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Alright, how's everybody doing today? Good to see all of you. I want to welcome everyone regardless of what campus you may be joining us from or if you're listening online. Glad to have all of you today.

Before we get rolling, many of you need no introduction when it comes to this couple standing next to me. This is Petie and Brittany Kinder. For those of you—yeah, give it up. Give them a hand. The Kinders have been on our team now for the past seven years. They came here and initially led our student ministry and did an amazing job. Then they went downtown, launched our Downtown campus and did an amazing job. Here recently Petie has been overseeing our campus pastors and sharing much of the teaching load with me around here.

One of the things that we just do around here as a church is that we find leaders, pour into them, raise them up, develop them and then other churches steal them. Can't say that I'm actually very happy about that. I kind of say that in jest, kind of, but I really just want to hold on to people very loosely. And Petie is my friend. I love Brittany and their family and want the best for them.

So, we began a conversation years ago, really, just to say, "Hey, Petie, where is the direction of your life headed? What do you feel that God has called you to do? And there have been so many times that Petie was like, "I just want to continue to serve here."

And yet, several months ago we were like, "Hey, where is God leading you?" And he said, "I think we just need to take a season to just really ask God for his direction." And that's what we did.

You probably noticed he hasn't been up here teaching for a while. And really the only reason behind that is because he's been on sabbatical through the summer. And we just said, "Let's create some space here for God to speak into your life and where he is leading you. And I'll back you 100 percent of the way."

He came to me several weeks ago and just said that there is a church in Colorado Springs, Colorado that has invited him to come and be the lead pastor. The name of the church is Red Rock Church and they are running about 1,000 people. It's about 12 years old. And they are without a pastor and they really need somebody with the skill set and experience that Petie has to offer to provide some leadership to their church.

So, I just want you to know that I don't want him to go and you don't want him to go and we're sad about it, but at the same exact time we celebrate it because we really see this

as them going and launching another branch of the family tree. They are going to continue to be a part of our church family.

They're not leaving right away. They are going to transition in November. So, you're going to hear from Petie again. He's going to preach another weekend. What I want to ask you to do as a church family is—we want them to leave with a full tank. And I mean like a full faith tank, a full emotional tank, a literal full gas tank if we could. Just to send them on their way so that they can really bless the church that they are going to go serve.

So, over the course of the next several weeks, would you just encourage them? Write them a letter, send them an email, go find them and talk to them. They will be here in the lobby at Northwest after the services. Let them know how God has used them to impact your life. Just encourage them.

Petie and Brittany, I just want you guys to know that I love you and we love you. And this church is different because of you and it's better because of you. And you'll always be a part of our family. This is, "See you later," it's not, "Goodbye." Let's give it up for them.

As a church family across all of our campuses, I just want to pray over them right now. So join with me:

Father, we come to you right now and I thank you for Petie and Brittany and their beautiful children. Thank you, Lord, for what they mean to us as a church family. Thank you for the work that you've done through their lives here. They have impacted literally thousands of people and I know that they are going to impact more people in Colorado.

So, Father, we send them with our sadness and our blessing. We send them with our grief because we love them, they are like family, and yet at the same time we send them with celebration because of the work that you are going to do in and through them.

So, Father, we just ask that you'd bless them in amazing ways. Over the course of these next several weeks—moving is no fun—we just pray that you would make it as easy as possible. Prepare the way. Provide friends for their kids when they get there. Friends for them. Help the transition to be just amazing. I pray that you would just confirm it every step of the way.

And so we send them with our blessing and our love, and we ask that you would work in and through them in incredible ways. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

Hey, come on let's give it up for them—big celebration. Man, we love you. Thanks so much. Brittany, we love you. Alright. Stand to your feet. Let's do it. Send them off.

Hey, thank you. Appreciate that. As you're finding your seat would you go ahead and find a Bible, maybe a Bible app, and get to Nehemiah, chapter 6? That's actually the passage that we're going to be in today.

