



Date: _____

Series: Signs on Believers Hwy
Winter Year 4, Lesson 38

God Answers Prayer...Sometimes with a "No"

Primary Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 12:9, "But he told me: 'My kindness is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak.' So I will brag even more about my weakness in order that Christ's power will live in me."

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

Kids need to know that God always answers prayer. But what happens when they pray for something and it is not answered the way they expect? Does God fail to hear them? Does prayer not work? God wants us to pray about everything. Yet, God reserves the right to answer our prayers according to his wisdom and our best interests. Sometimes the answer is "yes." Sometimes the answer is "not yet." Other times the answer is "no." When it is "no," God has a greater good in mind. The Bible says that his grace and kindness is all we need because his power is strongest when we are weak.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us:

Jesus submitted to the Father's will and became weak even to the point of death on the cross. Through that, he accomplished a greater thing—our salvation.

Jesus in us:

As we go through life's difficulties, we can become more dependent on God's grace to hold us. Then, Jesus will live in our lives at a deeper level.

Jesus through us:

Sometimes God's glory is evidenced all the more when we go through difficult times and Jesus shines through us as we rest in our faith in him.

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Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols, such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Supplies: a wrapped, empty gift box made so that the top can be easily lifted off, a cross that will fit inside and placed in the box during Power of the Cross time

**Kids, if you could ask God for anything right now, what would it be?
Think about that for a moment quietly to yourself.**

Wait a minute and then have three volunteers come forward and share their answers. After each has had a turn to share, have an assistant bring up the empty gift box from the back of the room, pretending it is heavy. Hold the gift box and turn to the volunteers but refer to the audience in discussion as well.

Imagine that this gift box is God's answer to what you asked for in prayer. My assistant, listening to our volunteers in the back, heard what they said, and filled the box with God's possible answers. Should we open it up and see what he says to them?

Work the audience to get you to open the box.

Okay, let's take a look.

Open the box and look surprised.

Uh oh.

Show inside of box.

There is nothing in here! What does that mean? I guess it means that God said “no” to the prayers.

Send volunteers back to their seats.

Do you think that God still loves you even when he doesn’t answer prayers the way we want? Does that mean that you wouldn’t want to be his son or daughter? Does that mean you shouldn’t give him your worship and praise? Of course not.

God may not answer every prayer just the way we want. Sometimes he might even say “no” just like our parents do. But does that mean our parents don’t love us? Of course not. Does that mean that God doesn’t love us when he doesn’t say yes? Of course not.

So, today whether we get just what we want or not, it doesn’t matter. We will (lift up the gift box) return our praises to God regardless of how he answers our prayers. Why? Because he is our all-knowing God who knows what is best for us. He is greatly to be praised.

In preparation for *The Power of the Cross*, have someone remove the box from sight and place the cross in the gift box while kids aren’t looking.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Have someone bring forward the gift box with the cross hidden in it.

There is one gift that God offers to us in any circumstance, whether we have been good or whether we have been bad and don’t deserve a gift. God still offers us this gift. This gift cost him more than anything else. It cost him more than all the gold or all the money in the world. It cost him more than the planet earth itself or even the entire universe. It cost him the one thing that hurt him the most to give. It was the cost of his Son dying on the cross for our sin. Jesus took our suffering and shame on himself. Our sin was lifted off us and put on him.

Open the box and show the cross.

Because of Jesus, God gives the power of salvation to everyone who believes, whether you have been good or bad, whether you have believed in Jesus for a long time or a short time. Right now, come to him believing and say:

Dear Jesus, I need you in my life. I need your forgiveness so I can forgive others. I need your love so I can love others. Please give me these things because you gave your life for me when you went to the cross. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Put the gift box on the altar. Have kids put their offerings into the gift box.

Discuss any current mission projects.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

Freeze Tag

One person is “it” and chases the others in a confined area until he/she tags someone. Once a player is tagged, he/she must remain frozen in the spot where he/she was touched. If another free roaming player touches the frozen person, he/she is released back into the game to continue play and avoid the touch of “it.”

