

# When God Says *no*

Facing *Disappointment and Denial*  
Without Losing Heart,  
Losing Hope, or Losing Your Head

Elizabeth Laing Thompson



© 2021 by Elizabeth Laing Thompson

Print ISBN 978-1-64352-361-3

eBook Editions:

Adobe Digital Edition (.epub) 978-1-63609-050-4

Kindle and MobiPocket Edition (.prc) 978-1-63609-051-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial purposes, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without written permission of the publisher.

Churches and other noncommercial interests may reproduce portions of this book without the express written permission of Barbour Publishing, provided that the text does not exceed 500 words or 5 percent of the entire book, whichever is less, and that the text is not material quoted from another publisher. When reproducing text from this book, include the following credit line: "From *When God Says, 'No,'* published by Barbour Publishing, Inc. Used by permission."

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked HCSB are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible® Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used with permission by Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*. New Living Translation copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Published in association with the literary agency of Kirkland Media Management, LLC.

Published by Barbour Publishing, Inc., 1810 Barbour Drive, Uhrichsville, Ohio 44683, [www.barbourbooks.com](http://www.barbourbooks.com).

*Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.*



Printed in the United States of America.

# Moses

## The Climb

*Based on Deuteronomy 34*

The voice comes to Moses as an old friend—the Friend that Moses has walked beside all these forty long years in the desert: “*It’s time.*”

Moses has known this word was coming. In preparation, he has commissioned Joshua, renewed the covenant, blessed the tribes, and taught them God’s song—but still, it steals his breath. For a moment, he sits with the Lord in the Tent of Meeting, his own face unveiled, picturing all the faces he will miss—so many beloved, so many goodbyes.

He nods and rises. “I’ll leave in the morning.” Pulling his veil into place, he leaves the Tent of Meeting and goes back to sleep in his own tent for the last time.

He rises when night still hangs heavy over the camp, a black and silent drape. He doesn’t need a scene, doesn’t want a mob. They will know he’s gone soon enough.

He doesn’t pack a bag. He won’t be needing it.

He takes only a waterskin, a heavy knife—for cutting, not for fighting—and his staff. With one last, long look around at his tent—his home—he tiptoes out into darkness. The waning moon hides her glow behind a veil of clouds. Moses winks up at her: *I know the feeling.*

As his eyes adjust, picking out the dark shapes of sleeping tents—a city of black rectangles, triangles, and squares—he picks his way to the edge of camp with his staff guiding his

steps. It fits as if molded to his hand, its presence a comfort. Save Joshua and Caleb, this staff is his only surviving companion from the early days, the Egypt days. *We've walked a lot of life together*, he thinks.

As he passes by the isolated tents on the outskirts of camp, the memories flood: many times the thumps of this staff echoed through grand corridors as armored Egyptian guards escorted him to hold audience with Pharaoh; once this staff glinted sun as he stood shoulder to shoulder with Aaron and Hur, holding it aloft as the Israelites battled Amalek; twice this staff drew water from desert rock. He sighs a little at that. *If only I hadn't struck the rock. . . .*

He starts up Mount Nebo, filling his lungs with the sharp, cool tang of predawn air: dirt, leaves, hope. The moon peeps out at last, lighting a silvered path sloping gently upward. Come dawn, come light, the path starts to climb higher, growing steeper; before long there is no path. There is only Moses, pushing and hacking through foliage, making his own path through wild places, as he has always done. And as always, his only constant companions have been his staff and his Lord.

Moses doesn't consciously decide to start speaking aloud, but the words begin to flow, steady as his footfalls: "We've climbed many a mountain together, Lord. First there was the time You nearly stopped my heart with that burning-bush trick." He stops, hacking at a web of vines blocking his way. "The great-grandkids still love that story." His heart gives a little squeeze, thinking about the little ones.

He presses on. "And then when You turned this staff"—he knocks it against a fallen tree, grinning—"into a snake, and I ran—well, that was just unfair. I didn't really know You then—didn't know how You liked to tease." Moses chuckles. "But, of course, I am happy to amuse You. . .and my wife. You know that

was her favorite tale to tell at family dinners.”

He keeps talking to keep his thoughts from dwelling too long on Zipporah.

