

When to say Yes, When to say No

1. Warm up: We just went through a week of 9/11 remembrances. Where were you and what did you feel on September 11, 2001, when you heard that the World Trade Center and Pentagon had been attacked?
2. On Sunday, as we resumed our sermon series on how to build beautiful relationships the Jesus way, we wrestled with how to find a healthy balance between serving the people around us while also taking care of ourselves and having healthy boundaries. On the one hand, Jesus taught us that life is for service. On the other hand, he also modeled for us the importance of picking our spots and not being afraid to say no. Let's read Mark 1:21-39, as printed on p. 3
 - a. Look again at verse 32, which tells us, "That evening, at sunset, they brought Jesus all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons." As all this was happening, what sorts of thoughts and emotions do you imagine Jesus was experiencing?
 - b. Verse 35 tells us that Jesus got up early the next morning and retreated to a "deserted place" to pray. Why do you think he did that? Why do you think he felt the need to get to a deserted place? What do you imagine he needed to process in prayer?
 - c. Tell us about a time in your life when you've felt surrounded by overwhelming demands. What happened? How did you feel?
 - d. When Peter told Jesus, "Everyone is searching for you," what do you imagine Jesus thought and felt?"
 - e. Why didn't Jesus say yes to the plea of the people of Capernaum to stay and heal more people? And what can we learn from his example?
 - f. Sherry Argov said, "Every time you say yes to something, you're saying no to something else." Jack Canfield adds, "Saying yes to the right things requires saying no to the wrong things." Tell us about a time you've had to say no to something that seemed important in order to be able to say yes to something that felt even more compelling.
3. Jeff also shared two other examples of Jesus saying no to people around him.
 - a. In Mark chapter 7, we're told Jesus took his disciples for a seaside vacation in a foreign territory for some time to decompress. While there, "Jesus entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there." Mark 7:24. Does it surprise you that Jesus wanted to hole up in a house and hide from everyone? Does that make you think more or less of Jesus? Do you find it endearing or off-putting?

- b. In that same story, a Gentile woman recognized Jesus and pleads with him to heal her daughter. At first, Jesus said no because his calling was to focus on his own people, the Jews. While on earth in a human body, even Jesus couldn't be everything to everybody, so he was trying to limit his focus. But when the woman kept pleading, Jesus made an exception and healed her daughter. Does Jesus' initial no make you think more or less of him? Do you find it endearing or off-putting? What do you think we're supposed to learn from this story?
 - c. In Mark chapter 3, we're told about a time when Jesus said no to his own mother, brothers, and sisters. This was at one point early in his ministry when lots of people started saying that Jesus was going off the deep end. Apparently, his family bought into that because, "When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.'" Mark 3:21. But Jesus rebuffed his family, refusing to change course or to even to come out of the house to talk to them. Instead of living into their expectations, he had to live into his own understanding of who God created him to be. When in your life have you had to say no to the expectations of people around you in order to be true to yourself and your sense of God's call on your life?
 - d. Are you surprised that Jesus so often said no to people's needs, wants, and expectations? How do you feel about that?
- 4. On Sunday Jeff emphasized that the point of his sermon was NOT that we should selfishly focus on ourselves and our wants and desires. He reminded us that Jesus taught that "life is for service." E.g., Luke 17:33, Mark 9:35, Matthew 20:26. But living an effective life of service requires balance and healthy boundaries. As Canfield says, "Saying yes to the right things requires saying no to the wrong things." But that raises the question, how do we know when to say yes and when to say no. Jesus answers that question in John 16:13, when he says, "When the Spirit of truth comes, the Spirit will guide you into all truth." In other words, the only way we'll know when to say yes or no is if we tune into the voice of the Spirit in our lives.
 - a. Tell us about a time in your life when you felt led to engage in an act of profound service to someone around you. What was it? What convinced you to do it? How did it feel at the time – and also now looking back on it?
 - b. Tell us about a time when, even though it was hard, you felt led to say no to meeting someone else's need or expectations. What was it? What convinced you to do it? How did it feel at the time – and also now looking back on it?
 - c. Is someone in your Oasis Group currently struggling with whether to say yes or no to something important? If so, and they're comfortable talking about it, ask them to describe the situation, and to share what they feel are the pros and cons, and which direction they're leaning at the moment. Also feel free to ask them any questions that might help them think it through. (But don't tell them what to do. Only they can decide that, as led by the Spirit.)

Mark 1:21-38, selected verses

21 Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.'

²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!'

²⁶And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed. ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' ³⁸He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.'