

When God Says "No!"

The thrill of parenthood is seen in the successes of children. When our kids shine, we shine. When they fail, we feel the failure as if it had been the result of our own actions. Watching them grow is not something that can be done from a distance. Constant interaction is what a child needs from his father and mother to know what to do, and what not to do in life. Especially when children are young, we parents are able to set limits for them, pointing them in the specific direction we choose for them to go. Though they may not stay on that course, no one can overestimate the importance of a parent's influence.

Probably the greatest picture of the father/child relationship is seen when God made Adam and Eve. Truly man was the offspring of God in such a way that no parent has since experienced. God chose the color of his hair, the amount of fingers on his hands, and toes on his feet. He decided as to whether he would walk on two feet or on all fours. He decided that man would communicate through speech, and give him powerful capabilities to decipher great amounts of information through thought processes. He even decided if he would have a belly button.

But what God did not do was make up man's mind for him. He gave Adam and Eve the ability to choose. This is the reason why God said to Adam and Eve, ". . . You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die," Genesis 2:16,17. Men and women through the ages have pondered these statements. What was God's motive? Why did he put the "tree" in the garden? When everything was so good, why spoil it by setting limits? Why take away freedom through restrictions? Why say NO!?

By these statements God has, by some, been looked upon as a Creator who has a cruel nature, one that seeks the demise and destruction of His own creation. Some would express that He is at least seen as being too strict and overbearing. Yet could another interpretation be also seen? Could we not appreciate a God who sees more than His children can see, a God who sees beyond the action? Is He not a God who knows the downward spiral into the abyss of consequences from wrong choices? Would a father who sees his child dart out into the street to get his ball into the path of an oncoming vehicle not see the devastation that can be resulted by not setting limits? How important are the words "do not go into the street?" What loving parent would not see the need to set limits?

When God said "you shall not eat" we learn something wonderful about God. We see that He is a God who cares. He is a God who knows what can happen when things get out of hand. He knows that once on the road to self-rule the result will be chaos and separation from Him, like what we would feel if our child was hit by a car, only worse. What parent wants to be separated from his child? Yet, continuous decisions to go against the will of parents bring about the same result, separation.

The events in the garden of Eden, set the pace for God's interaction with man for the rest of time. From then until now, God has simply to speak His will, and man can do one of two things. Either he can do it, or not do it. God does not have to say no when He has expressed what He wants. How big would the Bible need to be if God had to list the exceptions to His rules? How much time would you need to spend with your children explaining all the exceptions to your rules? Do they not understand that when you have said what you want that it is restrictive in nature, excluding all other options?

Children know through the consistency patterns of their parents just how free they are to move outside their parents rules. Christians today know the same with God. The Bible is filled with examples of God's consistency. Yes, we serve a gracious God! But, we also serve a just God! Paul said, "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, **provided you continue in His kindness**. Otherwise you too will be cut off," Romans 11:22. Continuing in God's kindness forces us to observe worship patterns set forth in the New Testament. It forces us to follow God's commands in how we interact with our fellow man as well. God has only to speak His will, and our diligence to seek to do it will be rewarded, Hebrews 11:6. Now, **that** is faith!

True freedom in Christ releases us from the quagmire of and frustration of the results of self-rule and the rules imposed upon us by society. To be a Christian is to say, "I'm tired of being told what to do by everyone but God. When I do my own thing it leaves me frustrated and out of control. I want to be free to do God's things in God's way."

Some have said that the greatest power on earth is not to be found in great explosives or machinery, but in the single power within one's own mind to choose the course of his life. Why not choose God's way?

—Scott