“And the time I climbed Mount Moriah, and You gave me Your law. I know everyone said I was gone for forty days, but to You and me, it just felt like no time at all”—he snaps his fingers—“and all the time in the world. As though we lived forever in a single afternoon.” He pauses, huffing hard as he clammers over a fallen tree. “And then when I came down, and we found the golden calf”—he stops, shakes his head—“you know, let’s not talk about that one. I don’t want to relive old anger today.”

The sky rumbles agreement.

“Remember the look on Pharaoh’s face when the frogs sprang out of that basket?” Moses mimics the expression, laughing. “And the magicians’ faces when my staff”—again he taps it against a tree—“ate theirs?” Moses points a knobby finger at the sky. “Why don’t people realize how funny You are? I wish they all knew this side of You.”

They start through a lifetime of memories, laughter mingling with tears.

The plagues.

The parted water.

The promises.

When they recall the day at Meribah, Moses stops to rest on a stump, sipping his water, running a forearm across his sweaty brow. “I’m sorry, Lord. Sorry I struck the rock—yes, *twice*. You’re right, I struck it twice. I’m sorry I don’t get to enter the land You promised, though I understand why You said no.” He raises an eyebrow to the sky. “Sure You don’t want to change that plan?”

The sun dips behind a cloud.

Moses nods. “I figured not.” He gives a wistful smile as he stands. “But Joshua—he’s ready. He’ll lead them the rest of the

way. Joshua is a good man.”

He walks on.

Still the memories flood: manna, quail, the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, Jethro’s visit, Miriam’s sickness, the plague of snakes, Aaron’s own last walk up Mount Hor, the renewal of the covenant, the people shouting—their voices as thunder—“We will obey!”

At last he reaches the summit. He is winded but not exhausted. From here, Canaan spreads out from the mountain’s base, a skirt of brown and green. Moses’ eyes, sharp as ever, can see to earth’s ends, or so it seems: the distant sea, glinting with golden sparkles; the Negev, lying quiet on the horizon; the Valley of Jericho, slumbering beneath a blanket of clouds. And as he looks, God peels back the present to reveal a glimpse of future days: the people marching, victorious; farms and settlements filling the land; children running, at home at last.

Moses sits on a boulder, feeling the wind soft in his beard and the sun warm on his head. “It’s a beautiful land, Lord. The people will be happy.” He pauses. “It’s been a good life. A long life. And I am ready.”

# When God Says, “No”

Moses had sacrificed everything to get to the Promised Land. From day one in Exodus 3—the epic burning-bush conversation when God revealed Himself and recruited Moses to go back to Egypt—the whole proposal had centered on one goal: leading God’s people to the Promised Land. A good land, spacious and green. Milk and honey for days. (Not necessarily a selling point for a modern homebuyer, but apparently the height of luxury in Moses’ day: “And here in the backyard we have a cow! And beehives! A veritable fountain of milk and honey!”)

Moses risked his life to stand before Pharaoh. Risked his life again to take Pharaoh’s not-so-cooperative response back to the soon-to-be-furious-with-Moses Hebrews. He made it through ten plagues—from the disgusting blood to the comical frogs to the miserable boils to the terrifying death angel. Moses stood between Pharaoh’s army and God’s people, trapped between swords and the sea; he raised his staff, and God parted the waters. He broke the first Ten Commandment stones in protest of the golden calf, convinced God not to kill the rebellious people, then dragged himself back up the mountain to reinscribe the Ten Commandments.

He survived unpopularity and criticism, ingratitude, and coup attempts. At one point, he sent his wife and sons away to keep them safe. Moses wandered for forty years in the desert because of the people’s rebellion. And after all that (plus a zillion other difficulties we don’t have room to list)—after *four decades of sacrifice*—Moses didn’t reap the intended reward of his lifetime of pain. How Moses must have longed to enter the Promised Land, the

goal of his heart all those long, miserable years—but God said no.<sup>1</sup>

God did take Moses to the top of Mount Nebo to let him take a look at the land, admire its beauty, envision the life his people would enjoy there—a kindness to take the edge off the disappointment—but Moses himself never set foot in the land. He died there on that mountain. God said no.