You can make the game harder, as appropriate for your group, by adding a second, third or fourth person at once to be “it.” If you do this, you might put a special hat or jersey on the “it” players to help other players identify them. Another way to unfreeze a frozen player is to require a free player to run two circles around the frozen player. A third way to unfreeze a player might be to crawl between their legs as they stand frozen.

Brief interview

Raise your hand if you were tagged and frozen during the game.

Who thinks they were frozen for the longest amount of time?

Were you ever tempted to break the rules, not wait any longer and just take off to play as if you’d been freed?

What was it like, wondering who would set you free?

Teaching Point

In this game, when you are frozen, it’s probably hard to remain patient while waiting to be unfrozen. This is especially true if you’ve waited a long time.

Maybe that's what it feels like when we pray to God and he doesn't answer right away. We don't feel like waiting and we don't like it. But God doesn't always say "yes" right away. Sometimes he tells us to wait, and other times his answer is simply "no."

Does that mean that you are not still part of the game? Does that mean that God doesn't love you? No, it doesn't. And guess what? Surprise, surprise! Sometimes it's even better for us when he says "no." As in this game, being frozen might actually help you get a chance to rest. We will find out more when we go to our Bible Event.

Bible Presentation:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Supplies: thorn, or sharp nail; three signs: "Yes," "No," and "Not Yet;" card table; two chairs; chess set; football; phone; cross; heart

Say:

The apostle Paul wrote most of the New Testament. He was very close to God. Jesus even spoke to him one time when he was on a journey to Damascus. Paul traveled the world to share the Good News of Jesus.

Would you expect Jesus to answer every one of Paul's prayers? The Lord did, but not every answer was a "yes." In this reading, we will see that the Lord answered Paul's prayer with a "no."

When the Lord answers "no," it means that he has another purpose for answering your prayer. Even though the answer may be different than what you initially asked, often the answer is better than what you had in mind for your life. This is what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:7,

"Therefore, to keep me from becoming conceited, I am forced to deal with a recurring problem. That problem, Satan's messenger, torments me to keep me from being conceited."

Hold up the thorn.

Another version of the Bible uses the words, “thorn in the flesh,” to describe the torment of Satan’s messenger. There was something, probably in Paul’s body, that was hurting him. Maybe it was a sickness, weakness, or another kind of problem. It felt like having a thorn stuck right in him. But he said that God used this to keep him from being conceited or too proud.

“I begged the Lord three times to take it away from me. But he told me: ‘My kindness is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak.’” (vs. 8-9)

How did God answer Paul when he asked that the problem be taken away? (God said “no.”)

Problems like this remind us to always depend on him. His kindness is all we need. His kindness will remind us that his power is great.

“So I will brag even more about my weaknesses... I accept weakness, mistreatment, hardship, persecution, and difficulties suffered for Christ. It’s clear that when I’m weak, I’m strong.” (vs. 9-10)

God answers our prayers every time we pray.

Show the “Yes” sign.

Sometimes he says, “Yes,” and takes away the problem.

Show the “Not yet” sign.

Sometimes he says, “Not yet.” When he says this, it will take a longer time for the problem to go away.

Show the “No” sign.

Sometimes God says, “No.” When that happens, he can use the problem to help us depend on him and his power more and more.

Application Story

One person will read the story while another person selects a volunteer from the audience to act it out as it is told. There are acting cues in the right column that the assistant will whisper to the actors when appropriate. No rehearsal is required.

When God answers, “NO,” he “KNOWS” something more!

