

# Sermon Discussion Guide

## When God Says “No”

40 Days of Prayer – Week 7

(Note – may only be reproduced for use as a participant in MCF’s 40 Day of Prayer campaign)

*“Call to Me and I will answer you . . .”* Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)

Jeremiah 33:3 above notes that God answers prayer – but there are thousands of reasons why God might say “No” to some prayers. For example, God says “No” when He has a bigger perspective, when He has a better plan, and when He has a greater purpose. What should we do when God says “No”? We should trust that God does everything out of goodness and love, pray what Jesus prayed facing the cross when we’re in pain, and expect God to give His grace to handle His answer. Let’s *Talk It Over!*

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

1. Read Jeremiah 33:3 on the top of the page. What does this verse tell us about God’s heart for prayer? Does this verse tell us that God will always answer in the way we expect? If we’re not getting what we ask for – that’s an answer, too!

*“He knows about everyone everywhere. Everything about us is bare and wide open to the all-seeing eyes of our living God; nothing can be hidden from Him . . .”* Hebrews 4:13 (TLB)

2. Read Hebrews 4:13 above. How can this verse help explain why God may have said “Wait,” “Grow,” or “No” to one of your prayers?

*“(God) guards the course of the just and protects the way of His faithful ones.”* Proverbs 2:8 (NIV)

3. Think of a time where you prayed for something that God did not give you. Then read Proverbs 2:8 above and discuss in your group why it was better this way or how something else he gave you instead far outweighed what you asked for.

*“The purpose of these troubles is to test your faith as fire tests how genuine gold is. Your faith is more precious than gold.”* 1 Peter 1:7 (GW)

4. Open your Bible and read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 aloud. God sometimes says “No” when He has a greater purpose. Paul notes that our present troubles which will soon be over produce in us immeasurably great glory that will last forever! Read 1 Peter 1:7 above. What does it say about the purpose of our troubles? How have your troubles helped you grow?

*“In everything God works for the good of those who love Him.”* Romans 8:28 (ICB)

5. Psalm 25:10 (NIV) says that *“All the ways of the Lord are loving . . .”* When God says “No”, we should trust that God does everything out of goodness and love. What does Paul say about this in Romans 8:28 above? Discuss.

6. Read Mark 14:35-36 in your Bible and mark the text where Jesus asks that he not suffer what was ahead of him. Discuss in your group why Jesus did this and outline the model He used when He: (1) Affirms God’s power, (2) Asks with passion, and then (3) Accepts God’s plan. Discuss what is surprising about this to you. When might you pray this way?

*“Those who know you, Lord, will trust you! You do not abandon anyone who comes to you!”* Psalm 9:10 (TEV)

7. Read the verse above out loud in your group and discuss the promise of this verse and the expectation that even when God does not answer our prayers the way we hope, he gives us the grace to handle his answer. Discuss this together and share a time when you have experienced this.

### **Diving Deeper (optional)**

Open your Bible and read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 aloud. How is Paul’s prayer similar to Christ’s prayer in Mark 14:35-36 above when Jesus: (1) Affirms God’s power, (2) Asks with passion, and then (3) Accepts God’s plan? From Jesus and Paul, we learn that we should expect God’s grace to handle His answer – even if it’s “No”! Use this model for your prayers each day this week. Be ready to share with your group your experience the next time you meet.

**REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.**

## Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

### Suggestions for This Week's Study

- **Icebreaker:** When did a parent, friend, or coach say “No” to you – and you were later glad they did!
- **Goals:** To understand that while God answers prayer, there are thousands of reasons why He might say “No”! For example, God says “No” when He has a bigger perspective, when He has a better plan, and when He has a greater purpose. To know what to do when God says “No”. For example, we should trust that God does everything out of goodness and love, pray what Jesus prayed facing the cross when we're in pain, and expect God to give His grace to handle His answer.
- **Final Prayer:** Heavenly Father, you knew us a thousand years before we were born! You see things we cannot see, have a better plan, and have a greater purpose for our lives. Help us to trust that you do everything out of goodness and love. When we're in pain, help us to pray like Jesus prayed from the cross – affirming your power, asking with passion, and accepting your plan. Help us grow to expect you to give us your grace to handle your answer – even if it's “No”! In your name we pray. Amen.

### Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

### Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We've designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.