You might expect to find bitterness, resentment, accusation, or self-pity in Moses' heart as he stood atop Mount Nebo, admiring the land he would never live in. Perhaps we sense frustration mingled with nostalgia and regret, but not complaint. Why? I think the answer is simple: because the no came from the Lord, and the Lord was Moses' friend. Although no one likes to hear no, no from a friend is different than no from an enemy. No from a friend may still be a bitter pill, but it's a pill we can swallow.



My daughter's eyes behind her Wonder Woman mask are round and bright with tears.

“What's wrong, honey?” I ask.

“The lady—the lady over there wouldn't give me candy,” she says, her voice warbly. “She said I already took some and I couldn't have any. But I *hadn't* taken candy, Mommy! She was mean for no reason!”

I wrap a protective arm around my daughter's caped

---

<sup>1</sup> Moses' no came as the result of an act of disobedience. With the people desperate for water in the Desert of Zin, God told Moses to speak to a rock to bring forth water, but Moses apparently lost his temper and struck the rock—not once but twice. As a result, God did not allow Moses and Aaron to enter the Promised Land. (See Numbers 20:1–13.) Moses' story does not suggest that all nos in our lives are punishments—we should not blame ourselves for all our nos. Sure, we all live with consequences from past mistakes, but we should not assume that every no God gives us is some kind of punishment we have brought on ourselves. See chapters 2 and 8 for a more thorough discussion of these complex concepts.

shoulders. “Oh honey, I’m sorry.” I feel my eyes shooting rather unrighteous visual daggers at the stranger across the lawn. We don’t know these people or this neighborhood; we are at a fall festival with friends, all of us new to town. I hug my daughter close, whispering comforting words, offering distractions, hoping her whole night isn’t tainted.

Fast-forward a few weeks. My daughter—today she’s head-to-toe princess for no other reason than it’s Thursday, and why not be royal?—runs up to me as I fold laundry at the dining room table.

“Mommy, can I have some candy?” She gives her eyebrows a hopeful wiggle.

I shake my head. “No, honey, you’ve already had enough sugar today. You can have candy another time.”

Her eyebrows take a dive, and mild disappointment flicks across her face, but she doesn’t argue—just sighs then sashays back to the playroom, her kingdom.

In both these situations, my daughter’s quest for candy got a no. The first no was hurtful and cast a cloud over her entire evening; the second no was no big deal, a momentary disappointment in an otherwise great day. What was the difference? The difference was in who said no.

The first no came from a harsh stranger with an unkind spirit; the second came from a trusted family member who had her best interests at heart. The first no felt painful, arbitrary; the second was understandable, even necessary. It was all about who was saying no.

Think about how we read the title *When God Says, “No.”* Our eyes go straight to the no, don’t they? We unconsciously read it like this: *When God Says, “NO!”* All caps. Bold letters. Angry voice.

But what if we changed the emphasis? What if we read it

like this: *When GOD Says, "No"?*

Because where the no comes from makes all the difference. *Who* the no comes from makes all the difference. No from a cranky candy hoarder is different than no from a loving parent. No from a stranger is different than no from a friend. No from an enemy is different than no from Someone who knew us and loved us before we drew our first breath; Someone who saw our unformed bodies—indeed *gave* them form with His careful hands; Someone who has watched over our coming and going, hemming us in behind and before, every day of our lives (Psalms 121:8; 139:5, 13, 16).

No Place Like No

No feels like a roadblock in the life path we wanted to take. The smaller roadblocks are inconvenient and frustrating, but after a delay, we often find a way to work around them or reroute ourselves. But maybe your roadblock towers to heaven and stretches for miles on either side—your very own Great Wall of China—so you can't peer around it. You can't climb up to see what lies on the other side: a sheer drop or a smooth road. And your roadblock is so wide, there's no way around; you just have to hope you find a door passing through. A gateway to the other side of no. As the old children's rhyme goes, "Can't go over it, can't go under it. . . gotta go through it."

Maybe you're grappling with a big no—a before-and-after-everything-was-different kind of no, an I-don't-know-how-I'm-going-to-get-out-of-bed-ever-again kind of no: illness, divorce, abandonment, betrayal, injury, death.

These nos don't just break us in half; they can grind us to powder, burn us to ash. If we can't fight our way to the other side, we run the risk of losing not just our heads and our hope but also of losing our heart for God.

