

When the Answer is No!

The Singer, Part 10

2 Samuel 7

If there's one question just about every child gets asked 100 times or more is the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up . . . what's your dream job?"

I did a little research again this week and found that kids are still giving the same answers you may have when you were growing up.

Some wanted to be astronauts; the president of the United States; some kind of professional athlete; several wanted to be Spiderman or Superman or some other superhero.

In one of the surveys I read, one kid wanted to be a zookeeper; another wanted to be a lion tamer; still another wanted to be a painter; several wanted to be actors and actresses, pilots, doctors and race car drivers.

Several kids wanted to be garbage collectors – I'm sure their mothers were thrilled by that; one kid told his mother that he wanted to grow up to be the ice cream scooper at Baskin and Robbins; another said he wanted to work at a Krispy Kreme factory store where he would eat fresh hot doughnuts all day . . . okay I made that one up.

What I found interesting – and not all that surprising – was that less than 10% of the adults said they were even remotely involved with their childhood dream job.

Even in a crowd this size, there aren't many astronauts or actresses or lion tamers or race car drivers – at least we don't get paid for it.

That means, somewhere along the way, just about every one of us experienced some sort of transition . . . the changing of our dreams.

The truth is most people I know, adapted to new desires along the way. Even now, your desires are being transformed . . . and the key agent in that transformation is the Spirit of God at work in your life.

You're learning to ***trust in the Lord with all your heart – and not to lean on your own understanding; in all your ways to acknowledge Him – that is, to put Him first – and then watch as He directs your steps (Proverbs 3:5-6).***

And that's critical simply because *our* direction is often different than the direction *God* wants for us.

How do you respond?

What do you do with that lingering desire to do something else . . . to be somewhere else . . . to do something different but God never gave you the chance.

God never allowed you to make that particular turn in the road.

How do you respond when you're planning to take steps – in a relationship; a career; a move; a purchase; a decision . . . and God closes the door?

No matter how hard you turn the doorknob, it won't open – the door won't budge.

Listen, the average Christian will go out and buy a sledgehammer . . . I can get this open.

Others will ask for prayer so they'll figure out how to pick the lock.

Do we really trust the Lord with all our heart, refusing to lean on our own understanding of what we think's best – do we put Him first and then watch as He directs our steps?

Let me ask it this way? What do you do when God says "no"?

How do you respond with wisdom and deference and even joy when God says, "Not that door . . . it'll never be that door . . . no, not that way . . . I've got something else in mind for you"?

Let me show you someone who did respond in that manner.

Let's rejoin our biographical study of the Singer – the life of King David . . . now at the Book of Second Samuel.

By the time we reached **2 Samuel**, the word that came to my mind was the word, "Finally"!

In our study, we've walked alongside him – covering ground in weeks that took David years to live out. We watched him, neglected by his father, out in the back 40 watching the family flock of sheep and goats. We marveled at his youthful courage in taking on a giant with the perspective that older warriors should have had – and especially King Saul – as David shouted, "Is there not a cause?"

We saw him make a living out of playing musical instruments and dodging spears.

Then off to fight Philistines as Israel's most prized commander.

Then it was years of running from Saul . . . hiding in caves . . . refusing to rip the crown from Saul's head and seize the throne.

We've been in the Psalms where we've heard him crying to God for strength and protection and wisdom.

Finally . . . Saul dies in battle and David hears the chant of the Israelites honoring him as they shouted, "Long live King David."

It will take the first six chapters of Second Samuel before David unites the Jewish nation, bringing the tribes of Judah and the tribes of Israel together once again and returns the Ark of the Covenant to its new home inside the capital city of Jerusalem.

David is finally king.

And over the next 15 years, David will not only unite the nation but bring about domestic peace and national rest.¹

It will take 15 years of hard labor and wise leadership; but finally, the Philistines are held at bay and the nation is united like never before.