Script	Actions
Once there was a boy named Colton who was just starting third grade.	Take a volunteer from the audience.
More than anything else, Colton loved to play football.	Hand football to the volunteer.
Colton loved to throw, catch and run, and he was pretty good. What he looked forward to the most as he started third grade was being old enough to join a flag football team. He could hardly wait.	
Finally, it came time for football season. He was at his first practice, running, catching, and throwing when he found that suddenly, he could hardly catch his breath!	Sit down and breathe heavily.
He had to sit down right in the middle of the field. It felt like his lungs could not get enough air.	
“What is wrong with me?” he asked himself. He started to panic but felt embarrassed when the other players gathered around to see what was wrong.	
The coach called his mother who came and picked him up. She took him straight to the doctor. On the way, he was praying, “God, please let my lungs, or whatever is wrong with me, be okay so I can play football.”	Fold hands and pray.
He was admitted quickly to the doctor who listened to his lungs and looked into his throat. Once the doctor had a diagnosis, he said the word, “asthma.”	
Colton prayed in his mind, “Please God, don’t let asthma keep me from playing football.” Then he turned to the doctor and asked, “Can I still play football?”	
What do you think was the doctor’s answer? Was it, “Yes?” Was it, “No?” Or was it, “Not yet?” Maybe it was the same answer that God was giving him to his prayer.	Hold up the three signs as each is stated.

Script	Actions
<p>“Not yet,” the doctor replied and Colton’s head dropped.</p>	<p>Hold up corresponding “Not yet,” sign.</p>
<p>Later that night, Colton was in his room feeling sorry for himself. “My friends are playing football,” he thought. “I’m such a weakling. They’ll all be having fun with each other and I’ll be left out.”</p>	<p>Colton sitting with head in hands.</p>
<p>Downstairs his mother was praying. “God, please heal Colton of his asthma. Please let him play football. But if you don’t, show him something better. Show him how he can depend on you more.”</p>	
<p>How do you think God answered his mother’s prayer? Was it, “Yes?” Was it, “No?” Or was it, “Not yet?”</p> <p>Take responses from the kids.</p>	<p>Hold up each sign as said.</p>
<p>God answered, “Not yet,” to healing Colton’s asthma. But let’s see if he answered, “Yes,” to the other part of her prayer that he would learn to depend more on God.</p>	<p>Hold up, “Not yet sign.”</p>
<p>The next day Colton’s mother decided to drive Colton to football practice so he could just watch. He sat there feeling sorry for himself thinking about how his friends were having all the fun. But his mother suggested, “I’m sad for you too, but why don’t you ask God to use your asthma for something big in his kingdom?”</p>	<p>Colton pouting.</p>
<p>That didn’t make sense to Colton. How could God use asthma? But he decided to pray anyway. “God, please take away my asthma, but if you don’t, please use it so that your kingdom can grow in my heart and anywhere else.”</p>	<p>Colton praying.</p>
<p>Back at football practice, Colton was watching from the sideline, and noticed another boy named Dustin, watching too. Dustin also wanted to play football, but he was so skinny that nobody ever wanted him on the team. Besides that, he couldn’t run very much. He had some kind of disease that kept him from playing football.</p>	<p>Bring volunteer up on stage to play Dustin. Have him sit next to Colton.</p>

Script

Actions

Dustin saw Colton looking at him. He slid closer and said, “So I heard that you can’t play football because you have asthma. I can’t play because I have a bone disease.”

Colton thought to himself, “That really sounds terrible. Maybe that’s why he is so skinny and doesn’t have much hair on his head. Maybe I’ve been feeling sorry for myself when Dustin has had things so much harder with his disease.”

So Colton asked Dustin, “What else do you like to do?”

Dustin replied, “You wouldn’t be interested.”

“Yeah, try me – tell me,” Colton begged.

But Dustin said, “I don’t tell too many people because I don’t think they would think it’s very cool.”

“Well, I’d like to know,” said Colton.

“Okay,” said Dustin, and added, “I’ll show you. Tomorrow after school, come over to my house.”

The next day Colton was excited to go over to Dustin’s house. His mom drove him over instead of going to football practice. They went up to Dustin’s room together. On the table was a chess set. Colton didn’t see any other hobby-like items in the room. “So, what is it that you like to do?” asked Colton. Dustin gestured toward the chess set and invited Colton to have a seat. “This is it?” asked Colton.