I want to start this way. We've all probably been in this situation before, where maybe you're in a crowded parking lot, maybe you're on a congested street somewhere and you're looking for a parking space. And if you've ever been in that scenario before where there are a lot of people out and you're trying to find a parking space, it doesn't seem as if anybody is willing or ready to make a space for you.

That's happened to me a number of times. In fact, maybe the most memorable one was I was driving really slowly through a crowded parking lot looking for a space to park. And I noticed that this guy came out of the store and it was very clear that he was finished with his business for the day, alright? He had his bags. He was ready to be gone.

He goes and gets into his car, starts it up, and even the reverse tail lights came on. So I knew that he was getting ready to leave. So I thought, "Sweet, a space opened up." I stopped and turned on my turn signal, which everybody knows is the universal indication that I've just called dibs. Everybody knows that.

So, I'm sitting there waiting and I'm waiting and I'm waiting. And he's not moving. In fact, he's doing everything but vacating the spot. He's messing with the radio, he's adjusting his mirrors, I don't know he was playing Candy Crush, checking Insta' story or something. He's just not moving.

And it occurs to me, does he see me? Does he notice that I'm there? So he's not moving because I'm waiting for the space? Could he really have the nerve to do that? So, being the man of God that I am, I decide to get out and just walk over and see if maybe I can encourage him along the way, you know? I'm not angry—just compassionate.

So, I walk over, and I get outside the driver side glass and he looks up at me and he rolls window down [Aaron makes a gesture like rolling down a window]—wow, is this 1955? He rolls his window down electronically, which is the way that you do that, and he looks at me, no joke, he goes, "Pastor Aaron?" And man, I had to call an audible really quick.

I was like, "That's right. Parishioner Joe. Just wanted to come over here and bless you. See if maybe God's moving you in your life in any way. Got a suggestion for you." We've all been there.

Now, this is actually a thing. According to the Journal of Applied Social Psychology someone studied hundreds of drivers and they found—get this—that we actually take longer to move out of a parking space if we know that someone is waiting for it than if we don't think that anybody is waiting for it at all. We are terrible, terrible people.

That means that we're willing to waste valuable moments in our day just to make someone wait. Just to not create any space for them. And I'm afraid that a parking lot or a crowded street isn't the only place that we do this. I know this is certainly true for me.

I find that this is most often true in my relationship with God. There are plenty of moments when I'm aware that God is there, I know that he's got the turn signal on, he's trying to get my attention, he wants me to create some space for him to come and speak to me and do something through me, but I'm not really willing to make some space for him to do that.

That's what this series that we have been in called *6 Words that Can Change Your Life* is really all about. Now, I just want to go ahead and acknowledge—I've already said this before—we all know that... I think it's probably overstating it just a bit to say that a word can change your life. Like, the only people who say those types of dramatic things are people who are trying to sell you something.

I know that just a simple word probably isn't enough to change anybody's life. And that's not what we are trying to do with this series. What we're trying to do is to examine some words that actually can help us create some space for God to come in and change our lives. That through these words—the conviction behind them, the courage behind them—can allow God to do what only God can.

So, on week number one we talked about a really fun word to say. The word: Wow. And then last week Pastor Ryan walked us through a hard word for us to often say. It's the word: Sorry. Today I want to look at another word that's equally difficult to say, but for different reasons. It's the word:

No

I just want you to look at that word and think about that word for just a minute. Like when you hear the word *no* what kind of emotional response does that bring about? What's the vibe behind that word?

Do you like me? No.

Can we be friends? No.

Do you think I'll get the promotion? No.

Do these jeans make me look fat? Well, the answer to that is probably: No. In fact, fellas, that is always needs to be no, right?

The word no, I'm just going to go ahead and acknowledge it, it's a word that has a negative vibe to it. It feels a little bit like a dead end, like a slap in the face, like we can't move forward. So because of that, many of us have a difficult time saying it.

Now, that's really what I want to look at. See, it's probably another message for another time, like how can we hear or receive a *no*? I know that for me, I've got a way to go in my life growing in that area, because oftentimes it reveals my character the way I respond to a *no*. That's a message for another time.

