

A HARD LESSON – LEARNING TO SAY “NO”

Edited and posted by Bob Young

Let me talk specifically to church leaders and those involved in ministry and missions. (I believe that other Christians who want to “listen in” will also find these ideas helpful.)

One of the great keys to personal health—mental, physical, and spiritual—is the ability to say no. What is our motivation for moving fast and being engaged in multiplied ministry activities? Why do we want to be so busy? Why is it so hard to set aside time for prayer, study, meditation, and sabbathing? One reason we try to do so much in ministry is that we want to feel important and significant. Do not become defensive—I am describing something common to all human beings. The irony is that in order to change our ministries for the better, an important step is to begin to say “no” to some of the ministry opportunities that we enjoy, are gifted for, and have been successful in.

In ministry and church leadership (and life!), saying “no” is one of our most important daily practices. Here is a short list of that reflects my own experiences! To live a life pleasing to God, I have to say “no” to the temptation to stay in bed or hit the snooze button on the alarm. I have to say “no” to checking email, watching the news, and playing games that interfere with my time with God in Bible study and prayer. I have to say “no” to distractions and laziness. I have to say “no” to eating what I want instead of what is good for me. I have to say “no” to countless proposals and ideas, even my own ideas, that will supposedly advance my ministry or help my coworkers and the church move forward.

I have to say “no” to looking at other ministry or mission works that look successful and attempting to mimic them. Let’s make a new commitment—to say “no” more. May we develop the discernment to say “yes” when we know that we are moving into what the Father is doing in this world.