

**Main Text:** 2 Cor. 12 and Acts 16

**Main Topic:** What to do when God says no!

**Introduction:**

Today we are concluding our study on prayer entitled “TEACH US TO PRAY”.  
The title of the message today is... *What to do when God’s answer is no.*

Series Overview: Teach Us to Pray according to the Bible.

WEEK 1: What makes prayer effective...

WEEK 2: How to pray through difficult seasons of life...

WEEK 3: What prayer IS and IS NOT...

WEEK 4: The RIGHT and WRONG way to pray

**TODAY: The proper response towards to Lord when his answer is NO...**

Now that we are at the end of this series on prayer we should be at a better place of understanding not only how to pray, but how to enjoy an effective prayer life in any season that you find yourself in.

Please go with me in your Bibles to the New Testament book of **Acts 16 and 1 Cor. 12**. Today we are going to learn ***WHAT TO DO WHEN GOD SAYS NO.***

**Some quick context:** Who is Paul?

Today’s message is for anyone who has ever been confused at the Lord’s response to prayer. Sometimes God says no even to innocent prayers, good prayers, even prayers that appear to be (on the surface) His Will. If you have ever been confused, mystified, dumbfounded, or otherwise just angry that God hasn’t answered your prayers the way that you want him to... THEN TODAY’S MESSAGE IS FOR YOU!

If you have ever desired to know how to properly and righteously respond to the Lord when he directs us in ways contrary to our original desires...then listen up...tune into the lesson from the life of Paul.

Our response towards the Lord says much about our relationship with and maturity in the Lord. So for the remainder of today I would like to attempt to discover the answer to two simple questions.

- 1) What should our response be when God says no to a good idea.
- 2) What should our response be when God says no to our desire for comfort.

**When God says no to a good idea.****Acts 16: 6-10**

**6** Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept *by the Holy Spirit* from preaching the word in the province of Asia. **7** When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but *the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them* to. **8** So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. **9** During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” **10** After Paul had seen the vision, **we got ready at once** to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

**Explanation:** This is a very interesting study, because it appears that God prevented *preaching*.

- Doesn't God want us to preach?
- Isn't this a “self-defeating” move on God's part?
- Does God have something against Mysia or Bithynia?

Twice it appears that Paul is simply attempting to do what he has been called to do...plant churches in new places that do not have them...and TWICE God prevents it!! This is mind boggling to us as humans.

- Why would God prevent them from doing a good thing?
- Why would God say no to someone who is simply attempting to obey the commands of Jesus?

**Illustration:** It is just amazing how much more of the Bible came alive to me the moment I became a dad! I began to understand things in the Scripture (automatically) in a new way. God gives parents a small dose of what it feels like to be Him and how he feels towards us.

I have a saying in my home. It goes like this, “I want to hear obedient feet.” When it is time to wash hands for dinner, clean the room, or brush the teeth...I want to hear their feet moving in the direction of what I am asking them to do in the moment. It isn't that I have anything really against what they were doing...it is just that I have something in the immediate moment that I need them to do first.

**Application:** Have you ever prayed for something that was good...even scriptural...and God said no. Ever pray for healing, happiness, provision, safety, security, etc. etc. and God appears to say no? (We'll talk more about that in a moment). Have you ever set out to do something good for God and God said no!

Examples: Often times we desire to be like our heroes or like the people that God used to bring us to Jesus! Whatever they did meant so much to us we want to be like them. So we pray to have their gifts...and God says...no...I want you to have YOUR gifts.

God is simply saying no to your good idea...so that you can take hold of HIS GREAT IDEA.

**When God says no to our desire for comfort.****2 Cor. 12: 7-10**

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Explanation:** Paul (like the O.T. Prophets) had been allowed to see things that could not be explained or described in human words. He was allowed to see directly into Heaven. He saw things and heard things that were beyond human comprehension. Paul was used in ways that were not normal. His writings, leadership, brilliance and administration were off the charts. His effectiveness in Power was unimaginable. BUT THERE WAS ONE THING that could have brought it all down crashing: PRIDE.

And so Paul was GIVEN A GIFT that didn’t feel like a gift...but IT WAS A GIFT. He called it a “Thorn in the Flesh” a “Messenger of Satan” a “pebble in my shoe” We do NOT know what this was, but Paul may have given us some insight as we continue on in the passage in verses 9-10.

infirmities, reproaches, needs, persecutions, distresses,

Whatever this was we do not know but we do know to things...

- 1) **Its Purpose:** To keep Paul humble before the Lord. The purpose behind the pain was protection. It was protection from Paul’s natural ego. Literally to *Keep him from exalting himself...*
- 2) **Its Source:** Was from God. The tool was all of the dire circumstances of Paul’s life.
- 3) **Its Result:** God’s Power was incredible due to the fact that Paul was FORCED to lean upon him, because he had no other recourse.

**Illustration:** I love the old saying, “Calm seas do not make a skilled sailor.”

**Application:** If you find yourself in a season where it appears that God is saying no...I believe His Word to Paul applies just as well for you. The Bible says he appealed to God three times. That is significant! That number through that Bible is significant! It means he was trying desperately to get God’s attention on this matter. He did not get the answer he was looking for...but it was the answer he needed to hear!

MY GRACE (power, resources, strength, ability, provision, connections, presence) is SUFFICIENT (I am enough) for you! MY STRENGTH can only become YOUR STRENGTH when I say NO!

If Paul was not told NO by God he would have begun to lean on himself and therefore get only his results...which may have been good...BUT NOT GOD.

Our responsibility when God says NO = REJOICE AND BOASTING IN CHRIST

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **When God says no to your good idea realize...**

- 1) You do not have the same information that God does. You never will. Trust is in order.
- 2) God knows you better than you know you! **(Jonny: how'd you know I would like this)**
- 3) If God said no SAY THANK YOU! PRAISE HIM for protecting you and saving you from a major failure.
- 4) When God says no...just remind yourself he is setting you up to succeed in the places that he says yes to.

### **When God says no to your desire for comfort realize...**

- 1) It is for a grander purpose. To keep us dependent on Him that we may gain his power and results.
- 2) Rejoice in the Lord and remember that he is ENOUGH...ALL SUFFICIENT. Praise him for his Power is made perfect in your weakness...SO REJOICE. NO = GOD'S POWER.

**Conclusion:**