

N U R T U R E  
**FAITH**  
with  
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When God Says No

**READ:** Mark 14:35, 36 (Common English Bible)

*“Then he went a short distance farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if possible, he might be spared the time of suffering. He said, ‘Abba, Father, for you all things are possible. Take this cup of suffering away from me. However – not what I want but what you want.’”*

**MEDITATE:**

I remember it well. It was two days before Christmas. All the gifts for our children had been purchased, wrapped, and placed under the family Christmas tree. I had the day off and invited my four year-old daughter, Rachael, to join me for enjoying the holiday decorations at the local mall and lunch in the food court. In one brief moment she was no longer by my side – something in the mall bookstore caught her eye and she was gone. As I entered the bookstore, Rachael presented to me a Barbie Doll calendar. She saw it from the mall. “Please, daddy, will you buy this for me?” Two thoughts swiftly took residence in my mind: First, I could hear my wife making fun of me, “Christmas is two days away, and you bought her a gift?” My defense would be simple and honest, “You were not there looking into those four year-old, imploring eyes.” The second thought was more profound. It shook me. And it caused me considerable pain. For the next fourteen years, until she was an adult, I would have to look into those same eyes and, on many occasions, answer, “No.” This one moment became an easy “Yes.”

Parenting isn’t for the faint of heart. Certainly it is filled with considerable joy, warmth and love. But there is also pain. Some of that pain is from looking into the eyes of a child, deeply loved, and answering, “No.” Children can’t see what parents see. They do not have the deeper understanding of life that parents possess. Consequences to a poorly chosen, “Yes” are not understood. Responsible parenting sometimes demands, looking into the eyes of your child, and answering, “No.” Children will not always understand. They will be disappointed. Occasionally, they may express both anger and sadness. The flood of emotions, experienced and expressed, is unpleasant for both child and parent. But love, on occasion, demands, “No.”

Jesus teaches us to pray, in the Lord’s Prayer, to pray to our spiritual parent, “Our Father who is in heaven (Matthew 6:9).” Here, on the night that Jesus would be arrested, Jesus prays. In the shadows of the night, alone in a garden, Jesus addresses his father, “Abba, Father,” which literally means, “Daddy.” Jesus, the son of God, is frightened, on his knees in a garden, and begins his “ask” of his father, “Please, daddy.” What is God to do? As Christians, we know well that an answer of “Yes” would prevent Jesus’ suffering and death. It would also mean our destruction. For without the cross, each of us would be held accountable for our sins. There would be no forgiveness. Jesus is pleading. What is God to do? God answers his son, “No.”

Someone has taught Christians a lie. Someone taught Christians that fervent, deeply felt and faithful prayers to God would always be answered with a, “Yes.” That promise is never made in the Bible. What is promised is that God hears every prayer. What is promised is that God draws near to us in prayer. And, additionally, what is promised is that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, which will ever separate us from God’s love. But God sees what we cannot see. God understands more deeply what we cannot understand. And it is precisely because of that love that God has for us that, sometimes, God’s answer is “No.”

