

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

Mary could have said, "No!" and stopped the flow - the flow of God's grace. How often have I said, "No!" ... said, "I don't feel like it!" ... said "I'll do it later!" .. but never did. Lord, forgive.

Lord, forgive me for those innumerable times when I've ignored those inward nudges, those gently nagging pulls which You have so graciously sent my way. Often You've silently called, "This way, child," and I've responded with a "No, Lord!" Oh, maybe I haven't been that blatant with my rebellion. My approach was more subtle. I would just turn up the volume on the Christian radio station or become busier in my do-good projects. Nevertheless, I knew and my Lord God knew that my response was a resounding, road blocking, "No!" Lord, forgive.

Why, did you know that one little insignificant-looking two-letter word can stop God's grace dead in its tracks? Oh, don't get me wrong. I'm not so powerful and neither are you. It's just with this free will gift given by our Lord God, He allows us to make choices. We can make right ones. We can make wrong ones. We can make surrendering "Yes" ones and thus be empowered by His Holy Spirit, or we can make stubborn, stuck "No" ones and try to wing it ourselves.

Often, I've made the latter choice and inevitably had to crash-land, but with each fall, my Lord God has met me,

lovingly brushed me off and set me back on my feet. I know our life journey is supposed to be a straight and narrow one. If, however, you tried to map out the routes I've taken, it would look more like a maze than a fine line. Why, I've slammed into more roadblocks and dead ends! I've made more wrong turns because of my "No, Lord" lingo. Lord, forgive.

Maybe you can relate. And what's even more disgusting is that we do discuss the mistakes over and over and over again. We replay the wrong turns. Now, talk about going nowhere and a real downer. Why, there's nothing worse! We ask for our Lord God's forgiveness. He gives it, puts us back on the right track and then we have the audacity to "Play it again, Sam." Oh, how tiring and non-productive.

Speaking of wrong turns, why only last week I went on a wonderful, whirlwind car trip to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, to see the Passion Play - twelve hours going - twelve hours returning, all in a three-day time span. My two dearest friends and I made our first Annual Pilgrimage. We see our friendship as a God-gift and have vowed to yearly take time from our busy schedules for a celebration of this gift. We feel this has become an imperative, for one of the group is moving. We don't know where our yearly jaunts will take us and it really doesn't matter as long as it meets our one criteria: God-centered. God-centered so that it will help us to refocus or re-align or just remind us of His Lordship in our lives.

Back to the trip. What tickled and amazed me was that my two cohorts love to drive. I don't. For the whole required 24 hours of driving, they took turns either being navigator or driver. Now, this was just fine with me. I would occasionally offer to relieve them, just to be courteous, but needless to say, the answer was, "No. We'd never get there!" They were perceptive, for my sense of direction is nil and my driving speed is usually slow. So, I'd again relax on the back seat and watch my A-type controllers do their thing - while I just went along for the ride and would sing. It was delightful.

What astounded and amazed me was that these two ladies got us to our destination in record time and instead of rejoicing that we hadn't ended up in Opp, Alabama, instead of Eureka Springs, Arkansas, they discussed for two days a little detour that had not been anticipated. They rehashed the highway numbers and the longitudinal and latitudinal directions. This seemed very important to figure out how they'd gone wrong. I wanted to say, "Hold it, girls! We're here! Forget the bad turn. That's old news. You did a grand job. You got us to our desired destination. That requires a celebration, not a castigation." But instead I looked perplexed too, like, "What are we to do? We arrived, but how did we arrive? Oh dear! Oh dear!" (I'm no dummy and I knew that I needed to join in their chagrin.)

And isn't that just like our human nature? I'm sure if we are fortunate enough to ever hear, "Well done, good and

faithful servant,” from our Lord, we’ll probably say, “But wait just a minute, please, let me dig up some old dirt to wallow in, let me show You some old rags that haven’t been washed, let me get out some old garbage that still smells.” Why is it? Why is it that it’s so hard for us to accept His grace, that free-flowing grace which comes with that one little word, yes - “Yes, Lord.”

We’re good at replaying the garbage, but not so good at retelling the grace flows. I don’t know why, but somehow it’s easier to rehash the negative than it is to relive the right-on-track episodes. But hear ye! Hear ye! That’s what we’re called to do. It says that we are to dwell on “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.” That’s Philippians 4:8.

That’s what keeps us on track. That’s what will help with the amplification of our Lord’s call. That’s what will make the reception of our hearts clearer. Yes, it is a still, small voice, which becomes even clearer in the cacophony of this world if we just listen and learn.

A good Old Testament story of getting stuck is found in Genesis 19:26. Lot’s wife turned into a salt pillar because she looked back, probably yearningly looked back, mentally retracing her old world tracks, whereas Lot and the rest of his family were forwardly marching, following their Father’s lead.

She became stuck as stone. The rest claimed new ground. It's all in the choices made.

And then there's the modern day Mary Barwick, my friend. It happened just last week. We met to sign a contract and that we did, but more importantly we met for coffee and a hug and a re-telling of an adventure - a grace-filled adventure which we had shared and also want to share with you.

Our conversation started with Mary quietly saying, "Lucy, do you realize how close I came to saying 'No'? That's the scary reality." If she had, I'm sure there would have been no books done together - she illustrating and me writing. Now there are three! And who knows how many more to come? The good news is that she didn't say no, but said yes and that's what needs to be documented, for it has been a grand and glorious grace flow.

The operative words were, of course, "Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord."

Now, my precious sisters and brothers, pilgrims on the way, are you using that powerfully positive word 'yes' when responding to the Lord? I pray so - it makes all the difference.

I am your sister in Christ,

Lucy