

When God Says “No”

By Amy Kasternakis

I believe prayer is the ultimate privilege. Since the veil was torn, we have been given access to communicate with the Sovereign God of the Universe. We are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace and submit our petitions to God. “You have not because you ask not.” We are told that God is a good Father who knows how to give good gifts to his children. He will never give us a stone when we ask for bread. We are told that God cares deeply for us and knows us intimately. We are promised joy, peace and that all things work together for good to those who love Him. It all sounds great, especially when God says “Yes!” and grants our petition. But what are we to do when we get a hard “No” or “Not yet” that makes no earthly sense to us?

To avoid any purely intellectual discussion on this topic here are three recent examples with which to wrestle:

1. My best friend Michele resigned from a lucrative career in finance to go to nursing school in her mid-40’s because she wanted to minister to others in a way that felt more tangible than her corporate job. She worked for two years as an oncology nurse before her psoriatic arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and diabetes (since childhood) crippled her with so much pain and fatigue she has been unable to work for almost three years. Many of you have prayed for her. Two months ago, thirty plus sincere Christians agreed to pray specifically for thirty days for her pain to decrease and her energy to increase. Do you know what happened? She got worse!
2. When Michael Seiboth was seventeen, he underwent an extreme brain surgery to put an end to his seizures. The surgery was not successful, and he continues to struggle with daily seizures. Susan prays regularly for the seizures to stop. They have not. Two months ago, Michael’s wheelchair fell over at his day program, and he hit his head in the most compromised area of his skull!
3. A client of mine who is working through an extensive abuse history in which she was regularly violated. She talks to me about how many times she cried out to God as a child when this was happening and asked Him to make it stop and it didn’t. She leans forward, looks me in the eyes and says, “Where was God and why didn’t He answer my prayer?”!

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Summer Picnic at Straubel’s



“When God Says No,” continued...

Most of you have your own good and perplexing examples of God saying, “No,” or “Not yet.” What do you tell yourself? What do you say to others? I believe we do not have to minimize our human feelings or quickly quote a verse and pretend to be joyful when terrible things happen or God clearly says, “No” or “Not yet” to something that we deeply longed for, like a marriage to be healed and restored. I believe God knows all of our honest thoughts and feelings. Of course, there are the points that Satan is involved in this world, sinful natures, fallen world, etc. However, Satan has limited powers and God is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. God can do ANYTHING and sometimes chooses not to act. WHY? I do not know and neither do you. I try to teach my clients and myself to stop asking the “Why” question. There is no satisfying earthly answer. I think this is partly because God is not an earthly father. The analogy of God as a Father breaks down when we take it too far. Even a mediocre earthly father would do anything to stop their child from being sexually assaulted, falling and hitting their head, or getting sick, if he had the power to do so. This is why some people think of God as sadistic. “How could He allow...?” “Why didn’t He stop it if He is all powerful?”, etc.

Thankfully, we do not have a limited earthly Father as God. We have a Heavenly Father whose ways are so much higher than our ways and whose thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8). He comprehends what we cannot. He sees from the beginning of time to the end of time. His larger plans are His, not ours. He seems to honor and require the wildest type of faith. A faith that says: “Even though I do not understand and I don’t like it and I wish it was different; You are God and I am not. I surrender my will to yours and trust that you know better.” Or, in the words of Job in Chapter 42, *“I know you can do anything, and no one can stop you. You asked ‘Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?’ It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me.”*

This wild type of faith continues to believe in the goodness of God and feels deeply loved and comforted even when things are not going as we wish. Faith in God’s loving character even when our circumstances seem anything but loving.

We have many examples in scripture of people who suffered for decades while they were faithfully serving the Lord. Many were restored, healed and saw justice. Others died before seeing a change in their circumstances and didn’t find healing and justice until they left this world. *Nowhere in the Bible does it say God never gives you more than you can handle.* It

happens all the time! That is the point. God never meant for us to handle all that this broken world throws at us alone. I believe He intended us to turn to Him, exhausted in our own resources, and cry out to Him in utter dependence. He honors those prayers. Thankfully, what we are promised is that God will walk with us, carry us, cry with us, transform our character, and teach us how to have joy and peace that is not dependent on circumstances. He is present, even when our suffering is not removed. Hallelujah!