Today I want to talk about: How do we say *no* more often? Because, chances are you're likely not saying it enough in your life. So, as a result, you're over extended, you're exhausted, sleep deprived, anxious, stressed, worried, off balance and trying to impress people who you barely know and you don't even really like, because you have a hard time saying *no*.

And it's really because you're a good person. You're a kind person and you don't want to be negative, you don't want to be discouraging, you don't want to come across as grumpy. So we sort of somewhere along the line let ourselves believe that positive people say yes, negative people say no, "I don't want to be a negative person," so you have a hard time saying no.

Now, it hasn't always been that way. Like there was a time in your life, and in mine, where we very naturally and very easily said no and didn't feel bad about it. We were little kids.

Eat your vegetables. No.

Clean your room. No.

Stop hitting your sister. No.

And we said it easily and we said it naturally and we didn't feel bad about it. Then somewhere along the line, maybe it was middle school or junior high, we began to figure out that people actually liked us better when we said yes. "I was more popular when I said yes rather than no. I made friends easier and kept them longer when I said yes rather than no. I really wanted to be noticed by that boy or that girl, so I said yes when I knew that I probably should have said no."

Now, I want to be really clear. I'm not down on the word yes. Yes is a really great word and there are plenty of moments and times when we should say yes. And I'll even talk about that a little bit in just a moment or two.

So, I want to be clear. The problem isn't with yes:

The problem begins when we start saying yes to the wrong things, for the wrong people, too many times, for the wrong reasons.

This is where the power of the word like *no* can be found.

I think for many of us, we've sort of mis-interpreted what it means to be a Christian, or a Christ follower. It's that we're somebody who is always available. Somebody who always says yes. Somebody who is always willing to do whatever other people ask for them to do. That's just simply not true.

Others of us, maybe we just think, "Well, in order to be a loving person or a kind person that means that I can never say no and I almost always have to say yes." And the result of saying yes when we want to say no or mean to say no is eventually it leads to resentment. Eventually it leads to burnout.

I've seen this in friendships and in marriage. I've seen it in the workplace. I've seen it in the church over and over and over and over again—we said yes, and yes, and yes, and yes and then, all of a sudden, we cross that line into resentment, and we get burned out. I've even seen people walk away from their faith because of it.

But see, when we can manage to say no, maybe even in those opportunities when we'd like to say yes, what it does is it creates some space, it creates some margin for refreshment. It creates some margin for us to process and to be a discerning person who operates with wisdom and we can actually begin to discern where it is that God is leading us in our lives.

Now, in order to do that, in order to say yes to the right person, the right thing, we've got to say *no* way more than we say *yes* so that we're ready to say *yes*. We actually see *no* all throughout the Bible. There is just example, after example, after example, after example. Let me just give you a few before we get to our primary passage;

Esther, chapter one: There is this queen by the name of Vashti and the king, a guy by the name of Xerxes throws this massive party for his nobles and his officials and his military leaders. So what she decides to do is she hosts like a lady's brunch in her wing of the castle while he's having his party. She's having a great time with the ladies.

Meanwhile, King Xerxes' party just goes off the rails and the music is thumping, they've had way too much to drink, and Xerxes, trashed out of his mind, sends a message to Vashti and he basically says: I want you to come in here and I want you to be the entertainment for my friends. She was a very beautiful woman. He said: I want you to come in here and flaunt yourself as entertainment for my party.

Guess what her response was? Look at what it says in verse 12, "But when they conveyed the king's order to Queen Vashti, she refused to come." In other words, no. Uh-uh. Not going to do it. "This made the king furious, and he burned with anger." In fact, he even took away her crown. Her *no* cost her something, but she stuck to her guns and she said that the answer is no.

We see another example in Daniel, chapter 1. There was another king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar who attacked Jerusalem and he took hostage some young men from Jerusalem, some of the very best and the brightest, and he took them back and he put them in his training program—it was a three year program in Babylon in order to sort of de-program them and indoctrinate them into the Babylonian way of life.