And then there are the “smaller” nos. I say “smaller” not to diminish the pain they can cause but to acknowledge different types of suffering. Certainly “No, you don’t get a promotion” feels different from “No, you don’t get a healing”—but both nos cause pain. Small or large, all wounds need tending. And yet sometimes we discount the smaller nos, trying to pretend they don’t hurt as much as they do: “That’s no big thing. I shouldn’t be sad about that.”

I’ve often told myself that I should or shouldn’t feel certain ways—*I shouldn’t feel heartbroken over my career setback; I should feel grateful that I have a husband even though I can’t get pregnant; I should feel happy with a roof over my head even though the house is filled with mold and making me sick; I shouldn’t feel upset about my friends going to different colleges, because at least I have friends*—but you know what? My feelings rarely listen to me. They show up whether they *should* or not. And when feelings show up, we have to deal with them.

Dating disappointments, career misfires, lost opportunities, unrealized dreams, financial reversals. . . these might sound like “smaller” nos from God—and yet they can hurt our faith and scar our hearts. They can weaken our hope. If we pretend they aren’t big-enough deals to warrant attention—instead stuffing the pain, ignoring the doubts—they may come back to haunt us later.

No one wants to go through no. No one wants to stand at that roadblock searching for a way through, wondering what will be waiting on the other side when they get there. God has told me no many times in my life—some nos have been small, their pain short-lived; others have been huge, their consequences life-altering—and every no, major and minor, has left its mark. Some have made me take a step back from God, wounded and wary. Some have made me scour the scriptures, searching anew for faith, for evidence that God is love after all.

Some have made me fight my way back to prayer after a season of God's silence. Some have looked like this:

I can't hear the other end of my husband's phone conversation, but I don't need to. The shock on Kevin's face says it all: he didn't get the position—the one he'd been told was a done deal.

He says all the right things, the humble things, the trusting-God things: "I totally understand. . . . We've all been praying, so I know God's hand was guiding this decision. . . . We'll be fine—more than fine, we'll be great. . . . I'll be praying for you."

But when he hangs up, his face is a symphony of anguish: he is stunned, embarrassed, insulted, angry. In that look, I see the college quarterback I married twenty years ago—*He starts his first-ever college football game as a fifth-year senior, buoyed by hope, cheered by friends. First play: stopped on the forty; second drive: pushed back by the defense; third drive: four and out; there is no fourth drive*—and the soul-crushing moment he was sent back to the sidelines to ride the bench again, his football dreams in tatters.

"I can't—I don't—" He can't find words. He leans down to put his phone on the table, shouts in pain, grabs his back, and falls, twisting, to the floor.

"What's wrong?" I cry, springing to his side. Panicked and irrational, I half expect to see an arrow or bullet in his back.

“That stupid bulging disk in my spine,” he grinds out, pushing up onto his hands and knees, panting in pain. When he finally turns his face to me, his eyes glitter with angry tears. “Well, this is just *awesome*. I can’t provide for this family, can’t even bend over to put down my phone.”

There’s nothing to say. I sink to my knees, reach for his hand, and curl up beside him on the carpet.



I wake up weeping, though I can’t remember why. I open my eyes—harsh light, white walls, masked nurse—and as the tears slide hot into my ears, memory comes crashing back: *The surgery. The pregnancy. The tiny heart, flat and still.*

“Oh love.” The nurse tut-tuts, bustling overhead, closing curtains around me. As if they could contain my cries. As if they could block the pain. As if they could raise the dead.



I’m pushing a ginormous grocery cart through Sam’s Club—the frozen pizza aisle, three pizzas for thirteen dollars—when my phone rings.

My heart jumps into my throat.

I’ve been waiting for this call for two days, so crowded Sam’s Club aisle or not, I answer.

The “Hi, Elizabeth” is pitched high—the trying-to-put-a-positive-spin-on-horrible-news pitch. And she’s talking fast, pulling-off-

a-Band-Aid style—like if she says it fast, it won't hurt so much. But this is no Band-Aid, and this wound is never going to heal.

*Memory loss. . . progressive. . . too soon to give it a name. . .*

I know too much to be fooled by the could-bes, the might-not-bes, the it's-too-soon-to-panics. I hear all the things she doesn't want to say about my loved one's condition, and the relentless voice of logic inside me fills in the rest of the prognosis.

