

WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN WOMEN
SAY *Yes*^{TO} *God*

LYSA TERKEURST



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A SOUL THAT LONGS FOR MORE

Whatever God says do, do it.

IT ALL STARTED THE DAY GOD told me to give away my Bible.

I was exhausted from traveling and speaking. All I wanted to do was to get to my assigned seat on the plane and settle in for a long winter's nap. Imagine my absolute delight at being the only person seated in my row. I was just about to close my eyes when two last-minute passengers made their way to my row and took their seats.

Reluctantly, I decided to forgo my nap. The last thing I needed was to fall asleep and snore or, worse yet, wake up with my head resting on the guy's shoulder beside me. No, I didn't need another most embarrassing moment, so I pulled a manuscript out of my bag and started reading.

"What are you working on?" the guy asked. I told him I was a writer and I was working on a book titled *Leading Women to the Heart of God*. He smiled and said he thought God was a very interesting topic. I agreed and asked him a few questions about his beliefs. Before long, I found myself reaching into my bag and pulling out my Bible, walking him through some key verses that

dealt with the issues he was facing. He kept asking questions, and I kept praying God would give me answers.

All of a sudden, I felt God tugging at my heart to give this man my Bible. Now, this was not just any Bible. This was my everyday, highlighted, underlined, written in, and tearstained Bible. My kids had even drawn pictures in this Bible. I started to argue with God in my head, but His message was clear. I was to give away my Bible.

I emptied it of some old church bulletins and other papers, took a deep breath, sighed, and placed it in the man's hands. "I'd like for you to have my Bible," I said. Astonished, he started to hand it back to me, saying he couldn't possibly accept such a gift. "God told me to give it to you," I insisted. "Sometimes the God of the universe pauses in the midst of all His creation to touch the heart of one person. Today, He paused for you."

The man took my Bible and made two promises. First, he said he would read it, and, second, someday he would pass it on, doing for someone else what I'd done for him.

Before I knew it, the plane landed and we were saying our goodbyes. As I stepped into the aisle preparing to disembark, the women on the other side of the business man reached out and grabbed my arm. She'd been staring out the window the entire time we were flying, and I thought she'd been ignoring us. But her tearstained face told a different story. In a tone so hushed I could barely hear her, she whispered, "Thank you. What you shared today has changed my life." I put my hand on hers and whispered back, "You're welcome." Then a knot caught in my throat as tears welled up in my eyes. I didn't have another Bible to give away, so I gave her one of my books and hugged her goodbye. It has been said that we are to tell the whole world about Jesus, using words only if necessary. I saw this powerful truth come to life. Though I never spoke to this

lady about Jesus, she saw Him through my obedience. How humbling. How profound.

As I got off the plane that day, I could barely hold back my tears. Three people's hearts were radically changed. I believe the businessman came to know Jesus as His Lord and Savior. I believe the same is true for the lady. But my heart was changed in a dramatic way as well. While on the one hand I was overjoyed at what God had done, I was also brokenhearted by the flood of thoughts that came to mind recounting times I'd told God no. How tragic to miss God's divine appointments. I just kept wondering, *How many times have I told You no, God? How many times because I was too tired, too insecure, too uncertain, too busy, or too selfish have I walked right past Your divine appointment for me and missed experiencing You?* I lifted up my heart to the Lord and whispered, "Please forgive me for all those noes. Right now I say yes, Lord. I say yes to You before I even know what You might ask me to do. I simply want You to see a yes-heart in me."

Several minutes after exiting the plane, I was weaving in and out of the crowds, trying to find my connecting gate, when I spotted the businessman again. He stopped me to tell me he had been praying to God and thanking Him for what happened on the plane. We swapped business cards, and, though we lived several states apart, I knew we would stay in touch.

About a month later he called to tell me his life had totally changed. He'd taken a week off from work to read the Bible, and he'd already shared his testimony with numerous people. When he said this to me, my mouth dropped open. I couldn't bring myself to tell him that I'd never taken a week off from work to read the Bible. God was definitely pursuing this man in a serious way! When I asked him what his favorite verse was, he said it was Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all your

heart; and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” I thought to myself, *Wow! Look at how God has already answered that for my new friend.*

He also told me that after reading the Scriptures he knew he needed to get involved in a church, so he’d decided to visit a large church in his town. On his way there he passed another church, and a strong feeling came over him to turn his car around and go back to that church. So he did. When he got to his seat in the sanctuary, he opened up his bulletin and gasped. Inside the bulletin he saw my picture and an announcement that I was to be the speaker at an upcoming women’s conference. He said he felt as though, once again, God had paused just for him.