Many times, God has done unmistakable miracles for me, and I have received many incredible “Yeses” that have taught me about His omnipotence. Several times God has graciously allowed me the hindsight to see why He said, “No” or “Not yet” to something I prayed fervently about to show me that He always has my best interest at heart, and His timing is perfect. I am eternally grateful for His goodness and how He protects me even from my own will and myself. It helps me hang in there when He says, “No.” Deeper surrender yields deeper faith and deeper peace...the kind of peace that passes all human understanding. I hope to experience more and more of that kind of peace, and I wish the same for you.

My friend Michele continues to demonstrate mature faith, despite God’s “No” to our thirty-day prayer challenge. She doesn’t think God is punishing her or that Satan is in charge. We don’t understand the answer but know that her healing is up to God and not us. Susan continues to pray for Michael’s daily seizures to cease. Despite her “No” or very long, “Not yet” answer, she continues to see God’s hand in Michael’s life and the many divine interventions that have unfolded over the years. My client continues to move toward healing of her past and is using her painful experiences to encourage other survivors. So what did I tell her, when she asked me her difficult questions? I leaned forward and met her gaze. I said, “I don’t pretend to know why God allowed such evil to happen to you for so long. But I do believe that God was there and saw everything. I believe He weeps for that little girl. He loves you and He will help you heal. God knows how to redeem and restore. That is what He does best. I also believe justice will happen. Those who perpetrated such evil will be held responsible for their sin.” I believe all three individuals in these examples have that wild faith and trust that God honors. I believe they will be dearly rewarded for keeping the faith despite such unrelenting challenges.

On Sunday mornings, the UPLIFT Prayer and Praise Connection area is staffed with two team members who consider it a privilege to join with your confidential prayer requests and praise for God’s answers whether they are “Yes,” “No,” or “Not Yet.”

Elder's Corner

By Pastor Andy Straubel

By the time you are reading this, our 5-Day Club will be over, and there is a lot for which we can give thanks. Our footprint into the West Windsor community is steadily growing. Our online efforts are paying off. We have a record number of individuals expressing interest in our ministry.

Years ago, the Apostle Paul had a "Macedonian vision." He sees a man saying, "Come over and help us." That vision turned out to be grass roots effort to two women praying by a river and a prison guard. It would not be considered "great" by today's standard. That vision, however, led to the founding of the church at Philippi, and a book in the Bible celebrating that church. It is the one church mentioned in the Bible that intimately describes the joy that Paul found in ministry. Paul said, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5).

There is a joy in serving Jesus, and it unites us. It is a "partnership in the Gospel." That is what our 5-Day Club was all about. Thank you all for pulling together to make this ministry happen. Paul experienced it in Philippi; we get to experience it at Windsor Chapel. The Apostle Paul goes on to say with conviction, "Be confident, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." You all are that good work!

ISI Garage Giveaway

Help international students and their families experience the warmth and caring of our local community. The ISI Annual Garage Give-Away, which will be held between 8 am and noon on Saturday, September 7, at the Lutheran Church of the Messiah, 407 Nassau Street, in Princeton, assists internationals by providing them with large and small items to help ease their transition to Princeton.

Donations of furniture, small appliances and kitchen, bath and bed needs are especially welcome. Drivers with pickups are also needed. The rain date is September 14. Contact John and Aruna Desai at (609) 924-0763 or idesai45@verizon.net for additional information.

5-Day Kids Club



Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8-9

Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*

By Cindy Bills



The Law of Love, Part 2

Matthew 22:34-40:

But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

In my last Chapel Challenge installment, I made some observations about Jesus' powerful words recorded in Matthew 22. It is essential for believers to make the connection between loving God and loving others. There is a fundamental truth that our love of God manifests a dynamic faith-relationship with our Lord, and it is in the context of this relationship that the Holy Spirit does His work in us and enables us to love Him in return and to love others. We love, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

But there is a third component to this passage: We are to love others as we love ourselves. The inference is that we have an appropriate regard for ourselves and exercise commensurate self-care that we can then translate into an appropriate regard and care for others. I suspect that trying to put this law of love into practice often leads to confusion for some and frustration for others. Many of us do not love ourselves well; nor do we know how to do so.