So he said: I'm going to put you on this exercise program, I'm going to put you on the keto diet that everybody is doing in Babylon, and I want you to come out of this three year training program totally different people so you can serve within my service. He even changed Daniel's name to Belshazzar.

And notice Daniel's response to this in verse 8: "But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king." And in fact, it cost him something. He got thrown into a lion's den because of it.

In Genesis, chapter 39 Joseph had been betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery in Egypt, and he's doing his absolute best given the circumstances that he is under to be faithful and obedient. He's trying to work as hard as he can. And then his boss, a guy by the name of Potiphar, his wife begins to take an unhealthy interest in Joseph.

Look at verses 6 and 7, "Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man," in other words he had a tan and six pack abs, "and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. 'Come and sleep with me,' she demanded."

Now this isn't a little innocent flirtation. This is a full-on proposition with a threat attached to it. And it would have been easy for Joseph to say yes in that situation. He could have easily talked himself into it. He's like: You know what? My life has fallen apart, it's taken this unexpected turn, I'm trying to be faithful with where I am. And you know what? I just deserve a little bit of indiscretion.

But Joseph doesn't do that. Joseph says *no*. And look at what it says in verse 8, "But Joseph refused." He refused. Now, I don't think it was because she was an unattractive woman, I think she was probably very beautiful. I think the reason why Joseph refused is because he knew that he couldn't do this. And she kept coming after him. She was one persistent cougar. She kept coming after him over and over and over and over again, to the point that Joseph—he didn't even hang around to say no any longer, he just ran. And it cost him something. She starts spreading all kinds of false lies about his character.

One of my favorite examples, though, is in Nehemiah. Nehemiah, chapter 6. If you don't know the story, Nehemiah is this guy from Jerusalem who finds out that his home town of Jerusalem has been attacked and is in ruins. Nehemiah was a leader. So he gathered the resources and the team to go and to rebuild the wall. And he had a lot of opposition against the rebuilding. We hear their names in verses 1 and 2.

“Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies found out that I had finished rebuilding the wall and that no gaps remained—though we had not yet set up the doors in the gates. So Sanballat and Geshem sent a message asking me to meet them,” alright? So this is a distraction. They are trying to get him away from rebuilding the wall, “...at one of the villages in the plain of Ono.”

Now, that doesn't necessarily seem unreasonable, it doesn't seem like anything out of the ordinary, but Nehemiah can see right through it. Look at verse 2, “But I realized they were plotting to harm me,” in other words, he had enough margin in his life that he could discern what was happening, “so I replied by sending this message to them: ‘I am engaged in a great work, so I can't come. Why should I stop working to come and meet with you?’”

Now, I don't know. I don't know how that hits you. I want you to think about Nehemiah's response. And I don't know how you are wired—but how did that feel right there? Because they haven't necessarily done anything wrong, Nehemiah is just discerning that this doesn't seem to be right. So Nehemiah basically said no to their request.

Now, if you're a type “A” kind of leader, you get more done by 8 a.m. than the rest of us do our entire day, maybe that's easy for you. You're reading that going, “Yeah, absolutely you shouldn't go. If I get the outlook request for a meeting and there's no purpose behind the meeting, the answer is no. I'm not going to do it.”

Then maybe there are others of us, and we don't like conflict, we want to keep the peace and all of that, we read Nehemiah's response to that and that just gave us a mini panic attack.

You are like, “How could he be so mean?” It's not that you can't logically see why Nehemiah said no, it's just, man, he didn't give any reason for it. And they would have felt bad.

Depending upon how you are wired, I just want to throw this question out to you. I just want you to think about it in your own life. Have you ever said yes to something or someone and you really wanted to say no?

I don't know what it is. Maybe it's a job. Maybe you're just on an interview because it was a courtesy, somebody recommended you and you go, and right there on the spot they offered you the job. You don't even have time to think about it. You don't even know if you want it. But you said yes, because they were asking you right there.

Have you ever—my favorite one is, have you ever been to the cash register and the clerk asks you if you want to join the rewards program? And everything within me is going, “No, no, no, no, no—where do I sign?” What am I doing?