“Yeah, have you ever played chess?” asked Dustin. “I like to play chess with people, but when I don’t have anyone to play with, I play on the Internet. It’s lots of fun.”

“Would you teach me how to play?” asked Colton. Soon both boys were having fun, not with their arms and legs like in football, but with their minds.

After that day, Colton often went over to Dustin’s house to play chess. Colton not only learned how to play the game, but also how to think ahead. By watching Dustin play, Colton learned patience and acceptance, too. He found that Dustin was a great friend and even if he didn’t look very strong on the outside, he was very strong on the inside.

Have the boys sit across from each other at a table with a chess game set up.

Script

Actions

How do you think God was answering Colton's prayer about his asthma? His asthma wasn't going away, but was God giving him something else? Let's see what happens.

As time went on, Dustin began telling Colton more about his disease. He said that it could be serious and that some kids his age even died of it. He was afraid of dying. He didn't know what would happen then because he didn't know if there was a God or a heaven or anything like that. One time Dustin asked Colton, "If there really is a God, why would he give a kid bone disease? How could he be a God of love if he gives me a bone disease?"

While Colton began thinking about how to reply to this, his mom called. She said it was time to come home. But he asked if he could stay longer because they were having a really important talk. She said, "No, you have to come home right now because dinner is almost ready."

But he was thinking about how he would answer Dustin's question, "How could God love someone if he didn't take away his bone disease?"

Colton asked Dustin, "Do you think my mom loves me?"

"Of course, she does," answered Dustin.

Colton added, "But she didn't let me stay here when I wanted to. She said, 'No.' Does that mean she doesn't love me?"

Dustin said, "Of course not. Just because your mom said, 'No,' doesn't mean she doesn't love you."

Colton replied, "The same thing is true about God. Even when he doesn't heal your bone disease, he still loves you. See, the reason that we have sickness, disease and death is because there is sin in our world."

Have Colton put a phone to his ear.

Dustin hands Colton a heart.

Script

Actions

“Sin is when we, as people, do wrong things against God. But when God first made people, he made them perfect so they could be his friends forever. When sin came into the world, that’s when people had bad stuff happen to them like disease and dying.”

“But why didn’t God stop it?” asked Dustin.

“He did,” said Colton and added, “That’s when he sent his Son Jesus who took the punishment for all the sin of all people in the whole world. He did this by dying on the cross. But he didn’t stay dead. He came alive again and lives right now in heaven. He says that if anyone believes in him, he will live in his/her heart. Then, after he/she dies, he/she will live with him forever in heaven.

Dustin thought for a moment. “You mean I could go to heaven if I believed Jesus took away my sin?”

“That’s right!” exclaimed Colton. “All you have to do is believe that he did it for you. You can invite him into your life and he will live right inside of you. He can heal your bone disease, but even if he doesn’t, he will answer your prayer with what is best for you. He still answers ‘Yes,’ to being your friend forever.”

Have Colton hand Dustin a cross and the heart.

Hold up the, “Yes,” sign.



Witness

Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Let kids tell how God answered their prayer with a “yes,” a “no,” or a “not yet.”

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Options: (select one from the options below)

_____ **Prayer Line Option:** Kids line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone to speak their prayers briefly.

_____ **Prayer Chair:** Adults or children with special prayer needs are invited to sit in the chairs. Kids gather around them, lay hands on their shoulders or knees and take turns praying.

_____ **Popcorn Prayer:** The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and turns it toward kids who are raising their hands to pray. The kids speak their prayers into the microphone.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire prayer along with you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- a wrapped, empty gift box made so that the top can be easily lifted off
- a cross that will fit inside the box

Offering:

- the wrapped gift box

Learning Game:

- none

Bible Presentation:

- thorn or sharp nail
- three signs:
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not Yet
- card table
- two chairs
- phone
- chess set
- football
- cross
- heart

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