It is only as we accept and come to experience God's love for us that we can begin to truly love ourselves. Most of us spend a good part of our days and our lives trying to become or prove ourselves lovable and to hide any evidence to the contrary. We gather symbols of success and serve the opinions and expectations of those around us in order to be perceived as "nice" or "good." We justify our unkind words and insensitive behavior and distance ourselves from them as quickly as we can. But we are not nice, or good. Our attempts to

demonstrate our lovability fall short. We are left with the awful truth that we are indeed difficult to love. And since we know ourselves and our shortcomings better than anyone else, each of us is in the position of knowing just how difficult it is to love himself/herself. Our unloving words and behavior simply expose the truth that we are sinners in need of a Savior and Redeemer.

We are loved by the Creator and Lord of the universe. As astounding as that is, it is one of the central truths of God's Word. This is where love and life begin! It is also where we can begin to love ourselves. God loves us as His personally created expression of Himself, uniquely designed to glorify Him as we pursue the good works of eternal significance for which He has created us. We are image-bearers of God with eternal significance. When we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, we become heirs of heaven, princes and princesses of the King.

God loves the world and everyone in it. But it is only by faith that we can access that love and establish a love relationship with the Lord. Believers are in the unique position of seeing God's personal love for each of us as his uniquely created image-bearer of Christ. We are loved because God is the lover. He loves us regardless of our appearance or performance. We do not earn or merit God's love.

And herein lies the challenge. We are sinners, and it is all too easy to follow our prideful sin nature and try to do life ourselves. Like Eve, we are the perennial two-year-old who insists that "I will do it myself." Even as we know that God loves us and Christ died for us, we want to feel worthy of that love. And so we focus on performance. Our inevitable shortcomings in the performance arena remind us that we are not as lovable on our own as we would like to be. And if our response is to simply try harder to perform we will continue to encounter those reminders; a performance mindset also leads to a competitive perspective that will never help us to feel worthy of love (there is always someone "better"). At the same time, the insistent and demanding competitor within us makes it all the harder to love others.

This conundrum brings us back to the initial concept of this passage: our love relationship with the Lord. God is love. It was for love that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8). It is in and through Christ that we are known and loved anyway. By grace through faith we encounter Love Incarnate; as we experience the powerful, tender, unconditional love of our Creator and Redeemer, we become better able to love ourselves

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“The Law of Love, Part 2,” continued...

without the ball and chain of performance. And as we become able to love ourselves, we are in a position to genuinely love others without needing anything back from them. To be sure, our fallen nature can make it exceedingly difficult to feel beloved and then make the translation from beloved to lover; but persevering in this exercise is at the heart of Jesus’ words.

We are to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind. As we pursue a love relationship with the Lord, we are brought into His presence. Relationship is about knowing: we open ourselves to be known by God, and we also come to know Him. The give and take of this builds a new perspective. We are, on our own, filled and covered with the ugliness of our sin. There is nothing we can do to cleanse ourselves. But God is the Lover, and He loves us anyway! We are beloved! As we experience God’s love and try to love Him in return, we are brought deeper into the mystery of God’s love. Trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior means that He has covered our sin and we are ugly no more.

Loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind is a response to His love of us. But as we do so, we are changed. He becomes more; we become less of our prideful selves and more of who He created us to be. We become able to accept being a beloved heir of the King and find less need to earn it or prove it. As William Young would say, learning to live loved is an expression of our love relationship with our Lord.

As we walk in a growing love relationship with our Lord, and as we love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind, we learn to rest securely in His love and in our identity as an eternally beloved child of God. We are better able to see our God-value and exercise self-care and stewardship over what the Lord has entrusted to us. Our relationship with the Lord defines us, and we have no need to see others as a means to feel good about ourselves. Loving others becomes a dynamic and powerful fruit of loving the Lord.

Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557 or clbills@verizon.net) to continue the dialogue....

Financial Update

(Through June 30, 2019)

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...”

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$142,473	\$142,500
Expense	\$137,153	\$142,500

Windsor Chapel has sent \$19,643 to our missionary partners this year. That’s 14% of your giving!

Answered Prayer

By Evelyn Ambrose

Reach for His Hand

There are times when one feels unsure and troubled. In studying the Bible, I have come to realize the answers to all our questions and ambivalence is in the good book. One of my favorite verses is Isaiah 41:13:

“I am the Lord your God, who holds your right hand. And I tell you, “Don’t be afraid! I will help you.”