That day on the plane, when God impressed on my heart to give this man my Bible, I did not know what would happen. This man might have thrown my Bible into the nearest airport trash can, for all I knew. Normally, I would have come up with a hundred reasons *not* to give my Bible away, but that day something changed in me. That day, for the first time, I truly heard the call of a woman who says yes to God: “Whatever God says do, do it.”

A FRESH INVITATION

When I said yes that day, I caught a glimpse of eternity. I saw how beautiful it is when God says to do something and it is done. And I thought, *Why wait for heaven? Why not say yes to God on this side of eternity?*

Oh, dear friend, the call to become a woman who says yes to God is the fresh invitation your soul is looking for. We all feel a tug at our heart and a stirring in our soul for more, but we are often afraid to venture past our comfort zone. Outside our

comfort zone, though, is where we experience the true awesomeness of God.

I think at this point it is important for me paint an accurate picture of what my life looks like on a daily basis. Lest you imagine me as this woman dressed in sackcloth who is perfectly calm, amazingly organized, incredibly disciplined, and who spends hours upon hours on her knees in solemn solitude before the Lord, let me assure you that's not how it is. I am a wife and busy mom of five who can often be found rushing from one carpool to the next. My to-do list rarely gets fully accomplished. My emotions have been known to run wild, and my patience can easily run thin. I get pushed to the limit by everyday aggravations, such as a summer's worth of pictures getting erased from my digital camera by a child who wasn't even supposed to be handling the camera. And a dog that I love dearly who insists on running away. And some important paperwork that should be in a file that has mysteriously sprouted wings and flown the coop!

Can you relate? Great! You are a woman perfectly equipped to say yes to Him. Notice that I did not say you are a perfect woman. But if you are in the thick of living with all that life throws at you and you simply whisper yes, you are equipped. "Yes, Lord. I want Your patience to invade my desire to fly off the handle." "Yes, Lord. I want Your perspective to keep my emotions in check." "Yes, Lord. I want Your provision so things don't seem so overwhelming." "Yes, Lord. I want Your courage to do what I feel You calling me to do." "Yes, Lord. I want and need more of You in every moment."

You don't need perfect circumstances to be a woman who says yes to God. You don't need the perfect religious attitude or all the answers to religious questions. You simply have to surrender all that's clamoring for attention in your heart with

the answer God is longing to hear spill from your lips, “Yes, God.”

Each day when I wake up I pray a very simple prayer even before my feet hit the floor. *God, I want to see You. God, I want to hear You. God, I want to know You. God, I want to follow hard after You. And even before I know what I will face today, I say yes to You.* This simple act of surrender each morning will prepare your eyes to see Him, your ears to hear Him, your mind to perceive Him, and your heart to receive Him. This is how to live expecting to experience God.

You see, we have become so familiar with God yet so unaware of Him. We make the mysterious mundane. We construct careful reasons for our rules and sensible whys for our behavior. All the while our soul is longing for a richer experience—one that allows us to escape the limits of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell and journey to a place of wild, wonder, and passion.

Women who say yes to God will see life like few others. They are drawn in and embraced by a love like no other. They don't have to wait until the next time they're in church to experience God because they sense God's presence all around them, all through their day. Instead of merely walking through the motions of life, they pursue the adventure of the moment-by-moment divine lessons and appointments God has in store for them. They *expect* to see God, to hear from Him, and to be absolutely filled by His peace and joy—and, therefore, they do and they are.

A woman who says yes to God isn't afraid to be honest with God. Just last week I woke up feeling drained and overwhelmed. I couldn't quite put my finger on the source of my anxiety, but I couldn't shake it, either. As I prayed my normal prayer of wanting to see and hear God, I told Him honestly that I really

needed to see evidence of Him in my day. Later on I was in my kitchen washing dishes, preparing dinner, and talking with one of my sons. My attention was focused on my son while my hands were just going through the motions of my tasks. Suddenly I felt God's strong impression on my heart to look down in the sink before I reached for another dish. As I did, I saw a very sharp butcher knife sticking blade up from inside a glass. Immediately, I knew God's presence was there. I closed my eyes and thanked Him. More than just for sparing my hand from serious injury, I thanked Him for caring enough to be so real in my life.

A holy God in the middle of life's mundane activities will change your life. But you might not always feel happy about the changes. I can't let you think that being a woman who says yes to God means everything will suddenly be happily ever after. As I am writing this, I must tell you about an experience I had today where I simply wanted to throw my hands in the air, throw my computer out the window, and cry out to God, "You have hurt my feelings and I'm just a little unnerved and upset!"

