

Yes, No or Not Yet

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, July 11, 2021

INTRODUCTION

There is an old Christian adage which states: “God answers every prayer with Yes, No or Not Yet” (REPEAT). Though I try to avoid cliché from this pulpit, I must confess there is wisdom in this statement. Those who seek to engage in the biblical discipline of prayer must learn to properly navigate this three-fold response of the Lord. Thus said...

FYI – I would like to explore the “Yes, No or Not Yet” of the Lord in this “standalone” message. Let us delve in...

WHEN GOD SAYS “YES”

Scripture continually presents God as the One who both hears and answers prayer. Please note the following...

Matthew 7:7–8 (NIV)

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

1 Peter 3:12a

12 . . . the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their prayer . . .

1 John 5:14–15

14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

NOTE 1 – I am moved by the many biblical accounts wherein the Lord (+) answered the prayers of His people...

1) Joshua

We could speak of Joshua, who prayed for the sun to stand still that his army might destroy a sinister enemy...

Joshua 12:12–14

12 On the day the Lord gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel:

“Sun, stand still over Gibeon,
and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.”

13 So the sun stood still,
and the moon stopped,
till the nation avenged itself on its enemies,” . . .

The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. 14 There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a human being. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!

2) Hannah

We could speak of the barren Hannah, who in her distress prayed for the Lord to grant her a child...

1 Samuel 1:10–11a, 19

10 In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. 11 And she made a vow, saying, “Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life . . .”

19 . . . the Lord remembered her. 20 So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel [sounds like the Hebrew for “heard by God”], saying, “Because I asked the Lord for him.”

3) Jabez

We could speak of the obscure Jabez, who prayed for breakthrough and blessing despite a terrible namesake...

1 Chronicles 4:9–10

9 Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez [lit. “pain”], saying, “I gave birth to him in pain.” 10 Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request.

4) Peter & the Praying Church

We could speak of the prayers of early church on the behalf of the arrested Peter...

Acts 12:1–11 (Emphasis Mine)

1 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. 2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. 3 When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. 4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

5 So Peter was kept in prison, **but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.**

6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists.

8 Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. 11 Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.”

NOTE 2 – Each of these moments (i.e., “Yes” Moments) is revelatory of the Lord—each speaks to His nature...

- 1) Sovereign Power – Joshua; Hannah; Jabez; and Peter
- 2) Lovingkindness & Care – Joshua; Hannah; Jabez; and Peter
- 3) Wisdom & Good Purpose – Joshua; Hannah; Jabez; and Peter

NOTE 3 – The “Yes” of the Lord should catalyze and/or compel the following elements in us...

- 1) Renewed Faith
- 2) Deepened Commitment
- 3) Genuine Praise and Worship
- 4) “MORE” Prayer unto God

WHEN GOD SAYS “NO”

As we have seen, Scripture clearly presents God as the One who both hears and positively-answers prayer. However, that is not the end of the story! The Bible also indicates that, at varying times and seasons, the Lord does say “No” to the petitions of His people...

NOTE 1 – We do well to consider the whole counsel of God herein...

1) Moses

We could speak of Moses, who was denied the most intimate of access with the Lord...

Exodus 33:18b–23

18 . . . Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

19 And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

21 Then the Lord said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”

2) David & His Infant Son

We could speak of David, whose prayers for the life of his newborn son were denied by the Lord...

2 Samuel 12:13–19 [Post-Confrontation w/ Nathan]

13 Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

Nathan replied, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. 14 But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die.” 15 After Nathan had gone home, the Lord struck the child that Uriah’s wife had borne to David, and he became ill. 16 David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. 17 The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

18 On the seventh day the child died. David’s attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, “While the child was still living, he wouldn’t listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate.”

19 David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. “Is the child dead?” he asked.

“Yes,” they replied, “he is dead.”

3) James & John

We could speak of James and John, whose plea to call down fire on the unbelieving were denied by Christ...

Luke 9:51–55

51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them [i.e., “you know now what manner of spirit you are of”].

4) Paul & His Thorn

We could speak of the apostle Paul, whose prayers for God to remove his “thorn in the flesh” were denied...

2 Corinthians 12:7b–10

7 . . . in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

NOTE 2 – Each of these moments (i.e., “No” Moments) is revelatory of the Lord—each speaks to His nature...

