



Encouraging Words

with Darlene Sala

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Have Trouble Saying No?

Do you have trouble saying “No” when you’re asking to do something? If so, you probably find yourself too busy for your own good--or anyone else’s. Mary Byers gives us an idea that will help. The technique is called, “Five Times Why,” and it’s attributed to Taiichi Ohno, father of the Toyota Production System. Here’s how it works. When someone asks you to do something and you’re feeling overwhelmed, first ask yourself--

Why am I feeling overwhelmed?

Answer? Because I’m doing too much.

Why am I doing too much?

Because I say yes to everything.

Why do I say yes to everything?

Because I’m afraid to say no.

Why am I afraid to say no?

Because I’m afraid they won’t like me.

Why am I afraid they won’t like me?

Because I’ve never said no to them before, and I don’t know how they’ll respond.¹

While your first response to why you’re feeling overwhelmed is probably that you’re doing too much, the Five Times Why exercise reveals the real reason that you say “Yes”- because you’re afraid people won’t like you if you turn them down. Mary points

¹ Mary M. Byers, *How To Say No And Live To Tell About It* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2006), 63, 64.



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out that Five Times Why encourages you to go deeper than a surface understanding of a situation...which often leads to new insight and understanding."²

God has promised to give us wisdom when we need it. James tells us, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach" (James 1:5). When we have a decision to make, however, we need to be willing to give up our own desires and ask God to make His will plain. Then when we feel certain of God's will, we must be willing to do it--even if that means saying "No" to a friend's request. But you will know you are doing what God wants you to do.

² Ibid., 66.