



# When God Says No



God is not some kind of genie in a bottle. Prayer doesn't work that way. We don't call in our order and drive around to pick it up at the window.

We know that. We say that God is all wise and all powerful, but we still face tough disappointment when His plan is different from our plan, when His answer is *no*.

This may be even harder for teenagers. Their life experience is limited, and their disappointments may loom larger in their limited perspective. How can you help them accept the sovereignty of God without a crisis of faith?

- **Talk about who God is.** Talk about His wisdom and power. Talk about His foreknowledge. Talk about the way He has orchestrated history and about His plan for the future. As we understand more about the character of God, we recognize His supreme power and control of all things. We bow in reverence and fear. Our position must be submission to His will.
- **We don't always understand God's will.** We don't think like God thinks. He is God and we are not. We accept that (Isaiah 40:13; Jeremiah 23:18; Romans 11:34; 1 Corinthians 2:16).
- **Help your teenager deal with those great promises of God.** Verses like John 14:13; John 15:7, 23; John 15:16; John 3:22; 1 John 5:14; and Psalm 37:4 can sound like a blank check. *Ask and you shall receive* (John 16:24) seems straightforward, and we teach our children to believe in the Bible. They are praying in faith, believing, taking that promise to the bank. But claiming one verse or one phrase out of context or as a guarantee for our wish list is not true to the Scripture.
- **Point your teenager to Jesus.** When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, His prayer was for God's will to be done, not His own (Luke 22:42). We submit to our Heavenly Father in the same way. But also, encourage your teenager to talk to Jesus about the disappointment; pray for clarity and understanding when the answer is *no*.
- **Study together about prayer,** using the parable of the widow in Luke 18:1–8, Christ's teaching in Luke 11:9–13, and other passages. God gives good gifts to His children, even when His timing and His provisions are not what we expect.





- **Don't minimize difficulty and disappointment.** Pain is still pain. Acknowledge it and share it with your teen. To shrug it off without grieving the loss is unhealthy. Encourage your teen to respectfully talk it out.
- **Celebrate answers to prayer.** Record them as evidence of the faithfulness of God. But acknowledge God's prerogative to answer with "wait" or "no."
- **Share your own testimony of times your prayers were not answered as you hoped.** What perspective on God's plan do you have now?
- **Remind your teen that God will one day give us complete understanding.** We live in a broken world. In Heaven, we'll be able to understand it all. Until then, we can trust our Heavenly Father knows what is best.