- 1) Sovereign Power to Say “NO” – Moses; David; James and John; and Paul
- 2) Lovingkindness & Gen. Care – Moses; David; James and John; and Paul
- 3) Wisdom & Good Purpose – Moses; David; James and John; and Paul

NOTE 3 – The “No” of the Lord should catalyze and/or compel the following elements in us...

- 1) Renewed Faith
- 2) Deepened Commitment
- 3) Genuine Praise and Worship
- 4) “REDIRECTED” Prayer to God

KEY – Prayerfully contemplate the following except...

QUOTE – “God is just as good to us in His denials as He is in His approvals. The denials of God are immeasurable mercies. If God answered all our prayers with a positive response, how miserable we would be. Thank heaven that heaven says no! Negations, restrictions, refusals, denials and rejections are all divine mercies. May we be thankful when God says no as when He says yes.

God can sustain us in a hostile environment, shielding us. God can also lead us through the valley of the shadow of death. It is His choice. God can exalt us before humanity. He can also invite us into His humility and shame. He gets to write the story. When we accept His divine denials as well as His approvals, we embrace His authorship of our lives. When we let Jesus write out stories, we can be assured of His ongoing, joy-filled presence. Joy in the presence of Jesus is far better than the bitterness of getting our own way as a result of wayward prayers.

WHEN GOD SAYS “NOT YET”

Lastly, the Lord may also respond to our prayer(s) with “Not Yet” and/or “Wait”...

NOTE 1 – Living a life of faith means we do not always know the timing or precise outcome of our prayers. Learning to “wait upon the Lord” is one of the most difficult aspects of the Christian experience, yet everyone must endure such seasons.

KEY – It is almost painful how often the Bible calls us to wait on the Lord...

Psalm 27:14

14 Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

This psalm calls us to wait on God in a spirit of unrelenting courage. It is easy in the midst of waiting to give in to anxiety and doubt, wondering if the Lord has even heard your plea! Let us find the necessary courage in this timeless and timely text!

Lamentations 3:25 (NKJV)

25 The Lord is good to those who wait for Him,
To the soul who seeks Him.

This passage calls us to trust in the goodness of God (i.e., even in the midst of the darkest moments of life). Death, sorrow, tragedy, affliction and anguish are parts of the story of life, but they do not have to be the totality or the end of the story with Him! Until He responds, wait and trust in His goodness!

Psalm 40:1 (NIV)

1 I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.

This psalm calls us to wait patiently. Patience is not the ability to wait! Rather, it is the ability to wait with a good attitude. The Lord is not going to rush simply because you are throwing a spiritual temper tantrum. If you cannot change your circumstance, you can change how you react in the midst of it.

Isaiah 40:31

31 . . . those who hope in the Lord
 will renew their strength.
 They will soar on wings like eagles;
 they will run and not grow weary,
 they will walk and not be faint.

Herein we find a sacred promise: those who wait upon the Lord will find sufficient strength to persevere. There will come moments in your faith-journey when you are depleted and ready to quit. However, it is at such times we are supernaturally enabled to endure in ways that transcend human understanding! Heed the following Pauline passage...

Galatians 6:9

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Micah 7:7

7 But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord,
 I wait for God my Savior;
 my God will hear me.

There is tremendous power in “decisional” faith (i.e., deciding that you will wait upon the Lord, rooted in the conviction He does and will hear). There is a certain “toughness” required of the believer! Choose wisely and give yourself to the Lord!

Q. Allow your seasons of waiting to be opportunities for...

- 1) Renewed Faith
- 2) Deepened Commitment
- 3) Genuine Praise and Worship
- 4) “Renewed” Prayer to the Lord

SUMMATIONS

God answers every prayer with “yes, no or not yet.” Clearly there is wisdom in this classic Christian statement! Those who seek the Lord in the discipline of prayer must learn to properly navigate this three-fold response. May we all continue to seek Him in an informed, effective manner! **(PRAYER)**

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Thank you for the birthday cake, card, and more than generous gift!

NOTE 2 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the work of the Lord!

NOTE 3 – Sunday School is set to resume on August 1. We are coordinating a Family Fun Day for July 31 (Aug. 1 rain date) and a Church Picnic after service on the final Sunday of August. Church ministries like the C.Y.C. and the M.M. resume in September.

NOTE 4 – Those who wish to linger in this sanctuary may feel free to do so. This is to be a house of prayer, so those who feel the need to pray may do so as they please. Moreover, I would be more than happy to pray with those who have need(s).

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.