The opening line of *chapter 7* tell you just how good it is – ***the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies.***

If we were like David, we'd reach for the lazy boy, kick up our feet and enjoy the rest of our lives. This was his dream job, right? I mean, this was everything he could have imagined possible when as a 13 or 14 years old, Samuel the prophet had anointed him.

After years of struggle and trouble . . . he has arrived – and the nation along with him. Everyone was enjoying these prosperous days. Every Israelite had two donkeys in the garage and roast beef in the oven.

The truth is David isn't reaching for the lazy boy. In fact, none of this turns out to be his dream job after all. In fact, there's something really bothering him. ***Notice verse 2. The king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent."***

Here David is, living in this mansion made out of expensive cedar – built for him as a gift from another king – and he looks out his window and sees this tabernacle and the ark of God living inside a tent made out of badger skin and he says, "This just isn't right . . . now that I can live in a mansion, it's time for me to build for God a magnificent house."

Now, don't be tempted to think that this was some kind of random, strange, spontaneous desire – you know, David must have been bored since he had no more Philistines to fight and since he'd tried just about everything else, he's thinking, "I'll try my hand in the building business for a while too . . . you know, why not?!"

Oh no . . . this project effectively becomes his dream job.

In fact, hold your finger here and turn over to the Book of I Chronicles – it's your favorite place to have devotions – turn right and go past 1 & 2 Kings and then *1 Chronicles*. ***Turn to chapter 22 and notice verse 1. Then David said, "Here shall be the house of the Lord God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel." 2. David commanded to gather together the resident aliens who were in the land of Israel, and he set stonecutters to prepare dressed stones for building the house of God. 3. David also provided great quantities of iron for nails for the doors of the gates and for clamps, as well as bronze in quantities beyond weighing, 4. And cedar timbers without number – verse 5. For David said, "Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands. I will therefore make preparation for it." So David provided materials in great quantity before his death – you could render that, for the rest of his life."***

With that kind of passion and life-long desire in mind, turn back to 2 Samuel. With great excitement and enthusiasm, David approaches Nathan and effectively says, "Nathan, can you think of one good reason why I can't get started? This will be the culmination of all my skill and creativity and passion and longing – let me build God a magnificent temple for His glory!"

And Nathan said to the King in verse 3. "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you."

Man, just think of it . . . a temple wherein the presence of God abides – David now has the power, the position, the skilled labor, the wealth, the people, the capital city, the infrastructure . . . and now, the prophet's affirmation – this is great – God says yes.

You can almost see David clearing off a table and calling for the royal architects to get started . . . a green light from the Prophet Nathan was a green light from God.

Not so fast. The first word in *verse 4* changes everything – But . . . ***but that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, "Go and tell my***

servant David, “Thus says the Lord, Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. 7. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” 8. Now, therefore, thus you shall say my servant David, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel.

Let me stop and simply say that what God does next through Nathan, is communicate what we call the Davidic covenant.

A covenant that promises David eternal issues.

The play on words is this – David won’t be allowed to build God a house, but God will build David a house – literally a dynasty that lasts forever.ⁱⁱ

In these next few verses, David is promised a land, a nation and a kingdom which will effectively bless the world.

In other words, the line of David will be the royal line with the right to the throne and the right to an earthly kingdom.

And that’s just one more reason it was so stunning for the angel Gabriel to deliver the news that *the Lord God will give to him – Jesus – the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*” (Luke 1:32-33)

A throne, a house and a kingdom . . . forever.

Nathan delivers the news centuries earlier to David here in this chapter that:

- His death will not annul this covenant – *verses 12-13*
- Even sin won’t destroy this covenant – *verses 14-15*
- And time will never exhaust this covenant – *verse 16*ⁱⁱⁱ

That’s the good news . . . now for the bad news – so to speak.

God effectively tells Nathan to go and tell David that he doesn’t need a house – at least not by David’s hand. If you look down at *verse 12, God informs David that when he lies down with his fathers* – that is, when he dies – *his descendant will build that temple – that house* for God.