Or maybe a friend comes up to you and asks if you would help them move. And inside you're just going, "I really don't want to...yes, what time do you want me to be there?"

We've all probably said yes in certain moments. Now, once again, I don't want to overstate this, because there are sometimes when maybe we don't feel like saying yes when maybe we should. What I'm talking about is an imbalance here where we're saying yes to some things that we know that we need to say *no* to.

When I was in college, I asked a girl on a date and she said yes when she really wanted to say no. And some of you are like, well how did you know that? Well, I called her up, and asked her out and she said yes. We set up the time. I go to her dorm to meet her and she comes out into the lobby of the dorm and as soon as she sees me there were two looks on her face. The first one was confusion. The next expression on her face, following very quickly, was one of disappointment—two looks that you don't want on the face of your date.

So, I'm like trying to figure out what's going on. And she ends up telling me, "Oh, you." Because I called her on the phone, this was way before the days of face time and all of that, she just heard my voice. She thought I was the cute Aaron who made her laugh and who sat next to her in her English Lit class. She thought she was saying yes to him. But no, she was saying yes to me.

So immediately I was like, "Hey, listen. We don't have to go out. It's no big deal." And she said, "No, no, no—we can, we can." And I wish we wouldn't have because it was like super miserable.

I'm sure that there have been times in all of your lives where you said yes to some things that you wanted to say no to, but yes is what came out of your mouth. Why? And I just want you to think about all of the reasons. It could be that, just like all of us, there's a little bit of a people pleaser in you. That's for sure true.

I think it goes even deeper than that. I think that for many of us we're looking for affirmation and we're afraid if we say no, we won't get it. Or maybe we're looking for our life's purpose and what if it's found in this opportunity, so if we say no we'll miss it. Maybe we're looking for meaning, we're looking for fulfillment and so we're afraid that if we say no we might miss out on the thing or the opportunity that it just might give it to us.

See, here's the thing. You don't have a 100 percent guarantee on any of the options that are in front of you. Nehemiah didn't. Nehemiah could not know with 100 percent certainty his enemies' intentions. He just had built enough margin into his life where he could operate with some discernment and some wisdom. He said: I don't think that this is fully right.

And he was right. They just kept coming after him. Look at what it says in verse 4, “Four times they sent the same message, and each time I gave the same reply.” They are trying to wear him down. And he just kept saying: No, no, no, no. “The fifth time,” they pull out all of the stops, “Sanballat’s servant came with an open letter in his hand, and this is what it said:

‘There is a rumor among the surrounding nations, and Geshem tells me it is true,’ because if Geshem says so it probably is true, “that you and the Jews are planning to rebel and that is why you are building the wall. According to his reports, you plan to be their king. He also reports that you have appointed prophets in Jerusalem to proclaim about you, “Look! There is a king in Judah!” You can be very sure that this report will get back to the king, so I suggest that you come and talk it over with me.”

Do you see what he is doing? He’s full of it. He is trying to—he’s making these dramatic statements in an effort to emotionally manipulate Nehemiah, even scare him into saying yes.

Now here’s what I know about you, that you likely, right now, have a Sanballat in your life. You likely have several. And here’s the thing. Maybe they mean well, maybe they are not like your full-on enemy, but they know how to manipulate you. And maybe it is a needy friend who is constantly taking from you but never giving back. Maybe it’s a coercive co-worker who is trying to use you to get ahead. Maybe it’s troublesome in-laws. I don’t know.

Maybe it’s your grown kids and they are constantly leaning on you for all kinds of things that they should no longer be leaning on you for. And they mean well, but they know what to say—better yet they know how to say it—to manipulate you into saying yes. So they exaggerate the truth, they hit you with some passive/aggression, they throw out some veiled threats.

They’ve been doing it for years. They know how to work you. So they say things like, “Oh, no, no. It’s fine. We’ll be okay.” But you know they are not okay. It’s like, “Oh, you know a lot of people feel this way, and so just wanted you to know.” Or, “You know, if you cared about me then...” So we end up saying yes in those moments because we can’t bear the short-term pain of saying no, and they know it. And what it is doing is, it is robbing you of margin for you to be discerning and it’s leading you toward resentment.

