

YES AND NO

Rob Robinson

At lunch with my sister, Les Landiss, last week, she said this to me: *“No one ever said ‘Yes’ to Jesus without saying ‘No’ to something else.”* The validity of what she said became more apparent the more I thought about it. When God put Adam and Eve in the garden, he expected them to say “No” when the serpent urged them to eat the forbidden fruit. Abraham said “No” to his family and the idols they worshipped when he said “Yes” to God and left his homeland to follow God’s guidance into the land and the life God promised. When Jesus called his disciples, one by one they had to say “No” to their past lives and livelihoods in order to follow him; they left family, boats and nets and a tax-collecting business because they said “Yes” when Jesus invited them, *“Come, follow me.”*

Perhaps more commonly, people who want to follow Jesus have to say “No” to behaviors, speech and attitudes. The first word of the original gospel invitation to follow Jesus is “repent.” John said, *“Repent and believe the gospel.”* Jesus said, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* Repenting is considering what you have been doing, and then saying “No” to that way of life. Once men and women learned enough about Jesus to believe in him and say “Yes” to his invitation to follow him, the first thing they were compelled to do was to say “No” to their past lives.

But that is only the beginning. Saying “yes” to Jesus and “no” to something else is a way of life for Jesus’ followers. The world we live in is constantly pressuring us to conform to values and behaviors that we simply must say “No” to as followers of Jesus. Faithful Christians need to say “No” to hating and judging others, turning a blind and uncaring eye to the sufferings of others and to profane or vulgar language, dishonesty and gossip. Say “No” to trusting in our things and ourselves for our future and security. Let’s examine our lives for any sexual misconduct, inappropriate relationships, lustful thoughts, use of pornography, perverse desires and imaginations, prejudice, selfishness, anger, grudge-bearing, or pride, and firmly say “No” to the temptation to excuse, ignore or tolerate these sins. Say “No” to something today!