In the parallel passage in *2 Chronicles 17:3-4* we read it even more clearly, *“the word of God came to Nathan, saying, “Go and tell David My servant, “Thus says the Lord, “You shall not build a house for Me to dwell in.”*

David, it won’t be you . . . it will be your son, Solomon.

Keep in mind, David has had no ulterior motive here. He has had no selfish ambition . . . he has no desire to make a name for himself. He simply wanted to exalt the name of God.^{iv}

And God said no.

We’re given clarification in the Chronicles that since David has spent most of his life at war, God wanted a man of peace to build his temple and Solomon will be that man. Even Solomon’s name is a derivative of shalom – peace.

It wasn’t a matter of David’s heart being wrong – it was simply a matter where God said “no”.

Can you imagine this dramatic – and difficult – about-face Nathan had to pull off the next morning . . . that wouldn’t have been easy.^v

“David, I told you yesterday that God would be pleased for you to build His temple . . . but . . .”

Oh, but . . .

That can be such a discouraging word, can’t it?

- You had planned to go on to graduate school, but . . .
- You had made our plans to get married, but . . .
- You were told that you were the person to get that job, but . . .
- You had planned on having a lot of children, but . . .
- You had planned on not having *any* more children, but . . .

That little conjunction can change everything.

In fact, if you’re talking to someone, what comes after they say, “but”, is what really matters.

Your child’s elementary school teacher calls you on the phone and says, “We really enjoy having your little boy in class, but”

A client calls you up and says, “I’ve enjoyed doing business with you, and you’ve always done a great job, but . . .”

Maybe you fellas had a girlfriend call you up and say, “I really enjoy being with you and all, but . . .” You know what that means, don’t you? It means you are now free to move about the country.

I am convinced David was unable to sleep, with such excitement . . . oh, the plans he was already

dreaming up . . . the things he would do for God's glory – and God said, "No."

Frankly, the mark of having a heart after God is probably nowhere more revealing than in how someone responds when God says "no".

Let me take you through the next verses and give you 5 summary words revealed in David's attitude and actions.

Let's call this, Five Ways to Respond When God Says No:

1. The first way is to respond with humility

Look at *verse 18. Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?"*

There's no laundry list of why God ought to let him be the one to do it; he actually says, "Who am I anyway?!"

Without any argument or protest, David is literally at his best – going into that skin-covered tabernacle and there offering up this rare testimony of self-deprecation and self-denial and self-relinquishment.^{vi}

Why do I even have what I do have?!

In other words, dream or no dream, I am a blessed person, David says.^{vii}

2. When God says no, respond with humility; secondly, respond with gratitude.

Notice verse 19. And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God. You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord God.

In other words, David is choosing to focus on what God is giving him in the future rather than what he wanted God to give him in the present.

Gratitude comes when we are willing to view the will of God over the long term rather than just in the short term.

God evidently had something else in mind.

In fact, if David had been allowed to build the temple out of materials he had available at that moment, the temple would never have been the magnificent structure that it was.

He had wanted to build . . . but God will use him to design and then later provide.

- Maybe you can't teach, but you can pray

- You can't go, but you can support
- You can't build, but you design
- Maybe you can't sing, but you can organize
- Maybe you can't run that particular race, but you can provide shoes for those who can.

I read recently about a man who was accepted, along with his wife, as missionaries to an unreached tribe in Africa. After they raised their support and headed off to the field, his wife came down rather quickly, with a disease. For her health sake, they had to leave their first term of service and come back to the United States. In order to make a living, he joined his father in their dentistry practice. They also began to experiment with pasteurization so that they could provide unfermented grape juice for their church communion services, held weekly.

The young man who had been a missionary, whose dreams had been dashed, along with his wife – well, his name was Thomas Welch.

