

## "Saying No to God"

Some people feel the love and grace of God means that we can live as we please and even say no to God. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Is it wise to say no to God?

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We're grateful to God for His word that helps us understand Him and His character. From the very beginning God has wanted to bless mankind and to dwell with us, but God wants us to draw close to Him. God promises in 2 Corinthians 6:16 to 18, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.'" Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

There's nothing in this world sweeter than a newborn baby. I love the thought of something so fresh from heaven. Jackie and I had four daughters of our own, and we're blessed with twelve grandchildren. When a little one gets to be about 18 months, they learn to say the word "no!" They're telling their parents "no" and beginning a lifelong battle of wills.

Will we do our own will or will we accept God's authority, is another question. The first authority is our parents, but ultimately God is the supreme authority. The Bible urges us to be careful how we deal with the inner person. Our hearts are important. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life." If we let our hearts grow selfish and indulgent, we can ruin our lives by a moment's foolish choice.

Now we offer this study free on Jesus is the Lord! If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). We'll now worship in song, we'll read from Joshua 24:14 to 18, and we'll explore the importance of God's truth.

Our reading comes from Joshua 24:14 to 18, it comes at the times when Joshua is an older man that had finished taking the Promised Land, and he was encouraging them to stay faithful. "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. If it's disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God." That's a reading from God's holy word.

Let's pray. "Oh father help us to leave other things alone and to serve You and to put You first in our lives, and to obey You will in every respect. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

Rebellion is an act of the heart and will; it's an act of defiance or resistance to one in authority. God gives us all freewill, and we can say yes or no to God. We can do God's will or we can follow our own desires; God won't rob us of our free will. My friend, you can choose to do what you wish. You can say yes to God and enjoy all of His blessings, or you can say no to God, but you've got to pay the price. God is gracious to the penitent and the willing; but when people rebel against him, there's a price to pay. And that price is always higher than you think.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel often drifted away from God and began living lives that pleased themselves. The Bible says in Isaiah 1:18 to 20, "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You'll eat of the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken. We're all still making decisions whether we will refuse and rebel against God or whether we will find the blessing of God.

The history of the Bible shows that people said "no" to God, shut Him out of their lives and paid a very high price for it. God gave Adam and Eve only one boundary in the days that they were in the Garden of Eden. They couldn't eat of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God said, "in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." But they listened to the lies of the devil and were cast out of the garden, where there was no eternal life and no fellowship with God. The woman bore children with pain, and the man would eat his bread by the sweat of his brow "till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3 and verse 19). You see, saying no to God didn't bless anyone.

In Noah's day people also rebelled against God. The Bible says in Genesis 6:5 to 7: Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Well the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." You'll remember that God sent a great flood and destroyed every person except those on the ark—eight souls in all. You see, saying no to God didn't bless anyone.

Then, Bible students will remember what happened to Israel as the people came into Palestine. In Joshua and Caleb's day, the people refused to do God's will. In Numbers 13:1 and 2 the Bible says: Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, "Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; and you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them." God wanted them to see all the blessings of Canaan and to trust in His promise to be with them.

Well the ten spies brought back a bad report, and said in Numbers 13:27 to 28, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there." Well they were afraid and counseled the people not to go in Canaan. Numbers 13:32 to 33 says: So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. There also we

saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Numbers 14:1 to 4 says: That all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” So they said to one another, “Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.” Well, such lack of faith, such grumbling, and such rebellion!

Numbers 14:5 to 9 says: Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, “The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.”

Verse 10 says, “But all the congregation said to stone them with stones. And then the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel.” The Lord was angry with Israel and thought about smiting them all with pestilence. Moses interceded for the people, asking for their pardon. The Lord pardoned the people, but they had a price to pay.

In Numbers 14:21 to 23 the Lord God says, “Indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD. Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it. Everyone in that generation twenty years old and upward perished in the wilderness and never saw the Promised Land.” Saying no to God didn’t bless anyone and cost them the promise.

In Jesus’ day there were a group of disciples who had seen many miracles. When they heard Jesus teach something that they didn’t understand or embrace, they turned away from the Lord. And the Bible says in John 6:66 to 69: As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” And Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.” Saying no to God never brought anyone a blessing.