This verse has given me immeasurable strength and peace. When faced with a dilemma or question, I have started to involuntarily clench my right hand to seek God’s touch. The feeling is amazing. I immediately feel calmer and clear-minded. By actively seeking God’s touch and trusting in his plan for me, the quality of my life is awesome. Did I win the lotto? No. What I won was even better. A good life with God firmly holding on to me by my right hand. That, my friends, is life everlasting.

If you have experienced answered prayer or been aware of God’s encouraging presence during a challenging time in your life, we invite you to share your story. Let your personal 350+ word story inspire and be a blessing to others.

Backpack Collection

It’s Back to School sale time and time to fill back packs! This year 35 backpacks (no solid red, blue, gold or orange backpacks, please) filled with needed school supplies will be distributed by the Harris Ministry to underprivileged children in the Trenton area. Please place them in the coat room by Sunday, August 18. Catch the sales now and help bring a smile to a child’s face! Please pick up a list of the suggested supplies on the tables in the chapel foyer or contact Scott Bruno (609-213-9545) with questions.



Do Not Stumble

By Janet Berrill

Have you ever cared a lot about someone or something and earnestly prayed for God to act? The kind of situation I am referring to is one you care deeply about, so much so that you petition God throughout the day with heartfelt prayers, asking Him to change the situation according to your request. I am referring to situations such as praying for healing, or an end to financial troubles, or an end to a conflict, or for wisdom regarding the future, etc.

I am in the midst of such a situation now. As those of you on the prayer chain know, my dear friend, Andrea, is suffering physically to the point of debilitation. She continues to go to doctors seeking their assistance in determining what is wrong and looking for their advice as to what can be done to help her feel better.

In Matthew 11:2-6, John the Baptist is in prison and he sends his disciples to ask Jesus if He is the "one who was to come," that is, the Messiah. Jesus replies by giving an account of the miracles He has performed such as healing the blind, deaf, lame, those with leprosy, and raising the dead to life. Then He says, "*Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.*"

John had expectations of the Messiah that were not being realized. John had been called by God to prepare the way for the Messiah and he had done that. So why was he in jail? This is not what he expected. It was anticipated that the Messiah was going to free the nation of Israel (see Acts 1:6), but it did not look like Jesus was doing that. Because Jesus was not meeting John's expectations, he may have thought he made a mistake, maybe Jesus was not the one he thought He was. In Jesus' reply, He says to look at what He had done and see how it fulfilled scripture (see Isaiah 35:5-6). He then goes on to tell them that they will be blessed if they do not stumble, that is, think He is not the Messiah, because everything about Him was not the way they thought it was going to be. He is who He says He is, even if He does not do what one expects Him to do.

As I have been praying for Andrea, I have expectations. I know God is all knowing, He designed our bodies, He knows exactly what is causing Andrea to feel so bad, He knows exactly what to do to help her feel better, He is all powerful, He can miraculously heal her, He loves her more than I do. Luke 4:40 says, "*When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying His hands on each one, He healed them.*" Inspired by this verse, I have been praying for Andrea, figuratively bringing my friend to Jesus, seeking her healing, expecting God to act. But as of yet, she is not healed.

"Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me." God is not meeting my expectations, how am I going to respond? I will honestly admit that for a time I was unhappy with God for His perceived lack of response. He healed the people that were brought to Him, why is He not healing Andrea? But as I read Jesus' words about not stumbling on account of Him, I realized that I cannot turn from God because I do not see Him working as I asked, as I expect Him to, but I must continue to trust in the truth of who I know Him to be.

Summer 11th Hour Workshop August 25 – Roman Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest Christian religion in the world. This study will examine its roots and summarize its history. Attention will be given to the authority of the church, the place of tradition, prayer to the saints, purgatory, confession, and the role of Mary. We will also attempt to chart when and how distinctive practices entered the church and how those practices have redefined the church both in America and around the world.

If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter please e-mail:

Susan Seiboth at

susan@quiltingsquare.com

Dorothy Soi at

dsoi@windsorchapel.org

Chapel Office (609) 799-2559

www.windsorchapel.org

Contributing Photographers:

Bob Seiboth & Pastor Andy Straubel