Check out Nehemiah’s response in verse 8, “I replied,” I love this, “There is no truth in any part of your story. You are making up the whole thing.’ They were just trying to intimidate us, imagining that they could discourage us and stop the work. So I continued the work with even greater determination.” Greater clarity, because he was able to see right through it. He just calls them out.

There is a guy by the name of John Townsend. He’s written a book here recently called *People Fuel* and I would highly recommend it to you. He was being interviewed on a

leadership podcast a few weeks ago and I love what he said. He said, “There are five words that can revolutionize your life.” He said, “Here’s what they are:

“I’m not available right now.”

Now, I think that there is a difference between saying no forever and no not right now. That’s a different thing. And just to be able to figure out the wisdom and the discernment that every time somebody runs to you with an emergency, every time somebody runs to you with a problem, every time... I would say that maybe the place where we need to begin is with these electronic rectangles in our pocket. They are constantly buzzing and chirping and maybe the first place to begin is, “I’m not available right now.” We just put that thing in sleep mode.

I’m not available right now. Now, here’s the thing. You need to say this and then the temptation is that you’re going to want to justify this. And he goes on to say that you don’t need to offer any justification. Just say, “I’m not available right now,” and leave it at that. You don’t need to justify your *no*.

Now, I need to offer a word of caution here, alright? You need to employ some emotional intelligence and some social awareness to this exercise. Here’s what I mean. If you’re going home this week and your wife texts you on your way home from work and she says, “Can you stop by the grocery store and pick up some marinara sauce for dinner?” don’t be texting her back, “I’m not available right now and Pastor Aaron says I don’t need to justify it.” I am publicly washing my hands of that scenario right now, alright?

Of course there are some moments when you can’t use this. It would be unwise. If your boss gives you a reasonable amount of time to get a project done, you can’t use this like a trump card. But I am saying that there are probably a lot of opportunities in your life when you need to employ this phrase a little more liberally in order to create some space in your life.

See, there is a small group of people in my life where 99.999 percent of the time the answer needs to be yes. Therefore, there is a much larger group of people where most of the time the answer needs to be no, so that I can say yes to them. Does that make sense?

I wish I had a visual up here. I don’t. But maybe in your mind just picture a bullseye and then some concentric circles, kind of like a target, that go out. And maybe you can do this exercise this next week with your spouse, your kids, or your small group. Maybe in your life—just in the center of that bullseye—who are the people who you need to say yes to most of the time?

And it should be a very, very small list beginning with Jesus right in the center of the bullseye—I’m going to get to that in a minute—and then the concentric circles moving

out to help you prioritize, “When do I need to say yes and when do I need to say no?” How tragic would it be if you said no to right people because you were saying yes to the wrong people? And many of us are doing that.

Well, it isn't over. Let me finish up the passage. Verse 11 says, “Later I went to visit Shemaiah son of Delaiah and grandson of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home. He said, ‘Let us meet together inside the Temple of God and bolt the doors shut.’” That's a red flag, alright? “Your enemies are coming to kill you tonight.”

So right now they just resorted to threats. And in verse 11 Nehemiah replied, “Should someone in my position run from danger? Should someone in my position enter the Temple to save his life? No, I won't do it! I realized that God had not spoken to him, but that he had uttered this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. They were hoping to intimidate me and make me sin. Then they would be able to accuse and discredit me.”

See, Nehemiah could discern that this wasn't God's direction, this was the manipulation of people and nothing was going to deter him from what God had asked him to do.

So, if I could just leave you with this, if there was one word—I think even out of the six words we are looking at in this series, that I think could immediately bring some change into your life and into mine almost immediately—I think it would be the word no.

And maybe this week what you need to do is you need to say no to something that maybe you'd really like to say yes to—just to create some margin. And maybe you're a little fearful that you're going to miss out on a promotion, a pay raise, some respect, some recognition. But you know what? This is just a discipline, “I'm just going to say no to this to create some margin. I'm going to trust God in this.”