People lose more than they imagine when they say no to God. They may think they’ve gained their freedom to do as they please, but what is the cost? Adam and Eve did as they pleased and were cast out of the Garden of Eden. The people in Noah’s day lost their lives. The people in Caleb’s day died young and lost their inheritance. The people in Jesus’ day lost “eternal life.” You can say no to God, but you’ve got to realize the cost is great.

Let’s say “yes” to God. Let’s be obedient to God’s will. We need to be like Moses. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:24 to 26, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.”

We need an attitude like the generation who entered the Promised Land after forty years in the wilderness. The Bible says in Joshua 1 and verse 16: They [that is that younger generation that was under twenty at the time of the bad report]

answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. And anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."

Isaiah also showed a marvelous spirit when he said to God in Isaiah 6 and verse 8, "Here am I. Send me!" We need the faith and love for God that says, Tell me what to do and I'll do it. Tell me what is true, and I'll believe it. We're not going to give any "ifs," "ands" or "buts." We're simply going to trust God enough to obey whatever He instructs us. We're not going to argue with Him or try to change His Word and become an editor of God.

The church began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection, fifty days after Jesus was crucified. Peter preached a compelling sermon to the people proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and how the Father in heaven has made him both Lord and Christ. When the people heard it they were pierced to the heart, because they realized the crucified Jesus was indeed the Lord and Christ. They were guilty and they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The Bible says in Acts 2:41 and 42, "So then, those who had received his word [and King James says "gladly received it"] were baptized; and that day were added about three thousand souls. [And then he says,] they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

The people in the early church began working to reach others with the gospel and to bring them to the Lord Jesus. Now if you love the Lord, if you love your soul, and you love the souls of other people, you'll want them to be right with the Lord just as you are. Knowing the Lord, being saved, and having eternal life are the greatest blessings that anyone can enjoy. Now if you have these blessings, you have everything. But if you don't know the Lord, you aren't saved, and you don't have eternal life, and you're missing out and robbing yourself of the most necessary, and most important spiritual blessings of all. When you say no to God, God will one day say no to you. When you say yes to God, and you do it in love and you do it in obedience, God will one day say yes to you. Are you saying yes or are you saying no to God? Are you pleasing Him, or walking in your own ways? Are you loving him, or ignoring Him? Are you with Him, or against Him? Don't ever, ever, ever, say no to God. Say yes, "Here am I, send me."

Let's pray. "Heavenly Father help us to be obedient to Your will, to always say yes to You and to love You and to serve You in all that You ask. Give us strength and help us every day. In Jesus name, Amen."

If we want the forgiveness of our sins, we ought to do the same thing the people did at Pentecost. Having heard of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we should believe, repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. When we realize that we've sinned, and the burden of sin is on our souls, we ought to repent and be baptized. Now no "ifs," "ands," or "buts" about it. No substituting what we'd like to do for what God asks us to do. Obedience is doing God's will in God's way. Let's say with our hearts and lives, "yes, Lord! We'll come to you and serve you by obeying what You have taught us to do."

Repentance is the turning away from sin and turning to the way of the Lord. Baptism is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sin. Saying no to God or changing the instructions would be the worst thing that we could do, and saying yes and obeying them is the best thing that we can do. Let's say yes to God, and God will keep His promise. He'll wash away our sins, He'll add us to the church, He'll give us newness of life.

Let's also say yes to assembling for worship with the church, yes to supporting the church, and yes to serving and teaching others. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." Let's get involved in being God's people doing God's will in God's way. Let's give God our hearts, our obedience, and our lives. Saying yes to God is always right!

We hope today's study about serving God and no longer saying no has stirred you to get involved. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area, and it's all of course free on [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." Now when you're watching the programs be sure to like whatever program you're watching; now this builds the algorithm so that more people are able to see the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses that can help you to understand God's word better. Now don't worry, if you get a hold of us we're not asking for money. We're not here to exploit you, we're here to help you to draw close to God and to be right with Him.

So we ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Now everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.