

Worship

by Miriam Ryan

Have you ever said “yes” to take on a new responsibility and later regretted it? When my kids were little, I was asked to serve on the board of our neighborhood pool. Having never served on a board, I felt honored and immediately said “yes” without considering all that this would entail. What I didn’t know was we were embarking on a major construction project at the pool, and this would entail months of long meetings discussing things like which kinds of drains to install, what the new overhang design would look like, and which trees to chop down etc. Turns out I have no expertise to offer in any of these areas, except a strong opinion about not chopping down trees. It was just me and one other board member who cared about the trees, so we became known as the “tree huggers.” And despite our best efforts, they still chopped down all the trees. I truly think I ended up offering nothing to this board other than slowing down their tree-chopping efforts. This two-year commitment took time away from my family and took up time and energy that I could have devoted elsewhere all because I quickly said “yes” and did not consider my other priorities first. Can you relate?

The Twelve disciples did just the opposite. They stopped to consider what mattered most to them and then re-arranged their priorities to serve this purpose:

Acts 6:1-7

6 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and

Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Turns out their wise decision led to other people being able to use their gifts and serve, and that saying “no” to something good allowed them to say “yes” to something better. They were proactive about protecting their priorities and their proposal “pleased the whole group.” It is interesting that when they prioritized the right things, rather than disappointing people, it blessed them. Other people stepped into ministry and the greater good was served. Sometimes we are so afraid to say “no” out of a desire to please people, but the reality is that sometimes the opposite is true. Saying “no” because we don’t want to compromise our priorities could allow others to step into new opportunities and use their gifts. The end result might just be that everyone is pleased with the outcome.

Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever said “yes” to a responsibility that you later regretted (at the expense of another priority)? Why do you think you chose to do this?
2. Have you ever said “no” to an opportunity because you knew it conflicted with other priorities? What gave you the strength or wisdom to do this?
3. What were the disciples prioritizing? How do you think this decision demonstrates the value they put on worship?
4. What do you think it looks like to make worship a priority in your life practically speaking?
5. As you reflect on your current situation (and schedule) is there anything that you sense you need to let go of to make worship more of a priority in your life?
6. How does worship enable you to have a better sense of your priorities?
7. What is something you would like to be more intentional about prioritizing in your life right now?