Maybe you need to say no in advance of a few things. And I think that most of us probably know this, but the challenge is when to say no and why we should say no and how we should say no, because we don't want to give off the perception that we are aloof or that we're arrogant or that we're negative. So many of you—maybe you have those questions like well how do I say no and when do I say no and why do I say no.

I wish that I could answer those questions. I just simply can't give you an equation. What I can do is lay out a principle that I think can establish a framework to help you process through this. Here's what I mean. I think that one of the best ways in which we can figure out when and how to say *no* to something when we want to say yes to it is: What's motivating you to say yes?

I need to say no, but the reason I feel compelled to say yes is because—and I'm going to ask you to make a list. Talk about this with your group. Talk about this with your spouse, your friends, your roommates. Just ask what are all of the wrong reasons that I'm compelled to say yes.

Let me just give you three to get you started. The first one is just simply this:

I'm too concerned with what people think of me

When I'm so concerned of what you might think about me that that's the reason, primarily, why I want to say yes, I should probably say no.

Here's the second one:

I'm too preoccupied with what I've acquired or accomplished

So, I'm afraid. Competition is steep. People want my job. I've already acquired this status and so I'm in protection mode. So I'm overextending myself to protect it. Then I probably need to say no.

Here's another one. It's the last one that I will give you:

I'm afraid I might miss out

I'm just afraid I'm going to miss out on that opportunity. I'm just constantly looking for validation and affirmation from others, so I just say yes all of the time without really, fully processing it.

So maybe this week you could just be very thoughtful about finishing out the list and this will give you a grid from which operate.

But let me give you one of the greatest sources of clarity as to what you should say yes to and what you should say no to. Going back to that bullseye, at the very center of the bullseye should be the name Jesus. It is amazing to me how clarifying it is when you say yes to Jesus—how much clarity it gives you to the other people and opportunities you need to say yes and no to.

One of the things about this fancy word *discipleship*, which is basically what we are running after, it's just trying to help you follow Jesus in every area of your life. This is where I'm trying to get to in my life. I'm trying to get to this place of margin. I'm trying to get to this place of spiritual health and emotional health.

I'm trying to get to this place where I have enough space for God to work in my life, where when Jesus speaks the noise isn't so turned up that I can't hear him, but I can actually discern his voice and I can say back to him, "Jesus, the answer is yes." Now, why the question? Because I trust him and I trust what he wants is best for me and I trust that what he's laid out for me really is for my good.

And you know what? Honestly, some of us right now, we just can't say yes to Jesus because we've said yes to everything and everyone else in our lives.

Some of you right now can't say yes to serving on the weekends because you've already said yes to your kid's sports. Some of you, you won't get into a group because you've already said yes to that hobby or the fantasy football league. Some of you are not willing to trust God with a tithe because you've already said yes to Master Card and Visa. Some of you aren't willing to put your trust in Jesus and follow him in every area of your life—you're still holding back, because you've said yes to everything and everyone else.

What I want you to know is that Jesus said no to self-preservation. Jesus said no to his own comfort. Jesus said no to his self-fulfillment so that you and I might say yes to the life that he died to give to you and to me.

So what we're going to do right now in this time is—I literally just want to create enough space right now for God to work in your life. And I just want to ask you not to leave the service early if you can. I just want to ask you to lean in. I want you to take communion, hopefully that you brought in with you, that represents the body and the blood of Jesus and spend a few moments just to ask God to speak and give you wisdom to say what are some things that I need to say *no* to so that I can say yes to you God and yes to the people and the things that matter most.

Let me pray for you.

Father, we come to you right now and I just ask that you would help us in this, because this is hard. This so challenging for us to be able to figure out when to say no and why to say no and how to say no so that we can be people who are refreshed enough and have enough margin to be able to be discerning about what we need to say yes to.

So, God, I just pray that at all of our campuses that we would just create enough space right now, just a few moments, before we turn our phones back on, before we go out into the craziness of our week—that we would just take a few moments to just sit and say, "God, here's some space for you to do what only you can." We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.