I stand rooted, too numb for tears. The tears will come—for months, years, they will come, at odd moments, unannounced—but in this moment, they spare me. Right now time is frozen—I am frozen—in the frozen-food aisle. The fluorescent lights glare hard, turning the world hard-angled and ugly. People shoulder past me, some shooting me confused and irritated glances—how could they know the stone-faced woman blocking their way to the pizza is a daughter in mourning?

We all have “no” stories: times when hopes flew and prayers pleaded—but God said no.

When my publisher first approached me about writing this book, my first response was dread with a side order of terror: *How can I speak to all the big, awful hurts? I'm not that wise. I have my own story, my own disappointments and scars, but there are a million different kinds of loss and pain and no. How can I speak to all the heartaches people might bring to these pages? Please, God, let me out of this.*

Of course, in a case of extreme yet oh-so-appropriate irony, God said no.

But then He reminded me: *“I’m not asking you to be the theologian who writes Why God Says, ‘No’—I’m asking you to be the friend who writes When God Says, ‘No.’ To offer hope and encouragement and reminders of My love. To offer scriptures and strategies and stories people can cling to through desert times and bewildering seasons. To show My children how to stumble back into My arms when sorrow has driven them away.”*

That’s a book I can write. That’s a path I have trod—though *stumbled* and *crawled* might be more accurate.

Whatever kind of no you bring to these pages—be it small or immense, life-annoying or life-altering—please know how much my heart aches with you. Please know how carefully I have weighed these words, trying my best to tread lightly on your anguish. I offer my words with humility, knowing I am only one woman who has lived only her one life; one woman who still loves God and His Word, even through all God’s yeses, waits, maybes, and nos; one woman who longs to comfort others in their pain.

Who Is God?

I have said that what matters most is *who* tells us no. If someone is going to tell us no and direct our lives down paths we wouldn’t have chosen, it helps to know who that someone is—and what right that someone has to make those choices for us. Let’s prepare for our journey to the other side of no by asking, Who is God?

*God is almighty*

*You rule the oceans. You subdue their storm-tossed*

*waves. You crushed the great sea monster.  
You scattered your enemies with your mighty  
arm. The heavens are yours, and the earth is yours;  
everything in the world is yours—you created it  
all. You created north and south. Mount Tabor and  
Mount Hermon praise your name. Powerful is  
your arm! Strong is your hand! Your right  
hand is lifted high in glorious strength.*

PSALM 89:9–13 NLT

Our God is the almighty Creator, infinite in knowledge, power, and ability. Nothing is beyond His power, reach, or knowledge. He is not bound by mortal time constraints; the past, present, and future stretch out in full view before Him. He sees all—where the world has been and where it will be. How one thing affects another thing that affects another thing, down the line into eternity. How one life touches another life that touches another life, generation to generation. How one choice changes another choice that changes another choice, continent to continent.

The dizzying complexity of infinite choices and possibilities unspools before His fingertips, intertwined yet untangled, with the golden thread of what is best always clear. He sees it all—more than that, He anticipates how it all interacts: which dominoes cause others to topple. He weighs all the options and always chooses the best one for the big picture. He is never surprised, never caught unprepared, never working from incomplete information. Where we see only a tiny corner of the puzzle, He owns the box—designed the box—and knows where every piece fits.

## *God is righteous*

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, LORD. They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness.*

PSALM 89:14–16

God always does the right thing—the good-in-the-long-run thing—even if the right thing sometimes involves what isn't fun, what we wouldn't necessarily choose, what causes a measure of pain.

## *God is fair*

*The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them. . . . The LORD is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face.*

PSALM 11:4, 7

Life isn't always fair, people aren't always fair, the justice system isn't always fair—but God is.

Does that mean God will always make *our* life sort itself out into “fair” and “not fair” from moment to moment? No, it doesn't. Does that mean justice always reigns, present tense? No, it doesn't. Even the briefest look at the lives of godly men and women in scripture reveals the truth: although God is fair, we all suffer unfairness on this broken planet, this place so fractured by sin and stained with blood. We suffer unfairness at the

hands of other humans.

