

DAVID: A MAN OF PASSION AND DESTINY

STUDY FOURTEEN

When God Says No

2 Samuel 7

You know what I've learned? When God says no, He has a better way. And He expects me to support it. My very best reaction is cooperation and humility.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

GOD answers prayer! Isn't that a powerful truth? Many spend weeks, months, and even years earnestly pleading with God on their knees about just one thing. Freedom from that addiction. Healing for that persistent sickness. Salvation for that lost family member who's far from God. When God finally says yes, joy supplants the burdens in the once-heavy heart.

Yet . . . because God answers prayer doesn't mean He'll *always answer yes*. In fact, God often says no—even to prayers offered by His most faithful followers, even to prayers offered in a posture of selfless service and pure humility, even to prayers that seem good for God's plan and God's people.

King David offered such a well-intentioned request to God shortly after taking the throne in Jerusalem. David wanted to build a temple, a house for God even grander than David's own palace.

But God said no.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study explores why God said no to David's honest, honoring, and heartfelt request. The lesson that David learned proves useful for Christ's followers today and provides a practical road map to follow when God says no to our requests.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prayer involves more than asking God to give good gifts. It's also an opportunity to give praise back to Him. Open your time of study by praying the words of *Psalm 103:1–5*.

*Let all that I am praise the LORD;
with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.
Let all that I am praise the LORD;
may I never forget the good things he does for me.
He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.
He redeems me from death
and crowns me with love and tender mercies.
He fills my life with good things.
My youth is renewed like the eagle's!*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

After donning the crown of Israel, David first returned the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. Shouts and songs of praise engulfed the entire city with its arrival. Peace filled the land, the king loved God, and God's favor returned at last.

The city of David, however, had one glaring omission: a temple for God's presence. The ark still resided in the tabernacle—a tent made of fabric, poles, and ropes. David couldn't sit idly by in the palace with God's presence relegated to such a mundane home.



Observation: An Earnest Request Denied

Pastor Chuck Swindoll's study of the Bible is based on a thorough observation of the Scriptures. He always begins with the same question, "What does the passage say?"¹ Keep this question in mind as you read *2 Samuel 7*.



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After he had firmly established his claim to the throne and settled into his palace, what did David say to the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:2? What did David's statements suggest he wanted to do?

It is during the interludes of life that we seize a dream, an ideal objective. But sometimes the dream is from God, and sometimes it's not. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll.

God began His response by asking a rhetorical question. While the answer to this question is unstated, the expected response should be evident based on the context. God employed this rhetorical device for emphasis—as if the answer were written in all capital letters. What question did God ask in 7:5, and what is the expected—though unstated—answer?

According to 7:6–7, why did God deny David's request?



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While God said no to David's request to build the temple, He said yes to something far more significant. According to 2 Samuel 7:10–11a, what did God promise to do for Israel?

In 7:10–11a, God promised *what* He planned to do for Israel, and in 7:11b–12, God explained *how* He would use David to carry out these plans. What role did God assign David in the fulfillment of this promise?

According to 7:12–13, who would build the temple for God?

Even though David was a man after God's own heart, God said no when David asked to build the temple. But God had bigger plans for David. God said, "Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever" (7:16). God denied David's request to build a house *for Him* because He wanted to build a house *for David*.



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Interpretation: Why God Said No

A careful reader of this account might ask, “Why?” Why did David want to build the temple? Why did God say no? Why did God choose to establish David’s royal line instead? The interpretation phase of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method will help uncover the answers to these difficult questions.

Turn to [2 Chronicles 6:7–9](#), which preserves King Solomon’s reflection on the time when his father David asked to build the temple. According to [6:8](#), what motivation did David have for making this request? How did God view David’s request?

God’s answer is not a question of sin. It is not His judgment. It is not coming upon David as a consequence of his wrongdoing. It is simply God redirecting His plan.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

[Second Samuel 7:18–29](#) records David’s response to God’s denial of his request to build the temple. What adjectives would you use to describe David’s attitude in his response? What can faithful followers of Jesus learn from David’s example when God says no to their requests?

It isn’t God’s plan that everybody builds a temple. You may have a great resolve, a great plan, a great ideal, but it may not be God’s plan. When you face that, it is tough to bear because you’re not dealing with sin. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: The Davidic Covenant

God's promise to David may seem like a consolation prize for not getting to build the temple, but it was a much more valuable honor. The covenant to establish David's dynasty played an essential role in defeating sin and restoring creation to its full glory.

In His original covenant with Abraham, God promised, "I will make you into a great nation. . . . All the families on earth will be blessed through you" (*Genesis 12:2–3*). Through Abraham, God established the nation of Israel, and later through David, God made Israel into a great nation. But how would God distribute His blessing and cure His creation? *Through David's heir.*

God told David: "I will raise up one of your descendants, your own offspring, and I will make his kingdom strong. He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for my name. And I will secure his royal throne forever." (*2 Samuel 7:12–13*).

In the short-term, God fulfilled this promise to David through his son Solomon, who built a temple for God in Jerusalem. But Solomon proved imperfect, and he didn't reign forever because he was just a man. More than that, he proved he didn't deserve to reign forever because he didn't follow God faithfully.

But didn't God's covenant say that David's heir would reign forever? This seems like a contradiction, but it isn't. Biblical covenants often have both *near* and *far* fulfillments.

Nearly 1,000 years after Solomon, another descendent of David was born—an eternal king, sitting on an eternal throne, reigning over God's eternal people. According to *Luke 1:32–33*, how did the angel who appeared to Mary describe the child she would later deliver? How do these words relate to the covenant God made with David?



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Read the priest Zechariah's prophecy about the birth of this new king in *Luke 1:67–75*. How would this descendent of David right the world's wrongs caused by sin?

While King David offered Israel physical deliverance from its enemies, his descendent—King Jesus—offers the whole world deliverance from the true enemies: Satan, sin, and death. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are the answers to the prayer that's deep within every human heart—the prayer for hope, for salvation, for everlasting life, for eternal peace.



Application: When God Says No Today

How should a faithful Jesus-follower respond when God says no to an earnest prayer? Pastor Chuck offers three points of application to keep in mind:

1. When God says no, it isn't necessarily discipline or rejection. It might be redirection.
2. When God says no, He has a better way.
3. When God says no, the best reaction is cooperation and humility.

Has God said no to you recently? If so, record the situation and how you responded. What does it look like for you to walk in faith in response to this no?



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Has God ever denied a request in the past only to send you down a path you never would have expected? What did you learn from that experience? How might His no have been a disguised yes to something else?

What are you praying for right now? How can you prepare yourself to respond with cooperation and humility, whether the answer is yes or no?

You may have been praying about this one matter for a long time. Maybe you're feeling weary while waiting for an answer. But God *will* answer your prayer, and regardless of the answer, you can trust that He has magnificent plans in store for you, and He has paved a way for you that is better than anything you could imagine.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for all the times You've answered my prayers—even when the answer was no. Help me to become a person of fervent and faithful prayer. When You grant my requests, make me grateful and cause me to rejoice. When You deny them, work in me to trust You and to believe that a no to one thing is a yes to something better. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