I am on a retreat at a friend's lake house where I have three days during which I'd hoped to accomplish a lot of writing. I am under a tight deadline for this project and really needed to make a big dent in the task before me. Yesterday went great. I wrote almost 2000 words and the friends with me loved what I'd written. I went to bed excited about all I'd accomplished so far. Visions of a completed manuscript and my editor's praises danced in my dreams all night long. I woke up this morning ready to tackle another huge chunk of writing, but first I wanted to admire yesterday's accomplishment. I opened up my documents section and the manuscript was nowhere to be found.

Refusing to panic, I asked for my friends' help. They felt

confident we could locate the document I'd saved three times the night before. After two hours of searching, one of my friends gently looked at me and verbalized the truth we'd all come to know. "It's gone, Lysa. You are going to have to start over."

Wait just a minute, I thought. *I have said yes to God today and had a great quiet time. I just know He can and will help me find this.* But for whatever reason, my document was gone and God had chosen not to bring it back. Tears filled my eyes as bitterness started to creep in my heart. Why would God allow this? My friend could sense my despair and gently replied, "Lysa, recently when something like this happened to me, someone told me to look at my loss as a sacrifice of praise to God. It is so hard in today's abundance to give God a true sacrifice, but losing 2000 words and a whole day's work would qualify. Give this to Him without feeling bitter."

I resisted slapping my well-meaning friend as she then broke into singing, "We bring a sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord..." By the second stanza I actually found myself joining in with a lighter heart and a resilient spirit. Being a woman who says yes to God means making the choice to trust Him even when you can't understand why He requires some of the things He does. It also means that once you've said yes to God, you refuse to turn back, even when things get hard.

This kind of obedience invites you to embrace a bigger vision for your life. When you look at your everyday circumstances through the lens of God's perspective, everything changes. You come to realize that God uses each circumstance, each person who crosses your path, and each encounter you have with Him as a divine appointment. Each day counts, and every action and reaction matters. God absolutely loves to take ordinary people and do extraordinary things in them, through them, and with them.

A PARTY IN YOUR HONOR

Imagine you're planning a wonderful surprise party for someone you dearly love. You've made the plans, invited all the guests, and decided on an exquisite menu. You can't wait for the big moment when all the guests yell, "Surprise!" and your loved one finally joins in the festivities. You know she'll understand just how cherished and adored she is when she sees everything that's been done in her honor.

Finally, the time for the surprise arrives. All of the guests are waiting in anticipation at the front door. You see your loved one pull into the driveway, and you hear the car engine turn off. As she opens the car door, you see the interior lights come on while she gathers her things. Your heart races as you see her heading up the driveway. Suddenly, she makes an unusual turn and heads to the back door.

You quickly make your way to the back door to redirect her. Your cheerful greeting is met with a halfhearted smile, and your attempts to send her to the front door are brushed aside. She insists she is tired and will look at what you want to show her tomorrow. Only you know that tomorrow the guests will be gone, the leftover food will be stored away, and the party will be over.

How sad for the guest of honor who missed her own surprise party! And how disappointing for the party planner who orchestrated the event.

God must feel the same way when we miss the "surprise parties" (the divine appointments) that await us each day. How it must disappoint Him when we don't hear or don't listen to Him redirecting us to the front door. How it must grieve Him when we walk through our lives oblivious of His activity all around us. How it must break His heart when we brush aside something that not only would make us feel special and noticed

by God, but also would allow us to join Him in making life a little sweeter for others.

How many times have we missed our own surprise party?

God reveals Himself and His activity to all of us, but very few really want an encounter with Him. Encounters cause extreme changes in our plans, our perspectives, and our personhood, and most of us hate change. In reality, though, the very act of trying to protect ourselves from change is the very thing that makes our life the boring mess that it sometimes is.

As I've traveled around the country speaking at conferences, I am amazed and saddened by the number of people missing out on the most exciting part of being a Christian—experiencing God. Over and over people tell me they want something more in their Christian life. They want the kind of relationship with God where they recognize His voice, live in expectation of His activity, and embrace a life totally sold out for Him. I suspect that tucked in the corner of your heart is the same desire. And I've discovered that the key to having this kind of incredible adventure is radical obedience.

THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO BLESSING

You may be surprised to discover that radical obedience is not really that radical. It is really biblical obedience—but we've strayed so far from biblical obedience that it now seems radical. In today's society, it is radical to obey God's commands, listen to the Holy Spirit's convictions, and walk in Jesus' character. But we will never experience the radical blessings God has in store for us without radical obedience. It is the road that leads to blessing. It is what happens when women say yes to God.

And you won't find the full blessing until you give walking in obedience your full attention. Obedience, however, is more

than just “not sinning.” It is having the overwhelming desire to walk in the center of God’s will at every moment. Don’t stumble over fearing you won’t be perfect or that you are sure to mess up. Saying yes to God isn’t about perfect performance, but rather perfect surrender to the Lord day by day. Your obedience becomes radical the minute this desire turns into real action. Radical obedience is hearing from God, feeling His nudges, participating in His activity, and experiencing His blessings in ways few people ever do.

If this is what you want, read on.

SIX SIMPLE WORDS

After hearing about the day I gave away my Bible, people often ask me if I’ve ever gotten it back. I always chuckle because, to be honest, I don’t want to get that Bible back (or any of the Bibles I’ve given away since then)—at least not for a very long time. I’ve had this vision of one day being on a plane when I’m old and gray, and the person next to me starts talking. She tells me of the amazing things God has done in her life since the day she received a Bible from a stranger who had received it from another stranger who had received it from another stranger. She’ll then reach inside her bag and pull out a worn and tattered book I’ve held once before. Wow, what a day that will be!

The man I gave the Bible to that day has continued to share his testimony, and I still hear from others whose lives have been changed because of his story. Recently, a lady wrote to tell me that the “Bible man” opened up a business meeting she attended by sharing how God had changed his life.

I just finished visiting with a friend of yours and mine.
His name is Ron. Over the years I have seen him struggling

with his success and the decisions in his life. Today, Ron is filled with a different spirit. Your actions brought him back in touch with God. He shared his story with the office on how he met you and the effect of your actions. Isn't it strange that we know God is powerful and we know that we should listen, but sometimes we shut Him out? I can't explain the emotion I felt when I heard this story, but I can tell you that I am seeking some way to be more active in spreading God's Word. Bless you and bless Ron for being wonderful messengers.

Don't we all long to see God at work? Evidence of His activity around us, in us, and through us is the greatest adventure there is. The God of the universe wants to use you!

There is but one requirement for this adventure. We have to set *our* rules and agendas aside—our dos and don'ts, our social graces and proper places—and follow God's command. His one requirement is so simple and yet so profound: *Whatever God says do, do it.* That's it. That is the entire Bible, Old Testament and New, hundreds of pages, thousands of verses, all wrapped up in six words.

It is the call of the radically obedient woman who makes the choice to say yes to God.

BIBLE STUDY



Did the story about the man on the airplane and giving him the Bible inspire you? How?

What is holding you back from going deeper in your relationship with God?

- Time?
- Intimidation?
- Not feeling like the Bible applies to your everyday life?
- Seems too hard?

Comment on one or more of the above or another thing you sense holding you back.

Psalm 19:7-10 (MSG) says:

The revelation of GOD is whole and pulls our lives together. The signposts of GOD are clear and point out the right road. The life-maps of GOD are right, showing the way to joy. The directions of GOD are plain and easy on the eyes. GOD's reputation is twenty-four-carat gold, with a lifetime guarantee. The decisions of GOD are accurate down to the nth degree. God's Word is better than a diamond, better than a diamond set between emeralds. You'll like it better than strawberries in spring, better than red, ripe strawberries.

List what Psalm 19:7-10 from *The Message* promises about God's Word.

The resolve of the human spirit is truly an amazing thing. We will fight to the death for something we want to protect, truly believe in, or desire. So why would we be lackadaisical about the most eternally significant relationship there is?

Read Deuteronomy 6:5.

- How can you love God with your heart?
- How can you love God with your soul?
- How can you love God with your strength?

Is there something you might need to let go of in order to have the freedom to say yes to God?

- Fear that it may cost you too much?
- Uncertain that you will like what a life sold out to Christ looks like?
- Feeling insecure that you'll be able to go the distance?

Psalm 16:7-9 (NLT) says,

I will bless the LORD who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me. I know the LORD is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me. No wonder my

heart is filled with joy, and my mouth shouts his praises! My body rests in safety.

Write below how this verse gives a sure answer for each concern listed above:

In this chapter we read, “Being a woman who says yes to God means making the choice to trust Him even when you can’t understand why He requires some of the things He does. It also means that once you’ve said yes to God, you refuse to turn back even when things get hard.”

Write out a personal prayer of commitment for your new adventure with God: