

What to Do When God Says No

A life-changing revelation for anyone who feels like God continually closes doors you wish He'd open

For generations now, the idea of God “opening doors” for His people has been understood to mean that something good is happening for us. We will comment to other believers: “God opened the door for this new job;” “God has opened a new opportunity for me to walk through;” “God opened the door for me to witness to this person.”

“Open doors” are something we *should* ask for when we pray, as they will lead us into the deeper measure of God’s will for us.

But when it appears a door is closed—after we have prayed for an opening—the tendency is to question God over why the prayer was not answered. We might say: “I prayed to get that job, and someone else got it instead. God did not answer my prayer!” Or, “I prayed to be able to do thus and so, and God didn’t answer.”

The fact is, He *did* answer; but not in the manner expected. He answered by *shutting* the door!

This may seem like a strong statement, especially if you have believed at one time or another that a door was going to open for you that would lead to a great blessing. You may have seen it as the door to increasing your income, getting you a larger house or even bringing you temporary joy. However, you must believe that “the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way” (Ps. 37:23).

The Hebrew word for *ordered* implies that you are being set up with every step you take. This setup is, of course, contingent upon you seeking the will of God and praying, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

For example, one person once said he had the opportunity to move to another state and double his income. The positive result would be more money for him and his family. The negative result would be that they would have to leave the church their children loved and leave their best friends.

After prayer, they rejected the move. They later learned that the job, which would have taken them out of state, would have eventually shut down, meaning they would have lost everything had they moved. Remember, what looks good is not always God's will.

Years ago a mother wrote me about how she had prayed that her son would be accepted to a certain university. It was family pride that drove the desire for him to attend that school. He was rejected, and she became angry with God, reminding Him that she had paid tithes and gone to church, and still He had let her down.

I wrote her and asked: "So God doesn't know what He's doing? What if the woman your son is to marry was not at *your* chosen school but at the one he is now going to? Is it not possible that the Lord may desire him to go to the other school in order to be in *His* will and not yours?"

We must learn to trust God in prayer and to understand that just because it appears like we are not getting what we *want*, it is by no means a signal of defeat.

If God Says ... No

If you've ever felt God saying no to your prayers, then you're in good company, biblically speaking. Moses and David stand out in Scripture as primary examples of believers who prayed specific prayers only to hear from the Lord that He was *not* going to do what they were asking.

When Moses' sister, Miriam, mocked Moses over the woman he chose as his wife, she came under the influence of a critical spirit. Knowing verbal criticism was like leaven in bread and

would spread, the Lord struck Miriam with leprosy. Moses cried out to the Lord, "Please heal her, O God" (Num. 12:13).

Remember, this is the man who could raise his rod and open the Red Sea, speak and God would send plagues, knew God face to face (Ex. 33:11). Yet when he cried out for a single healing, God said no! God required Miriam to spend seven days outside the camp by herself (Num. 12:15).

David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of his soldier Uriah. As the king, David attempted to cover up the sin and eventually sent Uriah into the front line of battle to be killed so he could marry Bathsheba, who was pregnant from the affair.

As the birth drew near, the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to expose David and inform him the child would die. After the birth, the infant became sick, and David spent seven days in fasting and prayer, interceding for God's mercy to heal his little son. But the heavens became like *brass* (see Deut. 28:23), and the child died.

David's son was already under a death sentence before he was born. Thus his death was the fulfillment of God's chastisement of David (2 Sam. 12:14).

The Lord allowed this as an act of judgment. Nathan also had informed David that because of the sin, the sword of the Lord would never depart from his house (v. 10). David ultimately lost four sons because of this word of judgment.

Notice, however, the *eventual* outcome that God brought in each situation.

Moses was told that God would not heal Miriam; however, she was healed seven days later after living outside the camp—and, no doubt, learning the importance of guarding her words!

David could not raise his departed son from the grave. Yet God

in His mercy gave David and Bathsheba another son—Solomon, which means “beloved of God”—who became king of Israel after David’s death.

God said no in each situation, but He still worked *His* plan.

There will be times when we pray and it will seem that God is not moving in the direction we are asking. This is often because God works in three dimensions—past, present, future—and we in one: the present. We cannot undo the past, we cannot see or predict events for the future; we can live only for the moment.

If God Says ... No, for Now

There are also times when God’s no means, “No—for now.” We see this exemplified when David desired to build a house for God (the temple) and amassed the spoils of war (gold and silver), actually preparing plans to construct a massive temple. Nathan told him to do all that was in his heart, for the Lord was with him—a word indicating to move forward with the project (2 Sam. 7:3).

Later, the Lord informed Nathan that David would *not* be the man to build God’s house, but God would permit a son after David to fulfill the plan (vv. 4–29). This prediction came to pass with Solomon.

David had previously pitched a tent on Mount Zion and hosted nonstop worship, even moving the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:12). Scholars called this tent the “tabernacle of David.” It was a continual place of singing and worship. Much of Psalms was written while priests and singers ministered at David’s tabernacle in Jerusalem.

