with his people. This great leader does not hide from them the fact that the Lord has refused to grant his request. He admits that the Lord was angry with him and refused to hear him.

Moses' transparency with his congregation demonstrates his humility and his desire to teach them a lesson in obedience. If God will not allow His chosen leader to enter the Promised Land because of disobedience, what consequences will the children of Israel suffer if they are reluctant to follow God?

The fifth thing that stands out is the _____ that God gives His chosen leader. *"Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; behold it with your eyes."* If Moses could not touch it, he could at least get a glimpse of the longed-for land. Moses, who early in his life *"forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible"* (Heb. 11:27), will close his ministry seeing the land promised to Abraham.

The sixth thing that stands out in these verses is God's _____. *"For you shall not cross over this Jordan"* was not the answer Moses wanted to

hear.

Wasn't the pressure on him almost unbearable? Didn't he deserve another chance? Wouldn't it make sense for the man who had paid such a heavy price leading the children of God through the wilderness to be able to end his ministry with a reward? Yes—in man's eyes.

But "My thoughts are not your thoughts, / Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. / 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, / So are My ways higher than your ways, / And My thoughts than your thoughts' " (Is. 55:8–9).

Perhaps the following thoughts were behind God's "NO" to His chosen leader.

1. God will not let sin go unpunished.
2. Because he was a leader, Moses was an example and, therefore, must be disciplined.
3. God needed to underscore the importance of total obedience.
4. The people were relying too much on Moses.
5. A new leader was needed for the battles ahead.

Here is a checklist of questions to ask ourselves when God says "NO" to us.

- ☐ Am I in intimate communication with God?
- ☐ Am I responsible for this situation?
- ☐ Is my request appropriate?
- ☐ Will I share this experience with others?
- ☐ Have I counted my blessings?
- ☐ Will I accept the sovereignty of God?

ANSWER KEY

1. Intimacy
2. Obey
3. Disqualification
4. Transparency
5. Privilege
6. Sovereignty