

## WHEN GOD SAYS NO

Scripture used: [Luke 22: 41-44 \(NLT\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

Today, Palm Sunday, Pastor Hurmon finished our sermon series, *Encounters!* As Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Bible tells us that He was praying so hard that He was sweating drops of blood. Jesus knew there was a mob headed His way, and He would soon be caught, falsely accused, and suffer before dying on the cross. Jesus asked God — calling Him “Abba” or “Papa” — to be spared. And God’s answer was “No.” The better we understand why God says no, the more we can lean on Him for the strength required to make it through life’s most difficult situations.

### KEY POINTS

- 1. Be clear about the purpose of prayer.** God does not exist to serve our purposes; rather, we exist to serve God’s purpose! That is why Jesus told His followers “I carry out the will of the one who sent me, not my own will” in [John 5:30 \(NLT\)](#). If you are praying to God and thinking about how to get what you want, you’re not following the example set by Jesus. The Bible is God’s story, and everyone in it is a part of the supporting cast. The better we understand God’s story, the more our prayers will align to it.
- 2. There are no unanswered prayers.** We tend to think that the answer to every prayer is “yes.” That’s the wrong view of prayer as a slot machine, where we put in prayers and then get out whatever thing we were praying for. Of course, sometimes we do receive an affirmative answer to our prayer. But there are at least four reasons why God may answer “no” instead.
  - a. It may not be the right time.** In [Galatians 4:4 \(NLT\)](#), Paul described the timing of Jesus’ birth. He came at “the right time” according to God’s plan, not based on any human calendar. There was no prayer that anyone could have prayed that would have changed that date. Sometimes we also need to remember the larger arc of God’s story, and try to see how our prayer is focused too much on timing that works for our calendar, not God’s.
  - b. We may suffer from broken relationships.** People love to quote [Mark 11:24 \(NIV\)](#) because Jesus said we will receive whatever we ask for in prayer. But we tend to forget the next verse, where Jesus tells us “if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” In other words, broken relationships may be getting in the way of our prayers. Forgive others, be forgiven, and then maybe God’s answer will change.
  - c. We may have the wrong motives.** [James 4:2-3 \(NLT\)](#) reminds us that our prayers should be about God and God’s plan to redeem the world. It is His will, not our will, that is the point. We should refocus away from our own pleasure to those things our Father in heaven wants for us.
  - d. We may not have enough faith.** The father of a boy with an evil spirit came to Jesus in [Mark 4:23-24 \(NLT\)](#). He asked Jesus for help but wasn’t sure if He could heal the boy. Jesus rebuked the man, questioning his faith, and the man responded “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!” Belief doesn’t guarantee the outcome we want, but unbelief can certainly get in our way.
- 3. Prayer is an open door, not a crowbar.** We all have a tendency to view prayer as a tool. We are more diligent and more urgent in prayers when we are trying to achieve a specific goal or fix a specific problem. But that is not the right way to think about prayer. Remember that we are beloved children of God, supporting characters in His story about redeeming the world. He wants a relationship with us, and for us to know Him the way He knows us.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) HEAR** - It’s perfectly natural for us to want to hear a “yes” back from God after every prayer. But that is not what the Bible tells us to expect. The answer will sometimes be “no” but God does not leave us with that. He strengthens us so we can make it through the difficult situations that are a necessary part of His plan. What have you prayed for that God responded with a “no”? How do you feel about that now?
- 2) UNDERSTAND** - Pastor Hurmon challenged us with a difficult question this week. Think about this and discuss your answers with family and friends, asking God to reveal something new to you. “Where has God said either no or yes to an important prayer, and how have I responded?”
- 3) DO** - Jesus gave us the ultimate example of faithfulness when He trusted God’s response in the Garden of Gethsemane. Now we can pray similarly “God, help me to trust in Your nos like I trust in Your yeses!” Remember to invite family and friends to [The Encounter](#), our Eastern celebration on Sunday, April 17th.