

CHAPTER EIGHT

“I Feel Guilty When I Say No!”

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to those
who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according
to the flesh, but according to the spirit.”*

—Romans 8: 1:1 NKJV

“I feel guilty when I say no!” If you can relate to this statement, join the big *Sorry Club!* It’s filled with people who are doing all sorts of hard labor they were never meant to do simply because they couldn’t say *no*.

If you have always been one who can say no and be done with it, I salute you! Please continue through this chapter, however. It will help you to be sensitive to our “*no-challenged*” friends and family members.

For many of us, simply saying the word “no” causes pain and anguish. This is especially true for those of us who are parents. We try to give our kids the world while they are growing up. We want the absolute *best* for them; however, we sometimes feel guilty when we have to say “no” to them. The reason for this may be the fact that we are trying to be our children’s friend instead of their parent. We are afraid that if we say *no* to something they want they will become upset and perhaps not love us anymore. By the way, kids are smart. They see this weakness in us and exploit it to the bitter end!

When we fail to use the power and teaching of saying the word “no” to our children, we quite literally fail them. We fail to consider what will happen when an undisciplined and overindulged child becomes a demanding teenager and subsequently a selfish adult. We all know people who obviously were not told “no” very often as children. They are obnoxious! They are mostly unhappy due to unrealistic expectations of the world and the people around them. They expect the world to give them what they want and they do not understand why they have to *expect* to hear the word “no” sometimes. Remember, no one besides you is going to think your son or daughter is “cute” or feel sorry for him or her when they act ugly in life because they cannot always have everything their own way.

If we teach our children how to handle the word *no* at an early age, it will not be difficult for them to hear it or say it as they get older. Also, we will not feel guilty when we say “no.” We must remind ourselves that it is for the ultimate good of our children to hear “no” at times when necessary. We should actually feel as if we have missed the mark when we fail to tell them “no” as needed.

Not hearing “no” when needed will ultimately cause our children great pain in life with relationships and in the workplace. We must come to the realization that *no* is a very powerful word. Instead of feeling guilty or teaching our loved ones to feel guilty, we should all embrace the word *no* as the best option sometimes. Saying the word “no” is more than just OK...it is vitally necessary.

What’s Wrong with this Picture?

Now let us consider those of us who are involved in our church, neighborhood activities,

jobs—and let's not forget the family (mother, father, sister, brother). Anisha Kaul, a life coach, tells us, "Women, who traditionally take on more responsibility for relationships, seem to have an especially hard time saying *no*. We tend to assume that it is our job to make sure everybody else is happy. So, we go out of our way to be accommodating, even if it means agreeing to make the potato salad when we're already in charge of the charcoal, the ice, and the beach umbrellas."

Shall we take this one step further with the following scenario? Imagine this: Your sister calls to ask you to watch your nieces and nephews tonight. First of all, it is the last minute. You have had a rough day and have decided to take a hot bubble bath and eat your favorite ice cream. Instead of saying "no," you say "yes." *Why?* You agree to her request because your sister tells you that she has not had any time to herself and, after all, you are their favorite aunt. You agree because you are afraid to let her down. You are afraid to make her upset or angry. Basically, you are just *afraid*. Can you relate to this scenario?

I invite you to substitute the above scenario for another situation. Can you substitute it for a situation on your job? Here is a workplace scenario: You are known as the team player. You are the one who can be counted on to do anything necessary to get the job done. You are, however, already handling multiple projects and your boss has just asked you to take on someone else's responsibilities. You do not want to say "no," because you want to avoid any kind of confrontation. Meanwhile, you call up your friends and complain to them about your workload. Confronting or relating your displeasure regarding the workplace situation to your friends is easy because it does not affect them, but it doesn't solve your problem.

Anisha Kaul lets us know that, as much as we hate rejection, we also hate rejecting. She tells us that if we are faced with a potentially guilt-inducing situation, taking the path of least resistance is easier. On the inside we may be screaming, "No! Go away! Leave me alone!" On

the outside, however, we summon up an agreeable smile and utter that fateful, “OK!”

Let’s take that poll again. If any of these scenarios sound familiar, raise your hand. I do not know about you, but I’ve got both arms waving in the air right now. Not only do I *hate* rejection, but I’ve also never liked the feeling of rejecting people who need my help.

In time past, when asked to help out with more volunteer work, at first I would say “no,” then I’d wrestle all night with my answer and then call the person back the next day to say I’d changed my mind. To add insult to injury, I would say that the Creator was convicting me and told me I should have said “yes” to begin with.

I now know that the Creator was not the one making me feel guilty. However, it sounded good and it justified my guilt feelings. I eventually learned that when we try to be *all things to everyone* we end up hurting ourselves *and them* in the end. Is it possible that the Creator had intended for someone else to do the thing you just said “yes” to, and your cowardice just interfered with His best plan?