

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 46

WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO' AND GRACE IN A BARREN LAND

2 SAMUEL 7 & 9

Introduction to 2 Samuel 7

As David compared his stately palace with the Lord's tent, he called for his trusted counsellor, the prophet Nathan, and intimated him with his intention to build a grand temple fitting for the ark of the Lord. In desiring to build a temple for God, David's heart was in the right place. Yet, just because David's plan was noble and his friend was applauding it didn't mean it was God's will. It's a good idea to remember that every plan we may design for God isn't necessarily of God. Nathan soon found out what the will of the Lord was—or shall we say, what it wasn't.

Read 2 Samuel 7: 1-17 and meditate on it for 3 minutes

Has God ever said no to one of your dreams? Perhaps you always wanted to go to the mission field, or maybe you desired to marry a godly person and raise children who love the Lord, or possibly you wanted to build a business based on Christian principles, or maybe (you fill in the blank). Yet God has closed every door you've tried to walk through.

This kind of mysterious no is hard to handle. But if we believe that God really loves us, really wants what's best for us—if we trust Him with our life—He will lead us to His better plan.

- Have there been times people feel like doing God a favour by working for him?

- How much of what we call 'Service for God' is actually 'Service for our wellbeing'? Give examples.

- God does not call everybody to build "temples" - large, high visibility achievements. Are you able to accept that fact? What makes it difficult?

- Referring to David's good intention to build the temple, God told him, "You were right in wanting to build a temple for me." (2 Chronicles 6:8). Can you hear God's affirmation of his godly desires? What comfort and strength can we draw from it?
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- As David supported Solomon who would build his "dream temple," how can you support others whom God may have called to fulfill your dream?
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- God has given some people the privilege of doing great things for Him. Do you sometimes feel envious of those people, wishing God would use you that way?
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Note

God's no is not a discipline for sin or a rejection of you, but a redirection toward His will for your life.

Building a temple is probably not one of our secret ambitions, but all of us have dreams of how God will use our lives. Sometimes those hopes line up with God's will for us; sometimes they don't. When God says no to our plans, He has a better way. Look for the 'yes' behind the no. God may not have any glorious temples for us to build, but there are always people around us who need building up. Our best reaction when God says no should be one of humility and co-operation. It takes real humility to say to the Solomon's in our lives, "You go, and may God be with you. I'll do everything I can to support you," and then sit back and applaud as they build your dream.

Read Verses 18-29

- How do you respond to the promises of a trustworthy God?
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- How, primarily, have you addressed God. With introductions? Requests? Confession? Thanksgiving? What does this say about your rapport with Him?
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- David focussed on what God had given him, not what He had been denied. And he never regretted the day when God said no. What further insight does this action give about David's character?
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GRACE IN A BARREN PLACE

Grace is God's snatching us from a barren place –a dry, desolate life of sin—and sitting us down to eat from the bounty of His table. It is undeserved and un-repayable. Best of all, its free. 2 Samuel 9 gives us one of Scriptures' richest illustrations of grace. Patterning his heart after God's, by extending acceptance and mercy, David showers a shrivelled soul with a refreshing rain of grace.

Read 1 Samuel 20: 14-15, and 1 Samuel 24: 21

- To whom did David make promises in the passages and how was his relationship to each of them?
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Read 2 Samuel 9

- What does David's kindness to Saul's lineage underscore about covenants?
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- What does it say about David?
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- What might Mephibosheth have felt as he was escorted back to Jerusalem? To the throne room? To the dining table?
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- In this regard, what do you make of Mephibosheth's handicap? And his likening himself to a "dead dog"? What might be an equivalent self-abasing comment today?
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- In what ways are you like Mephibosheth as you "stand" before God's throne? As you break bread at the Lord's Table? As you are an heir to your heavenly Father's spiritual Kingdom?
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Conclusion - Analogies of Grace

At least eight analogies connect David's grace to Mephibosheth with God's grace to us.

1. Once Mephibosheth had enjoyed fellowship with his father and so had humanity in the Garden of Eden.
2. When disaster struck, fear came and Mephibosheth suffered a fall that crippled him for life. Similarly, when sin came, humanity suffered a fall, which has forever left us spiritually crippled.
3. Out of unconditional love for his friend Jonathan, David sought anyone to whom he might extend his grace. God, because of His unconditional love for His Son and acceptance of His Son's death on the cross, continues to seek anyone to whom He might extend His grace.
4. The crippled man was destitute and undeserving. So, also, we sinners are undeserving and without hope. In no way are we worthy of our King's favour. All we can do is humbly and gratefully accept it.
5. The king took the crippled Mephibosheth from a barren wasteland and seated him at the royal banquet in the palace. God, our Father, has rescued us from a moral wasteland and seated us in a place of spiritual nourishment and intimacy.
6. David adopted Mephibosheth into his royal family. We also have been adopted into a family—God's family. And he gives us full privileges within His household.
7. Mephibosheth's limp was a constant reminder of David's grace. So also, our moral feebleness keeps us from ever forgetting that where sin abounds, grace abounds that much more.
8. When Mephibosheth sat at the king's table, he was treated with the same respect as David's own sons. When we one day attend the great wedding feast of the Lamb, the same will be true for us, We will sit with prophets and priests, apostles and evangelists, pastors and missionaries. We will dine with everyone from the apostle Peter to Corrie ten Boom. And we will be there with them because that same tablecloth of grace covers all our feet.