



SPEAK

LESSON FIVE: OBEDIENCE AND BLESSINGS

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We are assured the Lord answers every prayer that we lift to Him when we read Psalm 116:1, *"I love the LORD, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy."* God loves us and longs for us to talk to Him. The psalmist gives us the visual image in our minds that God is always ready to hear our prayers and bends down to listen to our voice. What a beautiful vision of how much He desires to hear from us. He also wants to bless our obedience. Psalm 91:14-15 reminds us of God's words, *"Because He loves me," says the LORD, 'I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on Me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.'* Isaiah 58:14-14 tells us, *"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.' For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

When God invited Moses up on Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, He entered into a covenant with Moses and subsequently the nation of Israel. The covenant is known as the Mosaic Covenant or the Sinai Covenant and is found in Exodus 19:3-6. Essentially it was a conditional covenant that required the Israelites to obey His Law, the Ten Commandments and in turn God would bless and protect His chosen people. In The Complete Jewish Study Bible, we are reminded of this covenant in Exodus 19:5-8, also known as Sh'mot 19:5-8 in Hebrew. It states, *"Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and keep my covenant, then you will be my own treasure from among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you will be a kingdom of cohanim for me, a nation set apart. These are the words you are to speak to the people of Isra'el. Moshe (Moses) came, summoned the leaders of the people and presented them with all these words which ADONAI had ordered him to say. All the people answered as one, "Everything Adonai has said, we will do." Moshe reported the words of the people to ADONAI."*

Then Jesus.

It is impossible for us to keep the Ten Commandments perfectly. We are sinners. We sin in our thoughts, our words, and in our actions. There is absolutely nothing we can do to earn our way into heaven because we cannot keep the Ten Commandments, we need an atoning sacrifice, a Savior, Jesus.

We can trust Jesus will make the absolute best decision for our life. We can rest in His arms and not 'second-guess' every decision He makes because they are perfect with our best interest in mind. He is a good father who loves us, protects us, and He died for us so that we can go to heaven for eternity if we will just accept Him as our Lord and Savior. And just as any good father will, He will discipline us in love. Sometimes that means He will answer our prayers with no.

As a parent, He will determine what is in our best interests that will be for our good and for His glory.

While it is often time difficult to be told, no, we can trust Him because He is God, a God of love.

Are there any examples in the bible when God told someone no to their prayer? James 4:3 reminds us that, *"Or you pray and don't receive, because you pray for the wrong motive, that of wanting to indulge your own desires."* Matthew's gospel records an auspicious time when God told someone no during a most dire time. Matthew 26:39 records for us, *"Going on a little farther, He fell on His face, praying, 'My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me! Yet - not what I want, but what you want!'"* Jesus, the Son of God who was fully man and fully God asked the Father to allow Him to avoid going to the cross if there were any other way possible for salvation to occur. Jesus was not rebelling and instead He reaffirmed His desire to follow God's plan when he said, *"My Father, if possible, let the cup pass from me! Yet - not what I want, but what you want!"* as recorded above in Matthew 26:39.

God's will, not mine.

I can empathize with anyone who has experienced an extended season of loss. In my own life, in a little over 4 ½ years I lost my only sibling, my mother, my beloved dogs, and my father. Of my original family, I am the only one left.

Were there times when I cried out to the Lord asking why? You better believe there were. Were there days when I did not want to get out of bed because the weight of loss pinned me there? Yes. Were there days when I was angry at God? Absolutely.

Then Jesus. I held fast to Matthew 26:39 and Proverbs 3:5-6. I prayed for the Lord to heal my hurts and to help me to trust Him again. I also had to remind myself that He is God, and I am not and that His ways are the best ways. Psalm 147:3 reminded me of God's promise, *"He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds."* He will bind up your wounds and heal your heart. Healing is an active process. God will meet you wherever you are in that journey of loss and grief, but you must press into Him. What does that look like? Reading His Word, praying, talking with a trusted friend, pastor, or grief counselor, attending worship, listening to praise and worship music, being selective with the music you listen to, the sites you visit, the books you read, and the movies, news, and television shows that you watch. In other words, be completely focused on God's healing that is promised to us in the bible. It may be difficult, and it may not be an overnight cure to your grief, but you can rest in the promises found in the bible because of Proverbs 3:5-6, *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."*

What does it take to put your desires aside and pursue God's? Trust, faith, prayer, and obedience, Jesus' example. While hearing 'no' is never easy and when tragedy befalls you may wonder where God is, it is especially gut wrenchingly difficult. Perhaps you prayed for something to happen or not to happen and you did not receive the answer you had hoped for, planned for, begged for, expected? Remember that God loves you and the no you have received is not meant to frustrate you, hurt you, or punish you. Instead, press into God, talk to a trusted friend, pastor, or counselor, and take comfort in knowing Jesus has been where you are now. Allow God the time to heal your hurt and be open to His healing by remembering the promise found in Romans 8:28, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good for those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."*

YOUR TURN: Write God a letter explaining how you feel about an answer to a prayer that He did not answer in the way you expected Him to. In your letter, list how you expected Him to answer and explain your reasoning. Ask Him to comfort you and to heal you as you draw closer to Him and surrender this hurt to Him.

Read the following verses and note how we can ask the Lord to begin to heal our hurts.

Isaiah 57:18

Isaiah 66:13

Jeremiah 31:13

Matthew 5:4

2 Corinthians 1:4

Revelation 7:17

Revelation 21:4