He figured out how to pasteurize grape juice so it wouldn't ferment – and went on to produce "unfermented sacramental wine" for his fellow church members . . . but it caught on and within a decade, his Welch Grape Juice and then later his grape jelly was being sold all over the world.

And he would go on to give hundreds of thousands of dollars to enable people to reach their mission field with the gospel.

You see, God said, "No," but He also said, "Yes."

After planning and designing and organizing for 2 decades, the temple will be absolutely breathtaking and the organized priesthood will be stunning.

God had said no, but he'd also said yes.

And catch the gratitude in David's voice here – no hard feelings . . . no resentment . . . sheer gratitude, "Oh God, thank you for what you are going to allow me to do."

Respond with humility and gratitude;

3. Thirdly, respond with surrender (v. 20-21)

Here's another word, when your dreams are dashed and the answer is no – surrender.

And that's not an easy word, is it?

Notice verse 20, "*And again what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God!*"

In other words, “I am your servant. What more can I say? I belong to you and that’s good enough.” Isn’t it interesting that in *verse 18, he says, “Who am I?”* And in *verse 20, he says, “I am your servant.”*

Which provides an interesting principle of surrender and security; it is not so much *who* you are as much as *who’s* you are.

David said, “I belong to You,” he said, “and I’m willing to wait on Your timing.”

Surrendering, and here’s the tough part – surrendering to the plan of God means you are surrendering to the pace of God as He times out your steps in life.

That’s not easy . . . and it’s never been easy.

I can remember years ago, driving our twin sons to kindergarten a few mornings each week; we carpooled with another family and their son as well.

I used to just listen to their conversations . . . I loved it. For several weeks they were talking about the latest rage at school, which happened to be loose teeth.

They knew everybody in the class who had a loose tooth. And, as soon as one of them lost their tooth, they come to class and showed off that empty space and that was really big news. This was a clear sign of growing up, right?

As a matter of fact, Marsha and I ended up having a little trouble with our twins because – well, we had a lot of trouble with them – but in this case they assumed that since they had been born on the same day, everything should happen to both of them at the same time.

I can remember when one of the boys announced he had a loose tooth, one of the front ones; his twin brother immediately checked his own tooth and it wasn’t loose. It was panic time.

He stayed up half the night working that tooth over – he announced the next morning, “Mine’s loose too!” And it was.

One particular Friday morning, we were riding along and the other boy was informing them that a girl in their class had another loose tooth.” It had evidently been verified on the playground.

And they were just so impressed – man, she’s got two loose teeth at the same time . . . that’s amazing. And then one of my sons just sort of lamented out loud, “Why is it that everybody has loose teeth but me?” I had to pull over and offer emergency counseling.

I couldn’t help but think, none of us really get very far away from this struggle, do we?

The only thing that changes is the object of our discontent.

We move from teeth to toys to homes to cars to careers.

David, in a sense here, says what Paul said, “***I have learned to in whatever situation I am in to be content.***” (*Philippians 4:11*)

Then he goes on to explain – whether rich or poor; in need or in abundance – whether none of my teeth are loose or one just came loose.

You say, “Man, I wish I had that gift of contentment.” Uh-uh. Paul said, “***I have learned***”

It’s learned in the curriculum entitled, “When God says No.” Trouble is, we don’t want to stay in the course long enough to learn it.

Here’s David, with great submission, saying, “Lord, I happen to belong to You and I’ll wait on Your timing. You just bring it when You want it. And order my *steps* and you order my *stops* . . . according to your timing and holy precision.

4. Fourth, respond with praise

Imagine this response – *verse 22. Therefore you are great, O Lord God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you.*

Wait, didn’t God just tell you no? Yes He did . . . but isn’t He great!

Excuse me?

Didn’t God just shatter your dream job?

Yes . . . but He didn’t shatter my faith . . . there is no God like Him!

But shouldn’t you try once more to force the locks on that door . . . shouldn’t you knock harder?

No, God has closed this door and I’m waiting on His direction. There is no one more trustworthy than my God.