Sometimes, when we get a no—or a series of nos—it feels like God is against us. Intentionally tipping the scales. Cheating at cards, stacking the deck so the house wins. Singling us out for suffering, being unfair on purpose.

But God would never do that.

And we can know that in the end, God will sort it out. In the end, God will set things right. It may not happen in our lifetime, in front of our human eyes here on earth, but it will happen. Justice is coming and cannot be denied:

*The LORD works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.*

PSALM 103:6

*God is in control—but not controlling*

I have wrestled and angsted and gnashed teeth over this concept a million times, and you can read all the books and ponder all the theology before you decide where you land, but here's where I stand: God is in control—but He's not controlling. God can do anything—He can take the reins whenever and wherever He wants to—but He made a crucial, game-changing decision long ago. In His love, God gave people free choice. And with that great blessing comes tremendous evil. It means people are capable of choosing love. . . or choosing hatred. God allows them—and us—that choice.

Certainly, the interplay between God's will and people's choices is complex, and it can be difficult—sometimes impossible—to separate the strands. But before we blame God for every no in our life, let's remember: sometimes *people* are the cause of our pain—and God is the One who longs to comfort

us through it. Yes, He saw it coming. No, He wasn't surprised. Always, He wants to see us through it, *love* us through it. Even now, He is working good through it and around it and even in spite of it (Romans 8:28).

And that brings us to our next characteristic: kindness.

### *God is kind*

*He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel. The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.*

PSALM 103:7–13 NLT

Take a moment to ponder those words. Let them sit one at a time in your thoughts and on your heart. “Taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psalm 34:8). Let the words melt on your tongue like a piece of chocolate till your spiritual taste buds start firing, one by one:

Our God is. . .

*Compassionate.*

*Merciful.*

*Slow to anger.*

*Filled with love*—and not just any old love: *unfailing* love. Perfect love that never lets us down.

Love past the heavens.

Forgiveness beyond the earth's ends.

That's the kind of God who draws us close: a *kind* God. A God who shows us a Father's love, a forever love. Even when He tells us no.



Almighty. Righteous. Fair. In control but not controlling. Kind. This is the God we serve. This is the God we trust. This is the One who is *worthy* of our service and trust. This is the One who often tells us yes. . .but sometimes tells us no.

Let us draw near to God—even if He's not giving us the answers we want, the candy we want, the life we want. Let's figure out how to stay close to Him when we don't understand His answers. Even when He feels like the bad guy. The mean parent. The roadblock. Even when we face dead ends and deathbeds.

In the pages to come, we're going to figure out how to walk through a season of disappointment and denial and how to face—and find—life on the other side of the roadblock. What spiritual practices will keep us faithful—and filled with faith—along the way? What inspiration and caution can we draw from men and women in scripture, people who faced “no” many years before us? What perspectives will help us pray when prayer feels like wasted breath? What kinds of prayers *can* we pray when God seems to be saying no? What attitudes will protect our hope when it starts to fade? What tools can save our relationships when “no” drives a wedge between us?

Let's study who God is—why and how we can trust Him even when life turns sideways, upside down, or inside out.

Let's find ways to pray—even praise—through pain.

Let's learn to keep our heads even when our hearts are hurting.

Let's look for the hope that hides in heartache.

Let's keep moving forward, seeking life—and joy—on the other side of no.

## More to Know

For further study:

To read a few highlights from Moses' life, you can find his call in Exodus 3 and 4, the ten plagues in Exodus 7–12, the story of the waters of Meribah in Numbers 20:1–13, and Moses' final ascent of Mount Nebo in Deuteronomy 34:1–12.

Prayer prompt:

*“Who among the gods is like you, LORD?  
Who is like you—majestic in holiness,  
awesome in glory, working wonders?  
You stretch out your right hand, and the earth  
swallows your enemies. In your unfailing love you  
will lead the people you have redeemed. In your  
strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.”*  
EXODUS 15:11–13

Journal prompts:

1. Describe the no you are grappling with right now. What specific doubts, resentments, and fears have you faced?
2. We talked about God being almighty, righteous, fair, and kind. Which of these descriptions are easy for you to believe—and which are more difficult?

3. When you picture life on the other side of no (if you are at a point where you *can* picture a life on the other side), what do you hope you find there? Who do you hope to be as you journey through no. . .and who do you hope to become on the other side?