With a place like that and with such a desire to please and worship God, why would the Lord not permit David to build a permanent temple? David was already worshipping God in a tent, so why restrict him from the temple?

The answer is, David was a man of war and bloodshed. When he shed the innocent blood of Uriah, he forfeited the right of being the builder of the temple (see 1 Chr. 28:3).

However, the *no* of David became the *yes* of Solomon. Solomon was not a man of war. He was a king of peace, and his administration initiated peace in Israel for the first time in many generations. The new temple was to be a house of peace and blessing. What David could not do, his son was enabled to do.

Moses was unable to enter the Promised Land for one act of disobedience: He struck the rock twice when the Almighty instructed him to simply “speak to the rock” (Num. 20:8-11). In his anger, by striking the rock instead of speaking to it, Moses exalted himself and Aaron in the eyes of the congregation. The action implied that he and Aaron were the ones providing the water instead of God and revealed that spiritual unbelief had impacted all of Israel—except for Joshua and Caleb.

Joshua was Moses’ minister, and he received the impartation and blessing of replacing Moses at his death and leading Israel into the Promised Land. The *no* of Moses became the *yes* of Joshua!

Similarly, the prayers you are praying based upon your dreams and visions of the future may be only partly fulfilled in your lifetime. But they may be completely fulfilled through your children and their children’s children!

There will also be times when your answer to prayer will be linked to the proper *timing* of the event or situation. Thus your answer can be delayed but not necessarily denied.

At age 75, Abraham received the promise of God for a son. Ten years later, Sarah was still barren and Abraham still fatherless (Gen. 16:3). Finally, the Lord appeared to Abraham, who was then 99, and reconfirmed a son through Sarah—nearly 24

years after the initial promise.

I always questioned the reason for such a long delay. Then I read: "Now Abraham and Sarah were old. ... Sarah had passed the age of childbearing" (Gen. 18:11).

Literally, Sarah had gone through menopause and was past the age of having a child. This was the reason for the 25-year wait. God wanted the physiological circumstances to be completely impossible for the couple to have a son. That way both Abraham and Sarah—and all who would hear—would know that the child was a gift and promise from God. The Almighty delayed the timing so that He alone would be glorified.

God's *no* is not always a no. It can be a delay. And delayed answers are not denials. They are simply pauses in the action.

When No Is Unexplainable Some *no* answers are simply ... unexplainable. One would be the death of a child or a loved one.

When a child or loved one passes unexpectedly through an accident or a terminal illness, sincere believers attempting to comfort the mourner will often make statements such as: "God took them because He needed another angel;" "God needs more workers to prepare for the marriage supper;" "God took them to spare them from all the trouble on earth." These strange comments, meant to comfort at that moment, can actually agitate the mourner.

I know of minister friends who prayed for their children's protection, asking God to build a hedge around them and not allow premature death to take them before their appointed time. They claimed the *protective* Scriptures for a long life and yet received a dreaded phone call that changed their world in a split second—as the voice on the other line released the news that the child had been killed in an accident.

The theory goes something like this: If you are strong, you will always win every battle. If you are fast, you will always come in first in the race. If you are smart enough, you will have guaranteed success in business, and if you are wise, you will always escape trouble. If you live righteously, you will never be attacked by Satan. (Don't tell old Job that!) If you have faith, you will always be healed. If you attend church, you must be a Christian.

Wrong ideas produce wrong thinking!

People who hold the opposite view, that bad follows us, will say: If you are sick, you don't have enough faith for your healing. If you are having financial struggles, it is because you are not sowing enough seed (money). If there is a shortage of answers to prayer, then you must be praying wrongly. If you're having trouble with rebellious children, you are not disciplining them correctly. If you're having personal trouble in your life, you must have opened some door to the adversary.

These incorrect superspiritual commentaries on the explanation for your trouble remind me of when Job lost his health, wealth and family. His three friends came to him to reveal the reasons for his numerous disasters.

They told him the door of trouble was opened because he had sinned, because of pride, and because God wanted to bring him down a notch and teach him a lesson. All three opinions from these friends were totally wrong, according to God Himself (Job 42:8).

One of the best Scripture passages to explain all these negative things that happen to good people was written by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 9:11-12:

"Under the sun ... the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time."

“Time” and “chance” happen to us all. The word chance here is not “luck.” It is the Hebrew word *pega* and means, “impact, or something that has an impact.”

Life-changing events that have an impact upon us for good or bad happen to all of us. Jesus said it well when He taught that God “sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45).

People bombard us with positive opinions on how good things should be—and we’re given weird explanations of what went wrong when the outcome crushed our expectations. The fact is, there will be times when there is an unexplainable no!

On numerous occasions I have observed that when a godly and pure-hearted believer is stricken with cancer or some disease, and other believers stand in the gap through intercession calling on God for that person, still the individual passes away. Basic explanations may be given, such as, “It was just his or her time to go.” But we must always believe that God is sovereign.

No matter what form a no from God seems to take, choose to believe that He is sovereign—that He alone fully sees, fully knows and fully understands the past, the present and the future. Then determine that you will trust Him through the good and the bad.

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