Beloved, the difference between waiting on God and wrestling with God is worship.^{viii}

The difference maker between waiting on God and wrestling with God is worshipping God.

And from *verse 22 to the end of the chapter*, David does nothing more than remind himself of the greatness and grace and glory of God.

Respond when God says no with humility, surrender, gratitude, praise, and one more:

5. Fifth, respond with readiness

I don’t know who said it first, but I’ve always smiled at the statement that when God shuts a door, He opens a window.

The window for David was the opportunity to prepare the work although someone else would see it finished.

What do you think David did for the next 20 years? What do you think he dreamed about all those years? Winning more battles or building a temple?

It's obvious. By the time you get to I Chronicles and David's signature speech where he hands the blueprints over to Solomon, along with all he'd collected and organized and sacrificed, he could have very well been the shell of a bitter, old, angry man.

God had put His foot down and David's dream had been dashed. He never would occupy his dream job as the builder of God's temple.

However, by being willing to accept God's answer and worship God, and walk with God and wait on God – David ended up providing for a temple that would have been unthinkable 20 years earlier.

And we know from other passage, that God will reveal to David the architectural details, the precise measurements and dimensions – how the temple would operate and how the courts would be served.^{ix}

Let me read what happened years later just before Solomon began construction. ***In 1 Chronicles 23, as David dedicates the work as it formally begins; he tells the congregation and informs Solomon that he has organized and trained 38,000 priests; 6,000 officers; 4,000 gatekeepers and 4,000 people trained to sing and play musical instruments that David had already made – 4,000 musical instruments ready and waiting. He says earlier in chapter 22, “With great pains I have provided for the house of the Lord – in other words, it wasn't easy – but with great pains I have provided 7,500 tons of gold and 75,000 tons of silver; bronze and iron beyond weighing, for there is so much of it; timber and stone, too I have provided. You have an abundance of workmen, stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and all kinds of craftsmen without number, skilled in working gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Arise and work! The Lord be with you.***

One author estimated that David had saved up, in today's economy, more than 5 billion dollars in gold, silver, precious stones and supplies.

But get this; this is no shell of a bitter old man. This was an excited, thrilled man who had accepted God's answer and had spent his years preparing in whatever way he could for the work to continue . . .

and keep in mind, he will not be alive to see it finished.

That's like being excited about planting an orchard of fruit trees that will bear fruit for others only after you've died.

What a spirit of readiness and preparation.

God said no to that . . . but He did say yes to this . . . I'll focus on what I can do, rather than what God is not going to allow me to do.

Some time ago, a survey was presented to 3,000 adults asking the question, “What do you have to live for?” The pervasive theme that ran through their answers basically revealed that nearly 90% of them were waiting for something to happen in the future.

They were all waiting for something they did not have or something they hoped they would eventually experience.

For instance, a number of them were living for that moment when they were going to be married. Others were waiting for children to be born. Still others were waiting for their children to either enter college or leave home. Some were waiting for that long dreamed about trip. Many were simply waiting for retirement.

The tragedy was that most of them were waiting for something to happen in the future; and in the meantime their lives were in neutral or on pause.

The survey summarized with these perceptive words: they were all waiting without realizing that all anyone has is today because yesterday is gone and tomorrow may never come.

What are you waiting for: for God to change His mind; for God to change the locks on that door; for God to stamp your dreams with His approval?

Or, like David, coming and sitting before the presence of God and saying to Him, “Who am I but Your servant? And I'm willing to serve You today – here and now – in whatever and wherever you've placed me . . .

I'll respond with:

- With humility for what He has chosen – for you;
- With surrender to what He has chosen to do – through you;
- With gratitude for what He has chosen to give – to you;
- With praise for what He has chosen to receive – from you;
- With readiness for how He has chosen His will to be prepared, organized, supported, enabled, interceded – by you

For His name . . . and for His glory . . . and for
His praise.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 3/30/2014 by Stephen Davey.

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