



**Out of Chaos with 3 Big Words**  
**“Asking for Help!”**

*(Biblical Text: Exodus 18:13-24)*

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Over the last couple of weeks, we’ve been looking at what I call “three big words” as a way of getting out of the chaos that characterizes most of our lives. And those words are “no,” “yes,” and “help!”

*The first two come fairly easily to us, the last one – not so much.*

When Ann and I were in Alaska last summer with our two-year-old granddaughter, Ginny, she’d learned to say, “no.” **It was her favorite word!** “Want to come sit with grandpa?” “Grammie?” “Wanna play outside?” “Do you want some milk?” **No. No. No. No.** Even when she wanted to say yes, she said no!

Most of us now say “no” less often - to the point of overload. When, out of frustration, we do say “no,” it’s often to the wrong things. I’m at that point with this election cycle. (“Will you take a short survey?” **No.** “May we put our campaign sign in your yard?” **No.** “Will you listen to my campaign ad which tells you who to vote for?” **No!**) It makes me want to say no to voting at all. **Not good.**

So the first message in my series was this: **“We have to learn to say “no” to some things – but it’s only so we can say, “yes,” to God.”** If we fail to do that, like the Priest and Levite in the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, we are unable to lead a life of following God, even if we want to do so.

We need to step out of our overcommitted, lives so we have the ability to make Godly choices with our lives. So the second message was: **“We need to learn to say, “yes,” to the right things in the right order.”** Loving God with all we have and are must come first. Loving our family comes next, then our neighbors and ourselves. Then, after that, comes everything else.

When we honor those priorities first, then our work and other things take on their proper place in our lives, and we are blessed in them. As Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, **“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be yours as well.”**

**Third, and hardest for us, when we are overloaded, we need to ask for help.** Moses learned that lesson in our Scripture passage for today. As you open your Bibles to **Exodus 18:13-24**, let me set the scene.

Moses and the children of Israel were in an *"in between place"* on the way from Egypt in their forty-year journey to the Promised Land.

**Spiritually, that's significant.** In Church, we tend to focus on the victory passages of Scripture - the deliverance from Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea, or Easter Sunday, or the promise that one day the Kingdoms of this world give way to the Kingdom of God! But we ought to pay more attention to the *"in between places."* Why? **Because that's where we live most of the time.**

**And those are also the places we need God the most.** And, in this *"in between place"* for Moses in the wilderness, what used to work isn't working anymore. And he did what most of do in the *"in between places."* He kept doing the same things he had been doing, he just did them harder and longer. Verse 13 in the text says, *"Moses sat as judge for all the people, and the people stood around him from morning until night."* No margin.

**Just like us.** In our relationships, when things are hard, we tend to just try harder and harder. But if that's all we do, things often get worse and worse. In our work when something isn't working the way we want - our tendency is to work longer and try harder, and the more tired we get, often the worse things get. The same thing is true in business, or our lives in retirement, or in our nation (*have mercy,*) or sometimes, even in the Church.

It's not that Moses was doing anything really wrong. He was leading well, even when the people were *"stiff-necked and stubborn,"* even when they complained day and night, and whined about how good things used to be back in Egypt. But Moses was worn out. He was weary from doing good.

And too often, that happens to us. What was Moses' basic problem? **He was trying to do it all himself.** That's so like most of us. The hardest thing for us to do is ask for help and stop trying to do it all ourselves! We need to step out of "super-mom" or "super-pastor" or "super-whatever" mode.

We often need someone else's insight to us get out of the destructive cycle of over-commitment in our lives. It can come from a consultant, a good friend, a counselor or pastor. **For Moses it was his father-in-law, Jethro** - who turned out to be smarter than his namesake on the Beverly Hillbillies!

Look at verses 17 and 18. *"Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone."*

**What did Jethro tell Moses to do?** He told him to ask for help from other capable people and stop trying to do it all himself! He told Moses to trust in God and in the community to join with him for the sake of the work of God. And that strategy works in the workplace, in our homes, in our personal lives and families, in the Church and in our city, state and nation.

**In our homes, husbands and kids especially take note – we should share the work.** It does no one a favor if one person shoulders the whole load. When I grew up, there were lots of things my parents got wrong, I'm sure. But one of the things they got right was this. Both my parents worked outside the home, but they also expected all three of their children to pull our own weight, to work hard and do our share. Ann's family was the same.

**If you want an illustration of the importance of teamwork and hard work, I give you this year's Kansas City Royals!** Some great players, sure, but their success is a team success, where each player contributed to this amazing season! Let's hear it for what they have been able to do together!

In our nation, unless we somehow learn to work together as a team, God help us, nothing will ever get done. And likewise in the Church, Paul says, we all have a share of the work to do. To paraphrase Ephesians 4:14-16:

***"No longer be children, tossed back and forth by every wind that blows, or the plans and schemes of men. Instead, speaking the truth in love, grow up and follow Christ. He joins and holds the body together. And when each part is working well, the body will grow and build itself up in love."***

Learn to when to say no and how to say yes, especially to God. But most of all ask for help when you need it. Why. No one is supposed to go it alone!

A while back I found a little book of amazing poetry by Iain Thomas. And here is my favorite entry, which could have been written just for you today:

***Every day, the world will drag you by the hand, yelling "This is important! And this is important! And this is important! You need to worry about this! And this! And this!" And each day, it's up to you, to yank your hand back, put it on your heart and say "No. This is what's important."***<sup>1</sup>

You are important! No matter what you are facing today, you don't have to face it alone. You don't have to burn out or give up! God will be with you! And others will join with you too, if you ask them and if you will let them!

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<sup>1</sup> Iain Thomas – I wrote this for you.

